Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History

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A Thesis
in
The Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Film and Moving Image Studies) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

December 2018

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Philipp Dominik Keidl

Entitled: Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor Of Philosophy (Film and Moving Image Studies)

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Abstract

Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History

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Fan studies has a long tradition of framing fandom as active, creative, and participatory. Yet, scholarship on film and television fans has primarily investigated fandom and fan practices in relation to the consumption, production, and criticism of fictional texts. In turn, non-fiction texts and fan practices have found considerably less attention. However, as this dissertation demonstrates, fans are active and creative participants in assembling, preserving, restoring, and disseminating materials from the past and in transforming these materials into print and online publications, podcasts, video tutorials, documentaries, and museum exhibitions. Drawing from the field of public history and the idea of a "participatory historical culture," this dissertation conceptualizes and examines fans as producers and distributors of historical knowledge through the textual analysis of a wide range of fan-made histories of the *Star Wars* franchise. This dissertation foregrounds practices, objects, and networks that so far have found little attention in fan studies: the distinct forms of historical media fans produce; community structures and hierarchies with historians and history-making at their centre; fan historians' relationship to the media industries; fan contribution to cultural heritage initiatives; the impact of fan labor in specific local contexts and beyond the media industries. As such, this dissertation shows how history-making is central to the formation, maintenance, and shaping of individual and collective fan identities and memories.

Acknowledgements

Allegedly, Germans are a tad brittle, humorless, unsentimental, and over-efficient. They are also supposedly straightforward, and, even if delivered without pomp and circumstances, truly mean what they are saying. The following short but nonetheless heartfelt acknowledgments will do more to reinforce these stereotypes than to break with them.

Haidee Wasson has taught me too many things to list all of them here. She has been a supervisor that I could 100% trust and rely on. I always looked forward to meeting with her, no matter what issues were on the agenda. Observing how she approaches, tackles, and ultimately solves every obstacle that comes her way was inspiring. She was always honest and direct, but nevertheless managed to send me away feeling more optimistic and better equipped for what was to come. We also had our fair share of laughs—what else could you ask for from a supervisor? Marc Steinberg has become a role model for me with his curiosity, creativity, thoroughness, and most of all, generosity for his peers and students. MJ Thompson always had my back in the last six years, and her mentorship has encouraged and empowered me to grow and mature as a teacher, colleague, and friend. Working with the three of them and having their continued belief in me—even when I struggled, stumbled and fell—means a lot to me.

I have found indispensable, inspiring, and loyal friends and allies in the cohort of scholars with whom I started my doctoral studies: Desirée de Jesus, Irene Rozsa, Jordan Gowanlock, Sophie Cook, Katarina Mihailovic, and, especially, Beatriz Bartolomé Herrera who has been a crucial collaborator, careful reader, and respondent on many drafts of this dissertation. I would also like to give a shout-out to Haidee Wasson's other doctoral students who provided critical and detailed feedback on chapters, presentations, abstracts, and applications: Mark Barber, Natalie Greenberg, William Fech, Joel Hughes, Heather Macdougall, Matthew Ogonoski, Kaia Scott, Kyla Smith, and Zach Melzer. The innumerable hours I spent working and having coffee with Zach are some of the best memories I will take with me from Concordia.

Masha Salazkina has provided important guidance in the early stages of my research and was an incredibly dedicated Graduate Program Director. I would also like to thank all faculty members and peers who gave me the chance to participate in their research projects in and around Concordia: Charles Acland, Luca Caminati, Michelle Cho, Kay Dickinson, Yuriko Furuhata, Joshua Neves, Catherine Russell, and Thomas Waugh. Christian Gosvig Olesen, who I met as an MA student in Amsterdam, continues to be a loyal and reliable friend and collaborator.

My FFAR250 colleagues and Megan Webster have greatly inspired my teaching philosophy and practice. Finally, a big “thank you” to Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema’s administrative staff for helping me to manoeuvre all the bureaucratic hurdles that crossed my way.

On a more personal note: Catherine, Brandon, Samantha, Viviane, Fulvia, Sima, Jeremy, Adam, Darien, Kester, Kasia, Ed, Julie, Anthony, Joaquin, Maria, Patrick, Lucie, Yves, Marie-Eve, Karl, Christine, Huguette, Mia, Alexie, Donnie, Toni, Rocky, Harriot, and Céline have made Montreal my home—having been your friend and family in the last six years means a lot to me. My deepest gratitude goes to my parents, who let me go wherever I needed and gave me all the freedom necessary to achieve my goals. I would not have been able to finish this project without the love and support of my partners in crime, Alex and Katharina.

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Prologue: Plastic Heritage and the Making of a Dissertation

In 2012, I arrived with a clear idea in mind for my doctoral project at Concordia University. I had just completed my master's degree in Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image at the University of Amsterdam, with a thesis on the educational potential of object-based film museums.[1] My goal for my doctoral research was to further explore and theorize how museums write film and media history. More specifically, I was interested in the question of how museums present film and media history by collecting, preserving, and displaying tangible objects such as costumes, props, set designs, scripts, production notes, ephemera, merchandise, and memorabilia, among other items. Two years into the program, after I had begun working on my dissertation proposal, my supervisor Dr. Haidee Wasson advised me to include a chapter on community-run and -financed museums. Up to this point, I had only focused on state-subsidized or industry-financed institutions and exhibition projects. I began researching museums without any public or industry funding in order to explore and compare different curatorial, political, and economic contexts in which the material culture of film and media finds its way into the museum.

My research led me to Stars of the Galaxy (then named Filmfiguren Ausstellung) in Germany: a fan-run museum focusing on media-themed action figures, LEGO sets, prop replicas, and collectibles, which is run by five *Star Wars* and science-fiction fans and housed in a former indoor swimming pool facility in the city of Mönchengladbach. Given the museum's thematic focus on toys and collectibles, I turned to research on the history of film and media themed merchandise. I was especially interested in scholarly research on the history of action figures, since these playthings constitute the majority of the displays and are presented in elaborate dioramas. My inquiry led me to scholarship on toys in relation to convergence culture, paratextual agency, and the role of action figures and other toys in contemporary media franchising. Although these arguments provided me with the theoretical foundation for analyzing action figures, they paid scant attention to historical discussions of the toys' manufacture, distribution, and reception.[2] However, I noticed that scholars at times referenced works written

[1] Philipp Dominik Keidl, *Film Museums: That's what Films are made for? Object-based Film Museums and their Potentialities in Film Education* (MA thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2011).

[2] Some of the first texts I read for information on action figure history were: Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York

by fans.[3] Following this lead of fan-produced histories, I discovered a large and thematically broad collection of fan-made works and projects that documented, analyzed, and gave value to toys across various media. And while some fans organized themselves within small, local, amateur, and self-financed communities, others worked within large and well-known cultural organizations and businesses.

I learned about other fan-run museums and exhibitions that were either housed in curators' homes or in dedicated spaces that they managed with fellow fans and volunteers.[4] I read print and online collectible and price guides that offered detailed descriptions of individual toy lines or specific toy genres, as well as introductory essays that covered their design, production, distribution, and reception. Moreover, the authors of these works often covered specific issues regarding the toys' connection to film and television, such as the science-fiction genre.[5] Other fans presented a more specialized knowledge and created books and videos about topics such as packaging design, prototyping, or advertising.[6] Fans' histories also stood out for their inclusion of interviews with personnel such as toy designers, photographers, managers—figures who are seldom recognized in film and media studies.[7] In addition, I found several projects that engaged with the question of how to preserve and restore action figures, and this

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University Press, 2010), 175-187; Jason Bainbridge, "Fully Articulated: The Rise of the Action Figure and the Changing Face of 'Children's' Entertainment," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 24, no. 6 (2010): 829-842; Lincoln Geraghty, *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia, Fandom and Collecting Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

[3] For instance, Jonathan Gray references Stephen J. Sansweet in *Show Sold Separately,* 235 and 236); and Jason Bainbridge references G.I. Joe fan historian Vincent Santelmo in "Fully Articulated," 842.

[4] Chapter four addresses several fan-run museums that are primarily dedicated to *Star Wars*. The chapter discusses Stars of the Galaxy (Germany), Brett's Toy Museum (USA), The Galaxy Connection (USA), Star Toys Museum (USA) and Rancho Obi-Wan (USA). Other examples, beyond the *Star Wars* franchise, include: The Toy and Action Figure Museum (USA), The Super Museum (USA), the Mad Max Museum (Australia), the Laurel and Hardy Museum (England), the Laurel and Hardy Museum (Solingen), the Tom Mix Museum (USA), the Batcat Museum and Toys (Thailand), The Doctor Who Museum (England).

[5] See Jeffrey B. Snyder, *Collecting Star Wars Toys: 1977-Present: An Unauthorized Practical Guide with Prices* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing, 1999), 9-20.

[6] For examples, see: Mattias Rendahl, *A New Proof: Kenner Star Wars Packaging Design 1977-1979* (Unknown place of publication: Dear Publications, 2015); Duncan Jenkins and Gus Lopez, *Gus and Duncan's Guide to Star Wars Prototypes* (Unknown place of publication: Completist Publications, 2010); "Tag Archives: Store Display," *Kenner Collector* [blog], accessed November 13, 2018, http://www.kennercollector.com/tag/store-display/.

[7] See Rendahl, *A New Proof*.

challenged the notion of the fan obsessed with collecting and keeping everything in "mint-condition." In these tutorials, fans discuss and share their advice on materials and best practices, and provide step-by-step instructions on how to assess and repair damage by repainting, repairing, and replacing parts of worn-out toys.[8] The fact that fans care about more than simply collecting and preserving toys that look like new was also apparent in projects that recorded personal memories of play. Some fans share autobiographical accounts of media and toy fandom in writing, while others collect and share stories and photos of fellow fans in their blogs and podcasts.[9] Finally, fans chronicle the history of the action figure and toy fan community itself, addressing key figures that founded clubs, edited zines, or give the community a public face through television appearances.[10]

The *Star Wars* franchise has the largest number of productions dedicated solely to it, but similar projects exist on the merchandise and toys of *Star Trek*, *The Masters of the Universe*, *Transformers*, Superman, Batman, as well as Mickey Mouse, *My Little Pony*, and *G.I Joe*, to name just a few.[11] Also, in many instances, fans write general histories on action figures and merchandise that cover more than one franchise. For instance, works like Philip Reed's self-published *Each Sold Separately: Scattered Thoughts on the Action Figure Marketing of the Eighties* addresses 30 different toy lines and how they were marketed in catalogues,

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[8] *Toy Polloi*, YouTube channel, accessed May 8, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/user/toypolloi; *RetroBlasting*, YouTube channel, accessed May 8, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/user/retroblasting.

[9] *I Grew Up Star Wars: Keeping the Galactic Memories of Our Childhood Alive*, accessed May 8, 2018, http://igrewupstarwars.com/; *My Star Wars Story* [blog], accessed August 29, 2018, http://mystarwarsstory.com/.

[10] Ron Salvatore, "The Ballad of Walter Stuben," *The Star Wars Collectors Archive* [blog], January 27, 2015, http://blog.theswca.com/2015/01/the-ballad-of-walter-stuben.html; Ron Salvatore, "Connecting Before the Internet," *The Star Wars Collector's Archive* [blog], October 10, 2014, http://blog.theswca.com/2014/10/connecting-before-internet.html.

[11] For instance, the website *TrekToy.com*; the documentary *Power of Grayskull: The Definitive History of He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* (Randall Lobb and Robert McCallum, 2017); the podcast *TransMissions: Transformers Toy News and Reviews!*; The Super Museum in Metropolis (USA) and The Cave of Gotham in Benton Harbor (USA); the website *The My Little Pony Preservation Project*; and the abovementioned encyclopedia by Santelmo. See *TrekToy.com* [blog], accessed November 21, 2018, http://trektoy.com/; "Home," *The My Little Pony Preservation Project* [blog], accessed November 21, 2018, http://www.mlppreservationproject.com/; and Vincent Santelmo *The Complete Encyclopedia to G.I. Joe* (New York: Krause, 2001).

commercials, mail-away specials, stores, and films and series, among other avenues.[12] Similarly, the toy preservation blog *Toy Polloi* on YouTube covers a variety of action figures, including objects from the *Star Wars* franchise, while magazines like *Action Figure Network* are also dedicated to action figures as a toy genre. Additionally, one finds histories on non-toy merchandise, such as watches, lunch boxes, or drinking glasses.[13] One of the most elaborate examples of fan historiography in this regard is Tim Hollis's *Toons in Toyland: The Story of Cartoon Character Merchandise*, published by the University of Mississippi Press, in which the collector and curator of a private museum traces the production of merchandise inspired by animated characters from film, television, and comic books.[14]

Fan-produced non-fiction works generated a new series of research questions beyond my interest in museums and material culture. On the one hand, I was curious about fans' approach to the making of history, as well as the scope of their research: How do fans transform personal memories into history? What kind of evidence do they use, and where do they find their sources? How do fans negotiate the tension among personal preferences, established canons within the community, industry practices, and the heritage sector? How do they finance their projects, and what media do they use to disseminate their findings?

On the other hand, I became interested in the question of motivation, especially in those cases in which fans perform time-consuming research or produce and distribute media without any evident financial benefit or substantial revenue. Put differently, how important is the social standing of fan historians in their communities? How does their work support, supplement, contradict, or challenge industry-written accounts as well as conceptions of cultural heritage? How does history-making, in general, reflect the social, cultural, and economic capital of the historian? Who is represented in these histories, and are they defined more by inclusion or exclusion?

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[12] Philip Reed, *Each Sold Separately: Scattered Thoughts on the Action Figure Marketing of the Eighties* (Unknown place of publication: Self-published, 2015).

[13] For example, see: Robert Heide and John Gilman, *The Mickey Mouse Watch: From the Beginning of Time* (New York: Hyperion, 1997); Jack Mingo and Erin Barrett, *Lunchbox Inside and Out: From Comic Books to Cult TV and Beyond* (Darby: Diane Publishing CO, 2004); Mark E. Chase and Michael J. Kelly, *Contemporary Fast-Food Drinking Glass Collectibles* (Radnor: Homestead Book Company, 1988), Greg Moore and Joe Pizzo, *Collector's Guide To Bubble Bath Containers: Identification & Values* (Paducah: Collectors Books, 1998).

[14] Tim Hollis, *Toons in Toyland: The Story of Cartoon Character Merchandise* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015).

Finally, I wondered about the impact of these works within and beyond their respective fan communities: How do fan historians shape the collective memories of their fan communities? What audiences do they reach beyond their fan communities, and how does their work impact collective memory in non-fan contexts? How does their work impact local cultural environments and who benefits from their work? How do the media and toy industries adapt the content, form, and style of these histories for their own purposes?

When I turned to research on film and media fandom with these questions in mind, I found relatively few analyses that addressed history-making as a fan practice in particular, or fans' textual production of non-fiction in general. Unlike scholarship on music and video game fandom, which explores how fans practice history, research on film and television fandom lacks seminal publications on fans' history-making like Sarah Baker's edited collection *Preserving Popular Music Heritage: Do-it-Yourself, Do-it-Together*, Melanie Swalwell, Angela Ndalianis and Helen Stuckey's *Fans and Video Games: Histories, Fandom, Archives*, and Raiford Guins's *Game After: A Cultural Study of Video Game Afterlife*. The essays in Baker's edited collection utilize the concepts of "self-authorized" and "unauthorized" popular music heritage practice, "DIY preservationist sensibility," and "community archive" to explore fan archives.[15] The edited collection *Fans and Video Games* includes four essays on fans' contributions to game history in its section on fans and history, in one instance on fans' documenting unsuccessful and therefore largely forgotten games.[16] In *Game After,* Guins deploys the concepts of "afterlife" and "cultures of materiality" to think about how video games are preserved in different material incarnations in professional and amateur projects.[17]

These examples saw fans as contributors of original research and knowledge, but the majority of research I found on film and television fans theorized their relationship to the past in more passive terms. Fans and fan collectors were conceptualized as informal archivists and

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[15] See Sarah Baker, ed., *Preserving Popular Music Heritage: Do-it-Yourself, Do-it-Together* (London and New York Routledge, 2015).
[16] See Melanie Swalwell, Helen Stuckey, and Angela Ndalianis, eds., *Fans and Videogames: Histories, Fandom, Archives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017); Victor Navarro-Remesal, "Museums of Failure: Fans as Curators of 'Bad', Unreleased, and 'Flopped' Videogames," in *Fans and Videogames: Histories, Fandom, Archives*, ed. Melanie Swalwell, Helen Stuckey, and Angela Ndalianis (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 128-145.
[17] See Raiford Guins, *Game After: A Cultural Study of Video Game Afterlife* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014).

curators of collections and information, and less as knowledge producers. As I will discuss later in the first chapter, research on film and television fandom presents fans' archival and curatorial practices as largely providing existing information and data, and does not analyze how they produce histories through new and original inquiries and findings. In sum, research on fans as curators and archivists conceives of them as merely chroniclers of their past experience, and does not acknowledge the variety of sources, approaches, and methods they use to transform the past into history. Eventually, the ubiquity of fan-produced histories, and the lack of scholarly engagement with fan histories in past and present media culture, motivated me to reconsider my doctoral project. The study of fans' making of history therefore became the central focus of my dissertation. This dissertation is a response to the lack of critical attention given in scholarship on film and television fandom to fans' historical activities and their impact and significance for fan communities.

Throughout its four chapters, "Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History" responds to these gaps by offering a detailed analysis of how fans transform the past into history as full participants in what Henry Jenkins has called convergence culture. Jenkins defines convergence culture as a process "where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways."[18] Audience participation has been central to convergence culture, as the "circulation of media content—across different media systems, competing media economies, and national borders—depends heavily on consumers' active participation."[19] The idea of participatory culture "contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship," replacing the notion of unproductive media consumers with interacting participants—even if not all participants have the same influence and power.[20] However, while there has been considerable and significant research on media convergence and participatory culture in regard to fans' interaction with, and reworking of, fictional media forms, including criticism thereof, considerably less scholarship exists on their interest in, and production of, non-fictional media on the past.

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[18] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 2.
[19] Ibid., 3.
[20] Ibid.

"Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History" offers a critical study of history-making as a fan practice, and provides a better understanding of how, why, and in what contexts fans produce non-fictional texts, in particular histories. As such, this dissertation moves away from questions of the production and consumption of fictional storyworlds towards the production and consumption of making-ofs, behind-the-scenes reports, preservation and restoration tutorials, oral histories, and museum exhibitions. To call these fan works and practices "histories" and "historiography" respectively might cause furrowed brows among academic historians. While fans working with archival sources might resemble academic practices, academic historians might feel more comfortable to describe fan productions such as lists and restoration tutorials as "practices of history" or simply non-fiction rather than "history" or "historiography." Thus, I would like to stress here that my use of these terms is not meant to imply that the works and practices discussed here follows academic standards taught and utilized by university-trained historians. As a matter of fact, the question of whether these texts meet the standards of academic historical research or the work of historians in the heritage sector is of little interest to this dissertation. Rather, as will be further elaborated in the second section of the next chapter, my dissertation follows the idea of "a participatory historical culture" in which people generally—and not just historians—have a clear role in making history; an idea that has been brought forward in the field of public history, which is mostly interested in alternative approaches and formats of history making in diverse social contexts outside universities and schools.[21]

Public historians stress that history-making is an activity rather than a profession. History as an activity is best described as a process in which the past is transformed into history and is as much an act of producing history as it is an act of thinking about history.[22] Therefore, my use of "history," "historiography," and "history-making" aims to acknowledge that fans who make history also reflect on the question of how to generate and present knowledge about the past. The dialectic relationship between making and thinking, for example, becomes evident in restoration tutorials for action figures. In these tutorials, fans provide viewers with the necessary information about the toys' production histories and their materiality in order to explain why and

[21] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory. Vol. 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London and New York: Verso, 1994), x; Hilda Kean, "Introduction," in *The Public History Reader*, ed. Hilda Kean and Paul Martin (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), xv.
[22] Ibid., xiii.

how they are approaching a restoration. But they are also justifying their approaches, for instance, in regard to the question of what damages to a toy should be reversed (e.g. decolourisation) in order that it resembles the figure's look as a standardized product. Similarly, fans discuss what marks of age should remain, and which should be eliminated as such marks can provide insight into the history of singular toys (e.g. traces of wear caused through play). Such tutorials narrate information about the past as much as they provide instruction on how to take care of an object of the past. They also reflect on what measurements of restoration and preservation will impact on what the toy will and can tell about its past (e.g. its commodity status or a child's valued plaything but also whether *Star Wars* is remembered as a film or a toy line). From this perspective, fan historians are central in organizing and maintaining a fan-driven "epistemological economy": a system of knowing and understanding that forms and reiterates knowledge about their objects of fandom and communities.[23] In the case of this dissertation, this epistemological economy operates outside of academic history, and so does my use of "history" and "historiography," which refers to the role, use, and value of non-fiction texts within this specific context of fandom.

In this dissertation, then, I discuss the social context of history-making, and the use and value of the past, in relation to the complex set of interactions between fans and media industries. In other words, I investigate the overlap, disparities, and appropriation of an "epistemological economy," fans' "gift economy," and a "consumerist economy" in which knowledge about the past is created and commodified and linked to a particular subgroup of fans.[24] To conceptualize the dynamics between fans and media industries in the making of history, I propose the concept

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[23] See Amelie Hastie, "The Epistemological Stakes of Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Television Criticism and Marketing Demands," in *Undead TV: Essays on Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, ed. Elana Levine and Lisa Parks (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 81. For a discussion of fan's gift economy, see: Karen Hellekson, "A Fannish Field of Value: Online Fan Gift Culture," *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 4 (2009): 113-118; and also Paul Booth, *Digital Fandom* (New York: Peter Land, 2010); Oliver Carter, *Making European Cult Cinema: Fan Enterprise in an Alternative Economy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018); Suzanne Scott, "Repackaging Fan Culture: The Regifting Economy of Ancillary Content Models," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 3. (2009), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2009.0150; Tisha Turk, "Fan Work: Labor, Worth, and Participation in Fandom's Gift Economy," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 15. http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0518.

[24] As Hastie argues, "the economy based on knowledge is also responsible for the driving of consumerist economies in many ways," especially in regard to the texts that produce and reiterate "what we 'know'" about media. See Ibid.

of "plastic heritage." The specifics of this concept will be discussed in more detail below, but I would like to introduce it briefly here in order to contextualize the chapter that follows. I use plastic in its literal and metaphorical sense, and associate it with the vernacular use of the word as a noun to describe three-dimensional objects, artificial and synthetic materials, with the capability to give form to and receive form from something.[25] First, and in reference to plastic as a three-dimensional object, plastic refers to the fact that fans produce histories and knowledge about toys and other merchandise, and also use them as a means to structure their historical narratives. Production histories of toys are examples of the former, and autobiographies structured around the acquisition of new toys are an example of the latter. Second, and in reference to plastics as synthetic materials, my use of the term acknowledges history as the end product of a process rather than a set body of knowledge that needs to be uncovered. Different people making history use different evidence, follow different enquires, and ultimately create distinct knowledge through their organisation of evidence that ultimately leads to a different kind of inquiry. Hence, the making of history is defined by subjectivity and relative to the context in which it is created rather than by criteria characterised by objectivity.[26] Finally, and in reference to plastics as materials with the quality of giving and receiving shape, my use of the term refers to the different forms the past can take, depending on who is making history, and in what context. Thus, it describes the different shapes and forms the past takes at the end of the process that may differ depending on whether histories were made by fans, the media industries, or fans working within the media industries.

Finally, a quick word on why I chose the word heritage over history in the title of this dissertation. As will become clear, fans produce histories of action figures and merchandise that endure for the future, as much as they use action figures as narrative devices to tell stories about the past. Therefore, heritage refers to the tangible things that fans research, as well as the intangible stories they collect and tell. Moreover, this dissertation examines the intangible narratives fans construct about the past as well as the objects with which fans make history tangible for the present and future: books, exhibitions, and restorations, among others. Considering the material and immaterial aspects of fans' engagement with the past, heritage

[25] For example, see "Plastic," MiriamWebster, accessed October 27, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plastic.
[26] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory,* 11.

seems a more appropriate choice than history. Definitions of heritage consider tangible and intangible incarnations of the past, while differentiations between tangible and intangible with regards to history—in the sense that history refers to the study of the past—do not exist.[27] However, as will be further explained below, this dissertation does not read the concepts of history and heritage as binary opposites. Rather, these concepts all refer to what cultural memory scholar Astrid Erll describes as different "modes of remembering," of which history and heritage can be described as specific mediums of re-presenting and re-constructing the past.[28]

As this dissertation will demonstrate, then, non-fiction fan activities play an important role in creating, organising, and maintaining certain fan communities, distinct from the consumption and production of fiction. Since fan studies has mainly focused on fiction and criticism thereof, a comprehensive understanding of how fans participate in the creation and dissemination of non-fiction history making is still lacking. Importantly, this emphasis on fiction has also left a blind spot when it comes to the question of how storytelling and franchise mechanisms function in the realm of non-fiction productions. Indeed, another purpose of this dissertation is to shine light on the question of how the media industries themselves shape the past through their franchises, thereby attempting to control what stories are told about them, how they are told and by whom they are told.

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[27] See Iain J.M. Robertson, "Introduction: Heritage from Below," in *Heritage from Below*, ed. Iain J.M. Robertson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 1-28; David C. Harvey, "The History of Heritage," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, ed. Brian J. Graham and Peter Howard (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 19-36.

[28] Astrid Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara B. Young (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 7.

Chapter 1: Introducing Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History

In what follows, my introduction chapter lays out the terms to examine the ignored capacity of the fan to act as a historian. It also provides the theoretical foundation for the conceptualisation and discussion of *plastic heritage* in relation to the phenomena of "action figure media," "transmedia " and the "fanboy historian," as well as "fan-induced tourism," and "fan geography" in the following chapters. The first section of this introduction analyzes how a focus on fiction and nostalgia as well as a neglect of material culture has resulted in the under theorization of fans' relationship to the past and non-fiction fandom. Moreover, it points to the binary opposition between memory and history that scholars have created, which has similarly contributed to this issue. The second section draws from the field of public history to overcome the binary between history and memory and outlines how we can understand fans as members of a "participatory historical culture." The third section argues that the concept of the fan historian can help us to understand key questions posed by the three waves of fan studies that have defined scholarship on film and media fandom in the last three decades. It presents concrete examples of how fans use the past as a mode of resistance and how the institutionalization of the past encourages us to consider the extent to which fans replicate hierarchies within their communities. Also, in order to properly consider the multiple axes of interaction between fans and the media industry in the making of history, it understands the past as something plastic rather than fixed. As in the rest of this dissertation, the *Star Wars* franchise will function as the main case study for this introduction. The final section of this chapter will outline my methodology, and why I chose to focus on the *Star Wars* franchise as my main case study.

1.1. The Place of History in Fan Studies

"Not only has a comprehensive history of media fandom not been written," argues fan scholar Francesca Coppa, "but there also have been very few histories of individual fandoms and the works of art they have produced."[29] Published in 2006, Coppa lamented the lack of histories on fandom, suggesting that this was due to fan scholars' methodological predilection for ethnography, their focus on trends in communication, and the behavioural and ideological prism

[29] Francesca Coppa, "A Brief History of Media Fandom," in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*, ed. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (Jefferson: McFarland, 2006), 41.

through which they read fandom as a subculture.[30] Nancy Reagin and Anne Rubenstein see the tendency of fan scholars to concentrate on post-World War II media and fan communities as another factor. They discuss the intersection of fandom and history in the following terms:

> The novelty of modern fan communities is often overestimated in research that sometimes seems to assume that fandom began with *Star Trek*. The ways in which fans formed appreciative and mutually encouraging audiences for one another's creativity, the fact that fans often contended with the producers of commercial mass culture or copyright holders over the 'moral ownership' of a particular canon, and the tendency of fans to offer their own interpretations and critiques of their objects of fandom: these patterns all were well established in a variety of fandoms well before World War II.[31]

According to Coppa, however, fans themselves have likewise little interest in the past. She points to the lackluster reception of the fan-written *Bodily Writing: A Trekker Fan and Zine History* when she explains that "writing history isn't important to everyone, not even to fans themselves."[32] However, as this dissertation demonstrates, producing and consuming histories is indeed important to at least some fans and their respective communities. Thus, how fans consume and crucially produce histories should also be important to fan scholars, especially since widely distributed fan histories on topics such as Disney merchandise have circulated since at least the 1970s.[33]

Until recently, only a few key texts addressed the impact of the past on the formation of fan identities. Annette Kuhn's research on "enduring fandom" throughout a fan's life and C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby's research on changing notions of fandom in relation to ageing are two key, but rare early examples.[34] Memory plays a role in each of these studies. Nonetheless, noticing a persistent lack, Joanne Garde-Hansen argued in 2011 that "there is room

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Nancy Reagin and Anne Rubenstein, "'I'm Buffy, and You're History': Putting Fan Studies into History," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no 6 (2011), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2011.0272.
[32] Coppa, "A Brief History of Media Fandom," 41.
[33] For example, see Cecil Munsey, *Disneyana: Walt Disney Collectibles* (Boston: E. P. Dutton, 1974). Also, Tim Hollis outlines the emergence of Disneyana fandom in *Toons in Toyland*, 129.
[34] Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002); C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby, "A Life Course Perspective on Fandom," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 13, no. 5 (2010): 1–22.

for notions of collective and personal memory in audience research of fan behavior."[35] Since then, fan studies has seen an increase in research on the role of the past, and a diversification of methods accessing that past. Scholars have recently investigated contemporary fandom and its practices, paying particular attention to fans' activities as "archivists" and "curators" in various contexts. Together with Matt Hills, Garde-Hansen has analyzed how fan-archivists have sought to recover and provide access to lost *Doctor Who* episodes.[36] Also focusing on archives, Abigail De Kosnik argues in her study of fan-run fan-fic archives that memory "has gone rogue," because fans have built their own digital archives in which they "explore the potential of digital technologies to democratize cultural memory."[37] Similarly, Sophie G. Einwächter describes fans as archivists who share "quotations or excerpts from original works […] remix videos and fanfictions [and copy and forward] product information from official marketing sources."[38] Lincoln Geraghty focuses on the role of fans as curators who preserve popular media objects neglected by official heritage institutions and who therefore challenge conceptions of what counts as heritage and what does not.[39] Lastly, Derek Kompare analyzes fans as curators who guide new fans into the history of their object of fandom and their communities, including fan participation in the writing of wikis and other databases.[40] Together, these examples position fans not only as consumers of information of the past, but also give them an active role in the collection, preservation, and distribution of information on, and objects from, the past.

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[35] Joanne Garde-Hansen, *Media and Memory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 122.

[36] Matt Hills and Joanne Garde-Hansen, "Fandom's Paratextual Memory: Remembering, Reconstructing, and Repatriating "Lost" Doctor Who," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34, no. 2 (2017): 158-167.

[37] Abigail De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 1-2.

[38] Sophie G. Einwächter, "Preserving the Marginal. Or: The Fan as Archivist," in *At the Borders of (Film) History. Temporality, Archaeology, Theories*, ed. Alberto Beltrame, Giuseppe Fidotta, and Andrea Mariani (Udine: Forum, 2015), 360-361.

[39] See Geraghty, *Cult Collectors*, 136.

[40] See Derek Kompare, "Fan Curators and the Gateways into Fandom" in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 107-113. For further research on databases see: Sarah Toton, "Cataloging Knowledge: Gender, Generative Fandom, and the Battlestar Wiki," *Flow* 7, no. 14 (2008), https://www.flowjournal.org/2008/01/cataloging-knowledge-gender-generative-fandom-and-the-battlestar-wiki/; Jason Mittell, "Sites of Participation: Wiki Fandom and the Case of Lostpedia," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 3 (2009), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2009.0118; Paul Booth, *Digital Fandom*, 79-102.

These interventions share a focus on fans' personal memories, or the collection and dissemination of extant knowledge. They neglect to acknowledge how fans create historical knowledge through their own research, some of it based on evidence other than personal memories and lived experiences. Einwächter, for example, sees fans as archivists who provide "innovative services made of *already existing* but *newly assembled* information."[41] Her discussion of "fan-cultural historiography" is in line with De Kosnik's focus on the work of fan-run archives such as Archive of Our Own and the preservation of fan works that would otherwise be lost. Geraghty's discussion of fan curators acknowledges the distribution of knowledge in the form of collectible guides, coffee table books, and exhibitions, but does so without addressing in more detail the respective methodologies of these projects, or conducting qualitative assessments of their content. In sum, then, these studies frame fan archivists and curators as data managers rather than producers of history.

Up to now, Matt Hills provides the most detailed study of fan-productions of (at least partially) fact-based content with his conceptualization and discussion of "fanfac," which he defines as "factual memory-work and fan autobiography, often produced as a form of entertainment within fandom" that uses a real-world template of events to create the basic structure of fiction.[42] His discussion of fanfac expands the scope of empirical data available for analysis, by focusing on how and what fans remember, as well as how they produce memories for consumption by fellow fans. However, Hills' focus on autobiographical accounts as examples of non-fiction textual productivity limits his research to a single practice that remains within the paradigm of personal memories. Other research strategies such as archival research, literature reviews, restoration and preservation, or conducting interviews, fall outside the theoretical reach of fanfac. Hence, a significant element of non-fictional practices, and interest therein, is not accounted for in fan studies. I maintain that the neglect of history-making is not due to a limited quantity of fan-made non-fiction works on the past, or interest therein. Rather, five tendencies in fan studies have contributed to the lack of scholarship on fans' production of works on the past.

First, as aforementioned, studies on film and television fandom have focused on fandom based on fictional texts and fans' textual production of and on fiction. Hills traces this focus on

[41] My emphasis; Einwächter, "Preserving the Marginal," 360-361.
[42] Matt Hills, "Doctor Who's Textual Commemorators: Fandom, Collective Memory and the Self-Commodification of Fanfac," *Journal of Fandom Studies* 2, no. 1 (2014): 32.

fan-fic and criticism to the publication of Henry Jenkins' seminal *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* in 1992, as well as similar foundational research by John Fiske, Eileen Bacon-Smith, and Constance Penley:

> Jenkins' work established two influential ways of thinking about fan activities. First, fans could be studied as critics of media content rather than blindly loyal consumers […], and second, fans' criticism could be linked to their distinctive 'textual productivity' [as explained by Fiske] in the form of fan fiction (fanfic). Subsequently, fanfic became viewed as the locus classicus of fan agency, resistance and cultural politics.[43]

Indeed, even though Jenkins' approach to fandom as a critical subculture defined by active media production has been expanded over time by a diverse range of methodologies and approaches, the focus on fictional textual productivity remains at the centre of much fan scholarship. Research projects such as Hills' work on fanfac, Paul Booth's study of list-making (e.g., best and worst episodes of a show), or the abovementioned work on archiving and curating, remain the exception rather than the norm.[44] To truly expand the study of non-fiction fan works, fan scholars also need to focus on the dialogue generated between non-fiction media texts—either produced by other fans or by the media industries—and independent fan productions. If fan-fic authors "poach" fictional media texts, then this dissertation demonstrates that fans also engage with history-based media texts that media industries and state-subsidized heritage bodies produce, as well as with the same kinds of work by other fans.[45]

Second, the academic neglect of non-fiction production is also mirrored in the absence of attention to the same in the spheres of aca-fandom, or scholar-fans and fan-scholars respectively. Scholars have employed the term aca-fan to negotiate their hybrid identity as academics and fans who move between the two roles in diverse spaces such as academic conferences and fan conventions.[46] The concept of aca-fan highlights how fans theorize independently or in dialogue

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Paul Booth, "Fans' List-Making: Memory, Influence, and Argument in the "Event" of Fandom," *MATRIZes* 9, no. 2 (2015): 85-107.
[45] Henry Jenkins developed the idea of textual poaching. The term describes fans' subversive appropriation of mass-media texts in their own works. See Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Cultured* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 49.
[46] Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 1-21; Matt Hills, "Media Academics as Media Audiences: Aesthetic Judgments in Media and Cultural Studies," in

with academia their object of fandom or fandom in general, often outside the academic context.[47] However, fan-scholars—fans who use academic methodology and theories in their works—are defined through their content, rhetorical, and narrative analysis of fiction texts and not historical practices and end-products. Reagin and Rubenstein's plea for more collaboration among fans, fan scholars, and academic historians is relevant here. Their argument is structured around the following questions: 1. What do fan historians offer to fan communities?; 2. What do professional historians offer to fan communities?; 3. What does studying the history of fans offer historians?; 4. What does academic history have to offer fan studies?. Notably, they address historiography as a fan practice in the first section of their introduction, arguing that fans never needed the help of scholars.[48] Yet, they do not provide a detailed analysis of how fans practice history, and neither do they elaborate in more detail on what fan scholars and historians can learn from fan-produced histories. They frame fan-produced histories as nostalgic "insider works" whose value lies in tracing the development of certain fan communities and their objects of fandom, as well as running memorial sites and collecting and preserving popular material culture.[49] What scholars can learn from fan historians becomes especially evident when one looks at fan histories of film and televisions merchandise, which include information that would have been lost without their efforts of collection, research, preservation, analysis, interview, and production.

Third, and as becomes evident in Reagin and Rubenstein's appraisal of fan histories as "insider works," fans' engagement with the past is largely framed through the lenses of nostalgia. Nostalgia as a feeling, as well as in relation to media consumption, has received considerable negative attention. For Susan Stewart, nostalgia is "a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience," and for Paul Grainge, nostalgia as a feeling "intensifies a 'superficial' sense of history" rather than advancing critical debates and

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Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World (2nd Edition), ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 60-76; Paul Booth, "Augmenting Fan/Academic Dialogue: New Directions in Fan Research," *Journal of Fandom Studies* 1, no.2 (2013): 119-137. Also see a special issue of *FlowTV* on the concept of aca-fandom published in December 2010: *FlowTV* 13, no.5 (2010).

[47] Cécile Cristofari and Matthieu J. Guitton, "Aca-Fans and Fan Communities: An Operative Framework," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 17 no.3 (2016): 713-731.

[48] Reagin and Rubenstein, "'I'm Buffy, and You're History'."

[49] Ibid.

understandings of the past.[50] Early fan studies' concerns with distancing the image of fans from passive consumers to active producers, as well as pessimistic theoretical conceptions and demeaning vernacular uses of the word "fan," have arguably encouraged fan scholars to distance fandom from nostalgia. For instance, according to Jenkins, "for nostalgia to operate, we must in fact forget aspects of the actual past and substitute sentimental myth about how things might have been."[51] Lincoln Geraghty's work has been an important intervention in this regard. Adapting Svetlana Boym's more optimistic notion of reflective nostalgia, Geraghty's study of fan collectors maintains that the longing for the past can be connected not only to looking back, but also to progress. To him, nostalgia can have a transformative character. Indeed, nostalgia enables fans to bring their objects of fandom from childhood to adulthood, and also encourages a constant "re-examination of the media history archive," ultimately influencing the creation of flexible and tangible fan identities in the present.[52] Yet, because nostalgia is heavily focused on personal memories and identities, it diminishes the diversity of analytical approaches fans bring to their work, as well as how their work generates impact beyond their private life or their communities. Without doubt, fans are nostalgic, and regularly acknowledge and theorize nostalgia as a driving force of their fan activities. But, identifying works as nostalgic can also unduly de-emphasize critical and transformative aspects of fan histories that do not simplify history but complicate it. Indeed, as will be discussed further below, fan restoration of the original *Star Wars* trilogy demonstrate how fans combine nostalgic feelings with knowledge of critical debates regarding film heritage in their arguments about why the past matters and how it should be preserved.

Fourth, fan scholars have neglected for a long time the significance of material culture on fandom, and especially that of merchandising.[53] As Hills comments in an interview in 2009, much "has been written about fan fiction, and there's started to be more on costuming and pilgrimage (visiting locations linked to filming), but the fan craft of modding and creating one

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[50] Paul Grainge, *Monochrome Memories: Nostalgia and Style in Retro America* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 28.
[51] Henry Jenkins, *The WOW Climax: Tracing the Emotional Impact of Popular Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 157.
[52] Geraghty, *Cult Collectors*, 3.
[53] See Avi Santo, "Fans and Merchandise," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 329.

offs as well as generating photographs/videos of toys, has not been studied enough."[54] This insight remains relevant today. Moreover, within the wider field of film and media studies, merchandising has often been framed as a parasite industry, a sign of consumer culture to which children and their parents fall prey, as well as a growing sign of the juvenilization and immaturity of a new adult generation.[55] Only more recent studies on paratexts, transmedia storytelling, licensing, convergence culture, and the media mix demonstrate that moving image culture should include material culture beyond cameras, screens, celluloid, and other carriers, because they are distinct and significant elements of media culture more generally.[56] In their eagerness to distance fan culture from stereotypes of mindless consumers, fan scholars have not only ignored object-oriented fan practices but have also excluded individuals or communities

[54] "Interview with Matt Hills, part 2," *doctorwhotoys.net* [blog], accessed October 27, 2018, http://doctorwhotoys.net/matthills1.htm.

[55] For example, see: Thomas Engelhardt, "The Shortcake Strategy," in *Watching Television: A Pantheon Guide to Popular Culture*, ed. Todd Gitlin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 68-110; Stephen Kline, "The Limits to the Imagination: Marketing and Children's Culture," in *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America,* ed. by Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 299-316; Stephen Kline, *Out of the Garden* (London: Verso, 1993); Jane M. Gaines, *Contested Culture: The Image, the Voice, and the Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 214.

[56] Gray, *Show Sold Separately*; Colin B. Harvey, *Fantastic Transmedia: Narrative, Play and Memory Across Science Fiction and Fantasy Storyworlds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Henry Jenkins, "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars? Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture" in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 281-312; Avi Santo, *Selling the Silver Bullet: The Lone Ranger and Transmedia Brand Licensing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015). Jason Bainbridge, "Fully Articulated"; Derek Johnson, *Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Marc Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Lincoln Geraghty, *Cult Collectors*; Katriina Heljakka, "Toy Fandom, Adulthood, and The Ludic Age: Creative Material Culture as Play," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World (2nd Edition)*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 91-105; Victoria Godwin, "GI Joe vs. Barbie: Anti-Fandom, Fashion, Dolls, and One-Sixth Scale Action Figures." *Journal of Fandom Studies* 3, no.2 (2015): 119–33; Victoria Godwin, "Customized Action Figures: Multi-Dimensional Fandom and Fannish Fiction." *Journal of Fandom Studies* 2, no.2 (2014.): 111–25; Victoria Godwin, "Mimetic Fandom and One-Sixth-Scale Action Figures," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 20 (2015), https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2015.0686.

working with objects from their definition of fandom.[57] Research by Bob Rehak on the transformational character of garage kits, Geraghty on collecting, Hills on DIY merchandise, and Brigid Chery on knitting as fan practice have begun to fill in these gaps and expand the understanding of the "object/text ecosystem" of fandom.[58] Hills and Rehak have also provided concepts of "mimetic fandom" and "blueprint culture," theoretical tools with which to overcome the binary trap of affirmational/transformational fandom that has "increasingly become an influential binary in fan studies."[59] However, since fan historians often produce histories of merchandise, the neglect of material culture as a valid object of study and fan practice, which has prevailed for such a long time, might have contributed to this lack of research on fans' non-fiction work.

Fifth, the topic of object- or toy-fandom remains under-examined in fan studies. The transition of the LEGO company from a simple toy producer into a transmedia and transfranchise producer—as well as the company's fan community, known as Adult Fans of LEGO—has found considerable attention in fan and media studies.[60] Besides the discussion of LEGO, only a few

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[57] Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst describe fans working with and on physical objects as enthusiasts rather than fans. See Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination* (London: Sage, 1998) 150. However, fans themselves have contributed to this division in their own theories. See Obsession_inc, "Affirmational vs. Transformational Fandom," *Dreamwidth.org* [blog], June 1, 2009, https://obsession-inc.dreamwidth.org/82589.html.

[58] Matt Hills, "From Dalek Half Balls to Daft Punk Helmets: Mimetic Fandom and the Crafting of Replicas," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16. (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0531; Bob Rehak, "Materializing Monsters: Aurora Models, Garage Kits, and the Object Practices of Horror Fandom," *Journal of Fandom Studies* 1, no. 1 (2013): 27–45; Bob Rehak, *More Than Meets the Eye: Special Effects and the Fantastic Transmedia Franchise* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Brigid Cherry, *Cult Media, Fandom, and Textiles: Handicrafting as Fan Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

[59] Hills, "From Dalek Half Balls to Daft Punk Helmets."

[60] For example, see: Lincoln Geraghty, "Nostalgia, Fandom and the Remediation of Children's Culture," in *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, ed. Paul Booth (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 161-174; Lincoln Geraghty, "(Re-)constructing Childhood Memories: Nostalgia, Creativity, and the Expanded Worlds of the Lego Fan Community," in *Reinventing Childhood Nostalgia Books, Toys, and Contemporary Media Culture*, ed. Elisabeth Wesseling (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 86-104; Sophie G. Einwächter and Felix M. Simon, "How Digital Remix and Fan Culture Helped the Lego Comeback," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no 25 (2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2017.1047; Jennifer C. Garlen, "Block Party: A Look at Adult Fans of LEGO," in *Fan CULTure: Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century*, ed. Kristin M. Barton and Jonathan Malcolm Lampley (Jefferson: McFarland,

scholars have explored fans' engagement with toys as a separate form of fandom not motivated by the fandom of a corresponding fictional media text or star. Kristen N. Bryant, Denise D. Bielby, and C. Lee Harrington explicitly differentiate an adult and a child's appreciation of toys. In their view, fan collectors' interest in toys suggests a dual engagement: "an experience that is similar to what a child encounters and on the other hand is different because of age."[61] Katriina Heljakka has researched toy fandom in relation to play and media culture, also challenging the notion of categorizing "toy fandom" simply as a type of collecting dictated by a nostalgic attitude or "rejuvenalization."[62] Victoria Godwin has published several essays on toy fandom in which she discusses action figure fandom and related practices such as collecting and the production of photostories from various angles, arguing that "customizing and collecting are fan activities predicated upon intense affection for action figures themselves, not necessarily for other media text that they represent."[63] The importance of these kinds of investigations is that they demonstrate how toy fans engage with a vast variety of physical and audio-visual materials beyond the actual plaything. Just like fans of fictional narratives watch and read information about their favourite texts beyond the actual films and series, many action figure fans seek out additional information on and explanations about the history of action figures and the people and companies who made them.

In consideration of these five tendencies, this dissertation moves beyond the trope of nostalgic fans, who are mainly absorbed in their memories. Some fan historians might be driven by nostalgia, while others are following rational research goals beyond documenting personal memories. Moreover, this dissertation argues that history-making is not necessarily a form of "object-based" or "object-oriented" fan practice that stems from fandom for a fiction text. Rather, it demonstrates that fan historians can be fans of objects, and they actively create and

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2014), 119-130. Also, see the comprehensive edited collection on LEGO studies: Mark J.P. Wolf, ed., *LEGO Studies: Examining the Building Blocks of a Transmedial Phenomenon* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

[61] Kristen N. Bryant, Denise D. Bielby, and C. Lee Harrington, "Populating the Universe: Toy Collecting and Adult Lives," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Fan Cultures*, ed. Linda Duits, Koos Zwaan, and Stijn Reijnders (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 31.

[62] Katriina Heljakka, "Toy Fandom, Adulthood, and The Ludic Age: Creative Material Culture as Play," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World (2nd edition)*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 92.

[63] Godwin, "Customized Action Figures," 115.

consume media that is expressly *about* the materiality and playability of toys. In any case, fan historians utilize a wide range of approaches to their research, as well as the production and dissemination of non-fiction texts. Hence, this dissertation demonstrates practices of history have considerable impact on single fans, collective fan identities, as well as on the cultural industries. The idea of the fan as historian also foregrounds how fans engage with historical texts produced by the cultural industries. Fans are critical consumers of making-ofs and exhibitions, coffee-table books and biographies, collectible guides and preservation policies. They react to industry-produced histories through their own work, be it through appreciative or critical references, corrections and alternative perspectives on the past, or the coverage of topics simply ignored and dismissed as financially unviable. As such, this focus on fans as historically engaged allows this dissertation to discuss with detail on many fan- and industry-run historical enterprises previously neglected or marginalized in the study of popular mass media texts.

However, in order to map history-making as fan practice, two other tendencies in film, media, and cultural memory studies need to be considered. First, besides extensive research on moving image technologies, only a small number of film and media scholars have addressed the history of material culture and its relevance to film and media histories and historiography.[64] For Amelie Hastie, film history operates at an "intersection between visual and written texts, between ethereal and material objects."[65] Nonetheless, many film historians remain concentrated on moving images and print sources (reviews, production notes, censorship reports) rather than on the study of objects from the production process or related to film and media in the most general sense.[66] Paul Gansky argues that the small number of studies on "film's material by-

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[64] Especially the interdisciplinary field of media archaeology has examined in great detail the materiality of media. See Jussi Parikka, *What is Media Archaeology?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012); Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, eds., *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). Scholars researching media preservation and restoration have also contributed to these debates through theoretical and practical studies of archival practices. For a comprehensive overview see: Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

[65] Amelie Hastie, *Cupboards of Curiosity: Women, Recollection, and Film History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

[66] For instance, the edited collection *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in American Film History and Method* proposes methods for the study of cinema "off-screen" but focuses only on print and paper media. See Eric Smoodin, "Introduction: The History of Film History," in

products beyond negatives, prints, and various home-release formats" reflects underdeveloped collection, preservation, and exhibition policies.[67] As Gansky explains, "sets, costumes, and props are not systematically saved for research, given their likely reuse, the costs of preservation, and the limitations of storage space."[68] Vivian Sobchack's discussion of the falcon from *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941) shows how a prop can become "a heterogeneous historical object that […] bears the historical and mythical weight of the *fossil*, the *fetish*, the *wish image*, and the *ruin* as it circulates among particular persons and through the various institutions of the culture at large" outside the museum.[69] Yet, rehearsals of objects in film history and a reinvention of an object-oriented film history remain rare.

Second, the relationship and differences between history and memory have been a contentious topic across different disciplines examining how knowledge about the past is formed and disseminated. Since the 1980s, cultural memory scholar Astrid Erll explains, "the relationship between culture and memory has emerged in many parts of the world as a key issue of interdisciplinary research, […] bringing together the humanities, social studies, and the natural sciences in a unique way."[70] The interdisciplinary interest has brought forward many different categorizations of and terminology used to describe memory, which often function as binary opposites to history: collective memory, social frameworks of memory, social memory, sites of memory, invented traditions, heritage, history and heritage from below, commemoration, communicative memory, cultural memory, popular memory, or media memory. Erll traces the binary opposition between memory and history to cultural memory scholar Maurice Halbwachs, one of the founders of cultural memory studies as a discipline. According to Erll, Halbwachs conceives of "[history] as abstract, totalizing, and 'dead,' and of [memory] as particular, meaningful, and 'lived.'"[71] This binary has led to a dead end, as studies on

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Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in American Film History and Method, ed. Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 1-34.

[67] Paul Gansky, "Severed Objects: Spellbound, Archives, Exhibitions, and Film's Material History," *Film History* 25, no 3 (2013): 127.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Emphasis by Vivian Sobchack. Vivian Sobchack, "Chasing the Maltese Falcon: On the Fabrications of a Film Prop," *Journal of Visual Culture* 6, no. 2 (2007): 240.

[70] Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies," 1.

[71] Ibid., 6.

> 'history vs. memory' are usually loaded with emotionally charged binary oppositions: good vs. bad, organic vs. artificial, living vs. dead, from below vs. from above. And while the term 'cultural memory' is already a multifarious notion, it is often even less clear what is meant with the collective singular of 'history' […] Selective and meaningful memory vs. the unintelligible totality of historic events? Methodologically unregulated and identity-related memory vs. scientific, seemingly neutral and objective historiography? Authentic memory produced within small communities vs. ideologically charged, official images of history? Witnesses of the past vs. academic historians? The whole question of 'history and/or/as memory' is simply not a very fruitful approach to cultural representations of the past.[72]

This false binary has focused in many regards more on who is saying something about the past—academic historians vs. amateurs, media industries, museums, and so on—than on what is being said and what value it has to individuals and communities. Indeed, we can see these dynamics at work in the framing of fans' engagement with the past as nostalgic or overly personal, thereby avoiding a more multifaceted analysis of the roles, meanings, and values that fan-made texts on the past take on as "material or medial memory" in contemporary media culture within and beyond their respective community.[73]

In order to overcome the binary between memory and history, Erll identifies different modes of remembering in culture to acknowledge the constant construction of representations of the past from different agents, perspectives, materials, media, and qualities.[74] As she explains, "history is but yet another mode of cultural memory, and historiography [as practiced by academics] its specific medium."[75] Moreover, what history, heritage, and the other categories share—and what the idea of modes of remembering emphasizes—is that all of them are constructed on the social and material/medial level. Hence, in all instances, modes of remembering constitute a process of meaning production that involves different agents, objects, contexts, and sites. Each takes a different form, but they all ultimately create and disseminate

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[72] Ibid., 6-7.
[73] Erll distinguishes between three levels of cultural memory: "'social memory' (the starting point for memory research in the social sciences), 'material or medial memory' (the focus of interest in literary and media studies), and 'mental or cognitive memory' (the field of expertise in psychology and the neurosciences)," ibid. 4.
[74] Ibid., 6-7.
[75] Ibid., 7.

ideas about the past. Drawing on the notion of modes of remembering, this dissertation frames fans' engagement with the past through the lenses of public history—an approach to the study of engagements with and representations of the past that emphasizes process over questions of accuracy determined by the discipline of formal and often exclusionary academic history.

The term "public history" comes with various definitions,[76] but this chapter adapts Hilda Kean and Paul Martin's use of the term as "a process by which the past is constructed into history and a practice which has the capacity for involving people [who are not inevitably scholarly trained historians] in the creation of their own histories."[77] To them, "public history is not a set body of knowledge but a process by which history is constructed," and therefore it "is about 'making' history as much as 'thinking about' history."[78] Their approach allows for the inclusion of a more diverse range of actors, places, and materials that contribute independent or intersecting answers to the question of what history is or can be, and how historiography is practiced. The benefit of this approach is that less emphasis is placed on the training or professional background of a historian, and more on the fact that non-academic history is also produced through reflective work that uses a diverse range of sources and evidence, as well as tangible and intangible representations of the past. Consequently, a public history framework acknowledges the construction of history across a wide range of sites—from academia to the media industries and domestic spaces—without valuing one representation, use, or significance of history over another. Moreover, as is the case in fan studies, the idea of participation has been key to the way that public historians' address and evaluate the use of the past in everyday life and outside of academia. The next section adapts the concept of a "participatory historical culture" to the study of history-making as a fan practice.

1.2. Fandom in a Participatory Historical Culture

"Participation" has been a key concept in the fields of fan studies and public history. Henry Jenkins advanced the idea of a participatory culture to describe fans as active cultural producers rather than passive consumers in *Textual Poachers*. Jenkins addressed fandom as a particular mode of reception, a set of critical and interpretative practices, a form of consumer activism, an

[76] See Kean, "Introduction," xvi-xvii.
[77] Ibid., xiii.
[78] Ibid.

art world with its own distinct cultural products, and an alternative social community in an analogue media environment.[79] In 2009, Jenkins reworked his definition of what constitutes a participatory culture in consideration of the technological changes that had occurred since he introduced the term in 1992. Because the transition from analogue to digital technologies made access to these practices and works easier and more widely available to a general audience, participation became possible for (informed or uninformed) individuals who were not part of or particularly immersed in fan cultures or traditions. Jenkins's updated definition therefore attempts to reflect these changes by providing a broader understanding of participation that approaches fandom as a site of informal learning. Now, participatory culture is not characterized by the act of partaking per se but the feeling that participation could be possible.[80] As Jenkins explains, participatory culture exhibits the following characteristics:

> 1. Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement.
> 2. Strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others.
> 3. Some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices.
> 4. Members who believe that their contributions matter.
> 5. Members who feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the very least they care what other people think about what they have created).[81]

Jenkins argues that even though all cultures are participatory to a certain degree, the extent of participation depends heavily on context. For instance, folk culture invites everyone to partake, but the concept of "mass-culture" is still built on the less inclusive producer–consumer model. Consumers outnumber producers of mass media by a large margin, and fan communities therefore retain the status of a sub-culture rather than being part of the mainstream.[82] This is why Jenkins claims that fandom should be described as *a more* participatory culture rather than a

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[79] See Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 277-280.
[80] Henry Jenkins, "Fandom, Negotiation, and Participatory Culture," in *A Companion to Media Fandom and Media Studies*, ed. Paul Booth (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 18.
[81] Henry Jenkins, Ravi Purushotma, Margaret Weigel, Katie Clinton and Alice J. Robison, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 7.
[82] Jenkins, "Fandom, Negotiation, and Participatory Culture," 21.

participatory culture. That way, the term reflects the ongoing imbalance between those who produce and those who consume popular media.[83]

In the field of public history, the concept of participation became popular with the publication of Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen's *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* in 1998. However, in Thelen's analysis of a "participatory historical culture," the relationship between academics and non-academics in the production and use of history takes centre stage, not the consumer–producer relationship of mass media texts. Thelen contends that people value and regularly turn to the past as a means to understand the present, but that the work of academic historians only plays a minor role in these processes. Indeed, he explains that people respond negatively to the ways that history is practiced and taught in high schools and universities. Therefore, he comes to the conclusion that what "we have in common as human beings is that we employ the past to make sense of the present and to influence the future."[84] The format in which the past is communicated is of little interest, as "matters little whether 'the past' consists of a 200-year-old narrative, an account from a textbook, a display at a museum, or a tale recounted by a family member over Thanksgiving dinner."[85] Thelen calls this phenomenon "participatory historical culture," which he defines as:

> a culture in which using the past could be treated as a shared human experience and opportunity for understanding, rather than a ground for division and suspicion [that should be] respected and treated for what they are: different uses of the past introducing different perspectives and different individual voices.[86]

"Participatory historical culture" therefore refers to the possibilities of the past to connect individuals to their community. It emphasizes the manner in which different conceptions and uses of the past can inspire each other, and thus help shape a civic arena that brings its participants together rather than divides them by profession.

What connects fan studies and public history in their conception of participation is that they both try to overcome the power hierarchies they examine. Fan scholars have highlighted the potential and limits of participation to distribute power from the media industries to fans. In turn,

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 190.
[85] Ibid.,190.
[86] Ibid.

public historians argue the importance of giving people authority in the making of historical knowledge, in the process showing that participation is only one side of this coin, and worthless if the results are not taken seriously. For instance, Raphael Samuel maintains that history should be considered "an activity rather than a profession," and that equal weight should be given to academic and popular accounts of the past.[87] To Samuel, "history is not the prerogative of the historians [whose] papers are addressed to a relatively narrow circle of fellow- practitioners."[88] Rather, history is a "social form of knowledge; the work in a given instance, of a thousand different hands" and an "ensemble of activities and practices" that enables a more democratic account of the past."[89] Samuel therefore takes seriously a variety of forms of historical knowledge including oral history and children's theatre productions, among others. They all contribute to the making of historical consciousness. Further acts of dividing historical works into binary oppositions, or judging if they reach academic standards and labeling them accordingly, would therefore mean denying makers of histories outside academia this authority.

Despite these overlaps in the use and understanding of participation, the concept of "participatory historical culture," or public history in general, has yet to be deployed in analyses of how fans make and use history through their own media production. One possible explanation could be the different power dynamics under investigation in each research field. Fan studies examines the power relationship between media producers and consumers, and public historians focus on the power dynamics among academia, heritage professionals, amateur historians, and the general public. In this examination of power relationships, fan studies' neglect of non-fiction has focused on the creation of fictional storyworlds and criticism thereof rather than on how fans produce and therefore contribute or challenge accounts of the past. In turn, historians have often criticized historical films for the inaccurate representation of the past, without looking at fictional fan productions and how they handle history.[90]

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[87] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994), 17.
[88] Ibid.,8 and 3.
[89] Ibid.3.
[90] For discussion of the historical fan-fic see: Abigail De Kosnik, "Memory, Archive, and History in Political Fan Fiction," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World (2nd edition)*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2017): 270-284. For a comprehensive overview on history and heritage and popular culture: Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

However, maybe even more important, public historians identify the past as a shared human experience that pertains to everyone without exception, and is therefore participatory by its very nature. Participation in fandom, despite its increasingly mainstream presence, still refers to a small subset of fans. While a large number of individuals might identify as a fan of a text, and regularly consume it, only a small percentage of fans actively engage in online fora, visit conventions, join clubs, or produce their own texts. Hence, while we may speak of *a more participatory culture* in relation to fandom, the idea of a "participatory historical culture" considers everyone to be an active agent in *a* participatory culture, full stop. We all engage in the making of the past on a regular basis, be it through everyday speech or more elaborate participation in historical societies, for example.

Moreover, while fans may disagree about different interpretations of their object of fandom, the participation in such a discussion results from a shared interest in a chosen object and is the product of fans' free will. In the case of history, amateur historians also come together around a shared passion and interest. While the negotiation of issues pertaining to nation, ethnicity, class, and gender may be part of fan discussions and historical societies, such discussions also occur in groups and encounters beyond shared common interests and passions. In other words, participation here is not voluntary but describes a given and inevitable social condition.

The complex evolution of public history as a scholarly field may also have contributed to this situation. Public history has been associated with many different meanings and definitions, often shaped by particular national schools of thought as well as professional organizations with an interest in protecting the status of historians as specialists working inside or outside academia.[91] Some ascribe the origin of public history to historian Robert Kelly, who initiated a course on public history at the University of California Santa Barbara in the 1970s. Motivated by the employment-crisis history graduates were facing, Kelly developed the course to train historians to work for the government, therefore defining public history as "the employment of historians and historical method outside of academia."[92] Other definitions see historians working

[91] See: Hilda Kean, "Introduction," xvi-xvii; and for a comprehensive introduction to the history of public history also see: Denise D. Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), xiii-xxxiv.
[92] Robert Kelly cited in Meringolo, xvii.

outside a governmental context, where they apply historical methods to communicate knowledge about the past in accessible ways. For Jill Liddington, for instance, public historians provide "refreshing, inspiring and necessary expert mediation between the past and its publics" simultaneously "maintain[ing] the highest standards of scholarship and critical rigor."[93]

Definitions that emphasize professional skills have been criticized for creating a distinction between amateur and professional historians, thus supporting notions that non-academics are mere "audiences for the discussions of others."[94] Such definitions neglect the active participation of audiences and fail to question assumptions about who is in possession of knowledge and who is not. For instance, Hilda Kean and Paul Ashton argue that "there may be a gap in historical understandings between those trained as historians and the audiences for their work but this gap will not be bridged by 'historians' merely reaching out to 'the public.'"[95] Similarly, historian Robert Archibald remarks that if "public involvement is not integral to the process of history the conclusions are meaningless."[96]

The concept of "participatory historical culture" refers to a specific school of thought within public history that sees the public as integral to the making of history, and is represented by the work of writers such as Kean, Martin, Samuel, Archibald, and Rosenzweig and Thelen. Their ideas of public history connect to criticism within the field of history that coincided with the rise of oral and social history in the 1960s and 1970s. Throughout this period, scholars stressed the need to give a voice in historical research to people who were often excluded. Their approach shifted in subsequent years from debates about what history is and who should be in charge of it, to the questions of why and to whom history matters.[97] Following this tradition, scholars in the field of public history have "sought to explore the range of historiographical processes that could lead to the possible creation of shared meaning and different understandings

[93] Jill Liddington, "What is Public History": Publics and their Pasts, Meanings and Practices," *Oral History* 30, no. 1 (2002): 92.
[94] Ludmilla Jordanova cited in Kean, "Introduction," xv.
[95] Hilda Kean and Paul Ashton, "Introduction: People and their Pasts and Public History Today," in *People and their Pasts: Public History Today*, ed. Hilda Kean and Paul Ashton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.
[96] Robert Archibald, *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community* (New York: AltaMira Press, 1999), 155-156.
[97] Kean, "Introduction," xvi-xvii.

of the past among people with a keen interest in the role of the past in the present."[98] As Kean and Martin explain together with Sally J. Morgan: "what is seen and what is experienced in our everyday lives is as likely to be significant in our understanding and creation of history as the reading of books or archives."[99] This work has occurred in many different contexts and fields, demonstrating that public history is not a distinct field such as women's history, but an attitude towards history that is defined by openness rather than a closing off.[100]

Kean and Martin have defined public history as an activity, describing it as a "process by which the past is constructed into history and a practice which has the capacity for involving people as a well as nations and communities in the creation of their own histories." As Kean explains: "Discussion of process is an integral part of the practice of public history […] Process also implies practice. This includes the materials used for creating history as much as who decides what history is."[101] Kean and Martin identify three approaches for studying the transformation of the past into history outside academia. First, all agents need to be recognized in the making of history in order to understand how the past is constantly re-evaluated in different contexts and for different purposes. As such, they argue for a move away from universities, schools, and government-run archives and museums that have been so central to the creation and dissemination of academic work, to individuals and their experiences, community-run archives and museums, family historians or amateur history clubs, and the media industries, among other agents. Second, public historians acknowledge that "scholarly sources are not the only means with which history is written."[102] Some public historians may consult archival sources, while others take personal collections or the archives of a family or community member as their primary source material. Oral accounts function for other public historians as central source material, while some focus on embodied experiences, such as the wearing of old clothes.[103]

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[98] Kean and Ashton, "Introduction: People and their Pasts and Public History Today," 2.
[99] Hilda Kean, Paul Martin, and Sally J. Morgan, "Introduction, " in *Seeing History: Public History in Britain Now*, ed. Hilda Kean, Paul Martin, and Sally J. Morgan (London: Francis Boutle, 2000), 15.
[100] Kean, "Introduction," xvi.
[101] Ibid., xiii
[102] Jorma Kalela, "Making History: The Historian and Uses of the Past," in *The Public History Reader*, ed. Hilda Kean and Paul Martin (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 121.
[103] Katalin Lovasz, "Playing Dress Up: eBay's Vintage Clothing Land," in *Everyday eBay*, ed. Ken Hillis, Michael Petit, and Nathan Scott Epley (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 283-295.

Third, public historians acknowledge the different tangible and intangible representations of the past that can range from embodied and disembodied memories to single objects or elaborate media productions. In order to understand fans as active agents in the making of history, I suggest adapting the idea of history-making as a process to the discussion of fan-produced histories within the context of a "participatory historical culture." As such, this dissertation represents a new engagement with the disciplines of fan studies and public history.

In subsequent chapters, my analysis focuses on four different agents that have been central to the writing of film and media history (although they have not been the only ones): academics, film and media museums and archives, the media industries, and fans.[104] Scholars and aca-fans regularly publish on popular media texts and stars, gaining authority from their critical examinations and use of academically-sanctioned theoretical and methodological frameworks. However, as Paul Booth remarks, the research of aca-fans, despite their hybrid identities as scholars and as fans, often does not reach fan circles as readers.[105] Moreover, fan historians have given the history of their own communities more attention than scholars have. Histories produced by the media industries themselves probably have a wider reach into fan communities. They are particularly popular because they provide access to original production materials as well as rare documents in their archives that would otherwise not be accessible, such as casting videos, concept art, unused scenes, interviews with cast and crew, and other archival materials. Similarly, museums—both state-subsidized and privately run—are attractive to fans as they provide access to rare objects and ephemera, curated by expert teams. Museums place emphasis on education and edutainment respectively rather than pure entertainment in their exhibits as well as in accompanying projects such as catalogues and databases. The value given to education differentiates museums from other museum-style venues such as studio tours or restaurant chains like Planet Hollywood.[106] Fans are the fourth group, who may be with or without institutional support. In the case of the latter, fans produce their histories during their free time and also rely on their own financial support or that of other fans. Fans are not necessarily trained historians but can draw from years-long engagement and acquisition of

[104] For example, the press.
[105] See Booth, "Augmenting Fan/Academic Dialogue: New Directions in Fan Research."
[106] Alison Trope, *Stardust Monuments: The Saving and Selling of Hollywood* (Hannover: Dartmouth College Press, 2011), 89-126.

knowledge on their object of fandom. Fan-made histories do indeed offer perspectives on the history of their object of fandom that are often absent from museums and academia.

The motivations and goals of these four agents differ. Academics try to advance critical knowledge about the past and present. The media industries attempt to sell films and series, and gather additional revenues through historical paratexts. Industry-run museums and archives may be compelled by similar incentives, and also function to document a company's history. State-subsidized museums and archives, in turn, function under the premise to collect, preserve, and display national heritage and educate the public. Fans are often interested in sharing their autobiographical experiences, information on the context in which they practiced their fandom, as well as those issues and topics that do not find a place in the work of academics, the media industry, or museums. The different goals and purposes of these agents become visible in their approaches to writing the history of media and material culture, as can be exemplified with the example of how these four agents use action figures for their research and presentation of the past.

For film and media scholars, as was explained in the previous section, action figures have largely been treated as a means to understand and theorize media culture. Historical data on action figures and their production is rarely addressed in these texts, which remain focused on data about major contracts and sales numbers. Similarly, film and media museums mainly display action figures, but most of the time they function as markers for bigger issues such as blockbuster productions, fan culture, or as replacements for otherwise unavailable objects. Most film and media museums have no systematic collection and preservation policies for merchandise, and they also do not focus on objects related to the production and distribution of toys, or the people making them. Industry histories are first and foremost concerned with the success of a franchise and celebrate rather than criticize their subject, working to manage possible fan resentment. Merchandise is often addressed in industry histories, though not necessarily in great detail. These histories lack comprehensive accounts of the production cycle of merchandise, even though recent commercial shows like *The Toys That Made Us* (2017—present) demonstrate that the interest shown by fans in these histories has been recognized by media industries. Fans fill these gaps by researching the neglected aspects of action figure histories and sharing their knowledge with others, thereby building their own perspectives on the past that would otherwise remain unavailable. In all of these instances, the four agents use

history differently, ranging from the advancement of scholarly theories to public education and the communication of heritage culture, the selling of products, to advancing the understanding of the object of fandom and the respective fan community.

Yet, these four agents and their approaches to action figure history often overlap. Consider the case of *Star Wars* fan and collector Stephen J. Sansweet, owner of the world's largest *Star Wars* collection, whose work will be discussed in more detail in chapter two and three. Sansweet has appeared as a historian of everything *Star Wars* since 1992, when he published *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible* with Chronicle Books.[107] Over the past three decades, he has published numerous other books, worked for several years at Lucasfilm as Director of Content Management and head of Fan Relations, founded his own museum Rancho Obi-Wan, appeared as an expert in television specials and documentaries, participated in panels on merchandise history at the Star Wars Celebration convention, discussed his fandom in podcasts, ran a column on the preservation and restoration of merchandise in the official fan magazine *Star Wars Insider*, and published a foreword to a scholarly edited collection on fandom.[108] Sansweet's different engagements with the past show not only a wide variety of *Star Wars* histories that can be constructed—the production history of *Star Wars* in the USA and abroad, the reception of the toys in national and international contexts, the history of the *Star Wars* fan and collecting community, his own story as a fan—but also the different approaches that can be used, such as archival research, interviews, object analysis, personal collections, exhibition curating and theorizing. Moreover, his work also demonstrates the different point of views and positions fans take to their work: fan, Lucasfilm employee, curator, and theorist. In other words, Sansweet as a public historian engages in different modes of remembering and historical work with multiple sources. Therefore, public history is a means to understand fan historians not only in one particular context—e.g., as an amateur—but in the multiple contexts in which they may operate.

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[107] Stephen J. Sansweet, *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992).

[108] See Stephen J. Sansweet, "Foreword," in *FanCULTure: Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century*, ed. Kristin M. Barton and Jonathan Malcolm Lampley (Jefferson: McFarland, 20131-4. For an overview of Sansweet's work on Star Wars see: "Steve Sansweet, President & CEO," *Rancho Obi-Wan* [website], accessed July 14, 2018, http://www.ranchoobiwan.org/about/steve-sansweet/.

Fans' heterogeneous use and discussion of materials as evidence in their histories, as well as the contexts in which they find and create these materials, also reflects the heterogeneity of fan positions. As was addressed above and will be further elaborated in chapter two on action figure media, fans produce historical texts with a variety of different materials, ranging from personal collections to archival and scholarly sources. This includes concept art and pre-production materials, contracts and patents, store-displays, and catalogues. Toys and merchandise as they were sold in stores are investigated and used as evidence, and so are prototypes. In addition to their personal collections, which function as "material autobiographies, chronicling the cycle of a life"[109] and "markers of personal identity […] and history," fan historians also use photos or documentation of their toys, or those of others that they interview.[110] The physical traces on toys of wear that are preserved by fan restorers give value to action figures as playthings that endure and are transformed over time. Depending on how they are used, these histories frame action figures as playthings, design objects, commodities, collectibles, and others.

The sheer number of action figures produced for franchises, putting aside all other kinds of merchandise, has led fans to build specialized collections. Some fans only collect toys of a certain character, while others focus on a certain toy line, or on toys related to one franchise. For their research, fans often consult other fans' archives and their expertise. Personal fan collections therefore function as community archives for other fans producing their own histories, and fans also often rely on each other's skills and knowledge. Fans' opening of their collections to other researchers is also of high importance, especially when it comes to rare materials and objects, such as materials associated with action figures' production, distribution, and reception. Indeed, these objects were often not preserved or collected by the media industries or museums and archives, and therefore often exist only in fan archives. Fans' interest in these toys comes with research into the biography and work of toy designers and company managers, materials used throughout the production process, and the specific practices and locations of factories around the world. But fans also venture to official archives and libraries to consult documents. Sansweet, as an employee of Lucasfilm, was able to work with the Lucasfilm Archives, for

[109] Susan M. Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 279.
[110] Geraghty, *Cult Collectors*, 38 -39

instance, while Philipp Reed's books refers to scholarly, newspaper, and trade magazine articles, as well as fan-written histories that are available in stores and libraries.[111]

Fan historians ultimately also build community archives by collecting primary sources relevant to the writing of the history of the *Star Wars* action figure fan community. Without a collection of the work of previous generations of fans, the history of a community is in danger of being incomplete if not completely forgotten, as the work of fan historian Ron Salvatore demonstrates. In an online article, Salvatore discusses the history of the hobby of collecting, noting that contemporary collectors know relatively little about early *Star Wars* collecting communities that formed in the 1970s.[112] Salvatore addresses and therefore closes these gaps with his research on early collectors such as Tom Kennedy and Walter Stuben, who were crucial in turning *Star Wars* action figure collecting into an organised hobby and giving it a public face.[113] Other fan historians cover similar issues. For example, Tommy Garvey talks to how the collecting community moved from print media to the Internet to trade items to form their collections and knowledge about *Star Wars* merchandise.[114]

The media with which fans disseminate their findings to other fans is as diverse as their use of action figures as historical sources. Indeed, fan historians use not only one medium, but several, thereby making them transmedia producers. Many of the projects discussed above are present on multiple media and platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, as well as fans' own websites and podcasts. *I Grew Up Star Wars*, for example, is not only a photo-sharing website but also a podcast with fan interviews about their pictures, a vidcast that includes these pictures and visually highlights what is discussed, a Facebook site and Twitter account, and web-links to the works of other fan historians. Similarly, *The Star Wars Collector's Archive* features a blog, accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, and a podcast. The podcast is accompanied by show notes on the website, and features images and materials to visualize issues discussed on the podcast. Moreover, this podcast gave birth to the spin-off *Galaxy of Toys*, which covers new toy releases, thereby supplementing *The Star Wars Collectors Archive*'s podcast *The*

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[111] See Reed, 64.
[112] Salvatore, "The Ballad of Walter Stuben."
[113] Ron Salvatore, "Connecting Before the Internet," *The Star Wars Collector's Archive* [blog], October 10, 2014, http://blog.theswca.com/2014/10/connecting-before-internet.html.
[114] Tommy Garvey, "An (Updated) Brief History of Online Star Wars Collecting Conversation, *Star Wars Collectors Archive* [blog], September 24, 2017, http://blog.theswca.com/2014/09/an updated-brief-history-of-online-star.html.

Vintage Pod's focus on vintage toys from the first trilogy. Finally, *RetroBlasting* features restoration and preservation tutorials, reviews of vintage toys, a photo gallery that offers a behind-the-scenes look at their own videos, a podcast, and several social media pages. Therefore, if transmedia refers to the telling of stories "that unfold across multiple platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to our understanding of the [story] world,"[115] fans practice and participate in what the third chapter refers to as transmedia historiography: they write the production and cultural history of the *Star Wars* franchise across multiple platforms, and each medium makes a distinctive contribution to the audience's understanding of the franchise's past.

1.3. Placing Fan Histories in the Three Waves of Fan Studies

In their introduction to *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, Jonathan Gray et al. identify three different waves of fan studies, which possess different aims, conceptual reference points, and methodological orientations. *First-wave fan studies*, often associated with ethnographic research, is primarily concerned with framing the consumption of mass media as a site of power struggle.[116] It casts fandom as a mode of empowerment and fan engagements with their object of fandom as creative, thoughtful, and productive. First wave fan studies considers fan works as challenges and confrontations to what John Fiske has called the "power block."[117] The "underlying advocacy of first-wave fan studies," Gray et al. argue, "derived its legitimacy from fans' assumed disempowerment and social position and their problematic representation in both public and academic discourses."[118] *Second-wave fan studies* questioned the notion of fan studies being a priori a site of culturally autonomous resistance, and adapted Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of consumption as their leitmotif. One of the main concerns was how social, cultural, and economic hierarchies are pertinent to the formation of fan cultures and communalities.

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[115] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 293.
[116] In addition to Jenkins, Camille Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women* has been crucial in establishing ethnography as a methodology in fan studies. See Camille Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).
[117] John Fiske cited in Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, "Introduction: Why Study Fans," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World (2nd Edition)*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 3.
[118] Ibid., 3.

Thus, second-wave fan studies demonstrated that fandom was not immune to other prevailing struggles.[119] But as Gray et al. explain, what was missing from these debates was the question of why fans become fans and what exactly motivates them to perform their practice. Moreover, the second wave did not address the increasing visibility and cultural currency of fandom on communities impacted by convergence culture. *Third-wave fan studies* addressed this issue, by broadening its methodological and theoretical frameworks and using psychoanalytic approaches to think about fandom on the macro- and personal level. It also considered how the rise of digital technologies impacted fandom with regards to community building, media literacy, and the advancing of cultural practices that includes both the production and consumption of media. "Third-wave fan studies," Gray et al. explain, "help us understand and meet challenges beyond the realm of popular culture because they tell us something about how we relate to ourselves, to each other, and to how we read the mediated texts around us."[120]

Even though these waves emerged at different times, Gray et al. stress that all three appear in contemporary scholarship on fandom and that none of them has lost their relevance. As they clarify:

> In using the label 'waves' rather than 'phases,' we sought to reflect that different conceptual and methodological approaches reached their high watermarks at different points in the development of the field, yet that concerns and approaches of earlier waves have become far from irrelevant […]. In the study of fans subject to persistent social stigmatization, the initial aims of the first wave of fan studies have lost little of their significance. Similarly, questions of hierarchization and structuration within fan cultures remain important for the persistence of precisely such inequalities.[121]

The notions of history-making as a fan practice and the fan as historian are relevant to all three waves. Further, the question of how fans make and use history connects with debates regarding resistance, hierarchies, and the role of media convergence and participation in the formation of collective and individual fan identities as producers and consumers.

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[119] Ibid., 5
[120] Ibid., 7.
[121] Ibid., 8.

In regard to the first wave of fan studies, it is notable that although many fans do not contest how Lucasfilm celebrates the *Star Wars* franchise and its success over the last 40 years, some fans and their histories confront historical accounts and restoration strategies that do not reflect their own feelings and opinions. One prominent example is the treatment of the special edition films that were released in the 1990s and contained new and altered scenes from the first trilogy. While fans criticized some of the changes made to the storylines, George Lucas forbade any screening of the original versions of *A New Hope*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Return of the Jedi*. Hence, the importance of the Special Edition lies not only in the changes made to the films, but also in the decision to never allow distribution of the other films again. In 1997, Lucas announced:

> There will only be one. And it won't be what I would call the 'rough cut,' it'll be the 'final cut.' The other one will be some sort of interesting artifact that people will look at and say, 'There was an earlier draft of this.'... What ends up being important in my mind is what the DVD version is going to look like, because that's what everybody is going to remember. The other versions will disappear. Even the 35 million tapes of *Star Wars* out there won't last more than 30 or 40 years. A hundred years from now, the only version of the movie that anyone will remember will be the DVD version [of the Special Edition].[122]

Lucas's decision caused a large outcry. Fans petitioned to keep the original films in distribution, making clear that they would not accept Lucas's conclusion. As the website *The Star Wars Trilogy: A Digital Star Wars Scrapbook* explains: "Sorry, George. We're not going to let that happen. A rag tag, fugitive band of rebel scum just spent two years restoring the original, theatrical version of *Star Wars*... Again."[123]

The Star Wars Trilogy: A Digital Star Wars Scrapbook is only one of many examples in which fans argue against changes made to the films, and by extension, film history. Arguments brought forward by fans range from autobiographical sentiments to the larger notion of the preservation of film heritage. In a case of the former, the administrator of *The Star Wars Trilogy: A Digital Star Wars Scrapbook* writes: "This is the version I grew up watching, over and over

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[122] Ron Magid, "An Expanded Universe: Digital and Analog Special Effects Collide in the Retooled Version of Star Wars," *American Cinematographer* 78, no 2 (1997): 70.
[123] "Project-4K77," *TheStarWarsTrilogy.com* [blog], accessed October 27, 2018, http://www.thestarwarstrilogy.com/page/Project-4K77.

again […] I wanted to show the film to my kids, and I wanted them to see the original version that I enjoyed at their age—not the one with the already dated looking CGI, over-saturated colors and a strong magenta tint."[124] In a case of the latter, a fan on another preservation website named SaveStarWars.com highlights that Lucas's decision is irreconcilable with recent heritage debates:

> The *Star Wars* trilogy not only comprises three very good films, but it comprises three milestones of cinema history. Major motion pictures are preserved because they provide a window into the society and technology of the time in which they were made. *Star Wars* (the film and the trilogy) was in both respects a pop cultural landmark, and therefore its preservation should be accorded the same importance as […] other culturally significant artifacts. […] George Lucas' open desire that it disappear, and his actions in pursuit of that goal, therefore represents a profound destruction of an important historical artifact. […] This is a serious issue in cinematic preservation. This website is designed to inform people of the aspects surrounding this issue, and also act as a form of protest. Here you will find information on the *Star Wars* 35mm materials surviving, the philosophical and social issues revolving around the preservation of cultural heritage, and the history of cinema preservation and restoration. Let Lucasfilm know that the original theatrical *Star Wars* films are important and don't deserve to be buried in time.[125]

The goals of these websites then are not simply to fight for a release of the original films. They also actively engage in the preservation of these films, the collection of news related to this matter, and the production of videos that show the impact Lucas's alterations have had on the original films. In sum, fans question Lucas' decisions in terms of the internal logic of the film's diegesis as well as arguments and jargon borrowed from the film preservation movement.[126]

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[124] Ibid.

[125] "Home," *Save Star Wars: Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Two Centuries…* [blog], accessed October 27, 2018, http://savestarwars.com/.

[126] For a history of the film preservation movement, see: Karen F. Gracy, *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Value, Use, and Practice* (Chicago: ALA Publishing, 2009); Caroline Frick, *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Anthony Slide, *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2000); Penelope Houston, *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives* (London: BFI, 1994), Janna Jones, *The Past Is a Moving Picture: Preserving the Twentieth Century on Film* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014).

Fan arguments challenging the decisions made by Lucas can be read as a form of textual criticism. However, they can also be approached as a form of resistance and subversion in regard to the dominance of state and industry archives in determining what is cultural heritage, as well as how it should be preserved for the future. Unlike fan-fic and other fan products, preservation and restoration projects of the original film trilogy show little concern with issues such as the representation of gender, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Instead, their main goal is to challenge Lucasfilm's power to ban the old film, and therefore eliminate a record that marked the beginning of the franchise and their fandom. Research on community archives stresses that they are not created on impulse, but are grounded in moments of reflection, and come in response to social conditions.[127] While nostalgic references to the past imply an erratic impulse, the detailed record and response to Lucas' position on, and contribution to the heritage movement shows critical reflection. By forming their own archives, fans take control of and ownership over the archival life of the films, enabling community participation through the maintenance of multiple restored versions rather than the creation of one ultimate and final film by the media industries.[128] Archiving and preservation, then, becomes a community endeavour, and takes film heritage out of the vaults and into the public realm.

Another example in which fans challenge Lucasfilm's narrative claim on the past is the negative reception of George Lucas's *The Phantom Menace* in 1999. Published fan autobiographies often feature sections in which the authors express their disappointment with the film upon its release, as well as how disconnected from the franchise they felt as a result. As Tony Pacitti explains in his autobiography *My Best Friend is a Wookiee* in relation to *The Phantom Menace*, he "felt betrayed for the first time by *Star Wars*, the one thing [he] had never imagined capable of betrayal."[129] Gib van Ert uses similarly drastic words in *A Long Time Ago: Growing up with and out of Star Wars*, summarizing his experience of watching *The Phantom Menace* thus:

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[127] See Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens, "'It is noh mistri, wi mekin histri." Telling Our Own Story: Independent and Community Archives in the United Kingdom, Challenging and Subverting the Mainstream," in *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, ed. Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander (London: Facet Publishing, 2009), 8.
[128] Andrew Flinn, "Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28, no.2 (2007): 153.
[129] Tony Pacitti, *My Best Friend is a Wookiee* (Avons: Adams Media, 2010), 137.

> What followed was two hours of crushing disappointment. *The Phantom Menace* was dreadful. When considered as a single, stand-alone, film, it was confusing, gaudy, and dull. When considered (as it must be) as a chapter in the *Star Wars* saga, it was worse, for it did violence to some of the fundamental aspects of the story.[130]

Star Wars fan John Booth is not able to provide a convincing evaluation of the time in his autobiography, even though he tries. He argues that "bad *Star Wars* is better than no *Star Wars*" and that his best memories of the "Prequel Era aren't about the movies themselves" but the joy that "the anticipation and excitement and energy and sharing those things" with his peers brought him.[131] Fan-made histories gives fans' negative opinions a public afterlife that is not restricted to their fan communities but finds commemoration in an increasingly institutionalized and widely advertised network in which they are disseminated. Criticism is no longer an initial reaction to a new product of the *Star Wars* franchise, but an indisputable part of its historical narratives. Consequently, fan-produced histories demonstrate a certain degree of dissatisfaction with Lucasfilm-produced or -sanctioned histories that rarely address negative receptions of individual films or parts of the franchise, as will be further explained in chapter three. Indeed, fans do not only create counter-narratives here, or express their dislike. They create records which find their way into fans' collective memory, and ultimately contribute to defining what aspects of *Star Wars* history is written and valued. In other words, if Lucasfilm does not perceive fans' negative reaction to the films as relevant, fans *do* include them in their discourses. Hence, fans create their own expressions of the past and their identity as fans.

Fans' production of histories—regardless of whether they challenge or support Lucasfilm's accounts of the past—represent in many instances a transition from personal memory into a tangible object that can be touched, stored, and consulted in the future by other fans (but is also accessible to the general public). The past is written down and printed in books and magazines, displayed in exhibitions, recorded and saved on hard drives, or sold on DVD. These products, in turn, are available in shops, libraries, streaming services, or on non-commercial social media and platforms. The experiences and knowledge of the past are made

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[130] Gib van Ert, *A Long Time Ago: Growing up with and out of Star Wars* (Lexington: Soi-disant press, 2012), 123.
[131] John Booth, *Collect All 21! Memoirs of a Star Wars Geek* Milton Keynes: (Unknown place of publication: Lighting Source UK Ltd., 2008), n/p.

available for future generations beyond printed zines that had comparatively small print numbers and smaller readership among fan communities. Fan histories pop up in online searches on Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Amazon, as well as in searches of library catalogues. Readers, viewers, listeners, and visitors of blogs, books, videos, podcasts, and exhibitions can now easily learn about *Star Wars* and its fan community before or without being in contact with other fans. In other words, the making of history also represents an institutionalization of fandom in which knowledge about the community is shared more and more through disembodied channels rather than direct social interactions.

The institutionalization of fan histories suggests the beginning of what scholars have termed cultural memory: the transmission of the past in a formal and ceremonial manner across a diverse range of media objects. Cultural memory scholar Jan Assmann describes the institutionalization of the past that occurs when it is transformed into cultural memory as follows:

> Cultural memory is a kind of institution. It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the appearance of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent. They may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another. […] In order to be able to be reembodied in the sequence of generations, cultural memory […] exists also in disembodied form and requires institutions of preservation and reembodiment. .[132]

Assmann defines cultural memory in opposition to what he calls communicative memory, which refers to the social processes in which the knowledge of the past is shared. He explains communicative memory as follows:

> Communicative memory is non-institutional; it is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission, and interpretation; it is not cultivated by specialists and is not summoned or celebrated on special occasions; it is not formalized and stabilized by any forms of material symbolization; it lives in

[132] Jan Assmann, "Communicative Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara B. Young (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 110-111.

> everyday interaction and communication and, for this very reason, has only a limited time depth.[133]

Fan-zines have served as an early example of the institutionalization elements of cultural memory, as *Star Wars* fans have used them to document the material culture of the franchise early on. For instance, complete lists of all *Star Wars* merchandise ever produced were in circulation shortly after the release of the film *A New Hope* in 1977. Since then, media on the history of the franchise and its material culture has increased considerably, as will be further explored in chapter three. This institutionalization and mediation of history give these works more visibility and duration in time alongside histories produced by Lucasfilm and in line with events like museum exhibitions or conventions like Star Wars Celebration. Although this building of cultural memory through processes of institutionalisation have not replaced communicative memory−direct and personal social interactions in which knowledge about the past is shared−fan histories nevertheless enable fans and other audiences to learn about the past individually and in isolation, without any direct, personal interaction with other fans.

For second-wave fan studies, the institutionalization of fandom is of interest as Assmann outlines differences in the degree of possible participation in communicative and cultural memory. Twenty-five years ago, John Fiske pointed to the tendency within fan communities to reproduce the structure of formal institutions of official culture, and the cultural hierarchies that come with them.[134] The relevance of this insight persists. As Assmann points out, the "participation of a group in communicative memory is diffuse" and some "people know more, some less, and the memories of the old go farther back than those of the young." Moreover, there are "no specialists in informal, communicative memory."[135] In turn, "the participation of a group in cultural memory is always highly differentiated," therefore showing an "inherent tendency to elitism; it is never strictly egalitarian."[136] The unequal distribution of power that Assmann identifies in the making of cultural memory helps us think about who rises to the rank of a specialist and "gatekeeper" in fan communities, and whose past is documented and preserved for the future. Even if a "historical participatory culture" stresses the everyday making and use of the

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[133] Ibid.
[134] John Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 30-49; Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 33.
[135] Assmann, "Communicative Memory," 114.
[136] Ibid.

past in all realms of life, the concept does not contradict the fact that there are multiple versions and formats of the past which, in turn, form different hierarchies and replicate power structures that shape society at large.

Fan scholars have demonstrated how cultural, social, and economic capital fuels the hierarchization of fandom.[137] This is also the case for history-making, which is an expensive and time-intensive hobby that relies on access to financial resources, research and analytical skills, and bonds to fellow fan historians. Running a blog or video channel might not appear overly expensive, but the same cannot be said for the publication of books or the running of museums. And even though crowd sourcing sites like Kickstarter enable fan historians to generate capital for their works, not all projects receive the necessary support. Moreover, there is a great variety in the "production value" of video channels, for example. Some historians use relatively simple point-of-view shots, while others produce more complex films that use elaborate editing techniques and technologies. Also, the most prominent fan historians are known because of their vast and exclusive collections, which feature rare toys and production materials. In addition to their access to economic resources and the cultural value given to their figures, fan historians also depend on their social network, whether that is access to Lucasfilm, other influential fans, or important agents outside fandom (e.g., publishers). In other words, everyone can participate in historical debates, but the histories that will be heard depend on an individual historian's cultural, social, and economic capital.

By examining who appears as a specialist and gatekeeper in *Star Wars* historiography we learn how fan historians marginalize issues of gender, race, and sexuality in the epistemological economy and cultural memory of the franchise. Scholars have criticized the easy gendering of fan practices, but it is notable that the vast majority of *Star Wars* fan historians whose work is available to a wide audience beyond fan circles are male, white, seemingly from the middle class, and straight—if they do address issues of their sexual orientation in more

[137] Kristina Busse, "Geek Hierarchies, Boundary Policing, and the Gendering of the Good Fan," *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 10, no.1 (2013): 73-91; Bertha Chin, "It's About Who You Know: Social Capital, Hierarchies and Fandom," in *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, ed. Paul Booth (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 243-255; Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom"; Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 20-36; Cornel Sandvoss, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 32-42.

detail.[138] Fan autobiographies, development of fan communities, or the reception of the franchise and its products rarely venture into political territory and address the position of LGBTQ fans in the community, racial and ethnic diversity or the lack thereof, or life models beyond the nuclear family. This results in a failure to account for the history of minorities and marginalized groups in mainstream society as well as the demographics of *Star Wars* fandom. For instance, fangirls have a much lower presence in *Star Wars* history than fanboys. Oral histories like an interview with veteran-fan Maggie Nowakowska for the blog *Fangirl* are outnumbered by similar histories produced by men, or focusing on men's fan experiences.[139] Consider, for example, the oral history project *My Star Wars Story.* In its 28 episodes dedicated to interviews with *Star Wars* fans, 25 interviewees were men and only three interviewees were women.[140] What I want to point to here is not that there are no female *Star Wars* fans, or that they do not have a bigger presence in other pockets of the *Star Wars* fan community, but rather that they are rarely present in the cultural memory of *Star Wars* as history-makers or subjects.

Thus, projects like Annalise Ophelian's forthcoming *Looking for Leia* are the exemption rather than the norm. According to the filmmaker, the crowdfunded six-part documentary series attempts to do more justice to the demographics of *Star Wars* fandom, pushing the boundaries male-centric *Star Wars* histories. By interviewing a diverse cross-section of fangirls, *Looking for Leia* will present an alternative account of the last 40 years of *Star Wars* fandom, and complicate existing autobiographical accounts that foreground *Star Wars* as thing for boys and men rather than girls and women. For instance, *Star Wars* fan Gib van Ert explains in regard to his children that the birth of his son was "more consequential from a *Star Wars* perspective […] for I, and much of the rest of the world still consider *Star Wars* to be chiefly a boy's interest." Van Ert acknowledges immediately that "this is demonstrably wrong in specific cases" and says he hopes that his daughter will like *Star Wars*.[141] But this statement shows the predicament that the gap of diversity in *Star Wars* history has left: as long as we do not know more about fangirls, they remain the rather vague and unspecific "specific cases" to which van Ert refers.

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[138] Geraghty, *Cult Collectors*, 54-56.
[139] See "Fangirl Chat 17: An Oral History of Fandom with Maggie Nowakowska," *Fangirl* [blog], August 11, 2014, http://fangirlblog.com/2014/08/fangirl-chat-17-an-oral-history-of-fandom-with-maggie-nowakowska/.
[140] See "General," *My Star Wars Story*, accessed November 15, 2018, http://mystarwarsstory.com/.
[141] van Ert, *A Long Time Ago*, 132.

Yet, since the "business infrastructure of franchises are predominantly men," as Lucasfilm President Kathleen Kennedy explains, generalisations about *Star Wars* as being for boys—now and then—reaffirms the gendered epistemological economy of fan-made *Star Wars* histories rather than actively challenging it.[142] And while fan John Booth recalls memories of sharing his fandom with his daughter in his autobiography *Collect All 21!, Star Wars*, fan works that actively challenge conventions of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class or age are more relevant for fan-fic or direct criticism of the films than non-fiction fan works. Although such debates may happen more visibly in fan fora, social media, or face-to-face conversations than in historical media, they are not present in the existing and institutionalised fan-made *Star Wars* histories.[143] But as long as these debates are absent from histories that have already made the transition from communicative to cultural memory, fan histories reproduce the gender discourse implied in the merchandising of official *Star Wars* towards a predominately male audience.[144]

Finally, from the perspective of third-wave studies, the study of history-making allows for further analysis of how individual and collective understandings of the past reflect the social, cultural, and industrial contexts in which the cultural memory of fans is articulated. Fans are active agents in what cultural heritage scholar David C. Harvey calls history culture: "the ways that the past is 'presented' in everyday life, supporting, augmenting, and guiding collective identities that reflect both an conscious and unconscious 'will to remember.'"[145] Fandom in history culture, however, is more than the will to remember one's favourite text but is also a means to connect fandom with other markers of self-identity, such as age, family relationships, and local belonging. For instance, John Booth reflects on how, during his twenties, a difficult romantic relationship affected the bonds he shared with family and friends:

> They were only two years, but even almost two decades later I still feel like I'm ripping off a scab when I remember how I treated my friends and family. When you are in your early twenties, it seems like every choice you make is an amplified earsplitting shout, every emotion a spiked lightning bolt, every

[142] Kathleen Kennedy cited in Suzanne Scott, "#Wheresrey?: Toys, Spoilers, and the Gender Politics of Franchise Paratexts," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34, no.2 (2017): 141.
[143] Booth, *Collect All 21!*, n/p.
[144] See Scott, "#Wheresrey?," 138-147; Derek Johnson, "'May the Force Be with Katie': Pink Media Franchising and the Postfeminist Politics of HerUniverse," *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 6 (2014): 895-911.
[145] Harvey, "The History of Heritage," 21.

> tenuous bond a grip that will gash and scar when broken. Only later do you realize how quiet everything was to the rest of the world.[146]

Similarly, van Ert, in his autobiography, reflects on his upbringing as a US-American living in Canada with his parents, who met at a drug rehabilitation clinic, and moved up North to avoid being sent to Vietnam. His memories of becoming and being a *Star Wars* fan are interwoven with reflection on his parents' brittle finances and his mother's fraught relationship with his grandparents. As he explains in one section of the book chronicling a visit to his grandparents in Texas:

> My grandparents' reaction to their only daughter becoming a hippy, marrying a Californian draft dodger and moving to Canada was what you would expect of mid-20th century middle-class Texans. When, before leaving for Canada, mother brought my father home to meet her parents, my grandfather literally chased him out of the house. If the Vietnam War was not reason enough for my father to flee the country, my grandfather might have been.[147]

Fan autobiographies also root fandom in certain times and places by recalling local cinemas and toy stores, as well as non-fan spaces such as schools and playgrounds. For example, van Ert recalls in his shopping experiences at Target in the 1980s that there was "nothing chic or trendy about Target […] It was a discount department store with red-plastic shopping carts, clear plastic clothes hangers, a greasy cafeteria and dozens of minim-wage-earners staffing the aisles and checkout corners.[148] Booth offers a more enthusiastic account of his favourite comic book store and its owner when he was in his 20s:

> My favourite stop was a comic store in a strip mall in Toledo run by a guy who was the closest I could imagine to a real-life version of Doc-Brown from *Back to the Future*. He wore a long trenchcoat all the time and was kind of wild-eyed and messy-haired and flapped around the store excitedly looking for stuff among the piles of seemingly disorganized boxes. He'd point me to a crate or a corner and I'd start rummaging.[149]

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[146] Booth, *Collect All 21!,* n/p.
[147] van Ert, *A Long Time Ago* 42-43.
[148] Ibid., 46.
[149] Booth, *Collect All 21!,* n/p.

In terms of locales, as will be further elaborated in chapter 4, fan-run museums create visible fan spaces in towns and cities that have no connection to the production of a media text, thereby making them part of the local cultural landscape and identity. Vintage reviews and restoration and preservation tutorials reflect on aging and the desire to protect the traces of one's childhood rather than eliminating it through reparation, and establish distinct markers and narratives of what it was like to be, or grow up, as a fan in the 1970s and 1980s. Fan-made history, then, illuminates the relationship between community and identity that unfolds around questions of where, how, and when fandom was practiced. It also encourages us to reflect on this information is communicated to the public through different modes of remembering.

One of the most significant issues surrounding this relationship between community and identity is the power dynamic shared between fans and media industries in the making of the past. Heritage scholars have theorized these power dynamics through the use of concepts such as "authorized heritage discourse" or "big heritage" and "heritage from below" or "small heritage" that represent either top-down or bottom-up approaches.[150] However, heritage studies has largely focused on state-sanctioned cultural and elite institutions and their relationship to subaltern and local groups. This concentration is less pertinent than the tension between fans and media industries in the making and use of history in what Henry Jenkins has called convergence culture.[151] Even if fans emphasize the local contexts of their fandom, the power dynamics between media consumers and producers fall beyond the frameworks of the nation or the national. Consider Jenkins's description of convergence culture:

> Right now, convergence culture is getting defined top-down by decisions being made in corporate boardrooms and bottom-up by decisions made in teenagers' bedrooms. It is shaped by the desires of media conglomerates to expand their empires across multiple platforms and by the desires of consumers to have the media they want where they want it, when they want it, and in the format they want.[152]

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[150] See Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Harvey, "The History of Heritage;" Robertson, "Introduction."
[151] Ibid.
[152] Henry Jenkins, "Welcome to Convergence Culture," *Confessions of an Aca-Fan* [blog], June 19, 2006, http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2006/06/welcome_to_convergence_culture.html.

By applying Jenkins' definition of media convergence culture to historical culture, it is possible to understand heritage as both defined by the top-down decisions of established institutions and media industries—who use the past for their own ideological and economic purposes—and the bottom-up decisions made by fans to produce and consume histories they cannot find elsewhere. But even if fans are working with comparatively smaller budgets and prestige than national institutions and media industries in the making of "big heritage," the potential use of "small heritage" by future audiences is unpredictable. As Harvey points out with regard to historical work produced on the Internet:

> the present spread of blogs, podcasts and digital archives such as myspace.com and youtube.com on the internet, it is perhaps these small heritages that will form the basis of the material, the thoughts, practices, and plans that we pass on to the next generation—our *prospective memory* if you like. What the next generation will do with this material, this effort and these memories, however – their *retrospective memories*—is up to them.[153]

In other words, we live in a moment in which fans, through their production of historical narratives, make *prospective memory*. A more elaborate study of the next fan generation's use of the past, however, will require further research. Moreover, as explained through the examples of Sansweet, fans can operate on both ends of the spectrum, moving between state- or industry-sanctioned cultural and elite institutions and subaltern and local groups. The barriers to sharing their views of the past are lower for fans than for amateur historians challenging state institutions, and the history of the *Star Wars* franchise is more malleable than that of a nation state.

However, not all fans disregard or challenge industry histories, and those who do are not representative of the entire community. They are only a faction. Indeed, disagreement about the past does not only occur between those at the top and those at the bottom, but also among fans themselves. The presence of different fan factions supports heritage scholars' G.I. Ashworth and J.E. Tunbridge's argument that:

> All heritage is someone's heritage and therefore logically not someone else's: the original meaning of an inheritance [from which 'heritage' derives] implies the existence of disinheritance and by extension any creation of heritage from the past

[153] Harvey, "The History of Heritage," 33.

> disinherits someone completely or partially, actively or potentially. This disinheritance may be unintentional, temporary, of trivial importance, limited in its effects and concealed; or it may be longterm, widespread, intentional, important and obvious.[154]

Within fan studies, Derek Johnson and others use the concept of fantagonism to think about the tension not only between fans and the media industries but also among fans themselves. Johnson defines fantagonism as "ongoing, competitive struggles between both internal factions [within fan communities] and external institutions to discursively codify the fan-text-producer relationship according to their respective interests."[155] In short, the process of reproducing intellectual property across multiple industries and successive sites of creativity—resulting in various distinct iterations and formats of a text—creates factions defined by fandom and anti-fandom. Fantagonism "recognizes that some factions, at some times and in some moments, take up positions of oppositional intervention in relation to the industries that produce and distribute media texts."[156] Hence, Johnson argues, "fan positions in relation to media industries are nearly always positions taken in opposition to other fan factions with their own positions in relation to industry."[157] Fantagonism imagines the multiple axes of interaction among fans, in which conflicts arise between different factions of fans, as well as between fan factions and the media industries in relation to the aesthetic history of a fiction text.

The title of this dissertation channels the ideas of fantagonism and the notion that "all heritage is someone's heritage and therefore logically not someone else's" into the concept of "plastic heritage." "Plastic heritage" refers to the making of history in convergence culture and its corollary: the multiplicity of agents, positions, and interactions do not fit into narratives of top-down or bottom-up binaries, or fans versus industry. I would like to recall here what I introduced in the prologue: Plastic and plasticity should be understood in a vernacular sense,

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[154] J.E. Tunbridge and G.J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict* (New York: Wiley, 1996), 21

[155] Derek Johnson, "Fantagonism: Factions, Institutions, and Constitutive Hegemonies of Fandom," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World (2nd Edition)*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 371

[156] Derek Johnson, "Fantagonism, Franchising, and Industry Management of Fan Privilege," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott (London and New York: Routledge 2017), 397.

[157] Ibid.

rather than in their more recent theoretical use by Catherine Malabou, who adapts Hegel's concept of plasticity in order to study the intersection of brain consciousness, subjectivity, and capitalism.[158] The vernacular meaning of plastic and plasticity highlights three important characteristics of how knowledge of the past is produced, communicated, and consumed. First, it refers to the idea that heritage is a process and therefore intrinsically malleable. In this sense, it resembles the meaning of the adjective plastic as being "something capable of being moulded or shaped."[159] Second, it builds on the meaning that emerged in the post-World War II period of something fake. Rather than "fakeness" I use to term to emphasize the process of construction as something less artificial but definitively subjective, as well as selective or incomplete in its use of sources, and its interdependencies with the contexts in which it is created.[160] Third, the meaning of plastic as the literal modeling or moulding of solid objects with three-dimensional effects relates to the centrality of material culture in the communication of film and media history. In the case of this dissertation, I will primarily focus on action figures and merchandise. In this regard, the question is less whether but more how objects form part of film and media heritage. The fan histories discussed throughout the following chapters demonstrate that objects are deeply imbricated in fan activities, including the practices that specifically relate to cultural heritage. Hence, this dissertation retraces how different agents use material culture to tell these histories and form individual and collective identities through the production and consumption of historical narratives.

1.4. Chapter Overview and Methodology

"Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History" uses the idea of the fan as a historian and history-making as a particular fan practice to examine the question of how fans write histories and what impact their work has in the making of cultural memory. Questions concerning fan resistance, hierarchies, and the dialectical relationship between the personal and communal are pertinent to each chapter, but do not form the centre of the following three case studies. Rather, these ideas are embedded in my development of the concepts to help examine the significance of key phenomena in historical and material fan culture: "action figure media," "transmedia

[158] Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).
[159] Jeffrey L. Meikle, *American Plastic: A Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1997), 4.
[160] Susan Freinkel, *Plastic: A Toxic Love Story* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 5.

historiography," the "fanboy historian," "fan-induced tourism," and "fan geography." These concepts, I content, help further explore the intersection of media, fandom, and material and history culture. By seeing fans as active agents in a more "participatory historical culture," we can trace the ways in which fans institutionalize their past in order to preserve it for the future, and how the past is taking a considerable and largely unmapped role in contemporary fandom. Tangible objects and intangible stories told across non-fiction genres are crucial in this process, and therefore function as the main object of study in all three chapters.

The first chapter, "Between Textuality and Materiality: Object-Fandom and Action Figure Media," uses fan historians and the media they are producing to explore action figures as independent objects of fandom. The chapter argues that, rather than consuming action figures because of their fandom of a specific storyworld, consumers of action figures and producers of media often identify first and foremost as fans of this particular genre of playthings. The chapter shows that fans of action figures not only consume the finished toys as they are sold in stores, but also engage with the wider material culture that surrounds the design, production, and distribution of them. They consume the toys and their wider material culture through what the chapter defines as action figure media: media that engages with the toys as playthings rather than mere avatars from a fictional storyworld.

The second chapter, "*Star Wars* at 40: Transmedia Historiography, Fanboy Historians, and Cultural Memory Management," examines how Lucasfilm has transformed *Star Wars* into a transmedia historiographical enterprise, in which the history of the franchise is developed across a wide range of media, including books, websites, documentaries, and museum exhibitions. For Lucasfilm, these histories represent a means to manage the perception of the franchise. Moreover, the company prioritizes certain fanboy histories in order to frame the franchise in general and the work of George Lucas in particular as a constant and ongoing success.

The third chapter, "*Star Wars* at the Swimming Pool: Fans and the Making of a Tourist Attraction," demonstrates how fans themselves have become active managers of tourist sites, for which the main attraction is their own collections and productions. By looking at Stars of the Galaxy in Mönchengladbach, Germany, the chapter argues that fan productions possess the potential to considerably shape and impact local contexts. Moreover, the phenomenon of fans travelling to see the work of other fans represents a larger interest within fan communities to

document and learn more about the specific local contexts in which fandom for a transnational franchise such as *Star Wars* is practiced.

While the three main chapters of this dissertation examine how fans produce history on popular culture, the conclusion highlights the need for future research to further investigate fans' use of popular culture to (re)write history. Indeed, the conclusion demonstrates the toxic qualities of fans' history-making. Taking the blog *Disney Star Wars is Dumb: Deconstructing the Deconstruction of the Star Wars Franchise* as an example, the conclusion shows that history-making is not inherently positive, innocent, accurate or inaccurate in its presentation, argumentation, and organisation. *Disney Star Wars is Dumb* points to a tendency in fan culture to integrate debates over the authenticity, canon, and history of popular franchises like *Star Wars* into a wider discourse about the authenticity of history and some of its most consequential conflicts. Hence, the conclusion lays out future directions for research on fan historians and how they position themselves and their views on the past ideologically and politically through their historical works.

The focus of this dissertation is on fans writing the history of the *Star Wars* franchise, but it is not a history of *Star Wars* itself. Other scholars have explored the history of the franchise in detail, and this dissertation will draw from their work to contextualize fan practices when needed.[161] Moreover, I would like to remind the reader one more time that fans of the franchise are not remotely the only ones who write histories on their object of fandom. In other words, *Star Wars* fans are not particularly unique. My initial research has shown that projects similar to the ones discussed here can be found on popular media texts and materials such as *Star Trek*, *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, Mickey Mouse, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, Tom Mix, *Mad Max*, Superman, Batman, the DC and Marvel Universe, and others. Yet, *Star Wars* is probably the most widely discussed focus of fandom in terms of singular projects related to it, as well as its appearance in projects that are dedicated to action figures or popular media in general. Nevertheless, the decision to focus on *Star Wars* throughout this dissertation was motivated not

[161] For instance, Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest, eds., *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017); Will Brooker, *Using the Force: Creativity, Community and Star Wars Fans* (New York and London: Continuum, 2002); William Proctor and Matthew Freeman, ""The First Step into A Smaller World': The Transmedia Economy of Star Wars," in *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds: A Subcreation Studies Anthology*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 221-243.

by quantity but rather by a desire to show the discursive breadth and scope of contexts in which fan historians operate, to test the proposed concepts on the same objects under investigation, as well as to outline the connectivity of the work of fan historians in transforming the past into history. Discussing *Star Wars* throughout this dissertation, then, enabled me to address industry and fan productions alike, deploying concepts that can be adapted by other scholars to use in their own research.

The chapters will return to some of the examples brought forward here in this introduction, such as the work of Stephen J. Sansweet and the museum Stars of the Galaxy, which are central case studies in chapters 3 and 4 respectively. This work will be complemented by additional examples. All of the fan works and projects discussed in this dissertation are open to the public and often distributed on commercial channels. None of the texts discussed here is password protected or released on a website or forum that requires registration and prohibits a wider audience beyond close-knit fan circles from experiencing it. Since the focus of the dissertation is on finished media products—be it a book, blog, video channel, documentary, podcast, or exhibition—fan fora and comments on these works were not considered. Comments on these works by fans were only taken into consideration when they were published with the intention of informing a wide readership about the work, such as comments on websites like Trip Advisor or fans' own blogs and projects.

The selection of case studies was informed by one of the biggest ethical challenges in fan studies: the question of whether publicly available fan works should be used for academic research, and if so, what kinds of work should be considered. Ruth A. Deller has written a compelling essay in which she reminds scholars of the impact their work may have on people, places, and things. She argues that just because a fan work is publicly available, does not mean that a scholar should use it without the consent of its author.[162] By focusing on polished works rather than informal fan work, this dissertation has tried to respect the fraught public–private boundary in contemporary online culture by choosing works that are heavily advertised on open media channels and have travelled beyond fan networks. Indeed, many of the works that are discussed in this dissertation were found through simple online searches. However, one of the main concerns in selecting case studies is that fan-made content often pushes the limits of

[162] Ruth A. Deller, "Ethics in Fan Studies Research," in *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, ed. Paul Booth (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 132-133.

privacy ethics and also copyright laws. Past cases have shown that media industries—Lucasfilm among them—have been willing to sue fans for what they consider copyright infringement.[163] Although the public–private boundary is also fraught when it comes to fan histories, the grip of Lucasfilm on the past is much weaker. As long as fan historians do not use copyrighted materials by Lucasfilm, fans are free to recount their lives and interview others, show their collections of toys and share how to display and restore them, research designers and write their biographies. Fans still remind each other to be careful when naming their works, and tend to stay away from titles that include words like "official" or the use of logos that resemble the IP of Lucasfilm They also often add disclaimers, explaining that Lucasfilm does not support their work.[164] This aspect of circumventing litigation and infringement is one of the most interesting characteristics of fan-produced histories, which frequently develop elaborate strategies and techniques for talking about phenomena that cannot be shown or explicitly named. Moreover, this dissertation has not conducted any interviews with historians, and relies on interviews that fan historians themselves have given at events, to other fans, or in commercial media that all have a potentially wide reach to non-fan audiences. As such, even though fan historians' consent was not solicited due to the public nature of their work, the only information used was the data that they were willing to openly share.

The selected fan and industry histories were evaluated through textual analysis. I focused especially on their thematic foci and use of sources, as well as how they complement each other. In addition to textual analysis, other sources were consulted when needed, such as newspaper articles, television reports, interviews, reviews, and websites with relevant contextual information. No interviews with fans were conducted, nor does my work lay any claim to being ethnographic in nature. In other words, this dissertation focuses on the existing cultural memory produced by fans, and excludes communicative history as it is shared among fans in everyday settings. However, although I focus on fans who produce texts, I would like to acknowledge that textual production is only one of many forms of how fans practice their fandom or identify as a fan. I follow Cornel Sandvoss in his definition of fandom as "the regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text in the form of books, television shows, films, or

[163] See Brooker, *Using the Force*, 164-171.
[164] For a panel discussion on the topic of fan-made histories see: Tommy Garvey, "C5 Collecting panel: Star Wars Collectibles Authors 4-5," YouTube video, 14:39, September 16, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_TRmcQ_ThA&t=520s.

music, as well as popular texts in a broader sense such as sports teams and popular icons and stars ranging from athletes and musicians to actors." And, as is the case in this dissertation: action figures.[165]

One of the reasons why I chose textual analysis over ethnographic research is my own position in the *Star Wars* fan community. My original doctoral project on film museums was founded on my theoretical engagement with museums and film heritage, a topic I studied during my time at the University of Amsterdam and expanded in my professional work experience in various archives and museums. However, I do not identify as a *Star Wars* fan, and therefore somehow moved from "insider" to "outsider" when I changed my research topic. While I designed my previous project as a hybrid of theory and practice, I did not research and write this project from the position of an aca-fan. Rather, I approached this project with the interest, curiosity, knowledge, and skills that I brought from my previous work and research on the intersection of moving image and material culture.

In this regard, this project hopes to form the foundation of future research on fans and their production of non-fiction and history, which may extend into ethnographic research, as will be further addressed in the conclusion. Such a project could explore through structured or semi-structured interviews how fans use and engage with the past beyond the production of historical works that are shared with a wider audience. Also, further knowledge about fans' relationship to the past could be gained through digital ethnography, and the participation in discussions in fora that have not been considered in this dissertation. But for now, "Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History" is primarily an analysis of specific historical narratives that are disseminated through various media and therefore become cultural tools in the process of making history.

[165] Sandvoss, *Fans,* 8.

Chapter 2: Between Textuality and Materiality: Fan Historians and the Mediation of Action Figures

A few weeks before the release of J.J. Abrams's *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* in December 2015, *Saturday Night Live* (*SNL*; 1975-present) featured a sketch that reiterated some long-standing and prevailing stereotypes about fandom. Resembling a toy commercial in its aesthetics and narrative, the sketch begins with scenes of a few tweens playing with *Star Wars* action figures, while a voice-over advertises their release. Just as the children enthusiastically announce that the Force is with them, a group of men storm into the scene, heartedly proclaiming that the Force was with them, too. For the rest of the sketch, the spectator witnesses several conflicts unravel around the question of how one should handle new action figures. While the boys want to play with the toys, the adults are more concerned with keeping them in pristine condition. Instead of unpacking them like the children do, the men store and display them in mint condition in merchandise-filled glass cabinets. The only form of play the men accept is screen-accurate mimeses of scenes from the films, which ultimately leaves the children no room for improvised play. Despite their evident excitement for the toys, the men literally take away the "action" from the figures.

Since the mid-1980s, mocking depictions of fans and their passion for their objects of fandom have been common in popular culture.[166] One prominent example is another *SNL* sketch from 1986, which is understood to be one of the first to depict *Star Trek* fans as "nerdy [and] basement-dwelling"—an image that has come to define fandom in general.[167] Set at a *Star Trek* convention in rural New York, the sketch culminates with a distressed William Shatner screaming at a group of overly zealous fans laden with costumes and merchandise to move out of their parents' basements and finally "get a life." According to Henry Jenkins, the scene distilled the common stereotype of fans as "brainless consumers, connoisseurs of profane and devalued cultural material and knowledge, as well as effeminate, a-sexual, immature and naïve social misfits" that defined contemporary public discourses on fandom.[168] Thirty years later, *SNL*

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[166] Lincoln Geraghty, *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia Fandom and Collecting Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 13-31.
[167] Ibid, 16.
[168] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture; Updated 20th Anniversary Edition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 10.

again relied on many of these connotations. Just as Shatner disbelievingly asked the crowd whether any of them had ever kissed a girl, the young *Star Wars* fans shame one of the men by asking him derisively whether his wife also likes toys. From this perspective, it seems as if not much has changed in the depiction and perception of fandom since the mid-1980s.

However, as much as the two sketches draw from the same stereotypes, the kinds of fandom they portray are ultimately different. Gray et al. argue that negative depictions of fans are not necessarily directed towards fandom per se. They are rather a judgment on fans' chosen object of fandom. Thus, what is under attack "is not the state of being a fan as such but particular texts as objects of fandom."[169] The differences in the two *SNL* sketches do not merely represent a shift in the target of mockery from *Star Trek* to the latest *Star Wars* instalment; they represent a more substantial shift from textual to material fandom. In the "Get a Life" skit, the consumption of merchandising marks the characters as fans of *Star Trek*, but there is no doubt that their interest in these commodities stems from their passion for the series and films. In contrast, the storyworld of the *Star Wars* franchise has only a minor role, and is rarely mentioned in the other sketch. It is only referred to in relation to the release of the latest toy line, a few character names, and the kind of space- and war-themed play the figures enable. If the *SNL* sketch from 1986 poked fun at fans' interest in the most trivial information on *Star Trek* storylines, the sketch from 2015 focuses on men whose fandom is primarily expressed and enacted through tangible things: action figures.

Distinguishing between fans of *Star Wars* films and fans of *Star Wars* action figures may at first glance seem like splitting hairs, but fans of action figures and fans of films, series, novels, or videogames are ultimately concerned with different questions, practices, and texts. Action figure fans are less concerned with a text's diegesis. Instead, they engage with a vast variety of physical and audio-visual materials beyond the actual plaything. Just like fans of fiction narratives watch and read information about their favourite texts beyond the actual films and series, many action figure fans seek out additional objects and information. They study other tangible objects related to the toys, including production notes, concept art, prototypes, packaging, store displays, production notes, and catalogues, among other resources.

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[169] Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, "Introduction: Why Study Fans?," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 4.

Furthermore, action figure fans consume audio-visual materials that range from advertisements and commercials to documentaries, social media groups and sites, podcasts, and dedicated action figure magazines. These feature reviews, interviews with toy designers, help and advice columns, and photo stories. This commitment to playthings beyond mere purchase and possession indicates that action figures are more than a side effect of the film and media industry. The playthings are discrete fan objects that need to be analyzed as phenomena that are distinct from fan communities and practices associated with fictional texts. While some action figures are intimately connected with such fan communities, some are not. Even still, action figure fandom that is tied to a fictional text or even a fictional universe is not reducible to an epi-phenomenon or a mere derivative of the primary fictional texts themselves.

Based on the premise that "film has never been (just) film, nor has television ever been (just) television," Jonathan Gray argues that "we need an 'off-screen studies' to make sense of the wealth of other entities that saturate the media, and that construct film and television."[170] Action figures have been popular objects of investigation in this scholarly turn off-screen. Gray himself has studied action figures as paratexts, whilst others discuss them in relation to media convergence, participatory culture, franchising, transmedia, the media mix, collecting, play, customization, or mimetic fandom.[171] Despite heterogeneous approaches, these studies share

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[170] Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 4.

[171] See, among others: Gray, *Show Sold Separately*; Colin B. Harvey, *Fantastic Transmedia Narrative, Play and Memory Across Science Fiction and Fantasy Storyworlds* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Henry Jenkins, "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars? Digital Cinema, Media Convergence, and Participatory Culture," in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 281-312; Avi Santo, *Selling the Silver Bullet: The Lone Ranger and Transmedia Brand Licensing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015). Jason Bainbridge, "Fully Articulated: The Rise of the Action Figure and the Changing Face of 'Children's' Entertainment," *Journal Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 24, no.10 (2010): 829-42; Derek Johnson, *Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Marc Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Lincoln Geraghty, *Cult Collectors*; Katriina Heljakka, "Toy Fandom, Adulthood, and The Ludic Age: Creative Material Culture as Play," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World (2nd edition),* ed. by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 91-105; Victoria Godwin, "GI Joe vs. Barbie: Anti-Fandom, Fashion, Dolls, and One-Sixth Scale Action Figures." *Journal of Fandom Studies* 3, no.2 (2015): 119–33; Victoria Godwin, "Customized Action Figures: Multi-Dimensional Fandom and Fannish Fiction," *Journal of*

a predominant interest in the relationship between toys and the narrative of a fictional text, comprehensively outlining how intangible storyworlds become tangible off-screen. These studies neglect examinations of how fans engage with the wider material culture of the toys, and how the materiality of toys is represented across the wide range of media mentioned above. Previous scholarship has framed textual fandom as the condition for fans' engagement with material culture rather than as a discrete interest in the objects themselves.

One reason for this emphasis on textual rather than material fandom is fan studies' long neglect of the role of material culture in fandom. As Matt Hills explains in interview, in fan studies "much has been written about fan fiction, and there's started to be more on costuming and pilgrimage […], but the fan craft of modding and creating one-offs as well as generating photographs/videos of toys has not been studied enough."[172] Recent research on practices such as knitting, garage kit models, replica building, and collecting has developed conceptual tools such as "mimetic fandom" and "blueprint culture" to further the understanding of the "object/text ecosystem" of fandom.[173] Yet, despite the increased interest in the intersection of fan and material culture, these concepts position fans' engagement with material culture as "object-oriented" and "object-based" practices of fandom, concepts that are subordinated or articulated to textual fandom, which is taken as the condition for fans' engagement with material culture.[174] As a consequence, not only is the study of material culture a relatively young and small sub-field within fan studies, but toys and action figures as stand-alone objects of fandom remain under-theorized.

Fandom Studies 2, no.2 (2014.): 111–25; Victoria Godwin, "Mimetic Fandom and One-Sixth-Scale Action Figures," *Transformative Works and Cultures,* no. 20 (2015), https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2015.0686.

[172] Matt Hills, "Interview with Matt Hills, part 2," *doctorwhotoysnet.net* [blog], accessed November 21, 2018, http://doctorwhotoys.net/matthills1.htm.

[173] See Bob Rehak, "Materializing Monsters: Aurora Models, Garage Kits, and the Object Practices of Horror Fandom." *Journal of Fandom Studies* 1, no 1 (2013): 27–45; and Bob Rehak, "Materiality and Object-Oriented Fandom," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no 16 (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0622. Rehak develops the concept of "blue print culture" in: Bob Rehak, *More Than Meets the Eye: Special Effects and the Fantastic Transmedia Franchise* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Matt Hills develops the concept of "mimetic fandom in: Matt Hills, "From Dalek Half Balls to Daft Punk Helmets: Mimetic Fandom and the Crafting of Replicas," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16 (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0531.

[174] Rehak, "Materiality and Object-Oriented Fandom."

The exception here is the work of Victoria Godwin, Katriina Heljakka, Kristen N. Bryant, Denise D. Bielby, and C. Lee Harrington, who all approach toys as distinct objects of fandom. Their research expands our understanding of toy fandom by looking at practices such as collecting, customization, and play in relation to media practices. Godwin has published several essays that explicitly argue that action figures are themselves objects of fandom.[175] As she explains, "customizing and collecting are fan activities predicated upon intense affection for action figures themselves, not necessarily for another media text that they represent."[176] Katriina Heljakka maintains that it is "no longer justifiable to categorize adult toy fandom single-handedly as a type of a collecting dictated by nostalgic attitude or rejuvenalization." Rather, she argues "it should be viewed as an activity justifiably seen as a form of play that uses new technologies, media services, and so on with the same ease as it employs material objects […] to bind and co-create with like-minded audiences."[177] Bryant et al. argue that adult toy fans bring an "erudite, age-related accumulation of knowledge about a toy's aesthetic elements, including its circumstances of design or manufacture, [and its potential] as [an] object of play."[178] Still, even though all of these scholars refer to toy fans and their vast knowledge and interests, they do not address in more detail how fans gather information on toys, or explore how fans consume and produce the media that shows action figures as playthings.

Fan historians are some of the most avid consumers and producers of media on action figures. This chapter aims to further our understanding of toy and action figure fandom in contemporary media culture by looking at fan historians as producers and consumers of what this chapter defines as "action figure media." Since the emergence of early collectible guides on popular material culture in the 1950s, career and amateur historians have produced books, blogs, videos, documentaries, podcasts, museum exhibitions, and TV shows on media-themed merchandise and action figures.[179] These histories share a common interest in the materiality

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[175] See Godwin, "Mimetic Fandom and One-sixth-scale Action Figures"; Godwin, "G.I. Joe vs. Barbie"; Godwin, "Customized Action Figures"; Victoria Godwin, "Fan Pleasure and Profit,"
[176] Godwin, "Customized Action Figures," 115.
[177] Heljakka, "Toy Fandom, Adulthood, and The Ludic Age," 92-93.
[178] Kristen N. Bryant, Denise D. Bielby, C. Lee Harrington, "Populating the Universe: Toy Collecting and Adult Lives," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Fan Cultures*, ed. Linda Duits, Koos Zwaan, and Stijn Reijnders (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 31.
[179] Scott Herring, *The Hoarders: Material Deviance in Modern American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 57.

and playability of the toys. They highlight issues such as articulation, size, and accessories, and also feature biographies of designers and managers, production materials, molding techniques, packaging design, and prototyping. Moreover, these histories address unrealized toy concepts, distribution, advertisements, marketing, bootlegging, licensing contracts, region-specific variants, as well as memories of play and the hobby of collecting.

But action figure media can also refer to fictional texts produced on and about action figures. In terms of fiction, fans of toys pay homage to action figures across a wide range of practices usually associated with fandom of fictional texts. Action figure fans write fan-fic starring playthings, produce toy stories set in domestic spaces, and perform in action figure cosplay at conventions. Even though these texts star media-themed action figures, they never lose their focus on the materiality and playability of the playthings. Together, non-fiction and fiction action figure media shine new light on the relationship between the textuality and materiality of toys and other merchandise that has found little acknowledgment in film and media studies: This chapter examines the mediation of toys rather than the thingification of fictional storyworlds.

The goal of what follows, then, is dual. First, it provides a more elaborate analysis of fans' textual productivity of action figure media, a topic that has not been covered in as much detail as issues of collecting, customization, and play.[180] Through this focus on the mediation of action figures, I argue that toys animate and are in a sense consumed as texts beyond the actual plaything available in toy stores. The chapter also documents the increase of action figure media not just within fan communities but also within the cultural industries, which have begun to produce, distribute and market fiction and non-fiction action figure media to mainstream audiences. Second, the chapter's focus on action figure media also enables us to further our understanding of the role of fan historians in building and maintaining action figure fan communities. Sharpening our understanding of the communal context in which action figure fans operate as producers and consumers of action figure media will enable us to elucidate the complex and specific dynamics at work in these communities that are too often addressed under the umbrella term of "*Star Wars* fans."

[180] See Katriina Heljakka, "Toy Fandom, Adulthood, and The Ludic Age"; Godwin, "GI Joe vs. Barbie; Godwin, "Customized Action Figures"; Godwin, "Mimetic Fandom and One-Sixth-Scale Action Figures;" Bryant et al., "Populating the Universe: Toy Collecting and Adult Lives," 35-46.

The first section of this chapter adds action figure media into definitions of action figures, and explores fans' interest in the culture of the toys beyond the actual plaything and their mimetic and thematic connections to fictional texts. Fans stimulate and satisfy this interest, this section argues, through the consumption of media covering this wider material culture. With this in mind, the first section maintains that a full conceptualization of action figures must include three distinct components: discussions and documentation of physical characteristics, textual references to fictional narratives, and fiction and non-fiction mediation of the playthings as toys across different media. The second section surveys a variety of non-fiction and fiction action figure media, dividing them into the categories of toys-come-to-life-as-toys stories and action figure histories. Moreover, this section will address how the cultural industries have begun to produce action figure media geared toward mainstream audiences, often employing fans as producers or part of the production team of action figure media. The emphasis in this section is on the question of *how* and *what* stories fans tell about their object of fandom. The third section discusses action figure fans as a sub-community with their own hierarchies, skills, knowledge and history that operate side by side and in relation to other fan groups. Action figure fans are one of many sub-groups that come together under the umbrella of the *Star Wars* franchise. The final section revisits the history of *Star Wars* action figures and their development since the release of *A New Hope* in 1977. It focuses on central moments in the discursive formation of action figure-fan communities and key initiatives that define *Star Wars* action figure fandom, but have often been neglected in academic histories on the franchise and *Star Wars* fandom. In this regard, this section writes on more detail action figure fans into the history of *Star Wars*, and also presents key developments in the history of action figure media.

2.1. The Mediation of Action Figures

Action figures have been highly mediated toys with close ties to the media industries since their inception. Hasbro invented a new genre of playthings in 1964 when they released the G.I. Joe dolls specifically targeted at boys. Beginning in 1967, G.I. Joe toys were sold with giveaway comic books and provided background stories for the 12-inch plastic soldiers.[181] Other companies soon copied Hasbro's successful strategy, licensing popular characters from DC and

[181] Vincent Stanelmo, *The Complete Encyclopedia to G.I. Joe* (New York: Krause Publications, 2001), 162.

Marvel Comics, Franklin J. Schaffner's *Planet of the Apes* (1968), and *The Six Million Dollar Man* (1973-1978) for their own action figure lines. Kenner Toys found unprecedented success with their *Star Wars* action figures between 1978 and 1985, and this was followed by a wave of new lines based on other texts. It was after the Reagan administration abolished FCC regulations prohibiting product-based programming for children in 1983 that the synthesis among toy and media industries and fan cultures peaked. Action figure lines like *Masters of the Universe* and *Transformers* were released alongside commissioned television shows and conventional marketing campaigns.[182]

Today, the development of toys alongside a new film and television production is common practice, and new action figures are as anticipated as the texts themselves. Their release is accompanied by elaborate marketing campaigns across media, beyond traditional print and broadcast advertisements. For instance, before the highly anticipated release of Gareth Edwards's film *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016), Hasbro's and LEGO's new action figures and play sets were introduced on a live broadcast of *Good Morning America* (1975-present) on ABC. During the show, which promoted the premiere for a grown-up audience rather than for children, or for parents rather than their children, actor Riz Ahmed unpacked an action figure of his character as if for the first time. Performing an emotional reaction to seeing himself as an action figure suggested that turning from a movie character into a toy was an apparently desired career goal for any actor. Such promotional events place action figures in a narrative of personal and artistic achievement rather than mere objects of consumption for both Ahmed and toy producer Hasbro. For Ahmed, his plastic incarnation symbolized an increased status in Hollywood that comes with being cast in a multi-billion dollar franchise. For Hasbro, the detailed toy demonstrated technical precision in sculpting, and was an acknowledgment of Hollywood talent rather than management, and artistic achievement rather than commercialism. Whereas Carrie Fisher did not hesitate to ridicule her objectification as merchandise, Ahmed's displayed understanding of his thingification tells a different story: action figures are presented and advertised as a status symbol.[183]

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[182] For a comprehensive action figure history see Sharon M. Scott, *Toys and American Culture: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2010), 2-6.

[183] For example, Carrie Fisher included skits on her appearance as merchandise in her autobiographical book and stage show *Wishful Drinking* (2008 and 2010). She also referred to it at award shows, such as the ceremony for George Lucas's AFI Life Achievement award in 2005.

Most scholars have approached with ambivalence the increasing synergy of media and toy industries, and the consequential narrativization of playthings, throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The few scholars who take an optimistic perspective consider mimetic toys as opportunities for children to access, adapt, and expand themes addressed in fictional storyworlds through the three-dimensional materialization of otherwise two-dimensional images.[184] Ellen Seiter contends that "because they are mass-media goods, these kinds of toys actually facilitate group, co-operative play, by encouraging children to make up stories with shared codes and narratives."[185] Similarly, Dan Fleming claims that "a great deal [is] going on when a child plays with the toy, for which a TV programme cannot be held responsible," specifically seeing potential in the "textual phenomenology" of toys that enables children to re-enact as well as to expand, invent, and change story lines and characters through their own play.[186] The larger camp of pessimistic critics frame media-themed toys as mere promoters and symptoms of a mindless consumer culture.[187] For Roland Barthes "the child can only identify himself as owner, as user, never as creator; he does not invent the world, he uses it: there are, prepared for him, actions without wonder, without joy."[188] Stephen Kline follows a similar line of thought by explaining that watching "television has […] become a primer for learning the particular mental prerequisites for character play."[189] In film and media studies, similar conceptions reduce toys and other merchandise to tangible afterthoughts, produced for the benefit of a "parasitic industry" that does not possess any creative agency of their own.[190] In other words, the makers of merchandise are as limited in their creativity as their toys are limiting imaginative play.

More recent research has provided alternative readings of toys, moving the discussion from how media influences play to questions of how toys impact or change the interpretations

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[184] See Dan Fleming, *Powerplay: Toys as Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); Ellen Seiter, *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993).
[185] Seiter, *Sold Separately*, 191.
[186] Fleming, *Powerplay*, 15 and 11.
[187] See Stephen Kline, "The Limits to the Imagination: Marketing and Children's Culture," in *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America,* ed. Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 299-316.
[188] Roland Barthes*, Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 54.
[189] Stephen Kline, *Out of the Garden* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 323.
[190] See Jane M. Gaines, *Contested Culture: The Image, the Voice, and the Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 214.

of a film or show. Gray's study of paratexts has been one of the most influential in this regard, echoing Fleming in his claim that "toys […] have never merely been 'secondary' spinoffs or coincidental: they have played a vital role in, and thus have become a vital part of, the primary text and its unrivalled success."[191] Also using the *Star Wars* franchise as an example, Gray argues that the toys refined and accentuated certain themes and meanings of the films. Through play, children were able to develop their own narrative using marginal characters in the text that were available as action figures.[192] At the same time, the popularity of certain action figures also had an impact on the development of the film's diegesis. According to Gray, the rare and popular action figure of Boba Fett contributed to the bounty hunter's cult status among many fans, and the character's central role in the prequel trilogy can be attributed to this embodiment as a plaything.[193] However, the conception of toys as paratexts does not extend to action figure media that are self-referential rather than reliant upon Lucas's storyworld. Just as action figures challenge such binaries between film and merchandise, action figure media challenge the notion of "primary" and "secondary" texts with regards to action figures as texts.

Toy scholars also focus on connections to fictional texts and tend to exclude the non-fictional and fiction mediation of toys as playthings in their definitions of action figures. So, then, non-fiction productions like the fan-made documentary *Plastic Galaxy: The Story of Star Wars Toys* (Brian Stillman 2014), reviews of new releases published on video channels like *Analog Toys,* specialized fan-magazines like *Action Figure Resource*, or the recent Netflix production *The Toys That Made Us* (2017-present) are overlooked. Consider Sharon M. Scott's definition of action figures as:

> miniature toys made to represent living individuals and fictional characters. They are made of plastic and have articulated body parts such as arms that bend and heads that turn. The action figure usually functions within a larger narrative in which a number of other characters have specific roles. Within these fictions, which are provided by comic books, television, and real life drama, the figures

[191] Gray, *Show Sold Separately*,183; also see Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix,* 87-135.
[192] See Ibid., 181-183.
[193] See Ibid.

> are likely divided into groups of heroes and villains who reenact the battle between Good and Evil.[194]

Although *Star Wars* action figures cannot be wholly separated from the fictional texts they are based on, I argue that their presentation *as miniature plastic toys with articulated body parts* in action figure media operates at one remove, or at least is not strictly dependent upon the narrative "mothership" of the *Star Wars* storyworld. A definition of action figures that prioritizes their function as playthings provides a better understanding of why and how action figures are consumed, both independently and in relation to other franchise texts. Critics of mimetic toys may see a toy's attractiveness as increasingly dependent on its connection to characters from a fictional text and the consequent possibility to reenact narratives.[195] But action figure media with its focus on the materiality and playability of toys demonstrates that consumers still care about a toy's intrinsic appeal as a plaything beyond its mimetic and established narrative qualities.

Promotional materials are the oldest form of action figure media. In their marketing between 1978 and 1983, Kenner focused on how *Star Wars* action figures enabled play rather than on establishing elaborate connections to the film's characters, settings, and themes beyond combat. Television commercials emphasized the size of the figures, which at 3.75 inches was considerably smaller than the industry standard of 12 inches. Moreover, these commercials emphasized special features such as weapons and vehicles. They showed children holding the figures, placing them in easy-to-handle spaceships, and moving them effortlessly from one place to another. Reference to the film's content and themes functioned more as a trigger for "action" than as a guideline for a screen-accurate restaging of iconic scenes. Likewise, toy catalogues and stores staged the figures, play sets, and vehicles in complex dioramas that children could admire onsite or in print, thereby also delivering information on the latest toy releases, as well as suggestions on how the figures could be posed and arranged at home.[196]

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[194] Scott, *Toys and American Culture*,1.
[195] See Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix*, 111-113.
[196] For scans of the Sears Wish Book, see: Matt Dracula, "Collectibles from the outer Rim: Sears Wish Book!," *Star Wars.com* [blog], Dec 14, 2015, https://www.starwars.com/news/collectibles-from-the-outer-rim-sears-wish-book; Brad Rica, "The Sears Wish Book and Star Wars Toys Real Value," *Star Wars.com* [blog], March 31, 2014, https://www.starwars.com/news/sears-catalog-wish-book-and-star-wars-toys-real-value. For an article with links to several images of Kenner's show room at the New York Toy Fare, see: Ron Salvatore, "Star Wars Does New York: Kenner

The impact of such texts becomes evident in fans' childhood recollections published in their autobiographies, which often contain sections dedicated to memories of television commercials and print advertisements. In *A Long Time Ago: Growing Up with and out of Star Wars,* Gib van Ert describes how looking through toy catalogues was a significant activity for him and his friend during their childhood, and how central Sears catalogues and Kenner's booklets were for their engagement with action figures.[197] As he recalls,

> The Wish Book was a thick, glossy, newsprint-format catalogue for Christmas shopping. Almost every one of its 400-plus pages was crammed full of colour photographs displaying the thousands of items available from Sears on mail order [….]. The toy section devoted one or two pages to *Star Wars*, sometimes displaying Kenner's figures and other offerings in dioramas. […] Anything new excited our greatest attention, but old items were also of interest if we did not yet have them. Some weeks later, when the novelty of the catalogue had worn off, we would still come back to it from time to time, just to admire its arrangements of figurines and vehicles […]. Even better than the Sears catalogues were Kenner's own promotional pamphlets. These were glossy rectangular booklets, roughly the dimensions of a postcard, inserted by Kenner into packaging of its larger toys. Each of the dozen or so pages of these mini catalogues displayed action figures, vehicles, playsets and various oddball items like Switcheroos […] and Play-Doh Action Play sets, all in full colour photos displayed on black pages with white text.[198]

The value given by fans to these texts is also evidenced by the fact that promotional materials are themselves seen as collectibles and are regularly covered in price guides or collector's meetings. As a section on store displays on *The Star Wars Collectors Archive* states, store displays issued "when the movies were released are some of the hottest, and most difficult to find items in *Star Wars* collecting. In particular, the Kenner store displays command the highest

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Toy Fair Showrooms of the '70s and '80s," *The Star Wars Collectors Archive* [blog], accessed November 28, 2018, http://theswca.com/images-speci/toyfair/index.html.

[197] See Gib van Ert, *A Long Time Ago: Growing up with and out of Star Wars* (Lexington: Soi-disant press, 2012), 61-62.

[198] Ibid., 61-62

prices."[199] On the same page, readers can find a link to "The Comprehensive Kenner Store Display Checklist" that helps collectors navigate between different displays issued with the release of Kenner action figures.[200]

The attention fans pay to ephemera is symptomatic of their wider interest in the material culture of action figures, a practice covered by the term action figure media. In addition to the finished toys one can buy in stores, action figure media also addresses objects and materials related to a toy's production, such as licensing contracts, production notes, concept art, maquettes, prototypes, proof cards, store displays, and patent records, among other things. Action figure media therefore provides a much more complex image of toys as objects, and challenges established definitions based on simple connection to fictional texts. Fiction and non-fiction action figure media focus on the different incarnations and materialities of the toys that are rarely discussed in scholarship on the intersection of media and toy culture. Action figure media indicates how the playthings are consumed through media about toys and their material qualities, therefore making their consumption independent of actual ownership of the toys themselves.

The mediation of action figures mirrors the emergence and dynamics of the "mass-media toy" that scholars have emphasized in their research on playthings in relation to transmedia, convergence, and participation—albeit from a different direction.[201] However, in the case of action figure media, we do not see the toyification of a mass media character as providing "the pleasure of participation: the participation in a communicative network or narrative work accessed through the materialized image of the character in its various thingly forms."[202] Rather, we notice how the mass mediation of toys enables a form of participation in a communicative and narrative framework that offers consumers various access points to representations of toys in different material states and stages. Hence, "the mass media toy" in this dissertation is understood not as the three-dimensional materialization of a two-dimensional image, but the reverse: instead of making ephemeral images and stories tangible, the material, tangible forms

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[199] Gus Lopez, "Store Displays," *The Star Wars Collectors Archive* [blog], accessed November 6, 2018, http://theswca.com/images-storedisplays.html.
[200] Ron Salvatore, "The Comprehensive Kenner Store Display Checklist," *The Star Wars Collectors Archive* [blog], accessed November 6, 2018, http://theswca.com/images-kenst/display-chart.html.
[201] See Steinberg, *Anime's Media Mix,* 89-132.
[202] Ibid., 113

of action figures become their own narratives in action figure media. Indeed, most action figure media—podcasts, blogs, and video channels, for example—can be accessed and consumed wherever one finds the right technological equipment. Steinberg argues that toys "provide a new physical dimensionality to [a fictional] screen-world through weight, proportions, texture, smell, and eventually, the scratches and wear."[203] In consideration of the examples of action figure media discussed above, I maintain that it is also crucial to recognize that action figure media provide a new authenticity to the toys by covering their conception, production, distribution, and reception. This understanding of action figures as "mass media toys" recalibrates to a degree the point of orientation in our conceptualisation of toys.

Finally, the cultural impact of action figures "off-screen" and beyond books and podcasts is also evident in everyday fashion, which fans use as a means to express their action figure fandom. According to Nicolle Lamerichs, fashion "shows there is an intimate relation between even uncostumed fans and their clothing."[204] The range of brands that have acquired *Star Wars* licenses for their clothing lines has grown rapidly since the release of *A New Hope*. As Jonathan DeRosa explains, *Star Wars* has such "a current effect in fashion that an article pops up concurrently regardless of any official release dates for *Star Wars* products or films."[205] This includes fashion referencing action figures. From t-shirts and sweaters that depict action figures, their packaging, or the Kenner Toys logo, to hand-made action figure earrings, action figure-inspired fashion has given fans the chance to express their fandom through their wardrobe.

Sometimes the line between the toys and their film is unclear. In some instances fashion labels have referenced both the fictional *Star Wars* universe as much as they reference the material culture of the franchise. For example, Adidas designed a line of sneakers in which each pair of shoes was designed based on a character from the films, and was sold in packaging reminiscent of the action figures instead of customary shoe boxes.[206] At the Cannes Film Festival premiere of Ron Howard's *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018), action figures took centre stage on the red carpet and the realm of best- and worst-dressed lists. Promoting the film at the

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[203] Ibid, 123.
[204] Nicolle Lamerichs, "Stranger than Fiction: Fan Identity in Cosplay," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 7 (2011), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2011.0246.
[205] Jonathan DeRosa, "Fashion from a Galaxy Far, Far Away," in *Fan Phenomena: Star Wars*, ed. Mika Elovaara (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2013), 24.
[206] See Salih Kucukaga, "Adidas Star Wars Sneakers," *The Dieline* [blog], November 1, 2010, https://beta.thedieline.com/blog/2010/11/1/adidas-star-wars-sneakers.html.

prestigious film festival, Thandie Newton wore a dress with an action figure print with all the black *Star Wars* characters from the *Star Wars* franchise in the past. The custom-made Vivienne Westwood gown caused an unusual overlap in reporting among toy and fashion bloggers discussing the actress' dress choice.[207] If fans of film and television are marked not only by what they watch but also by what they wear, the same can be said about action figure fans. Or to put it another way, action figures have become so popular that one can buy now merchandising *for* merchandising.

2.2. Toys-Come-to-Life-As-Toys Media, Action Figure Histories, and Mainstream Media

Fans have been some of the most productive and creative producers of action figure media, bringing together skills and knowledge on the *Star Wars* storyworld and its material culture that often exceed in style and creativity that of industry-run promotional campaigns. Action figure media can be divided into two broad categories. The first category is toys-come-to-life-as-toys media, which should be understood as a subset of the toys-come-to-life genre in which playthings become animated characters without human interference, such as the *Toy Story* franchise.[208] Fan and media scholars have addressed the animation of toys in relation to photoplay and vidding for storytelling, for instance.[209] However, in these examples toys are first and foremost animated as the characters they mimic. Hence, a toy's specificity as a plaything is often neglected in favour of representational accuracy in the remaking, expansion, or parody of popular media texts. The examples discussed below bring toys to life as playthings. In their depiction, the toys may or may not contain character traits familiar from fiction, but action figure media never lose sight of action figures' qualities as a toy well beyond mimesis to a narrative film. *The second category* is fan-written histories of a given action figure as a design object, commodity, plaything, object of fandom, and collectible. They chronicle what design historian

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[207] This investment extends to tattoos of action figures that fans place on their bodies, which according to Bethan Jones demonstrates "affective investment in a text" and also functions as "a performance of fandom and an example of sacred fan identity. See Bethan Jones, "Fannish Tattooing and Sacred Identity," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 18 (2015), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2015.0626.

[208] See Lois R. Kuznets, *When Toys Come Alive: Narratives of Animation, Metamorphosis, and Development* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

[209] See Jenkins, "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?"; Godwin, "Customized Action Figures"; Heljakka, "Toy Fandom, Adulthood, and The Ludic Age."

Victor Margolin calls the full cycle of a product that "begins with its conception, planning, and manufacturing, moves to its acquisition and use, and ends with its disassembly or disposal."[210] Fan-written histories therefore present a toy's past apart from the release of new media texts that often structure the appearance of action figures in the *Star Wars* historiography.

Toys-come-to-life-as-toys media

Although relatively small in comparison to fan-fic of other media productions, fan-fic archives and databases, in which fans share and preserve their stories, contain works in which toys come to life and interact either with each other, their owners, or with characters from other franchises. Examples like *Welcome to the Dollhouse* notably negotiate the relationship between *Star Wars* texts and the material culture of the franchise.[211] It tells the story of a longing Qui-Gon Jinn action figure, who waits every night for the arrival of his beloved apprentice, rejecting sexual advances from Ken dolls living in the same space. The pleasure of reading this text lies in the transplanting of the close relationship between Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi portrayed in George Lucas's *The Phantom Menace* (1999) into the space of a child's bedroom, where the queer potentialities of the Jedi mentor–pupil relationship are explored. *Welcome to the Dollhouse* challenges readers to think differently about typical heteronormative portrayals of Jedi relationships. In addition, the story can also be read as a critique of the gendered and hyper-masculine branding of action figures as boy toys.[212]

While "the strict gender coding of toys does not necessarily predestine them for stereotypical uses in play,"[213] merchandise still positions female fans in discourses of beauty and romance, and action figures remain geared toward heterosexual male consumers.[214] By queering action figures, fan-fic authors challenge the still-present gender politics "in a contemporary media environment where culture industries gendercode their media products as 'for boys' or

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[210] Victor Margolin, *The Politics of the Artificial: Essays on Design and Design Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 46.
[211] darthhellokitty, "Welcome to the Dollhouse," *Archive of Our Own*, August 21, 2014, https://archiveofourown.org/works/2175825?view_adult=true.
[212] See Suzanne Scott, "#Wheresrey?: Toys, Spoilers, and the Gender Politics of Franchise Paratexts," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34, no.2 (2017), 138-147.
[213] Seiter, *Sold Separately*, 192.
[214] Derek Johnson, "'May the Force Be with Katie': Pink Media Franchising and the Postfeminist Politics of HerUniverse," *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 6 2014), 895-911; Scott**,** "#Wheresrey?".

'for girls'."[215] Instead of focusing on masculinized themes of combat, fan-fic authors emphasize love and vulnerability, thereby providing an alternative form of action figure consumption outside the heteronormative iterations of *Star Wars* that primarily target male consumers. In other words, action figure fan-fic is a form of resistance to dominant cultural norms and practices that reduce *Star Wars* and its toys to a "boys' game of action figure combat" and neglects, marginalizes, and prohibits alternative modes of play.[216]

However, not all forms of action figure media lend themselves to such readings. The practice of action figure vidding also plays with the fantasy of what toys get up to when we aren't looking, but without challenging normative conceptions of gender and sexuality. These productions are primarily set in domestic spaces or playgrounds and tell stories about toys living in them. They often star generic characters such as Stormtroopers and have titles that provide vague information and are structured around simple references to battles, rescues, or fights. Action figure videos begin as quickly as they end and often contain minimal dialogue. For example, *Star Wars Stop Motion Zombies* shows a fight between different *Star Wars* toys, in which action figures fight between their own packaging on what looks like a kitchen or dining room floor.[217] Even in movies with more advanced scripts, the toys merely come to life as playthings. *Star Wars The Force Shorts: How To Deal With Haters* shows how new action figures arrive and disturb the peaceful atmosphere among older toys from the *Star Wars*, *Transformers*, and Marvel universes.[218.] In all of these cases, the videos document the toys' potential for play by acting out themes of war and battle from their source text. With their obvious setting in domestic spaces and staging of battles, these videos toe a commercial line in which the action figures are first and foremost toys for playing out conflicts. They reinforce the sexed and gendered perceptions of the franchise and its toys that *Welcome to the Dollhouse* tries to break. Therefore, these videos become a site for the reassertion of dominant gender roles in fictional storyworlds as well as material culture.

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[215] Johnson, "'May the Force Be with Katie'", 897.
[216] Will Brooker, *Using the Force: Creativity, Community and Star Wars Fans* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000), 200
[217] Nivrerex Film, "Star Wars Stop Motion Zombies," YouTube video, 1:46, October 29, 2013, YouTube,https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDA7IUBbj0U.
[218] TheLeoLegendary10, "Star Wars The Force Shorts: How To deal With Haters," YouTube video, 1:40, September 5, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzwQh--pExQ.

The videos discussed above differ in their emphasis on toys as playthings from what Jenkins' describes as action figure movies and cinema respectively: "movies which may lovingly recreate the specific images the filmmakers remembered from the source material but may also playfully evoke the mixing and matching of characters that were part of toyroom play."[219] Action figure cinema is dedicated to character development or world-building, that uses the toys as an "authoring system […] to make up their own stories about these characters."[220] In my conception of action figure vidding, toys come to life as toys, and while character traits and storylines may potentially overlap, the films nevertheless always make clear that the viewer is watching *Star Wars*-toy stories and not *Star Wars*-stories told with toys. In the case of the film *Blue TIE Blues-Tie Fighter*, toys are even portrayed by humans. The short film tells the story of several vehicles gathering for a poker game that end up discussing the exclusion of Blue Tie Fighter from the Kenner line for Irvin Kershner's *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) more than thirty years after its release.[221] Toys do not stand in for humans, but humans function as doubles for the playthings—an uncanny reversal of roles that makes the overly predictable masculine approach to the portrayal of the vehicles an ultimately (but probably unintended) queer endeavour.

Images taken at recent conventions feature cosplayers in costumes based not on actual characters from films but instead on corresponding action figures, emphasizing vintage toys' bulky materiality. For example, an Obi-Wan Kenobi cosplay is based on the abstract light-brown costume of the 1978 action figure, and includes a telescopic lightsaber and unwieldy plastic vest. Recreating the stiff look of an action figure, the cosplayer avoids any expression that would fall outside the expressive capacities of the toy.[222] If cosplayers "use their bodies explicitly to display their affection for certain narratives," the above indicates a fandom for displaying their intimate knowledge and appreciation of very particular qualities of a specific material object.[223]
In addition, images from conventions show life-sized replicas of action figure packaging in

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[219] Henry Jenkins, "He-Man and the Masters of Transmedia," *Confessions of an Aca-Fan* [blog], May 20, 2010, http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2010/05/he-man_and_the_masters_of_tran.html.
[220] Ibid.
[221] *RetroBlasting*, "Star Wars Follies: Blue TIE Blues – Tie Fighter," YouTube video, 7:29, June 7, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Or9MK0_LMe0&feature=youtu.be.
[222] Scifi Staff, "Epic Star Wars Obi-Wan Kenobi Action Figure Cosplay," *Sci-Fi Design* [blog], April 13, 2017, https://www.scifidesign.com/2017/04/13/epic-star-wars-obi-wan-kenobi-action-figure-cosplay/.
[223] Lamerichs, "Stranger than Fiction."

which fans can pose, thereby transforming cosplayers of media texts into action figures.[224] The cosplayers' detailed costumes become an indirect reference to the parallel existence of material and textual incarnations of characters, as well as the increasing screen-resemblance of action figures enabled by more refined technologies. Action figure cosplay therefore emphasizes the possibility of mimesis while simultaneously stressing the limitations of action figures in achieving absolute screen accuracy or the illusion of aliveness. Performing without any facial expression or fluid movements, the cosplayers are a come-to-life promise of play as advertised in catalogues. They are not, crucially, attempting to represent or embody on-screen characters.

Finally, fan art—drawings, paintings and sculptures—equally foregrounds the materiality of toys. Stiffness and stillness are some of the core themes addressed in these works. While action figures today have up to 18 or more points of articulation, Kenner action figures from the first trilogy had only five. Consider the work of Bwana Spoons, which highlights the stiffness of the figures by placing them in front of colourful backgrounds in positions that ultimately highlight their immobility. His paintings also address the vague resemblance of the old figures to their on-screen characters, and rely more on the color schemes of costumes than on facial likeness.[225] Mats Gunnarsson's series of paintings uses these material characteristics in his oil portraits painted in Renaissance style. As such, they can also be interpreted as a comment on the tension that arises between the mass-produced, cheap toys and the art world's dependency on originality and exclusivity.[226] In terms of sculpting, Mike Leavitt created a series of articulated action figures that feature Michael Jackson as Wicket the Ewok, Steve Jobs as C-3PO, Charles Darwin as Chewbacca, Hillary Clinton as a Stormtrooper, Donald Trump as Darth Vader, and Nelson Mandela as Obi-Wan Kenobi, among others.[227] Again, while the mash-up of

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[224] See Matt Hills, "From Transmedia Storytelling to Transmedia Experience: Star Wars Celebration as a Crossover/Hierarchical Space," in *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling*, ed. Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 221.
[225] YBMW Staff, "Spoonful Of Star Wars - Paintings Of Vintage Kenner Star Wars Action Figures!,"*YouBentMyWookie* [blog], October 4, 2010, youbentmywookie.com/wtf/spoonful-of-star-wars-paintings-of-vintage-kenner-star-wars-action-figures-10228.
[226] New Paintings," *Mats Gunnarsson* [website], accessed November 6, 2018, http://www.matsgunnarsson.com/new.htm.
[227] "Empire Peaks," *Mike Leavitt Art* [website], accessed November 6, 2018, http://mikeleavittart.com/fineart/portfolio/EmpirePeaks/.

fictional *Star Wars* characters with personalities of historical importance is a common practice in fan art, these sculptures stand out as they clearly position themselves as action figures rather than explicit textual representations.

Figure 1.1 Actress Thandie Newtown at the premiere of *Solo: A Star Wars Story* at the 71st Cannes Film Festival in 2018. Her "action figure dress" was designed by British Designer Vivienne Westwood.

Figure 1.2 Star Wars x adidas Originals ZX 800. The sneakers were based on the character of Boba Fett, and sold in packaging inspired by action figures card backs.

Figure 1.3 Obi-Wan Kenobi vintage Kenner action figure from 1978.

Figure 1.4 Obi-Wan Kenobi action figure cosplay.

Figure 1.5 Mats Gunnarson's oil painting of vintage Kenner action figures. The paintings depicts action figures of the bounty hunters Zuckuss, 4LOM, Dengar, IG88, Bossk and Boba Fett. The group of bounty hunters appeared for the first time in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Figure 1.6 Bwana Spoons's Star Wars action figure inspired painting. The artist's paintings emphasize the stiffness and immobility of the figures.

Action Figure Histories

Price and collectible guides are one of the oldest and most popular genres to engage with the history of toys. In the case of *Star Wars* toys, the lists, catalogues, and digests produced and

distributed by Tom Kennedy Radio Productions (TKRP) represent early efforts to document the price of every item of *Star Wars* merchandise released. The *Star Wars Merchandise List*, the first comprehensive guide to *Star Wars* merchandise, came out as early as the summer of 1978. Published without images, the list included over 300 items licensed through 20th Century Fox, and invited readers "to scan these pages and expand your collection of merchandise from the greatest science fiction classic of all times."[228] Since then, the genre of collectible guides has expanded, with each guide showing different approaches to *Star Wars* toys and their making and standing as collectibles. For instance, Jeremy Beckett's *The Official Price Guide to Star Wars Memorabilia* reads like a training manual for present and future collectors, providing readers with information about different merchandise lines and collectors' terminology.[229] Mark Bellomo's *The Ultimate Guide to Vintage Star Wars Action Figures 1977–1985* combines information about each action figure's material characteristics with images and summaries of characters and their roles in the films.[230] And Stephen J. Sansweet's *Star Wars: The Ultimate Action Figure Collection* covers more than 2,500 individual action figures with an image for each figure and a brief descriptive text covering issues such as their main material characteristics, the role of the corresponding character in the films, changes made to the figures of characters over three decades, and their popularity.[231]

Fan historians have explored the history of action figures and other merchandise from various angles, often focusing on one specific production step. For instance, Mattias Rendahl's objective with his self-published *A New Proof: Kenner Star Wars Packaging Design 1977–1979* is "to assemble the most complete and comprehensive information about *Star Wars* packaging as possible" and to "understand the crazy amount of work that went into creating toy packaging and how it was done."[232] Rendahl does so by providing a thorough account of how the packaging

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[228] For a scan of *The Star Wars Merchandise List* see: "TKRP Star Wars Checklist," September 27, 2014, *Rebelscum Forums*, accessed May 8, 2018, http://forum.rebelscum.com/photogallery/data/500/TKRP2.jpg.
[229] Jeremy Beckett, *The Official Price Guide to Star Wars Memorabilia* (New York: House of Collectibles, 2005).
[230] Mark Bellomo, *The Ultimate Guide to Vintage Star Wars Action Figures 1977-1985* (New York: Krause Publications, 2014).
[231] Stephen J. Sansweet, *Star Wars: The Ultimate Action Figure Collection* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2012).
[232] Mattias Rendahl, *A New Proof: Kenner Star Wars Packaging Design 1977-1979* (Unknown place of publication: Dear Publications 2015), n.p.

was devised, including interviews with designers, prints of different stages of package design for each figure, and discussion of how the packaging designs entered the collectors' market and specialized community developed around it. Similarly, *Gus and Duncan's Guide to Star Wars Prototypes* by Gus Lopez and Duncan Jenkins focuses on prototypes of a variety of *Star Wars* merchandise and the community that has gathered around them. The guide shows early designs for toys and other merchandise, some of which made it to production and some of which was cancelled in the pre-production stages.[233] In many instances, toy companies would dispose of these materials, and would keep only a few of them in their company archives as references before eventually disposing of them altogether. Hence, the preservation of these materials is also the result of fans, who collected them by dumpster diving, visits to flea markets, and directed searches online. The work of these three fan historians turns material associated with the conception and production of toys into original and auratic objects, which are then accessible to fellow fans and a wider audience. Crucially, these objects are often excluded from commercial collectible guides or Lucasfilm-produced histories.

National histories of *Star Wars* merchandise outside the USA have been another popular topic for fan historians. They provide detailed information on what kind of *Star Wars* merchandise is sold internationally, how this merchandise differs from merchandise sold in the USA, and details about toys advertisements and promotions. Stéphane Faucourt's *La French Touch: The Definitive Guide to French Star Wars Collectibles 1977–1987* delivers detailed information on how the marketing office of French toy company Meccano developed how-to-guides for retailer catalogues that explain how the action figures should be advertised, what action figures were depicted on the covers, how many pages were dedicated to the *Star Wars* toys, as well as how customer catalogues advertised the toys in formats such as regular booklets or folding posters added to magazines. Moreover, Faucourt offers insights into the kinds of advertising strategies that were used, as well as how the toys were promoted in the national toy magazine *La revue du jouet*, and through promotional materials like greeting cards, store

[233] Duncan Jenkins and Gus Lopez, *Gus and Duncan's Guide to Star Wars Prototypes* (Unknown place of publication: Completist Publications, 2010).

displays, giveaways, and special-offer announcements.[234] In this regard, *La French Touch* is also a testament to the work that went into selling hundreds of millions of action figures, sales that cannot simply be attributed to the success of the films.

Fans also collect, preserve, archive, and share stories of how the action figures were played with. On a material level, the importance of play becomes evident in videos of action figure restorations. They provide information on how to restore used toys as close to mint condition as possible, but also on how to preserve traces of play, such as scratches and wear. The preservation series *Toy Polloi* and *RetroBlasting* include videos that expressively highlight the need to preserve these traces, and also feature reviews of vintage toys and what kind of play they might offer.[235] On a personal level, fans have been active designers of oral history projects. By interviewing other fans about their memories of play, these projects prioritize local and personal stories of everyday fan practice over immense production numbers and revenues. The blog *I Grew Up Star Wars* contains several hundred images, submitted by fans, that depict children playing with action figures or other merchandise. In a podcast featured on the blog, select fans explain the background of these images, locating their fandom within the context of their everyday lives as children.[236] Similarly, on the podcast *My Star Wars Story*, fans recollect their first encounters with the *Star Wars* films and toys and how their fandom has developed through the years.[237] As such, these fan-produced histories connect individual stories to a larger historical narrative of the *Star Wars* franchise and fandom that is mapping, distinguishing, and diversifying approaches to what, who, and where *Star Wars* history is written.

Fan-run museums will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4, but they need to be briefly mentioned within the context of action figure media. Fans have shared insights into their collections on social media, video platforms, and blogs by sharing images or video tours. Moreover, database websites like *The Star Wars Collectors Archive* can be considered as both

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[234] Stéphane Faucourt, *La French Touch: The Definitive Guide to French Star Wars Collectibles 1977–1987* (Unknown place of publication: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016).
[235] *Toy Polloi*, YouTube channel, accessed May 8, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/user/toypolloi; *RetroBlasting*, YouTube channel, accessed May 8, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/user/retroblasting.
[236] *I Grew Up Star Wars: Keeping the Galactic Memories of Our Childhood Alive* [blog], accessed May 8, 2018, http://igrewupstarwars.com/.
[237] *My Star Wars Story* [blog], accessed August 29, 2018, http://mystarwarsstory.com/.

online collectible guides and a form of online museum; other fans, however, have made their collections open to the public. Rancho Obi-Wan houses the world's largest private *Star Wars* collection in a former chicken barn in California; The Galaxy Connection in Arkansas is placed in a building in the city centre; and Stars of the Galaxy in Germany displays action figures and other collectibles and memorabilia in a former indoor swimming pool facility. In turn, Brett's Toy Museum in New York State and The Star Toy Museum in Vermont are open to the public but housed in the curators' homes. The thematic emphases of these museums differ. They include toys and merchandise as part of the overall pop cultural phenomenon of *Star Wars* (Rancho Obi-Wan), the celebration of George Lucas's creativity (Brett's Toy Museum), and the relationships among *Star Wars*, Christianity, and the biography of the museum's owner (The Galaxy Connection).

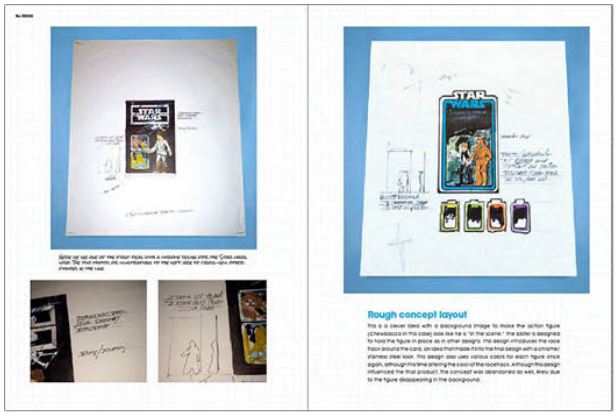

Figure 1.7 Mattias Rendahl's *A New Proof*. The image shows a section from the book that addresses the design process of action figure packaging design.

Figure 1.8 Mattias Rendahl's *A New Proof*. The image shows a section about fromer Kenner employee Tom Neiheisel, who considerably contributed to the saving of Star Wars action figure packaging proofs.

Figure 1.9 The image was posted on the blog *I Grew Up Star Wars*. It is one of many images posted by Star Wars fans that document family celebrations that included the exchange of Star Wars gifts.

Figure 1.10 The image was posted on the blog *I Grew Up Star Wars*. It shows the action figure collection of a young Star Wars fan in the 1980s.

Fan historians also gather at conventions and share their findings in themed panels on specialized topics, such as the Collector's Track at the official *Star Wars* Convention Star Wars Celebration. The convention was first organized in 1999, and collectors have been present to hold panel discussions about their objects of fandom as well as their community history ever since. Collector's Track 2017 included panels with titles such as "Highlights from Four Decades of *Star Wars* Collectibles"; "*Star Wars* Display and Advertising Collecting"; "The Art and Packaging of Vintage *Star Wars* Toys"; "Displaying Your *Star Wars* Collection"; "Star Wars Collecting: Social Media & Networking"; "A *Star Wars* Collector's Journey"; "Collecting *Star Wars*: A Singaporean Perspective"; "Time Travel to Vintage Toy Factories Around the World"; and "*Star Wars* Collecting in Argentina." Talks are usually accompanied with PowerPoint presentations that summarize key facts and figures and also feature images of private collections, archival documents, old catalogues, store displays, production sketches, and other visual aids. Some of the presentations are recorded and put online, thus allowing fans who were not able to visit the convention a chance to review what they missed.

Finally, fan historians are also interested in the history of the collection and action figure fan community. As will be further elaborated in the last section of this chapter, some fan historians have begun to cover how early action figure fans, such as the abovementioned Tom Kennedy—who released and distributed collectible guides and zines from 1978 onwards—or Walter Stuben—who was known as the owner of the world's largest Star Wars collection in the 1980s—shaped the hobby of collecting. In other instances, fans include interviews with key agents in their podcasts and blogs, give presentations at conventions about the history of their community, or include chapters on these topics in their books, such as Rendahl in *A New Proof*. Celebrating and researching 40 years of *Star Wars* and its action figure history is therefore also ultimately an endeavour to document 40 years of action figure fandom.

One of the most prestigious projects in which the history of the toys and the history of the fan community came together was the fan-made, 80-minute documentary *Plastic Galaxy: The Story of Star Wars Toys* by Brian Stillman from 2014. The film takes a look at the history of *Star Wars* toys by interviewing toy fans and collectors, toy designers and historians, as well as by using footage from old toy commercials. Although the *Plastic Galaxy* was not distributed in theatres, it was available for streaming on Amazon and iTunes. Moreover, it was included in

the program of select Virgin Australia, Air Canada, and Air New Zealand flights.[238] Online, many fans praised the film. As a fan collector expressed in their review:

> While I knew I would love the collector guests, I was surprised to be so fascinated with the interviews of former Kenner employees. They told great stories about the design and marketing of these toys, loads of stuff the average collector probably wouldn't have known. The great thing about these guys is that you can see that they really dug working on these toys, it wasn't just a job for them. They love it that they were such an important part of *Star Wars* history. When we are buying, trading and selling our SW collectibles, it would be easy to lose focus of the individuals who made it all possible for us—these toys were sincerely ahead of their time. Thanks to Brian Stillman et al. for reminding us.[239]

The reviewer's appreciation of the toy designers is crucial to an understanding of the third kind of action figure media that will be discussed below: mainstream non-fiction and fiction action figure media that is often produced by, or with the participation of, fan historians, but is directed toward a wider audience than die-hard fans. This media comes in the form of toys-come-to-life commercials, documentaries featuring toy designers, or coffee-table books.

Mainstream Action Figure Media

The cultural industries have taken notice of toy fandom and the vast interest of fans in action figure media, and have begun to produce works for action figure media that borrow in form and content from the work of fans. Jenkins argues that the "aesthetic of action-figure cinema gave rise to Adult Swim's successful *Robot Chicken* series, which also mixes and matches characters or recasts them to achieve desired effects."[240] The themes and aesthetics of action figure vidding have also found wider distribution channels. Hasbro celebrated the 40th anniversary of *Star Wars*

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[238] Tomás Romero, "IFE Film Review: Star Wars toy doc Plastic Galaxy disappoints," *Runway Girl Network* [blog], March 20, 2016, https://runwaygirlnetwork.com/2016/03/20/ife-film-review-star-wars-toy-doc-plastic-galaxy-disappoints/.

[239] Christian Carnouche, "Documentary Review: Plastic Galaxy – The Story of Star Wars Toys," *Vintage Star Wars Collectors* [blog], June 24, 2014, https://vintagestarwarscollectors.com/documentary-review-plastic-galaxy-the-story-of-star-wars-toys/.

[240] Jenkins, "He-Man and the Masters of Transmedia."

by producing an elaborate toys-come-to-life-as-toys advertisement in which vintage toys from Kenner and their latest Black Series meet at night in a deserted toy design office. The commercial shows a fight between the Rebellion and the Empire in which vintage Kenner toys pair up with their contemporaries from Hasbro's Black Series to fight the enemy, with the latest, bigger Hasbro figures creatively using their ancestors as weapons. By bringing toys from different periods together, Hasbro celebrates the original toys while advertising the improved accuracy and flexibility of their own line through modes of animation that document these characteristics. In terms of non-fiction, Hasbro has begun to produce promotional materials called *Designer Desks* featuring toy designers who give insights into the making of action figures.[241]

Lucasfilm saw the potential of action figure media in the early 1990s, when they planned to publish their own official price guide for toys. They hired *Star Wars* fan Stephen J. Sansweet, whose role within the company will be explored in more detail in chapter three, to write the price guide. Sansweet ended up writing a coffee table book. Since the 1980s, several price guides had included *Star Wars* action figures in their listings, but Sansweet's *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible*, published in 1992, stood out as a result of the author's detailed research on the production of *Episode IV* to *VI* and its merchandise. The book, in short, explores the films in as much detail as the history of the licensed toys. Sansweet conducted archival research at Lucasfilm and Kenner and interviewed members of the film crew as well as Kenner employees. His research resonated considerably with action figure fans, as it treated merchandise as an integral and irreplaceable factor in making *Star Wars* the pop cultural phenomenon it is today.[242] It marked the beginning of a wide range of other fan historiographical work, especially on issues like packaging design, a topic that Lucasfilm has not addressed in detail in similar official publications. As will be further elaborated in the next chapter, there are still far fewer Lucasfilm-sponsored books on collectibles than on films. In this respect, there is room for fans to fill the gaps with their own work, thereby making them unofficial labourers of *Star Wars* historiography.

[241] "Designer Desks," Hasbro.com, accessed September 13, 2018. https://starwars.hasbro.com/en-ca/videos.
[242] Sansweet, *From Concept to Screen to Collectible*.

Production companies other than Lucasfilm or Hasbro have begun to capitalize on toy fandom, as well as the ubiquity and recognition value of action figures in popular culture. In December 2017, Netflix released the first season of *The Toys That Made Us*, which in four episodes explores the history of *Star Wars* and other iconic toy lines. In form and style, the show resembles the genre of making-ofs and behind-the-scenes reports, usually produced to advertise the release of a new film or TV show, or to celebrate their anniversaries. While such productions primarily refer to toys' sales figures in order to highlight the success of a film or series, *The Toys That Made Us* dedicates the entire 45 minutes of each episode to the design, production, distribution, and reception of playthings. References to related films or TV shows serve only as a means to introduce crucial developments in the toy lines, and never take centre stage. By putting the history of the toys and their makers at the center of the show, *The Toys That Made Us* deemphasizes the notion that toys are merely tangible afterthoughts to popular media texts.

The success of *The Toys That Made Us* demonstrates the potential appeal of action figure media for mainstream audiences. Since the release of the show, Netflix has renewed *The Toys That Made Us* for a third season, and added similar productions to its library, such as *Power of Grayskull: The Definitive History of He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* (Randall Lobb & Robert McCallum, 2017) and *The Great Canadian Toy Story* (Summer Love & Jane Michener, 2014). Producer Brian Volk-Weiss developed the show knowing that he would need to reach a larger audience than toy fans and collectors. As he explained in an interview: "the whole goal of the show is that someone like us [toy fans and collectors] could watch an episode and love it, but someone like my wife, who doesn't care at all about *Star Trek*, would enjoy it just as much."[243] The overall recognition value of a brand played an important role in the selection process of the toys for each episode:

> I had an idea in my head of like the Mount Rushmore of toys, and I wanted to make sure that every character we did could be on the Mount Rushmore of toys. My wife doesn't know anything about *Transformers*, but if you show her a

[243] Ken Reilly, "Interview: Brian Volk-Weiss and The Toys That Made Us," *Trek Core* [blog], February 1, 2018, http://trekcore.com/blog/2018/02/interview-brian-volk-weiss-and-the-toys-that-made-us/.

> picture of Optimus Prime, she knows who that is. That's what I call the Mount Rushmore factor.[244]

In other words, even if someone has not played with the toys featured in the show, potential viewers have most likely heard of them, or at least seen them in a store or a playground. In the case that no familiarity with the toys exists, their connections to popular franchises like *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* might nevertheless attract curious audiences.

By focusing on the toy designers, and also inviting toy fans to participate as experts, *The Toys That Made Us* also breaks with previous narratives and representations of action figure collectors and fans in non-fiction formats. Collectors of popular material culture have regularly been reported on in national newspapers, and appeared in reality TV shows dedicated to antiques, collectibles, or practices of hoarding, such as *Antiques Roadshow* (1979–present), *Collectors* (2005-2011), *American Pickers* (2010–present), *Britain's Biggest Hoarders* (2012–present), and *Pawn Stars* (2009–present). In these shows, the act of collecting has been of bigger importance than the history of the toys, or detailed knowledge thereof. In many instances, such shows have reinforced the idea of the fans as pathological hoarders, incapable of controlling their fandom in conventional ways.

One recent example is the *Collectaholic*s episode on *Star Wars* collector James (2014). His collecting habit is so "out of control" that the hosts need to help James not only to manage his physical collection of 35,000 pieces but also to keep his family. In other instances, such as *Pawn Stars*, the history of the Boba Fett action figure is condensed for the sole purpose of foregrounding the immense price of $150,000 that fans and collectors would pay for the "Holy Grail of *Star Wars* toy collecting." The difference between these two examples and *The Toys That Made Us* is therefore ultimately one of tone: *Collectaholic*s and *Pawn Stars* approach action figures and their collectors as *the toys that made them*, and represent fandom as extreme and almost perverse. In contrast, *The Toys That Made Us* seeks identification with toy fans and their passions, rather than othering their interests, practices, and knowledge.

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[244] Preston Burt, "6 Facts We Learned About 'The Toys That Made Us' From Producer Brian Volk-Weiss (Including What's Next)," *Geek Dad* [blog], February 21, 2018, https://geekdad.com/2018/02/6-facts-learned-toys-made-us-producer-brian-volk-weiss-including-whats-next/.

Lucasfilm and Netflix make use of the fan cultural capital of Volk-Weiss and Sansweet for their production of action figure media, and also draw from Sansweet and Volk-Weiss's previous careers in media. Before joining Lucasfilm, Sansweet worked as a journalist for *The Wall Street Journal*, and Volk-Weiss produced several comedy specials for Netflix before it green-lighted *The Toys That Made Us*. Their careers give them credibility as authors and filmmakers, and provide them with the experience and skills to turn subcultural interests into entertaining narratives with a reach beyond their respective fan communities. In the case of *The Toys That Made Us*, this results in fast-paced narratives that combine nostalgia for old toys with the harsh realities of working in the toy industries. Rather than catering to dedicated collectors and their interest in every small detail of individual objects, the show presents toy history as a heightened drama. Rapid commercial success is followed by threats of bankruptcy, product innovation ends in creative stagnation, collegial collaboration turns into estrangement, and seemingly dead toys are profitably resurrected—or not. In the case of Sansweet, the history of *Star Wars* action figures is packaged into glossy coffee-table books with witty and informative texts and descriptions of *Star Wars* action figures and their history. However, as will be further elaborated in chapter three on Sansweet's role as the *fanboy historian*, Lucasfilm saw in the former journalist an ideal mediator between the company and the fan community.

At the same time, Sansweet and Volk-Weiss have been able to transform their fan cultural capital into economic capital. Matt Hills argues that fan-producers of commemorative works are more likely to commodify their works than fan-fic authors, who are met with more criticism from their peers when they commodify their works.[245] However, although fan historians often sell their self-published works, Sansweet and Volk-Weiss are exceptions rather than the norm. It is debatable whether histories such as Rendahl's *A New Proof* improve the author's economic capital as much as it increases his reputation among his peers. The book's acclaim has given Rendahl a reputation as a specialist, not only among fans but also within the toy industry. Hasbro, for instance, invited him to give a presentation at a special event celebrating the 40th anniversary of *Star Wars* in Berlin. Yet, it is likely that the potential revenues from self-published book sales and occasional talks at best cover the costs and hours invested in building a collection, researching, writing, editing, photographing, proof-reading, designing, advertising,

[245] See Matt Hills, "Doctor Who's Textual Commemorators: Fandom, Collective Memory and the Self-Commodification of Fanfac," *Journal of Fandom Studies* 2, no. 1 (2014): 45.

selling, and shipping books; it is less likely that they translate into actual profits. Nevertheless, these examples of entrepreneurial fan activities indicate that some fan historians are able to move between formal and informal economies, thereby achieving a special standing within both action figure fan communities and the cultural industries.[246]

2.3. Action Figures as Objects of Fandom

The consumption of action figures as media texts not tied to specific fictional narratives, and the role of fans as action media producers, further expands our understanding of action figures as objects of fandom. Two specific questions are of interest in this discussion: First, what kind of skills and knowledge differentiate action figure fans from film and television fans? Second, how are action figure fans positioned within the larger *Star Wars* fan community? According to Cornel Sandvoss, all objects of fandom should be understood as mediated texts. No matter if "we find our object of fandom in Britney Spears, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or the Boston Red Sox, these are all read and negotiated as (mediated) texts by their fans."[247] Of course, fans are more likely to own an action figure than their own sports team like the Red Sox, but even though action figures are produced in the millions, not all individual figure designs are equally available or affordable. The understanding of toys consumed through media shifts our understanding from the idea of collecting physical toys to the consumption of action figures through narratives. It foregrounds the idea that some fans are not solely dedicated to "owning" an object or an image thereof, but are interested in the stories told about them.

Consider the case of Kenner's original design for the first Boba Fett action figure: the company had advertised the action figure as a give-away before the release of *The Empire Strikes Back*, particularly promoting the missile that could be fired from Fett's back. Due to concerns that children would be able to swallow the little rocket, the figure was never produced as advertised.[248] Nevertheless, this unproduced version of the toy has become one of the most mediated toys in *Star Wars* action figure history. Indeed, the figure regularly appears in prototype images, advertisements, bootleg copies, or fan recollections of the excitement for the

[246] See Matt Hills, "Fiske's 'Textual Productivity' and Digital Fandom: Web 2.0 Democratization versus Fan Distinction?," *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 10, no. 1 (2013): 138.
[247] Cornel Sandvoss, *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 8.
[248] Sansweet, *From Concept to Screen to Collectible*, 68-70.

figure. Therefore, action figure media is at times the only means with which rare toys and related objects may be available and consumable for fans, and a means to engage and negotiate their object of fandom through media.[249]

The content of action figure media also indicates how toy fan communities have developed alongside and independently from those of fans of the films. In turn, they have produced distinct forms of knowledge and skills that are communicated and documented through action figure media. Fans of toys are not necessarily concerned with a corresponding text's diegesis, its characters, or the creative minds behind it. Rather, they have extensive knowledge of different forms of plastic and their characteristics, changes in the production technologies of toys, as well as the factories in which they were produced. They research the biographies and work of toy designers, the different steps involved in the making of toys, as well as the way individual toys or their respective lines change from first sketch to final product. Toy fans know how to identify, appraise, restore, preserve, and display toys, and it is precisely through action figure media that fans acquire their knowledge and skills.

History-making is participatory, and fans can share and acquire knowledge on various platforms. Nevertheless, action figure fans have their own hierarchies in which the work of some fans is particularly valued, and executive fans who establish and run central organizations for the community have considerable influence.[250] In addition to Sansweet and Rendahl, Gus Lopez has established himself as a renowned *Star Wars* collector and historian. He is the author of collectible guides,[251] and founder of the website *The Star Wars Collectors Archive* as well as the influential Seattle Area Lucasfilm Artifact Collectors Club, to which I will return below.[252] Lopez also moves between formal and informal economies, and regularly appears as a *Star Wars* expert on television and documentaries, including *The Toys That Made Us* or the fan-made *Plastic Galaxy*. Similarly, Thomas Manglitz, curator of the German fan-run museum Stars of the Galaxy, has acquired the status of a *Star Wars* expert within and beyond the *Star Wars* fan

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[249] See Geraghty on the sharing of images online and digital collecting, *Cult Collectors*, 158-160.
[250] See John Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 30-49; Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge 2002), 20-36.
[251] Jenkins et al., *Gus and Duncan's Guide to Star Wars Prototypes*.
[252] See Gus Lopez, "Collector Interview #10: Gus Lopez," *Vintage Star Wars Collectors: A Blog by a Collector about Collectors*, May 21, 2017. http://vintagestarwarscollectors.com/collector-interview-10-gus-lopez/.

community. Fans regularly visit the museum and interview him about his work, as do regional and national television channels and newspapers.[253] At the top of these hierarchies, then, are distinguished fans whose competences and skills as authors, bloggers, directors, curators, panel speakers, and interviewers are communally recognized and distinguished. The prestige awarded to particularly proficient fans and projects affirms Fiske's observation that fans "reproduce equivalents of the formal institutions of official culture" in their production, use, organization, and maintenance of cultural capital.[254] Hence, it is those fans who successfully run, and participate in, these formal institutions who are most likely to move from the "shadow cultural economy" of fandom into the cultural industries.

What requires further exploration, however, is how toy fandom is positioned within larger media franchises such as *Star Wars*. Especially in the case of Sansweet, it becomes evident that certain fans function as authority figures for several sub-communities or the *Star Wars* community as a whole. As a result of his employment at Lucasfilm, his broad knowledge of the *Star Wars* storyworld, and his vast collection, Sansweet represents a link between different *Star Wars* fan groups. Hence, while the notion of action figures as mediated texts enables toy fandom and its practices and communities to be more clearly differentiated from their narrative mothership, it should not overshadow the multidimensionality of fandoms in contemporary media franchising. Considering this variety of textual and material versions of the franchise, the phrase "*Star Wars* fan" at best works as an umbrella term under which different forms of fandom come together and at times intersect. In this regard, one needs to consider how fans of *Star Wars* action figures might also identify with other aspects of the transmedia franchise, if not necessarily with all of them.

Hills addresses the multidimensionality of fandom by arguing that conceptions of fan cultures as "isolated and singular" neglect the "extent to which fans of one text or icon may also be fans of other seemingly unrelated texts/icons simultaneously."[255] He proposes the concept of trans-fandom for the study of fans "who are moving across different fandoms [and are] moving

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[253] Articles about the museum have appeared in the online versions of the *Rheinische Post*, *Westfälische Rundschau*, *Der Westen*, *Coolibri*, the public broadcaster Westdeutscher Rundfunk, the regional section of the private broadcaster RTL, as well as several fan blogs, video channels, and forums, among others.
[254] Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," 33.
[255] Hills, *Fan Cultures*, xvi.

across these different forms of fan knowledge."[256] While Hills discusses multidimensionality across different franchises, action figure media and action figures as objects of fandom force us to consider trans-fandom within a specific franchise like *Star Wars*. Some *Star Wars* fans may only be interested in one incarnation of the storyworld, such as the films. Other fans may belong to different sub-communities within the franchise, combining their skills and knowledge on the films with LEGO products, or their interest in tie-in novels with video games. And while some fans only focus on the action figures and their role in toy history and culture, others combine material and textual familiarity with the storyworld across different media in their works. In sum, fans who belong to multiple communities of a franchise like *Star Wars* represent a form of inner-franchise trans-fandom.

Action figure media and its consumption and production can therefore function as a conceptual tool to understand the formation, development, and maintenance of such specific sub-communities. The idea of internal franchise trans-fandom allows us to write action figure fandom and media into the history of the Star Wars franchise, by focusing on key texts (e.g. *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible*) organisations (e.g. Seattle Area Lucasfilm Artifact Collectors Club), agents (e.g. Sansweet and Lopez), adaptations of technologies and platforms (e.g. online fora), and reactions from the cultural industries to the growing number of toy fans, as well as their increasing media productivity. To understand how a show like *The Toys That Made Us* came into being, we need to trace the development of action figure fandom since the invention of this specific genre of playthings. The final section of this chapter highlights some key developments in the formation of *Star Wars* action figure fandom, with the aim of writing action figure fans into *Star Wars* history.

2.4. Writing Action Figure Fans into *Star Wars* History

Historical accounts of *Star Wars* action figures follow a trajectory that begins with the hasty production of the toys in 1977 and 1978 and then traces their unprecedented and unexpected success. Such accounts then often describe the disappearance of Kenner action figures from store aisles after the release of Richard Marquand's *Return of the Jedi* in 1983, before their resurrection in the 1990s by collectors. These histories usually end with Hasbro's acquisition

[256] Matt Hills and Clarice Greco, "Fandom as an Object and the Objects of Fandom," *MATRIZes* 9, no. 1 (2015): 158-159.

of Kenner and the licenses for *Star Wars* action figures, and the current, unbroken interest in these toys.[257] This "basic story" covers George Lucas's deal with 20th Century Fox to give up a higher directing fee in exchange for exclusive merchandising rights, and his problems finding a toy company willing to acquire the license. It includes outlines of how Kenner president Bernie Loomis read a newspaper report on the project and realized the film's "toyetic" potential that would eventually result in the sale of 42,322,500 small figures within one year, and a total of more than 250 million over the next eight years.[258]

Moreover, this "basic story" usually includes a description of how children grew up and out of *Star Wars*, and how other action figure lines took over stores, screens, and children's fantasies. As a result, the period between 1985 and 1992, when no new films were in production or planned, is known as the Dark Ages. The period after 1992, in turn, is known as the *Star Wars* Renaissance, which began with the release of a trilogy of novels and peaked with the economic restoration of the franchise, which started an ongoing constant stream of new films, series, and video games, as well as action figures and other merchandise and tie-ins.

The emergence of action figure collecting as a hobby is positioned as part of the *Star Wars* Renaissance, a moment in which now-adult fans returned to their childhood and *Star Wars* fandom. However, neither the concrete development of collecting communities and their respective infrastructures, nor the production of action figure media is addressed in this "basic story." Histories of *Star Wars* primarily focus on the release of the films, or other narrative extensions of the storyworld, such as the novels of the Expanded Universe. As a result, the hobby of collecting has been implicitly linked to fan communities and practices related to fiction rather than to the objects themselves. The history of how action figure fandom materialized in concrete practices and networks is sidelined. As a matter of fact, in order to understand action figure fan communities and their production of action figure media, we need to look at how collecting popular material culture developed before the release of *A New Hope*

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[257] Examples of this narrative can be found in: Robert Buerkle, "Playset Nostalgia: LEGO Star Wars: The Video Game and the Transgenerational Appeal of the LEGO Video Game Franchise," in *LEGO Studies: Examining the Building Blocks of a Transmedial Phenomenon*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 118-152; Harvey, *Fantastic Transmedia*, 137-162, Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 175-187; Geraghty, *Cult Collectors*, 120-137.
[258] Sansweet, *From Concept to Screen to Collectible*, 71.

in 1977, as well as how fans of *Star Wars* action figures and merchandise emerged contemporaneous to film's first merchandise products.

Collecting had been a common hobby for centuries, although the post-World War II period saw a dramatic increase in the popularity of inexpensive collectibles in America.[259] The Oxford English Dictionary states that the term collectible was used for the first time to describe "things worth collecting, esp. rare, old, or interesting objects (not necessarily valuable or antique)" in 1955.[260] This development was accompanied by the release of specialized literature. Price guides and advice columns became valuable sources of information on current monetary values of objects such as dolls and glasses. It taught collectors how to improve their skills and practices. Moreover, garage sales became increasingly popular in America over the course of the 1970s, so that "by the end of the decade, the legitimization and institutionalization of garage sales was firmly established."[261] Film and media merchandise formed some of the most popular collectibles in this period. In particular, collectors of Disneyana—Disney themed merchandising—had gained public attention with their interest in old Mickey Mouse objects and specialized price guides.[262] As such, *Star Wars* collectors could draw from existing resources and best practices that fans of other material objects had put in place several decades earlier, and could studiously visit spaces where similar objects had already circulated.

To the "basic story" we also need to add that grown-ups began collecting merchandise with the release of the films, and began at the same time to produce collectible guides and zines about them. While many of those who began collecting in the 1990s had played with the toys as children in the 1970s and 1980s, action figure fandom among adults had already formed two decades earlier. As such, arguments that suggested fans merely held a sentimental attachment to toys because they enabled them, as children, to re-enact their favourite scenes and develop their own story lines is only true for a fraction of action figure fans. *Star Wars* fan Ron Salvatore has pointed to the misunderstanding that Star Wars collecting began as a hobby in the 1990s in his research on the collecting community. As he explains in a blog post, individuals began collecting *Star Wars* merchandise the moment the first products were released:

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[259] Herring, *The Hoarders*, 57.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid., 56.
[262] Robert Heide and John Gilman, *Disneyana: Classic Collectibles, 1928-1958* (White Plains: Disney Publishing, 1994), 12.

> Contemporary *Star Wars* collectors often approach the hobby as though it started in the '90s. After all, that's when the people who had started buying Star Wars merch as kids reached adulthood and became formal collectors. But there have been adult collectors since the '70s. Most of them are no longer active, but their efforts in the years immediately surrounding the release of the original movies are what laid the groundwork for all the nerdery that came afterwards.[263]

In another section of the blog post, Salvatore mentions Tom Kennedy Radio Productions (TKRP), whose merchandise list from 1978 was referred to in the previous section as an early example of *Star Wars* action figure media. Five years later, Kennedy created *The Collector's Connection* with the intention of bringing together collectors and enabling a smoother trade of collectibles among them. As he explains in the announcement of the service, "with many of you being collectors, [TKRP] devised a new service called *The Collectors Collection*. […] It's a way for collectors to get in touch, directly, with other collectors for the purpose of fellowship and the mutual growth of your respective collections."[264] The service offered *Star Wars* collectors the chance to share with their peers what objects they were looking for and what was up for trade from their collections. Each announcement came with a short introduction to the respective collector and their address, and occasionally featured a photo of them surrounded by their collection.

One of the collectors advertising in the magazine was Walter Stuben, who was considered to have owned the largest *Star Wars* collection in the 1980s. The text in his advertisement described him as follows:

> You've heard about him. Maybe you saw him on CBS-TV in the preview program prior to the network showing *Star Wars* in February 1984. He knows his collection, and would love to chat with you about the world of *STAR WARS*! He's WALT STUBEN! Truly a "Premiere Collector." When you write,

[263] Ron Salvatore, "The Ballad of Walter Stuben," *The Star Wars Collectors Archive* [blog], January 27, 2015, http://blog.theswca.com/2015/01/the-ballad-of-walter-stuben.html.
[264] Ibid.

> ask him for his special business card. Tell him you heard about him in the TKRP Collector's Connection Digest![265]

Stuben's activities as a collector are of interest also because of the way in which Kenner appropriates him and his collection for its own advertisement purposes. In 1984, Kenner invited Stuben to show his collection at the New York Toy Fair under the name "The New York *Star Wars* Exhibit" from February 11th to 13th at the Doral Hotel in Manhattan. A press release issued by Kenner advertised The Stuben Collection as worth more than $50,000 and consisting of 7000 pieces from "every single toy ever made to models, books, games, an alarm clock […], stamps, theater posters, trash cans, wallpaper, pieces from the original movie stage sets and a complete 'family' of 17 different R2-D2 figures."[266] The show was visited by more than 2000 visitors, and allegedly reached more than 10 million people across the USA through a "media blitz which included: 7 newspaper/syndicate features, coverage by 7 local and national television systems and pick up by 6 radio stations."[267] As Salvatore argues in a tribute to Stuben, Kenner "must have seen [him] as a means of keeping *Star Wars*—and Kenner products—in the public's view."[268] In other words, collecting became a means of branding, and the exhibition is an early example of action figures reaching beyond the fan community.

Another fan who appeared in *The Collector's Connection* was Sansweet, who is currently considered the owner of the world's largest collection of *Star Wars* merchandise and memorabilia. *Star Wars* fans and collectors regularly emphasize the importance of Sansweet's book *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible* in renewing their interest in *Star Wars* and the impact of it on their self-identification as fans. Crucially, Sansweet's work shifted fans' foci from documenting and exchanging information about merchandise to historicising their conception and production as an elementary part of the success of *Star Wars* through his archival work and interviews with toy designers. Collector Bobby Sharps recalls how the book transformed him from a consumer to a collector: "I'd seen *Star Wars* toys listed in cruddy paperback price guides and such, but this was the first time I'd seen these toys treated with such

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[265] Ron Salvatore, "Connecting Before the Internet," *The Star Wars Collector's Archive* [blog], October 10, 2014, http://blog.theswca.com/2014/10/connecting-before-internet.html.
[266] Salvatore, "The Ballad of Walter Stuben."
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid.

artistry and respect."[269] Similarly, Pete Fletzer explains how the book encouraged him to come out as a collector:

> At first I made excuses for buying the toys. "I want to see if my nephew Ben will like it," or "I have to have something around the house for when the kids visit," or "I need them for reference!" But it was after I picked up […] *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible*, that my whole point of view changed. […] What clinched it for me though was reading the back flap of the book: Steve Sansweet, *Star Wars* collector and toy enthusiast extraordinaire was, at the time he authored the book, the Los Angeles Bureau Chief for the *Wall Street Journal*! If this fact could not legitimize my new obsession then nothing could.[270]

The book has been called the "foundational document of the [collecting] hobby,"[271] and Sansweet continued to share his expertise on action figures and other merchandise in a column in the *Star Wars Insider* magazine, which regularly included dedicated articles on action figures.

Despite this praise, and even though *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible* was released in the early years of the *Star Wars* Renaissance, the book is missing in accounts addressing this era. For instance, fan and media scholars Mathew Freeman and William Proctor have argued that the *Star Wars* Renaissance began with the emergence of the Expanded Universe (EU). After Timothy Zahn's financially and critically successful set of novels, *The Thrawn Trilogy* (1991–1993), set the Renaissance in motion, a number of notable items were released, proving *Star Wars*' continuing creative and economic potential. Besides the Expanded Universe novels, these also included Micro Machines, Topps's trading cards, several *Star Wars* video games, the introduction of the fan magazine *Star Wars Insider*, and re-launched Kenner toys.[272] Although Freeman and Proctor acknowledge toys, and the magazine *Star Wars Insider*,

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[269] "Collector Interview #9: Bobby Sharp," *Vintage Star Wars Collectors* [blog], June 2, 2016, http://vintagestarwarscollectors.com/collector-interview-9-bobby-sharp/.
[270] Pete Fletzer, "From A Galaxy Far, Far Away ... Adult Toys," *Oplenty* [blog], accessed November 6, 2018, http://www.oplenty.com/fletzer/toys.htm.
[271] "'Chive Cast 70 - Steve Sansweet and the Creation of the Vintage Star Wars Collecting Hobby," *The Star Wars Collectors Archive* [blog], February 18, 2016, http://blog.theswca.com/2016/02/chive-cast-70-steve-sansweet-and.html.
[272] William and Matthew Freeman, "'The First Step into a Smaller World': The Transmedia Economy of *Star Wars*," in *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds: A Subcreation Studies Anthology*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 225.

Sansweet's book and the impact it had on fans is curiously absent. Given that Sansweet's work has inspired several other individuals to explore the history of the material culture of *Star Wars,* his work is crucial to the history of how the interest in the material culture of *Star Wars* developed within the *Star Wars* fan community.

Online fora have been also important sites in this development. In the 1990s fans began using the Internet to organize their discussions. Action figure fans would organize their discussion alongside information on the films; however, the collecting community began organizing themselves in separate forums and ultimately on different websites in the mid-1990s. *Star Wars* collector Tommy Garvey explains the importance of this moment in one of his posts:

> In May of 1995, the collecting aspect of the hobby split off to form rec.arts.sf.starwars.collecting (RASSC). This would prove to be one of the most important events the hobby ever had, as for the first time, collectors had their own community, and didn't have to share it with other non-collector fans. Now, this might sound like a given to modern collectors, but at the time, it was a big deal and resulted in heated discussion. Collecting was seen as merely an offshoot of fandom, and the thought at the time was that there couldn't possibly be enough conversation to necessitate a separate group.[273]

Beyond the Internet, action figure collectors began forming local clubs and regular meetings to facilitate exchange between fans. Following the example of an Australian collector's club in Hobart, Gus Lopez founded the Seattle Area Lucasfilm Artifact Collectors Club (SARCASS).[274] These clubs organize meetings with members in their region and plan field trips to special *Star Wars* locations. As Lopez explains:

> These meetings don't have to simply consist of buying, selling, and trading. At each of our meetings, people bring their prized collectibles to show others. These are the kinds of things that people only dream of seeing for sale. If items are too big or fragile to bring to the meeting, people bring photos. Photos also allow you to see different displays and large dioramas in people's homes without having to visit each member's house. Part of the experience is learning

[273] Tommy Garvey, "An (Updated) Brief History of Online Star Wars Collecting Conversation," *Star Wars Collectors Archive* blog], September 24, 2017, http://blog.theswca.com/2014/09/an-updated-brief-history-of-online-star.html.
[274] Lopez, "Collector Interview #10."

> from other collectors and hearing opinions about price trends, what to look for, things/people to avoid, and places to shop. Knowledge about collecting is extremely important for building a nice collection, and many dealers exploit a lack of knowledge to increase their sales, so it's important to be informed.[275]

Similar clubs have been formed in Ohio (The Ohio *Star Wars* Collector's Club, OSWCC), Pennsylvania (The Pennsylvania *Star Wars* Collecting Society, PSWCS), the Washington DC metropolitan area (DC Metro Area *Star Wars* Collecting Club), Long Island (Long Island's Network of Collectable *Star Wars*), and Chicago (Chicago *Star Wars* Collectors Club). These clubs have organized and maintained local fan communities by organizing regular meetings and sharing best practices, therefore further institutionalising, advertising, and professionalizing the hobby.

Amid this formation of fan frameworks and networks, the production of action figures and other merchandise increasingly targeted collectors. Hasbro flooded the market with new *Star Wars* action figures based on old and new characters when the prequel trilogy was announced and finally released in 1999. Between 1999 and 2012, Hasbro released 23 different lines of action figures based on different films, series, or vintage figures.[276] Styles of the figures ranged from those trying to capture the look of actors from the live-action films as closely as possible, to those that adapted to the look of the animated television series *The Clone Wars*. In the case of the latter, the figure of Yoda, for instance, has different facial proportions to the figures based on his appearance in the first and second trilogy, with bigger eyes and more angular facial features. Moreover, Hasbro began releasing figures specifically developed for the collector market that spoke more to grown-up fans than to children. In 2002, some of the most famous *Star Wars* characters were sold dressed in Christmas attire based on an early Lucasfilm holiday card painted by Ralph McQuarrie, who provided the concept art for the first trilogy. Five years later, another set of action figures was sold that was modeled after McQuarrie's drawings for *A New Hope*, in which the main character had a considerably different look to the final film. Examples like the concept-based figures are not advertised as playthings. Rather, they fall into Lucasfilm's transmedia practices in writing and distributing the history of the films, which will be further

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[275] Ibid.

[276] See Stephen J. Sansweet, *Star Wars: The Ultimate Action Figure Collection: 35 Years of Characters* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2012).

discussed in chapter three. The action figures take the popular concept art by McQuarrie that is included in many Lucasfilm-sponsored publications, films, and exhibitions, and turn that art into a tangible experience. Instead of comparing concept art to stills or film scenes, the comparison of screen-based action figures to concept-art toys becomes a three-dimensional, haptic experience.

While the flood of action figures fuels the desires of many collectors, the number of figures also make it unrealistic for most fans to collect all of the more than 2500 action figures listed in Stephen Sansweet's *Star Wars: The Ultimate Action Figure Collection: 35 Years of Characters*—a number that has since risen considerably with the release of several more seasons of *Star Wars* television and four new feature films.[277] The work of Sansweet as well as of general action figure magazines like the *Action Figure Network*—which reviews new releases under the categories of sculpting, paint, articulation, accessories, fun factor, value, and overall quality—represents a means to manage the constant flow of new figures, and to keep up to date with the latest releases of toys as well as media on action figures.[278] Indeed, the growing number of action figures, collectors, and action figure media are interdependent: the more collectors consume action figures, the more toys are produced by the industries, which then ultimately results in fans producing more action figure media.

These examples do not provide a complete history of the development of action figure fandom, but they nonetheless demonstrate that the definition of a "*Star Wars*" fan is too broad. Within this vast category of "*Star Wars* fans" one can find subgroups with different emphases, knowledge, and points of entry into the *Star Wars* World. These histories, therefore, need to be considered with an eye to differentiating among them if we are to adequately theorize action figures' role in the past and present of media culture. A further study of action figure fans and their history will also provide a better understanding of fans as prosumers who consume and produce action figures as objects as well as fiction and non-fiction media texts. Moreover, it enables us to position mainstream productions such as *Collectaholics* and *The Toys That Made Us* within media histories, and not simply as reality shows or reactions to an audience's predilection for nostalgic programming. From this point of view, action figure media delineate from a long tradition of fans who have begun exploring similar topics and themes since the

[277] Ibid.
[278] The magazine is currently in transition from a newsletter to a permanent website.

release of the playthings, and who are slowly but steadily finding an increasing presence on and off screens across a wide range of media and venues.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the notion of action figure media in relation to three interdependent phenomena: fans' interest in the wider material culture of toys beyond the actual plaything and their mimetic and thematic connections to fictional texts; fans as producers of fiction and non-fiction media on action figures and their wider material culture; and action figure fans as a sub-community with its own hierarchies, skills, and knowledge that operates side by side and in relation to other fan groups gathered around the *Star Wars* franchise. Gray's call for an off-screen study and the dialectical relationship between toys and fictional texts inspired this argument. In turn, the idea of action figure media ultimately focused on the relationship between toys and media dedicated to action figures as a plaything. Demonstrating that the manner in which people collect and play with finished toys is only one of many practices in which toy and media culture intersect, this chapter approached action figures as complex objects that are consumed in various material forms as well as across a variety of media telling different "toy stories." Thus, action figures should be understood as consisting of three components: actual material objects, textual connections to a fiction storyworld, and action figure media.

Moreover, the idea of action figure media was used to develop a better understanding of the diversity of different fan communities that come together under the umbrella of one singular franchise like *Star Wars*. Action figure fans perform their fandom through different practices that focus on action figures as toys. This, in turn, requires and reflects specific knowledge about the materiality of the toys, and is therefore very different from the work performed by fans of films, series, video games, or novels. Action figure fans might also identify as fans of the films, but they do not necessarily have to. In that line of thought, this chapter suggested that action figure fans are often engaged in what this dissertation calls inner-franchise trans-fandom: they identify as *Star Wars* action figure fans as well as fans of the films, for example, but scholars should not automatically assume that a fan historian or collector is automatically both. Rather, they are bridging the different skills and competences of separate subgroups that come together under the umbrella term of "*Star Wars* fan."

Beyond this chapter and the specific case study of the *Star Wars* franchise, the notion of action figure media could be used for the following research inquiries. First, the concept can further the study of fans' textual productivity. Of particular importance here is that (at least in the current moment) non-fiction action figure media outnumbers fiction productions, as was already highlighted in the introduction. Since fan studies has primarily focused on fans' textual productivity and criticism of fiction media, action figure media can function as a useful resource to expand our understanding of non-fiction practices and how they are co-opted by the cultural industries.[279] Second, action figure media provides the foundation for writing a more elaborate history of action figure fandom by looking at productions by and for action figure fans, such as early collectible guides, Internet sites, fan clubs, and recent industry productions. Finally, the study of action figure represents a step towards not only writing merchandise objects into film and media history, but also writing a media history of merchandise that gives more attention to the question of how, where, when, with what, and by whom merchandise is designed, produced, distributed, sold, consumed, and eventually mediated.

[279] See Hills, "Doctor Who's Textual Commemorators," 32.

Chapter 3: Star Wars at 40: Transmedia Historiography, Fanboy Historians, and Cultural Memory Management

2017 marked the 40th anniversary of the 1977 release of George Lucas's *A New Hope*, a film that would develop into a multimedia franchise over the next four decades. Since the very beginning, Lucasfilm has invested great effort in celebrating the film's milestones and anniversaries. As early as 1978, the company developed a poster depicting 10 of the first 11 Kenner action figures around a birthday cake, to applaud the 12-month theatrical run of *Star Wars*.[280] Subsequent anniversaries were commemorated with documentaries and making-ofs, the release of a special edition of the first trilogy with new scenes and special effects, print publications, and museum exhibitions.[281] The franchise's official website, StarWars.com, has been crucial to the celebration of the film's 40th anniversary, and features a special section that looks back at the production history of *A New Hope*, as well as Irvin Kershner's *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and Richard Marquand's *Return of the Jedi* (1983). This includes blog articles on the production process, interviews with cast and crew, galleries with film stills and behind the scenes photography, short movie scenes, excerpts or complete documentaries, sound effects, various poster designs, information on the production of the merchandise, fan accounts of their first *Star Wars* experience, a video recording of a panel discussion with Lucas and the original cast at Celebration Orlando, and an article on how Lucasfilm has celebrated *Star Wars*' anniversaries in the past.[282] Together, these non-fiction texts assembled on, and produced for the website demonstrate that Lucasfilm has not only expanded the fictional storyworld of *Star Wars* using different media forms and technologies, but has also invested a great deal of effort in the production of non-fiction texts on *Star Wars*' history. These texts have played a crucial role in expanding the franchise.

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[280] See "Star Wars at 40: 40 Years of Star Wars Anniversary Posters," *StarWars.com*, May 24, 2017, https://www.starwars.com/news/40-years-of-star-wars-anniversary-posters.

[281] For instance, Steve Sansweet's *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible* was published in 1992, the 15th anniversary of the franchise. The Special Edition of the first trilogy was released in 1997, and Star Wars: The Magic of Myth opened at the Smithsonian Institution in the same year. The documentary *Star Wars: The Legacy Revealed* and J.W. Rinzlers book *The Making of Star Wars celebrated* the 30th anniversary.

[282] See "Star Wars at 40," *StarWars.com*, accessed August 20, 2018, https://www.starwars.com/star-wars-40th.

The density and diversity of *Star Wars* histories produced within the last four decades shows that Lucasfilm does not merely reproduce the same content across different media. Each medium and venue provides a different perspective on, and experience of the franchise's past. They are written by different personnel (publicists, archivists, curators, journalists), utilize different historical documents (e.g. film scenes, production notes, original costumes, oral histories), are constructed around different media (e.g. digital and analogue moving images, themed and auratic events and exhibition venues, paper-based print media), and are narrated by a variety of practitioners and disciplines (e.g. actors, producers, costume designers, conceptual artists, special effect artists, model makers, and fans). In this regard, Lucasfilm uses the genres and technologies of non-fiction to engage in what media scholars have described, in the context of fiction media, as transmedia storytelling. Media and fan scholar Henry Jenkins defines transmedia storytelling as a form of collaborative authorship and participatory spectatorship in the telling of stories "that unfold across multiple platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to our understanding of the [story] world."[283] Because each entry expands *Star Wars* history by providing new and additional knowledge on how its storyworld and related products came into being, it is possible to use this concept of transmedia storytelling as a way of thinking about analogous non-fiction practices. Thus, the non-fiction *Star Wars* practices outlined above can be described using the term "transmedia historiography," which we may understand as a subset of transmedia storytelling. Transmedia historiography describes the making of a story world's production and cultural history across multiple platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to the audience's understanding of the franchise's past.

As is the case with transmedia storytelling, fans are active participants in transmedia historiography. Jenkins considers fan performance to be a key principle of transmedia storytelling, arguing that "fan produced performances" can eventually "become part of the transmedia narrative itself."[284] Fan-fic, fan-made videos, and other fan works both result from and in transmedia extensions of a fictional storyworld. However, the extent and range of performances differs from participant to participant. Media scholars Carlos A. Scolari, Paolo

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[283] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. (New York University Press, 2008), 293.
[284] Henry Jenkins cited in Matthew Freeman, *Historicizing Transmedia Storytelling: Early Twentieth-Century Transmedia Story Worlds* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 38.

Bertetti, and Matthew Freeman divide describe audience engagements using a pyramid taxonomy:

> on the base, we find the consumer of a single media product (e.g. the viewers of a television series or the readers of a comic); on the second level, the consumer of the different media products (i.e. the consumers of the transmedia narrative world expressed in different textual supports); on the third level, the fan who shares contents online and actively participates in the conversations around the narrative world; finally, on the top of the pyramid we find the prosumer: the fan who produces new contents and expands the narrative world.[285]

A similar taxonomy could be used to describe fans' performance in relation to transmedia historiography. On the base, we find the consumer of a single media product, for example a reader of former Lucasfilm historian J.W. Rinzler's detailed book series on the making of the first and second trilogies.[286] Consumers of different media products on *Star Wars* history are placed on the second level of this pyramid. They consume the franchise's history across different media, reading books as much as they watch television specials, read blogs, visit museum exhibitions, and visit social media sites. Fans who share content online and actively participate in conversations about the past, for example posting already existing but newly assembled information on their object of fandom, are on the third level. Finally, on top of the pyramid, we find the historical prosumers. These fan historians do not only share and (re-)contextualize already existing information, but also produce new knowledge about the past. They venture into archives and libraries, interview witnesses, and assemble tangible and intangible collections that they interpret and analyze.

Most fan-written histories are financed through crowdfunding or private funds, and do not receive direct financial support from Lucasfilm. Fan histories often cover topics that are not financially valuable to Lucasfilm, such as production histories on merchandise lines outside

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[285] Carlos A. Scolari, Paolo Bertetti, and Matthew Freeman, *Transmedia Archaeology: Storytelling in the Borderlines of Science Fiction, Comics and Pulp Magazines* (New York: Palgrave Pivot, 2014), 2-3.
[286] J.W. Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars* (New York: Del Rey, 2007), Kindle; J.W. Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*: *The Empire Strikes Back* (New York: Del Rey, 2013), Kindle; J.W. Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*: *Return of the Jedi* (New York: Del Rey, 2013), Kindle.

the USA, production histories of merchandise packaging and prototypes, the display of personal merchandise collections, or fan memoirs.[287] In some cases, Lucasfilm has supported fan historians' efforts by exposing their work to a wider audience. For instance, StarWars.com includes links to fan-run blogs and podcasts with historical content, and historians can share their knowledge on panels at conventions, such as the collector's track at Celebration.[288] In other cases, Lucasfilm has hired fans to write about the franchise's history and established collaborations with publishing houses. The most prominent Lucasfilm-employed fan historian is Stephen J. Sansweet, who published *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible* in collaboration with Lucasfilm, and was later hired by the company to manage fan relations, a position which allowed him to further develop his profile as the franchise's official historian.[289] Moreover, the author bios on StarWars.com all include references to the authors' *Star Wars* fandom, thereby highlighting their dual role as paid writers for the blog as well as true and long-time fans of the franchise.[290] Transmedia historiography, therefore, seems to carry the potential for a select group of fans to actively contribute to the making of *Star Wars* history through collaborative non-fiction authorship and participatory reader- and spectatorship. However, while online projects find recognition on the website, self-published books do not. Advertising for such books is mainly left to fan blogs and podcasts, as well as to convention panels where authors can present their research. In addition, fan-produced histories that do not support Lucasfilm's version of the past or those that may impact the company's overall branding strategy are excluded, and do not receive substantial material or immaterial support.

The relationship between inclusion and exclusion becomes evident in cases in which fans cover aspects of the franchise's past that the company tends to downplay rather than to highlight.

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[287] For instance: Mattias Rendahl, *A New Proof: Kenner Star Wars Packaging Design 1977-1979* (Unknown place pf publication: Dear Publications 2015); Duncan Jenkins and Gus Lopez, *Gus and Duncan's Guide to Star Wars Prototypes* (Unknown place of publication: Completist Publications, 2010); Stéphane Faucourt, *La French Touch: The Definitive Guide to French Star Wars Collectibles 1977–1987* (Unknown place of publication: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016); Gib van Ert, *A Long Time Ago: Growing up with and out of Star Wars* (Lexington: Soi-disant press, 2012).

[288] "Community," *StarWars.com*, accessed August 20, 2018, https://www.starwars.com/community.

[289] Stephen J. Sansweet, Star Wars: *From Concept to Screen to Collectible* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992).

[290] "Fans+Community: Featured Blog Contributors," *StarWars.Com*, accessed December 20, 2017, https://www.starwars.com/news/category/fans-and-community.

Not every entry in the franchise receives the same commemoration as *A New Hope*, or the cinematic releases of the franchise in general. As a matter of fact, a production like Steve Binder's *The Star Wars Holiday Special* (1978) does not only receive little attention by Lucasfilm, but Lucas and his company have actively prohibited its re-release. The television variety show was produced against the backdrop of *Star Wars*' gigantic success in 1977. Although it includes performances by the main cast from the feature film and an animated short that introduced the character of Boba Fett, *The Star Wars Holiday Special* was broadcast only once due to its poor reception by critics, audiences, and Lucas himself.[291] Yet, fans have not forgotten *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, distributing analog and digital bootlegged copies, thereby counteracting Lucasfilm's attempts to downplay and minimize the collective memory of the television program. *Star Wars* histories that Lucasfilm supports rarely mention the television program. Histories aimed at a more general audience in particular, such as the works by Rinzler, also ignore the production. Histories that do mention *The Star Wars Holiday Special* are mainly aimed at fans who already know about it, and even then it is dealt with in a few lines as a creative misstep, often crammed into small passages that describe other minor, forgettable *Star Wars* obscurities.[292]

As such, it has been left to fans to preserve and document its history, as is the case with Skot Freeman's website StarWarsHoldiaySpecial.com. The website features content summaries, character descriptions, information on the cast and crew, publicity texts, production notes, script excerpts, stills, merchandise information, media files, latest news, and links to other fan projects.[293] Despite the detail and care of Freeman's website, it is no surprise that it is not linked on StarWars.com, which currently only features two detailed articles on *The Star Wars Holiday Special*.[294] In this way, Lucasfilm lends authority only to those fan historians whose work is

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[291] Stephen J. Sansweet and Peter Vilmur, T*he Star Wars Vault: Thirty Years of Treasures from the Lucasfilm Archives* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 50.
[292] Sansweet et al., *Star Wars Vault*, 50.
[293] See "Celebrating 40 Years of The Star Wars Holiday Special," *StarwarsHolidaySpecial.com* [blog], accessed November 20, 2018, http://starwarsholidayspecial.com.
[294] See: Tim Veekhoven and Kevin Beentjes, "The Star Wars Holiday Special Cantina: Who's Who," *StarWars.com*, December 2, 2013, https://www.starwars.com/news/the-star-wars-holiday-special-cantina-we-may-not-thrive-friend-but-we-survive-friend. Also, *The Star Wars Holiday Special* is referenced in a holiday special of *The Star Wars Show* (2016-present), which is featured on *StarWars.com*. However, the special does not directly address or discuss *The Holiday Special*. Rather, as discussed in this chapter, it references it in style and tone that is arguably

close to the company's own and preferred vision of the past. Considering the unequal love Lucasfilm gives to fans' historical projects—hiring some fans and supporting select projects, while ignoring others—it becomes necessary to think not only about fans who make history, but also how and in what way Lucasfilm uses fan-made histories to disseminate their version of the past among fan communities.

Chapter one provided the general parameters of history-making as a fan practice. Drawing from my conception of the fan as historian, the following chapter examines how fans practice history in relation to and in collaboration with media industries. It argues that *Star Wars* has not only become a fictional transmedia storytelling project but has also developed simultaneously into a transmedia historiography that constructs, disseminates, and manages the history of the franchise across different media. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to develop a better understanding of how non-fiction media function in contemporary media franchising, the role of cultural memory in shaping textual continuity and collective memory, and the role of fans interpreting Lucasfilm's version of *Star Wars*' past for their audiences.

The first section of this chapter develops the theoretical foundation of transmedia historiography. Building on Matthew Freeman's argument that character-building, world-building and authorship form the basis of transmedia storytelling, the section outlines how Lucasfilm has adapted the hero's journey as a narrative template for their historical works, and has established George Lucas as the main creative authority behind the franchise.[295] The second section uses memory scholar Aleida Assmann's notion of *canon* and *archive* to explore how Lucasfilm uses transmedia historiography to establish textual continuity between the different *Star Wars* texts. It also looks at how transmedia history functions as a means to develop a collective memory of the franchise that focuses on theatrical releases and sidelines extra-cinematic products.[296] The third section mobilizes Suzanne Scott's concept of the fanboy auteur and everyfan to explore the role of Stephen J. Sansweet as a fanboy historian.[297] It argues that the

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comprehensive for fans familiar with the television special but not for those who do not know it. See: "The Star Wars Show Holiday Special," *StarWars.com*, accessed August 20, 2018, https://www.starwars.com/video/the-star-wars-show-holiday-special.

[295] Freeman, *Historicizing Transmedia Storytelling*, 22-36.

[296] Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 97-108.

[297] Suzanne Scott, "Modeling the Marvel Everyfan: Agent Coulson and/as Transmedia Fan Culture," *Palabra Clave* 20, no. 4 (2017): 1042-1072.

fanboy historian functions as both a means of transmitting Lucasfilm's version of the *Star Wars* textual and cultural canon to the fan community, and as a model Lucasfilm fan: namely, someone who consumes everything *Star Wars* without questioning the centrality of the films. The conclusion of this chapter will summarize the findings and recall some fan historical projects that have actively and directly criticized Lucasfilm's memory management.

3.1. From Transmedia Storytelling to Transmedia Historiography

Media scholars Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest identify four phases in the development of *Star Wars* from a single film into a directed transmedia storytelling project. The first phase encompasses the production of the first film trilogy. Between 1977 and 1983, the first film trilogy established the *Star Wars* mythology, and was supported by "tie-in comics, film novelizations and franchise novels, television films and animated cartoons, a radio adaptation, and [the development of] video game platforms."[298] The second phase describes the period between the first and second film trilogy, which spans from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s. Although no new films were produced during this time, the *Star Wars* storyworld nevertheless grew with media forms produced by media industries and fans not directly related to the production of the feature films. The term Expanded Universe describes these Lucasfilm-produced or officially licensed products, which include novels, comics, and video games, among others.[299] The release of George Lucas's *The Phantom Menace* in 1999 marks the beginning of the third phase, which ends with Disney's acquisition of Lucasfilm in 2012. As the scholars explain, in these thirteen years, *Star Wars*:

> expanded incrementally across media, intensifying its transmedia world-building strategy through hundreds of novels, comics, games (board, card, computer, video), action figures, animated television series, and licensed adaptive and paratextual materials, such as storybooks, LEGO sets, and museum exhibitions.[300]

[298] Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest, "Introduction: "What Is This Strange World We've Come to?," in *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling*, ed. Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 12.
[299] Ibid.,12-13.
[300] Ibid.,13.

The fourth and current phase has to this point been defined by Disney's decision to rebrand the Expanded Universe as Legends, thereby setting course to reboot the franchise with a new trilogy around Luke Skywalker, the release of three anthology films, a new animated television series, the announcement of a television series for a forthcoming Disney streaming service, and a new film trilogy that will not take Luke Skywalker as its focus.[301] Disney's production and branding strategies in the last six years demonstrate their intention to creatively connect all new *Star Wars* releases across different media, thereby correcting previous inconsistencies in Lucasfilm's licensing and (at times uncoordinated) storytelling.

While Guynes and Hassler-Forests' periodization cohesively outlines how *Star Wars* developed from a relatively uncoordinated franchise into a structured transmedia storytelling project, *Star Wars* histories other than museum projects—such as making-ofs, behind the scene reports, print media, and blogs—are absent. By primarily focusing on fictional *Star Wars* productions, they neglect to include the wide range of non-fiction media produced and licensed by Lucasfilm that chronicles the franchise's production and reception history.

One possible explanation as to why non-fiction *Star Wars* media have been marginalized in film and media studies is that the franchise set new standards with its excessive and all-encompassing licensing strategies. The extent to which Lucasfilm licenses the storyworld, and the franchise's wide range of pop cultural works and products, has given Lucas the reputation as "a founding figure in the evolution of modern transmedia storytelling."[302] In order to close the deal with 20th Century Fox before production on *A New Hope* began, Lucas traded his directorial fee for the licensing rights. This was a deal that seemed to disadvantage the director, as movie merchandise was considered financially unreliable. In other words, the success of the merchandise was as much a surprise as the film's box-office numbers. What had previously been considered financially unreliable now enabled Lucas to produce subsequent episodes independently from the big Hollywood studios. In addition to giving the filmmaker financial independence, Jenkins argues, the licensing agreements ultimately affected how Lucas approached the production of *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. That is, the

[301] Ibid.
[302] Henry Jenkins and Dan Hassler-Forest, "'I Have a Bad Feeling About This': A Conversation about Star Wars and the History of Transmedia," in *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling*, ed. Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest (Amsterdam: Amsterdam: University Press, 2017), 17.

success of *Star Wars* merchandising "created a strong incentive for those pieces—the comics, the toys, the novelizations, and so forth—to be more fully incorporated into the story system of *Star Wars*."[303]

In comparison, print and audiovisual media, behind-the-scenes reports, interviews, and publications with production materials were anything but new and exciting marketing strategies in the film and media industry at the time. As media scholar Bob Rehak explains, the circulation of "paraproduction"—media that enable insights into a film's production history—have been available since the beginning of filmmaking.[304] When *A New Hope* hit theatres in 1977, Lucasfilm's utilization and appropriation of more familiar, non-fictional publicity and advertising strategies were less innovative and likely less profitable than the franchise's forthcoming merchandising strategies. Yet, by investigating Lucasfilm's adoption of non-fiction formats, we can see how this part of the franchise developed from a disconnected selection of non-fiction media into a fully orchestrated transmedia historiography. As this chapter will demonstrate, the orchestrated telling of the past enables Lucasfilm to maintain authority over the *Star Wars* storyworld, as well as *Star Wars* as a cultural object. Indeed, *Star Wars*, in its totality, represents a form of *franchising the past*, in which the cultural production of history occurs across different industries (print, television, museum, online, among others), markets (entertainment, education, heritage), and laborers (Lucasfilm employees, curators, media professionals, amateurs and fans). And even though Lucasfilm cannot fully control *what* is written about it, by selectively licensing and granting access to its archive as well as copyrighted materials under its ownership, it can influence *how* its history is written.

The focus on fictional transmedia storytelling is not unique to studies on *Star Wars*. However, although scholars have primarily studied fictional characters, stories and storyworlds since the emergence of the concept of transmedia storytelling in 2003, they have regularly acknowledged the existence and potential of non-fictional transmedia storytelling. Asking whether it would be "possible to identify transmedia experiences beyond fiction," Scolari et al answer that transmedia storytelling is a "transversal phenomenon that covers any kind of

[303] Ibid.
[304] Bob Rehak, *More Than Meets the Eye Special Effects and the Fantastic Transmedia Franchise* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 10.

narrative" and can therefore also be found in journalism and documentary filmmaking.[305] Research on the topic has taken two directions. First, studies have examined transmedia storytelling in relation to television documentaries, educational programs, and the museum space, but not in relation to mass media franchises.[306] Second, scholars have tended to theorize non-fiction transmedia outside of commercial or promotional contexts, framing it as a social phenomenon and means of participation in smaller communities outside the industry context.[307]

To understand *Star Wars* as a transmedia historiography, we might want to look to Historian Hayden White, who argues that history is primarily a literary artefact and has little resemblance to science. According to him, history is mainly a story with a beginning, middle and end that makes use of various narrative genres such as tragedy, comedy, romance, or satire.[308] If we adapt the notion of history as a literary composition to *Star Wars* historiography, it is possible to argue that Lucasfilm is using the literary template of the hero's journey as a way of conceiving of the franchise's past. In his seminal *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, American mythologist Joseph Campbell argues that the majority of myths share the same structure: "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."[309] Lucasfilm and Lucas himself have stressed how Campbell's work influenced the writing of *Star Wars* and Luke's transformation from a farm boy into a Jedi who saves the Galaxy by bringing down the

[305] Scolari et al., *Transmedia Archaeology*, 4.
[306] See; Jenny Kidd, *Museums in the New Mediascape: Transmedia, Participation, Ethics* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Renira Rampazzo Gambarato and Geane C. Alzamora, eds., *Exploring Transmedia Journalism in the Digital Age* (Hershey: IGI Global, 2018); Arnau Gifreu-Castells, Richard Misek, and Erwin Verbruggen, eds., "Transgressing the Non-fiction Transmedia Narrative," *VIEW: Journal of European Television History and Culture* 5, no. 10 (2016), http://ojs.viewjournal.eu/index.php/view/article/view/JETHC108/261.
[307] For instance, see Donna Hancox, "Transmedia for Social Change: Evolving Approaches to Activism and Representation," in *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies*, ed. Matthew Freeman, Renira Rampazzo Gambarato (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 165-172.
[308] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).
[309] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces (3rd edition*) (Novato: New World Library, 2008), 23.

Empire.[310] In *Star Wars* histories, then, Lucas is regularly portrayed as the "hero" who moves from provincial California to Hollywood, where he defies skeptical studio bosses and fellow filmmakers to produce one of the biggest pop cultural phenomenon of the 20th and 21st centuries. This narrative arc becomes evident in the description of Rinzler's detailed *Star Wars* history, which promises insights into the "budget battles that nearly scuttled the entire project," "the director's early casting saga," or "the who's who of young film rebels who pitched in to help."[311]

Despite this narrative structure, non-fiction works have fallen through the cracks of transmedia storytelling, and this is perhaps because of how scholars have distinguished transmedia storytelling from adaptations and cross-media storytelling. Transmedia storytelling emerged as a theoretical concept through and for the study of fictional texts, and was therefore differentiated from earlier concepts of adaptation and cross-media storytelling. Whereas cross-media describes the publication of the same content across different media platforms, adaptation refers to the translation of the same story into different media without adding considerable new content.[312] Consequently, definitions of transmedia storytelling have attempted to highlight differences from these two processes. For instance, media scholar Elizabeth Evans explains that "transmedia elements do not involve the telling of the same events on different platforms; they involve the telling of *new* events from the same storyworld."[313] In addition, media scholar J.P. Wolf differentiates transmedia storytelling from adaptation by reasoning that the former represents the growth of the narrative and storyworld whereas the latter does not add anything new to it.[314] Following these definitions, it would be easy to dismiss *Star Wars*'s

[310] For instance, accounts of Lucas's admiration for Campbell have been featured on *Star Wars.com*: Lucas O. Seastrom, "Mythic Discovery Within the Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Joseph Campbell Meets George Lucas - Part 1: A Much Friendlier Meet-Up than Obi-Wan and Vader," *StarWars.com*, October 22, 2015, https://www.starwars.com/news/mythic-discovery-within-the-inner-reaches-of-outer-space-joseph-campbell-meets-george-lucas-part-i.
[311] See the product description on Amazon.com: "The Making of Star Wars (Enhanced Edition)," *Amazon*, accessed August 20, 2018, https://www.amazon.ca/dp/B00DQQSD2W/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1.
[312] Freeman, *Historicizing Transmedia*, 21.
[313] Emphasis by Evans in Elizabeth Evans, *Transmedia Television: Audiences, New Media, and Daily Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 27.
[314] Mark J.P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 245-246.

(his)storytelling as cross-media or adaptation on first sight, as they indeed follow the same narrative arc of Lucas's career and the making of the films.[315]

On first sight, *Star Wars* histories might look like cross-media, as many of the historical documents indeed reappear across different texts, as is the case with conceptual designer Ralph McQuarrie's concept art that had considerable impact on the final look of the films. His drawings are included in print and online publications, documentaries and DVD extras, exhibitions, and have even been produced as action figures and high-end collectible figurines. Yet, what ultimately makes them a form of transmedia historiography, and differentiates them from mere adaptations or cross-media, is their narrative framing, as well as a medium specificity that expands historical knowledge through different readings of the franchise's past. Even if transmedia historiography sometimes reuses the same materials, it provides different narrative frames to the hero's journey. In Carol Titelman's *The Art of Star Wars*, published in 1979, McQuarrie's work is used to outline the process from Lucas's first idea, to the first draft of the script, to the final film.[316] Robert Guenette's documentary *The Making of Star Wars* (1977) uses the concept art to demonstrate how Lucas and his creative team realized his ideas, creating a before-and-after moment for the viewer. Museum exhibitions like Star Wars: Identities (2012), which approaches the franchise through the lens of psychology, invites visitors to view the drawings from an anthropological perspective, and, more specifically, to understand how cultural, biological, and geographical environments impact an individual's personality.[317] Rick Hull's documentary *Star Wars Tech* (2007), which investigates how technologies featured in the films might be realized, transforms them into blueprints for actual vehicles, tools, and weapons. Action figures based on early concept art that Hasbro released in 2013 allow haptic comparison and speculation on how *Star Wars* could have looked, or might look in the real world. Furthermore, the figures, which just like the early concept art differ considerably from the final look of the film, establish connections to a comic book series based on Lucas's first draft of

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[315] See Anja Bechmann Petersen, "Internet and Cross Media Production: Case Studies in Two Major Danish Media organizations," *Australian Journal of Emerging Technology and Society* 4, no. 2 (2006): 94.
[316] Carol Titelman, ed., *The Art of Star Wars* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979).
[317] Beatriz Bartolomé Herrera and Philipp Dominik Keidl, "How Star Wars Became Museological: Transmedia Storytelling in the Exhibition Space", in *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling*, ed. Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 155-168.

the script.[318] As such, each of the aforementioned works provide a new perspective on the history of the franchise.

Transmedia storytelling is about and fosters an experience of "exploring the central narrative through new eyes, such as secondary characters or third parties," Jenkins explains.[319] This focus on subjectivity is also evident in transmedia historiography. The telling of *Star Wars* history unfolds across multiple media, and these works necessarily involve a variety of agents and their perspectives, such as actors, producers, costume designers, conceptual artists, special effects artists, and model makers, as well as fans, scholars, and a wide array of witnesses. Therefore, if transmedia storytelling tells different stories, or at least different parts of a larger story, we could say that transmedia historiography tells different parts of a larger history of the *Star Wars* franchise.

In transmedia storytelling, "each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play."[320] This also applies to transmedia historiography, in which the history of the franchise is introduced through a television special or DVD extra, expanded through newspaper reports, biographies, museum exhibitions, comic books, and blogs, while objects like an action figure transform the pre-production process into a form of play. What makes these works more than mere adaptations into different media is the way they use historical sources to produce knowledge about the franchise. Whereas McQuarrie's concept art appears across media, other forms of evidence do not. Books like Rinzler's *The Making Of…* offer the chance to reprint original manuscripts, production notes, transcribed interviews, concept art, photography of sets and post-production environments, among other artefacts.[321] In print, readers study these draft scripts in detail, which would not be possible in other media like film. Documentaries like Kevin Burns' *Empire of Dreams: The Story of the Star Wars* (2004) provide footage from the casting of the films that visualizes how the cast approached their roles in first readings, before moving to footage from shoots at various

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[318] *The Star Wars: Based on the Original Rough Draft Screenplay by George Lucas* is a 8-part comic book published by Dark House Comics that was launched in 2013.
Jenkins cited in Freeman, *Historicizing Transmedia*, 21. [319]
[320] Henry Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling," *MIT Technology Review* (2003), January 15, 2003, https://www.technologyreview.coms/401760/transmedia-storytelling/.
[321] For example, see J.W. Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*.

locations and the final film. Museums enable a close encounter with the original objects and their materiality, as well as with the proportions of props, set designs, and vehicles. Biographical information in works like Rinzler's book can narrate undocumented events in the life of Lucas and others, whereas comics like Brian Smith and John Michael Helmer's *George Lucas: Rise of an Empire*, although not officially supported by Lucasfilm, can illustrate these moments.[322] Each of these works, then, introduces new materials that add fresh insight and perspective on *Star Wars'* history, which makes them valid transmedia extensions.

In both cases—narrative framing and medium specificity—*Star Wars* historiography follows what Matthew Freeman describes as a "system of producing narrative variation on sameness" that defines transmedia storytelling beyond technological and industrial convergence.[323] Accordingly, the idea of transmedia storytelling is grounded in the idea of cohesion, and therefore requires the development of narratives that at least feel as if they fit with each other and belong to the same fictional storyworld. However, each new story must expand what audiences already know, exploring different events and introducing new characters to offer variation between texts.[324] Based on this balance between variation and sameness, Freeman identifies the following three characteristics: (1) character-building, (2) world-building, and (3) authorship. As he summarizes:

> Character-building is the construction and development of a fictional character, including via things such as backstory, appearance, psychology, dialogue and interactions with other characters. World-building […] concerns 'the process of designing a fictional universe…that is sufficiently detailed to enable many different stories to emerge but coherent enough so that each story feels like it fits with the others.' […] Authorship, lastly, refers most broadly and most simply to the governing role played by a central author figure over the extensions of a story across media, be it a sole writer, a company or something in between.[325]

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[322] Brian Smith and Michael Helmer, *George Lucas: Rise of an Empire* (Vancouver: Tidalwave Productions, 2017).
[323] Freeman, *Historicizing Transmedia*, 39.
[324] Ibid.
[325] Ibid., 10.

In terms of character-building, similar processes are exemplified by the figure George Lucas, and how his personality and environment is presented in *Star Wars* histories across media. Since most Lucasfilm-produced *Star Wars* histories use the narrative frame of the hero's journey, these works transform Lucas into what Bertetti calls a transmedia character: "a fictional hero whose adventures are told in different media platforms, each one giving more details on the life of that character."[326] Indeed, Luca functions as the hero of the narrative, whose "success goes to the heart of the American dream, a story rooted in his early life in the agricultural cradle of Northern California."[327] His life and work, framed as the American dream of the underdog working his way to the top of their field, is the template with which *Star Wars* history is written follows his inspirations as a filmmaker, his struggles as a writer, his friendships with some of New Hollywood's most talented filmmakers, such as Steven Spielberg and Francis Ford Coppola, and the construction of Skywalker Ranch as the epicenter of *Star Wars* productions. Each entry further develops his character backstory, appearances, psychology, dialogue, and interactions with other creative agents by focusing on specialized topics like costume design or special effects, or by retelling his interaction with cinematographers and directors. He remains a constant presence even in works that focus on other members of the crew. Regardless of whether it is in books, films, interviews or exhibitions, other people's memories and contributions to *Star Wars* are regularly introduced with phrases like "George wanted", "George asked" or "in George's vision."[328] As a result of his central role, Lucas is more than the "face" of *Star Wars*. Rather, he represents "a good character [who] can sustain multiple narratives and thus leads to a successful [history of a] movie franchise" by connecting different creative agents and production sites.[329] Notably, in some instances, fictional transmedia characters cross the realm into non-fictional productions. In the documentaries *The Making of Star Wars* and Stephen Franklin's *Star Wars: Feel the Force* (2005), C3PO and R2D2 recollect the production of the films, awkwardly bridging fiction and non-fiction and referring to Lucas as their director rather than their creator.

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[326] Paolo Bertetti, "Toward a Typology of Transmedia Characters," *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014): 2344.
[327] Mark Cotta Vaz and Shinji Hata, *The Star Wars Archives: Props, Costumes, Models and Artwork from Star Wars* (London: Virgin Books, 1995), 2.
[328] Bartolomé Herrera et al., "How Star Wars became Museological,"161.
[329] Jenkins cited in Betetti, "Toward a Typology of Transmedia Characters," 2346.

In terms of world-building, the central location of Lucas's journey is post-WWII America—specifically Hollywood—as the place where this change comes into being. *Star Wars* histories tend to divide time into a pre- and post-*Star Wars* period, marking the release of *A New Hope* as a social phenomenon and world-changing and defining moment. Film scholar Alison Trope argues that vernacular references to Hollywood do not address a concrete geographic site. Instead, she remarks that Hollywood is a placeless, timeless, and emblematic symbol that is associated with many different meanings by many different people.[330] As such, Hollywood "becomes a name that stands in for and connotes a range of other experiences and symbols, many of which are subjective and ever changing."[331] In Lucasfilm histories, then, Hollywood as a symbol stands in for an outdated, uninspired, and cautious studio system whose executives and personnel fail to recognize Lucas's vision for *Star Wars*. As screenwriter Matthew Robbins explains:

> Not only was he very apart from the system, George was a rebel and was grateful to not be in Southern California. The whole culture of the studios and business managers, agents and lawyers, to him, was enormously distasteful and threatening. He felt that the Hollywood enterprise was corrupt. That it wasn't really about creativity, it was about making money. I think American Zoetrope and a great deal of Lucasfilm was in reaction to Hollywood.[332]

In contrast, these histories frame Lucas's production sites Park Way and the Skywalker Ranch as intimate spaces that allow creativity to thrive. A passage in Rinzler's enhanced edition of *The Making of Star Wars* describes the atmosphere as communal rather than industrious and corporate infrastructure of the Hollywood studios:

> In a spiritual continuation of the temporarily defunct American Zoetrope, Lucas's converted Victorian house, now known as Park Way, [which] became a haven for many of these same friends and colleagues. 'I came up and started working at Park Way in 1974,' recalls Lucy Wilson, Lucas's first hire (who still works for Lucas), whose office was on the main house's sunporch. […] Anyway, that was fun because they were all very entertaining. George had

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[330] Alison Trope, *Stardust Monuments: The Saving and Selling of Hollywood* (Hannover: Dartmouth College Press, 2011), 2.
[331] Ibid., 2.
[332] Matthew Robbins cited in Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*, Kindle.

> invited these filmmakers basically to share his house with the same goal: that it would be a film community."[333]

Following the idea that transmedia storytelling is "the art of world building,"[334] *Star Wars* histories position an idealized version of San Francisco as more liberal and creative than the business-oriented and ultimately outdated Hollywood studio system that was reluctant and hesitant to release Lucas's visionary project. Conflicts between old and new Hollywood and filmmaking set the scene for Lucas's struggle and eventual success that should change the way "movies are made," as the documentary *Empire of Dreams* claims in its opening sequence.

This narrative of Old Hollywood and New San Francisco, or old and new technology, southern versus northern California, is plainly evident in the ways that Skywalker Ranch is very frequently the setting for *Star Wars* histories. These histories include pictures, descriptions and anecdotes set at Skywalker Ranch, which immerse the viewer in a concrete locale that contextualizes events and characters. The descriptions of the plans for, and work at Skywalker Ranch draw another sharp contrast to the assembly line production in the studio system, where tennis breaks at lunch would not be considered part of a productive work flow:

> Over the years, Lucas would purchase several adjoining lands, tripling the acreage. His plans for what came to be called Skywalker Ranch always included vineyards, orchards, grazing lands, and a Victorian house; four editing studios, a sound facility; guest residences for friends and filmmakers; music and film libraries; and a recreation complex. 'Writers can't work a straight eight-hour day," [Lucas explains]. 'So it's great to be able to go out and play tennis at lunch and then go back to work. It really comes out of when I was in cinema school. Film school is a very small community of like-minded kids who help each other make films, look at films, and talk about films. I wondered why you couldn't have that kind of setup on a professional level.'"[335]

Interviews conducted for audiovisual productions are often conducted at Skywalker Ranch, as was the case with Joseph Campbell's interview for Pamela Mason Wagner's documentary *The Mythology of Star Wars* (2000). In addition, Lucasfilm carefully restricts access to the

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[333] Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*, Kindle.
[334] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 114.
[335] Rinzler, *The Empire Strikes Back*, Kindle.

Ranch, thereby positioning it as a mystic place to be explored. Unlike studio tours, which sell tickets by bringing their visitors as close as possible to the production sites and process, Skywalker Ranch's production sites remain largely inaccessible to visitors. It is presented as private space rather than a media production hub, and guides visitors through lounges, sunrooms, and gardens rather than offices and studios. Lucasfilm's success in branding Skywalker Ranch as a secret, even mystical place is evident in pop-cultural references to the site. One episode of *The Big Bang Theory* (2007–present) entitled "The Skywalker Incursion," portrays its protagonists unsuccessfully attempting to break into the property. In Kyle Newman's film *Fanboys* (2009), a group of friends road trip to the acreage in order to get their hands on *The Phantom Menace* before its released.

Given that George Lucas is a character in the transmedia historiography of *Star Wars*, albeit one with a certain degree of agency, the authorial control over the flow of content across media and the negotiation of what and how different parts of the larger history are dispersed lies with Lucasfilm. The company holds and coordinates the copyrights to the franchise. Although the history of *Star Wars*, or the biography of George Lucas, is not protected by copyright, any audiovisual material from the films is. Now, it is possible to write *Star Wars* history without an official license or authorization by Lucasfilm, but Lucasfilm has two advantages on the non-fiction market. First, it can regulate the presence of materials in popular non-fiction media, not granting making-ofs the use of moving images from the films, the filming and post-production process, or relevant production materials. Hence, it can influence what is said about *Star Wars* by withdrawing or refusing image rights. Moreover, Lucasfilm can keep the most valuable and rare documents that generate big sales numbers for its own, in-house historical projects.

Second, and closely related to the previous point, Lucasfilm oversees its own archive. Lucasfilm Archives includes everything related to *Star Wars*, from production notes to original props and merchandise—objects that can rarely be found in other institutions. Thus, Lucasfilm can directly control who can see what from their holdings, giving the company another advantage over fan, professional and academic historians who lack such things. Lucasfilm therefore takes on what philosopher Michel Foucault has called the author function that has "indicative descriptions" and "is functional in that it serves as a means of classification:

A name can group together a number of texts and differentiate them from others."[336] Although some Lucasfilm-employed historians, like J.W. Rinzler and Stephen J. Sansweet, have become recognizable names for those interested in *Star Wars* historiography, Lucasfilm's trademark functions as an indicator of authorized history.

Using this conceptualization of a transmedia historiography system that produces variation on sameness, it is possible to sketch and periodize the development of *Star Wars* into a transmedia historiography project akin to Guynes and Hassler-Forest's four phases. The first phase encompasses the production of histories dedicated to the making of the first film trilogy. If between 1977 and 1983, Episode IV to VI established the *Star Wars* mythology, the early histories established the narrative of the hero's journey for non-fiction *Star Wars* media. Fans began producing their own historical works at this time, which they distributed in fan zines or published in collectible guidebooks independently from Lucasfilm, as discussed in chapter two. In the second phase, spanning from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, histories and reports on the first three films were produced to revitalized interest in the franchise and to market the new *Star Wars* products advertised to old and new fan bases. Most notably, Lucasfilm began collaborating with museums in the curation of exhibitions on the films. Moreover, Lucasfilm hired Stephen J. Sansweet to manage fan relations, a position from which he published several *Star Wars* histories. The release of *The Phantom Menace* in 1999 marks the beginning of the third phase, in which Lucasfilm further capitalized on the franchise's history by supporting high-end products like *The Making of...* series by Rinzler, as well as commodifying holdings from their archives, such as Hasbro's translation of McQuarrie's concept art into action figures in 2013. The fourth period begins with Disney's acquisition of the franchise, as well as Lucas's announcement of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, which is set to open in Los Angeles. This museum will house Lucas' collection of paintings, illustrations, comics, props, films, and digital art, and will give *Star Wars* history a permanent home in one of the most expensive and prestigious museum projects in recent history. Moreover, it is marked by Disney's decision to reboot the franchise, raising the question of what aspects of it will be included in future works and in *Star Wars* histories licensed by Disney.

However, transmedia storytelling and transmedia historiography are deeply intertwined

[336] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 123.

in the media industries. The next section will outline how Lucasfilm has produced histories to negotiate, organize, and guide textual relationships and interpretations of the growing *Star Wars* storyworld. George Lucas might be considered as a founding figure of contemporary transmedia storytelling practices, but *Star Wars*' development from a singular blockbuster into a fully-operative intertextual franchise has been anything but smooth.[337] While Lucas' foresight and investment in licensing agreements enabled *Star Wars*' expansion from the screen into every fiber of American popular culture, early licensed products rarely challenged the narratively self-contained storyworld the filmmaker developed in his first trilogy. Toys, radio adaptations, board games and novelizations offered fans an alternative entry point into the space saga without ever considerably altering Lucas's vision. Although tie-in authors and fans began to introduce new or highly personal interpretations and continuations of the Luke Skywalker story that challenged the films' centrality, this positive attitude to industrial and technological convergence changed in the early 1990s.[338] It was at this point that Lucasfilm began using *Star Wars*' past to (re-) establish the films at the center of the franchise through the construction of a collective memory. In this collective memory, extra-cinematic texts take on only a minor role, while some entities are deliberately neglected.

3.2. Transmedia Historiography and the Making of Cultural Memory

Media scholar Colin B. Harvey argues that memory is central for understanding the production and reception of transmedia fiction. The successful creation of transmedia requires both producers as well as consumers to establish what Harvey calls a "transmedia memory" between different media and their content. For licensors and licensees, legal arrangements and copyrights regulate how and what aspects of a storyworld can be articulated in their products. Such legal frameworks protect licensees from misappropriation of their intellectual property, while it provides licensors with the scaffolding for the creation of products that are recognizable to old fans, and might function as stepping-stones for new fans into the franchise.[339] For audiences, memory is a crucial part of their immersion into transmedia storylines and aids in understanding

[337] Jenkins and Hassler-Forest, "I Have a Bad Feeling About This'," 17.
[338] Will Brooker, *Using the Force: Creativity, Community, and Star Wars Fans* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 164-170.
[339] Colin B. Harvey, *Fantastic Transmedia: Narrative, Play and Memory Across Science Fiction and Fantasy Storyworlds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2.

the different configurations of a character and a world in films, videogames, series, and novels. "Not only is the viewer, player or reader required to configure the medium in question in order to understand the piece of narrative on its own terms," Harvey explains, using the example of Darth Vader, "but to engage with the work transmedially by recalling the character […] from his other appearances in the broader storyworld."[340] Without recalling information from previous texts, each entry would represent a new and stand-alone work that would fail to develop an encompassing storyworld across media. And although memory is "the means by which elements are remembered," it also refers to the possibility that things from a narrative are "misremembered, forgotten, and even 'non-remembered' across media."[341] In this regard, transmedia storytelling is actually also a system of producing and managing, or at times erasing, memories.

This triangular system is not without its conflicts, and "issues of memory are often expressed through arguments over 'canon' […] and which elements of a particular storyworld are 'genuine' or 'authentic' and which are non-canon."[342] Media industries, fans, as well as general audiences and media institutions engage in the processes of canonization, as fan scholar Mark Duffett's definition of the term indicates: "[Canon is] the media universe created by the makers of a text; a set of texts chosen by critics or prominent fans as the best or most indicative of a particular cultural field."[343] In the case of the *Star Wars* franchise, such debates have materialized in what fans refer to as the "canon wars," a complex and heated debate around the question of what extra-cinematic story elements form the textual foundation of the franchise.[344] Broadly speaking, two camps engage in the "canon wars": those fans who follow and those who challenge Lucasfilm's conception of the canon. Such incompatibilities between personal and collective canonization result, as Harvey explains, in "ongoing tensions between the relationship of subjective remembering and collective memory, even leading to the

[340] Ibid., 3.
[341] Ibid., 200.
[342] Ibid., 3.
[343] Mark Duffett, *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), Kindle.
[344] For a detailed overview on the canon wars, see "The Star Wars Canon: Overview," *Canon Wars* [blog], accessed March 8, 2017, www.canonwars.com.

oxymoronic concept of 'personal canon', i.e. an individual's subjective opinion on what constitutes the collective 'reality' of the storyworld."[345]

The "canon wars" are not mere struggles over subjective interpretations or objective textual authenticity and ontological security. For media industries, canons represent the chance to guide audience consumption of and reception around their core products, and to actively shape collective memories of the franchise. By placing the films in the center of the canon, Lucasfilm embeds the franchise in a discourse of cinematic authorship, technological innovation, and industrial reinvention. Accordingly, "everything else *Star Wars*" is an indicator of the films' power and influence, but they are not responsible for their success or should be acknowledged independently from them.

For some fans, such hierarchizing of texts represents a threat to their self-narrative and identities. By giving preference to the films and presenting them as a common denominator, Lucasfilm implicitly hierarchizes fans' experiences, memories, and self-understanding. The discounting or lack of appreciation of non-canonical texts brings with it a danger of marginalizing and forgetting those fans and their biographies that strongly identify with them. As such, canonization also impacts the *Star Wars* fan community on a social level, as canons foster a singular collective fan identity and cultural memory of the franchise that does not reflect the diversity of memories and interpretations that appear in some fan-produced histories. To recall chapter one, here, fan projects such as autobiographies that reflect on the authors' struggles or end with their fandom, or preservation projects which restore the first trilogy as it was seen on screen upon first release, suggest that fans actively dispute both decisions made in the past and Lucasfilm's representation of this past.

Cultural memory scholar Aleida Assmann uses the concept of canon to examine how cultural memory supports the formation of collective identity. Cultural memory emerges through the interrelationship between forgetting and remembering, of which both have passive and active aspects. Active forgetting refers to acts of intentional negation, destruction and censorship of the past, whereas passive forgetting refers to unintentionally neglected, disregarded, and forgotten aspects of the past. In turn, passive remembering suggests the accumulation of relics of the past without further interpretation, while active memory is mediated and interpreted with a message for posterity. Assmann defines passively stored memories that preserve

[345] Harvey, *Fantastic Transmedia*, 4.

"the past as the past"— literally and metaphorically—as the archive. She defines actively circulated memory that preserves the past as present with a clear message for posterity as the canon. As Assmann elaborates, cultural memory,

> is based on two separate functions: the presentation of a narrow selection of sacred texts, artistic masterpieces, or historic key events in a timeless framework; and the storing of documents and artifacts of the past that do not at all meet these standards but are nevertheless deemed interesting or important enough to not let them vanish on the highway to total oblivion. While emphatic appreciation, repeated performance, and continued individual and public attention are the hallmark of objects in the cultural working memory [canon], professional preservation and withdrawal from general attention mark the contents of the reference memory [archive]. Emphatic reverence and specialized historical curiosity are the two poles between which the dynamics of cultural memory is played out.[346]

Assmann's definition of canon and archive can be used both to describe textual continuity amongst different fictional incarnations of the franchise—Harvey's idea of "transmedia memory"—but also on the level of social relationships between fans and the media industry, as well as among fans in their respective communities.

Lucasfilm engages in practices both in the spirit of the archive and the canon. It collects, documents and stores texts, objects and information on its storyworld and its production history in its (literal) archives. But not all objects or non-fiction media in these archives attract the same attention in their conceptualization of the canon. The history of the films, their makers, and their meanings are assigned with an auratic and existential importance, negating the notion of potential *Star Wars* histories that neither begin nor end with the theatrical release of the films. While each new *Star Wars* history enables audiences to dig deeper and discover a new aspect of the films' production and cultural impact, the information on non-cinematic texts is stored and potentially available in the archives but is not actively interpreted with the same attention and repetition. In other words, the practice of transmedia history by corporate owners services the need to achieve consistency in transmedia and cultural memory, which, in turn, controls the image of the franchise and its profitability.

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[346] Assmann, "Canon and Archive,"101.

Throughout the first period, which ran from 1977 to the mid-1980s and primarily focused on the production of making-of television specials and publications, Lucasfilm established the narrative pattern of the hero's journey set around Lucas. In early *Star Wars* histories, the company did not substantially acknowledge non-theatrical *Star Wars* productions and licensed works, which expanded the *Star Wars* storyworlds beyond what could be seen in the theatrical releases. *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, John Korty's *Caravan of Courage: An Ewok Adventure* 1984), Ken Wheat's *Ewoks: The Battle for Endor* (1985), and the animated series *Ewoks* (1985-1987) and *Star Wars: Droids* (1985-1986) all presented original *Star Wars* stories, but were rarely mentioned in early Lucasfilm-produced histories. Although each of these productions had the potential to refocus audiences' reception of the theatrical films, Lucasfilm did not see any need to establish a hierarchy between the different works. The main strategy in the first phase of *Star Wars* transmedia historiography was to "actively forget" such works, taking them out of circulation (*The Star Wars Holiday Special*) or more or less ignoring them (Ewoks films and the two animated series) in *Star Wars* histories, which generally conclude with the release of *Return of the Jedi*. Indeed, the vernacular rough-and-ready rule that "movies are gospel, and everything else is gossip,"—something Lucas apparently coined—was very much the attitude Lucasfilm adopted in relationship to extra-cinematic texts.[347]

Processes of strategic textual and cultural canonization began only in the second phase, especially from the 1990s onwards, and were further streamlined in the third and fourth period. Five important developments prompted a new strategy in memory management and caused this transition.

1. The emergence of the Expanded Universe told new *Star Wars* stories in every medium but film. The various novels, role-playing games, video games, and other tie-ins "expanded the [story] world in profound ways by installing new data to the story-program and collaboratively building a substantial narrative history [that] grafted new narrative tissue onto the bones of the franchise."[348] Suddenly and unexpectedly, Lucas

[347] See William Proctor and Matthew Freeman, "'The First Step into a Smaller World': The Transmedia Economy of Star Wars," in *Revisiting Imaginary Worlds: A Subcreation Studies Anthology*, ed. Mark J.P. Wolf (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 232.
[348] Proctor et al., "'The First Step into a Smaller World'," 227.

was no longer perceived as the only authorial figure spearheading the development of *Star Wars*.

2. Lucas and Lucasfilm experienced a fan backlash to the special edition of the films that was released to commemorate *Star Wars*' 20th anniversary. Lucas advertised the special edition as a way of restoring the damaged and fragile film prints, and improving some of the outdated or less successful special effects. According to some fans, Lucas had gone far beyond the technical by performing some changes to content. In particular, Lucas's decision to alter the cantina scene—so that Han Solo's intentional, deadly shot at bounty hunter Greed was reframed as an act of self-defense—caused controversy. Since then, fans have argued that this seemingly small adjustment has had a considerable impact on the perception of the character; namely, it caused "the evolution of Han's character [from ruthless smuggler to rebel hero] to carry much less impact."[349]

3. Lucas made the controversial declaration that the special edition would replace the original three films as canon. He restricted circulation of the original films, and only released them with comparatively lower image quality as a DVD special. Unpredictably, fans were no longer able to see the films that triggered their fandom.

4. The release of *The Phantom Menace* starkly divided fan communities, leaving many fans of the original trilogy disappointed and dissatisfied. This created a gap between younger and older fans. Whereas the former tended to receive the film more positively, the latter considered the new film to be poorly written, too childish, commercial and inauthentic in its use of CGI. Some fans began to describe Lucas as the nail in the franchise's coffin and not as the creative force behind it, while other fan conversations shifted from debates on one's favorite *Star Wars* film to whether one could like the new trilogy at all.

5. The material culture of *Star Wars* became increasingly visible in the 1990s. This came as the result of two developments. First, a community of collectors of *Star Wars* vintage

[349] A fan commenting on the changes made to *A New Hope* for the special edition cited in Brooker, *Using the Force*, 76.

> action figures and merchandise began organizing and professionalizing itself more publicly than in the 1970s and 1980s, commemorating the success of the franchise beyond narrative media in what the second chapter has discussed as action figure media. Second, the release of the new trilogy resulted in new merchandise contracts, including the lucrative transmedia *Star Wars* LEGO line that brought *Star Wars* in product form to all kinds of stores. To some, *Star Wars* was in danger of turning from a film series that sold toys to a series of films primarily made to advertise ancillary products and tie-ins.[350]

Taken together, these five developments made the gospel–gossip analogy an insufficient model with which to organize the increasingly expanding and complicated *Star Wars* storyline and material culture, as well as the franchise's history. It was at this time that Lucasfilm increased the production of non-fiction texts, and non-fiction media became Lucas and Lucasfilm's tool to canonize and archive texts and memories of the *Star Wars* franchise.

Lucasfilm released its first official statement on the relationship between the feature film and the Expanded Universe in 1994 in the official fan magazine *Star Wars Insider*. While the term Expanded Universe itself already implies "a certain degree of separation from the 'official' or 'canonical' films,"[351] the statement placed the films on top of the *Star Wars* canon:

> "Gospel," or canon as we refer to it, includes the screenplays, the films, the radio dramas and the novelizations. These works spin out of George Lucas' original stories, the rest are written by other writers. However, between us, we've read everything, and much of it is taken into account in the overall continuity. The entire catalogue of published works comprises a vast history with many offshoots, variations and tangents like any other well-developed mythology.[352]

Tie-ins such as a *Star Wars* encyclopedia functioned as a platform to further implement this approach to the canon. Its aim, among other things, was to canonize the special edition and de-canonize the original films. In the encyclopedia, Stephen J. Sansweet proposes "one sure answer" to the question of what canon is:

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[350] See van Ert, *A Long Time Ago*, 129-130.
[351] Freeman, *Historicizing Transmedia Storytelling*, 35.
[352] "Continuity, Canon and Apocrypha," *TheForceNet.com* [blog], accessed August 20, 2018, http://www.theforce.net/swtc/continuity.html.

> The *Star Wars* Trilogy Special Edition—the three films themselves as executive-produced, and in the case of Star Wars written and directed, by George Lucas, are canon. Coming in a close second, we have the authorized adaptations of the films: the novels, the radio dramas and comics. After that, almost everything falls into a category of quasi-canon.[353]

However, such clear-cut structured and on first sight simple categories are complicated by his occasional borrowing from the Expanded Universe that indicate that the books "also fed back into the ur-text of the feature film series."[354]

In 2000, Lucasfilm developed a new canon structure following a more cohesive documentation of all world information provided in different media in a central database called Holocron. The purpose of the Holocron—with its more than 30,000 entries that are not available to the public and rarely presented to fans—is to handle internal breaches by establishing a hierarchy of five canons of Lucasfilm-produced fiction that did not include any fan works:

1. The George or G-Canon (the most recent versions of films Episodes I–VI, the scripts, movie novelizations, radio plays, and Lucas's statements);
2. The TV or T-Canon (*The Star Wars: Clone Wars* television series);
3. The Continuity or C-Canon (The Expanded Universe);
4. The Secondary or S-Canon ([Role-playing games] such as *Star Wars*: Galaxies); and
5. The Non- or N-Canon ("What if?" stories such as *Star Wars* Infinities, and also tie-ins such as *Star Wars* Lego films and video games).[355]

By building the canon around George Lucas, Lucasfilm follows a general tendency in transmedia storytelling to simultaneously deemphasize and confirm the importance of a singular author figure. "Transmedia stories disintegrate the author figure, as artists in different media collaborate to create the transmedia text," Suzanne Scott explains, "but, in order to assure audiences that someone is overseeing the transmedia's text expansion and creating meaningful connections between texts, the author must ultimately be restored and their significance reformed."[356]

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[353] Stephen J. Sansweet, *Star Wars Encyclopedia* (New York: Del Rey Books), xi.
[354] Harvey, *Fantastic Transmedia*, 145.
[355] Proctor et al., "'The First Step into a Smaller World'," 232
[356] Suzanne Scott, "Who's Steering the Mothership? The Role of the Fanboy Auteur in Transmedia Storytelling," in *The Participatory Cultures Handbook*, ed. Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 41.

However, Lucasfilm's attempt to smooth out the inconsistencies between the films and their media extensions through this complex and layered canonization has not been unanimously accepted by all fans, as the ongoing "canon wars" and fan-run projects documenting and commenting on such debates demonstrate.[357] Lucasfilm-authorized *Star Wars* histories need to be understood as a measure to stabilize these textual hierarchies by canonizing the production histories of the film and predominantly archiving the past of the Expanded Universe and ancillary products.

Through the production of a film- and Lucas-centric cultural memory, detailed and lavish print publications, television specials, home-video extras, among others, have established preferred modes of canonization. The making of *Star Wars*' cultural memory in this second phase is exemplified by the musealization of the franchise in the form of various exhibitions. Since 1993, Lucasfilm has regularly produced, in collaboration with museums, traveling exhibitions that feature original props, costumes, concept art, production notes and behind-the-scenes photos and footage. Often curated under specific themes such as mythology, arts, science, and psychology, these immersive exhibitions would feature insights into the *Star Wars* storyworld and were framed as forms of education and edutainment.[358] No matter what the theme, however, all exhibitions presented Lucas as the main creative force behind the franchise, and would only include the films and later the Lucas-sanctioned animated *Clone Wars* film and series. Cast and crew are given a voice in these exhibitions, but mainly to proclaim how they helped bringing Lucas' vision from concept to screen. The George Lucas Exhibition (1993), as one might guess by the name, established this emphasis on Lucas by celebrating him as a storyteller and filmmaker with the skills to craft and realize his artistic and narrative vision across several films. The promotional materials and exhibition catalogue produced an image of authorship tied to the idea of a unique creative mind. The catalogue cover and poster even

[357] See "The Star Wars Canon."

[358] Star Wars (Barbican Centre, 2000); Star Wars: Art of the Starfighter (Smithsonian Institution, 2001); Where Science Meets the Imagination (Boston Science Museum, 2006); Star Wars: The Exhibition (Cité des Sciences, Paris, 2006) ; Star Wars: Identities (Montreal Science Centre, 2012); Rebel, Jedi, Princess, Queen: Star Wars and the Power of Costume (The Museum of Pop Culture, Seattle 2015); An Art Odyssey (Le Café Pixel, France, 2015); and Visions (The Mori Arts Center, Tokyo, 2015) are among the best-known examples of the franchise's extended museological life.

depicted Lucas in the center with his arms crossed, surrounded by *Star Wars* props and models, thereby explicitly signaling his mastery over the storyworld.[359]

Ultimately, the museumification of *Star Wars* also represents the diversification of target audiences. On the one hand, Lucasfilm continued to produce histories geared at already existing fans, covering more non-theatrical aspects of the franchise, albeit without ever losing sight of the films. On the other hand, producing *Star Wars* exhibitions enabled Lucasfilm to reach a wider audience through the educational promises of museums and science centers. Three tendencies define this development: First, museums would mention the expanded universe only in passing, and would not feature any related objects or documents, using the success of the franchise beyond the screen to highlight the cultural impact of the films without giving any form of credit to the makers, content or reception of non-cinematic texts. While the content of the Expanded Universe might find its place in a textual lower canon, Lucasfilm sees no place for their individual histories in the canonization of cultural memory.

Second, museum-based *Star Wars* histories actively forget the impact of non-cinematic texts on the films. In the exhibition Identities, for example, the first appearance of Boba Fett is credited to *The Empire Strikes Back*, even though the character first appeared in *The Star Wars Holiday Special*. The works that do mention *The Star Wars Holiday Special* do so in passing, openly addressing it as an embarrassment and neglecting to explore its production history. As a rule of thumb, one could argue that the more a *Star Wars* history is geared to fans with an already broad knowledge of the franchise, the more references one can find to non-cinematic texts.

Third, as is the case with the narrative elements of the Expanded Universe, the material culture of *Star Wars* merchandise finds no place in these exhibitions, although a comparatively small corpus of Lucasfilm-sponsored literature exists on the topic written for the growing collecting community. Yet, Lucasfilm exhibitions do not include names of toy designers, concept art and prototypes, correspondence between Lucas and Kenner, or information on unrealized merchandise projects. As was explained in the previous chapter, such materials are of great interest to toy collectors and action figure fans, and could create a narrative that follows Stephen J. Sansweet's *From Concept to Screen to Collectible*. At the same time, however, such a narrative would also distract from the films, as well as take (at least partially) attention from

[359] Bartolomé Herrera et al., "When Star Wars became Museological," 161.

Lucas as an auteur to the toy designers, and from Lucasfilm to Kenner and Hasbro respectively. Additionally, a discussion of merchandise might be harder to weave into a narrative of *Star Wars* as educational valuable, instead highlighting its extensive merchandising strategies that the company wants to conceal by bringing the franchise into the museum rather than to highlight and seemingly celebrate.

Fourth, museum exhibitions neglect any form of negative reception and fan criticism, presenting the first six films as one large and continuous creative and critical success across different generations. Thus, as I have argued elsewhere with Beatriz Bartolomé Herrera, *Star Wars* exhibitions oscillate between transmedia memory and amnesia by removing or ignoring non-canonical works—but including those co-scripted by Lucas which rank low on canonical hierarchies—while excluding critical fan reactions from official commemorations of the franchise.[360] What fans and visitors are encouraged to memorize in these exhibitions is determined by Lucas's vision of the canon, but also by Lucasfilm's determination to cloud creative and financial failure from the last four decades. They produce selective cultural memories built around *Star Wars*'s cinematic releases and a highly select fan reception that does not explain the great disappointment audiences felt when they watched the prequel trilogy.

Two tendencies of museum exhibits that emerged in the second phase have been carried into the third and current phase of transmedia historiography. The production history of *Star Wars* has been continuously connected to educational themes within and also outside the museum. *Star Wars* exhibitions have not only been accompanied by exhibition catalogues (as well as their own merchandise), but some of the core themes addressed in them have been further developed by Lucasfilm, making the museum into something of a market-testing site for future products. For example, the theme of The Magic of Myth exhibit that was produced by the Smithsonian Institution was eventually adapted into Pamela Mason Wagner's television special *The Mythology of Star Wars* (2000), and is also mirrored in the scholarly publication *Star Wars and History* that was supported by Lucasfilm, which contains images provided from their archives.[361] The exhibition Where Science Meets Imagination (2006), which premiered at the Museum of Science in Boston, has been adapted into a book and a mini series named *Science of Star Wars* (2005) on Discovery Channel. In 2017, Disney Digital Network and Lucasfilm

[360] Ibid., 163.
[361] Janice Liedl and Nancy R. Reagin, ed., *Star Wars and History* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2012).

produced a similar web-show called *Science and Star Wars* (2017). Finally, concept art and production design, which regularly feature in museum exhibitions, continue to appear in every official history on *Star Wars* across formats. For instance, they have been featured in the form of various specialized publications, such as Brandon Alinger's *Star Wars Costumes: The Original Trilogy*.[362]

In addition, these past exhibitions' neglect of the Expanded Universe has continued to serve as the foundation for Disney's strategic rebooting of the franchise. The fact that textual continuity and the cultural franchise are inextricably linked under Disney's ownership remains evident on the official website StarWars.com. The website features a databank that provides information on the *Star Wars* world and its characters. But whereas the database lists in what films and series the characters or locations appear, they do not provide any reference to the Expanded Universe. This follows George Lucas's hierarchy of the canon, which he has not always managed to express in a particularly fine-tuned manner. On several occasions, the filmmaker has explained that "[he does] not read that stuff."[363] The films and the Expanded Universe represent two parallel storyworlds, Lucas explained, and neither he nor the Expanded Universe authors intrude on each other's work.[364] But the absence of the Expanded Universe in this database also represents Disney's decision to reboot the Expanded Universe as Legends, and the companies' announcement that the new trilogy and anthology films, as well as any other future *Star Wars* project, will not be based on or consider the Expanded Universe as canon in their future projects.

Therefore, transmedia historiography should be considered to be a form of memory management. Canonization and archiving at the level of textuality and cultural memory intends to shape a particular (transmedia) memory of the franchise that does not conflict or challenge the canonical boundaries set by the company. Arguably, readers, spectators and visitors of *Star Wars* histories, who do not participate in fan-specific debates and practices, are more likely to remember this version of *Star Wars* as the authentic one. In this way, transmedia historiography contributes to consolidating a selective form of cultural memory that suits the franchise's self-understanding. Indeed, transmedia historiography imposes a form of what Matt Hills has called

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[362] Brandon Alinger, *Star Wars Costumes: The Original Trilogy* (Bellevue: Becker & Mayer, 2014).
[363] George Lucas cited in Freeman, *Historicizing Transmedia Storytelling*, 35.
[364] Ibid.

"fanagement" within the context of fiction. Fanagement describes media industries' strategies in "responding to, and anticipating, fan criticisms, as well as catering to specific factions of fans who might otherwise be at odds with the unfolding brand, and attempting to counteract fan resistance to diegetic and production changes."[365] Unlike the early conceptualization of "fantagonism," which describes industry strategy that aims to discipline fans on the diegetic level by incorporating (unwanted) fans and practices into their storyline, fanagement attempts to manage fan readings, responses and activities at an extra-textual level, such as insights into the production history of a given text.[366] As will be outlined in the next section, one of Lucasfilm's strategies of fanagement has been the employment of what I will call "fanboy historians," whose work has supported the company's textual and cultural canonization.

3.3. Fanboy Historians and the Modeling of the Everyfan

Fan communities are a social hierarchy, as several fan scholars have argued. John Tulloch has pointed to institutional hierarchies among fans, describing the leaders of fan clubs and editors of fan magazines as executive fans.[367] Drawing from Pierre Bourdieu's theories on cultural hierarchies, John Fiske sees orders among fans established through fan cultural capital (a fan's knowledge of their object of fandom), whereas Matt Hills emphasizes the importance of fan social capital (networks of fan friends and their access to producers and professionals) in this process.[368] Moreover, Hills argues that some fans transform from Jenkins' "textual poacher" to "textual gamekeeper" and become producers or owners of storyworlds and cult texts by taking on positions as storywriters or directors, for example.[369] Lincoln Geraghty considers Stephen J. Sansweet to be an example of a "fan turned producer, poacher turned gamekeeper"

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[365] Matt Hills, "Torchwood's Trans-Transmedia: Media Tie-ins and Brand 'Fanagement'," *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 9, no 2 (2012): 410.
[366] Ibid., 410.
[367] John Tulloch, "'We're Only a Speck in the Ocean: The Fans as a Powerless Elite'," in *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Doctor Who and Star Trek*, ed. John Tulloch and Henry Jenkins (London and New York: Routledge 1995), 149.
[368] John Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London and New York: Routledge, 1992): 30-49; Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 30.
[369] Ibid., 15.

due to his employment by Lucasfilm.[370] His position as Head of Fan Relations enabled him to share his expansive knowledge on the franchise and its merchandise with a wide audience, bringing him celebrity status. "He's almost a god," one fan explained in *The New York Times*, reasoning that "he's the closest thing there is to George Lucas."[371]

However, whereas the term "gamekeeper" adequately defines Sansweet's status change following his employment by Lucasfilm, it does not adequately express his input into Lucasfilm's transmedia historiography. Rather than actively expanding the *Star Wars* storyworld through new fiction media or providing dominant interpretations of a given storyworld, Sansweet has distinguished himself as a "fanboy historian," whose main role is to negotiate the relationships between different texts and alternative readings through the generation of new knowledge about the franchise's past. Moreover, as this section will demonstrate, Sansweet also functions as a model Lucasfilm fan, as he consumes everything *Star Wars* without questioning the company's textual and cultural canon. As such, both textual gamekeepers and the fanboy historians might be found on Lucasfilm's payroll, but they take on different roles within the franchise.

The idea of the fanboy historian draws from the notion of the "fanboy auteur," which fan scholars use to conceptualize authorship's role in negotiating relationships between producers and consumers, and canonical and marginal texts in fiction media. Henry Jenkins describes the fanboy auteur as "the dungeon master made good, the guy who used to play with *Star Wars* action figures and now gets to manipulate big budget special effects," and who functions for the film and media industry as a means to classify the relationship between texts, explain textual events, and determine texts' value through notions of authorship.[372] Suzanne Scott has revisited the role of the fanboy auteur in contemporary transmedia storytelling projects to challenge overly positive receptions of transmedia as a form of collaborative authorship and participatory spectatorship. Referring to the continuing tendency to canonize official texts, she argues that

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[370] Lincoln Geraghty, *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia, Fandom and Collecting Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 135.
[371] Michael Joseph Gross, "The Force Is with the Fans (One Superfan, in Particular)," *The New York Times*, May 15, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/15/movies/the-force-is-with-the-fans-one-superfan-in-particular.html.
[372] Henry Jenkins, "The Guiding Spirit and the Powers That Be: A Response to Suzanne Scott," in *The Participatory Cultures Handbook*, ed. Aaron Delwiche and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 54.

the majority of mainstream transmedia stories "produce a consolidated canon of 'official' texts that frequently discourage or discredit unauthorized expansion or speculation by fans."[373] Thus, she sees the danger that "despite transmedia stories' collaborative narrative design, the media industry frequently equates fans' 'participation' with their continuous consumption of texts they narratively and financially supplement."[374] The fanboy auteur's "liminal positioning (his ability to present himself simultaneously as one of 'us' and one of 'them,' consumer and producer), is framed as his greatest asset, suggesting that he is an ideal interpreter between text and audience," whose interpretations are distributed in paratextual media such as making-ofs, podcasts, and interviews.[375] With his production of *The Force Awakens* (2015), J.J. Abrams has taken on the role of the fanboy auteur; transitioning from *Star Wars* fan to director, Abrams is responsible for rebooting the film series and guiding fans' interpretation of the franchise at its new Disney home. As this section argues, the notion of the fanboy auteur should be supplemented with an understanding of the fanboy historian, whose guidance extends to the writing of *Star Wars* history, and the production and management of *Star Wars*' cultural memory.

Although the notion of the fanboy auteur consciously emphasizes the gender of the author and highlights the absence of fangirl auteurs in contemporary media industries, Lucasfilm has shown efforts to hire more women on its staff. Eleven out of the twenty-three contributors listed on StarWars.com are female, Lucasfilm Archive's curator Laela French has curated exhibitions, and Carol Titleman, Deborah Call, and Trisha Biggar, among others, have written *Star Wars* publications.[376] In this regard, Lucasfilm-sponsored histories have a more diverse authorship than the predominantly male history community working independently from the company. However, even though Stephen J. Sansweet is not the only *Star Wars* historian, he is one of the most prominent faces of Lucasfilm, as was discussed in chapter one. A trained journalist and former *Wall Street Journal* writer, in 1992 Sansweet wrote the seminal book *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible*, the aforementioned history that traced the

[373] Scott, "Who's Steering the Mothership?," 43.
[374] Ibid.
[375] Ibid., 44.
[376] For examples, see: Carol Titleman, *The Art of Return of the Jedi* (New York: Ballantine, 1983); Deborah Call, *Art of Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (New York: Del Rey, 1994); Trisha Biggar, *Dressing a Galaxy: The Costumes of Star Wars* (New York: Insight Editions, 2005).

franchise from Lucas' first ideas to the success of the toys. Following the book's success, Lucasfilm hired Sansweet in 1996 as Director of Content, Management and Head of Fan Relations. Sansweet left Lucasfilm in 2011 to start his own non-profit museum on *Star Wars* merchandise and memorabilia, but he still works for Lucasfilm as a consultant. In this position, Sansweet has written eighteen books on *Star Wars* films and *Star Wars* merchandise, helped develop the website StarWars.com, wrote articles and columns for the official fan magazine *Star Wars Insider*, organized Star Wars Celebration, and became one of the most well-known faces associated with Lucasfilm, with appearances in industry- and fan-produced media.
As Lucasfilm's direct connection to the fan community, Sansweet grew into the role of historical author in the word's original dual sense: He authored *Star Wars* history across different media, which also promoted the company's conception of textual and cultural canonicity; and his authority within the fan community made him the perfect conduit through which to emphasize Lucasfilm's version of the *Star Wars* canon.

One possible explanation for Sansweet's popularity is the highly-publicized nature of his transition from fan to producer. Lucasfilm has not made a secret of why they hired Sansweet, explaining that "getting the message out to the influential fans who can then disseminate that information to the whole fan base is not as easy as you might think [and Sansweet] has relationships that can create a groundswell among our fans on a mass basis to go out and celebrate *Star Wars*."[377] Sansweet's fan identity is constantly emphasized in reports on him and his work, with particular emphasis placed on the fact that he is considered to own the world's largest *Star Wars* memorabilia collection. The "about the authors section" in the publication *The Star Wars Vault* introduces Sansweet as someone who "has transformed his love for the *Star Wars* saga into a busy career" and ends with the note that he has gathered "the largest private collection of *Star Wars* memorabilia in the world."[378] Furthermore, the introduction to *Star Wars: 1000 Collectibles, Memorabilia and Stories from a Galaxy Far, Far Away* chronicles his development as a collector and fan of *Star Wars* from his childhood in the 1950s to his first encounter with *A New Hope* to his work for Lucasfilm and the opening of his museum.[379] His

[377] Jim Ward cited in Gross, online.
[378] "About the Authors," *The Star Wars Vault*, 128.
[379] Stephen J. Sansweet, *Star Wars: 1,000 Collectibles* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2009), 6-21.

histories, therefore, are as much about the history of *Star Wars* films and merchandise as they are about his own experiences as a fan and collector.

If we compare the publicity surrounding the work of J.W. Rinzler, who was also one of Lucasfilm's most productive historians between 2001 and 2015, to that of Sansweet, the importance of the latter's fan persona becomes clear. Rinzler's introduction to *The Making of Star Wars* is written without any reference to fannish feelings for the films, and Rinzler thanks Sansweet for helping him find the long-lost documents that enabled the project in the first place.[380] In the introduction, the writer presents himself as a curious and eager researcher, who wrote the book because of his historical curiosity rather than fannish feelings. This is also reflected in the biographies written on him, which emphasize his professional status as a historian and do not refer to him as a fan. Instead, he is linked to the character of Indiana Jones, drawing parallels between his interest in the past and research skills and one of Lucasfilm's other most popular characters.[381]

Consequently, fans do not refer to Rinzler as one of them, as they do with Sansweet. Because Rinzler's reputation is primarily based on his work as an in-house historian, fans refer to him online as a *Star Wars* scholar, Lucasfilm historian, or simply an archivist. While Rinzler's work is respected among fans, he has always written works for them, but not as one of them, as Sansweet did. Thus, it is not surprising that the two historians also take on two different roles in relation to the textual canon and cultural memory of the franchise. In similar fashion to the television specials and museums, Rinzler consistently focuses on the films, and only refers to non-cinematic texts in order to highlight the impact of the films. In turn, Sansweet as fanboy historian takes more freedom in pointing to otherwise sidelined aspects of *Star Wars* history that might be unfamiliar to regular audiences but well known among fans. His work nods to those texts and objects of fan interest, covering or acknowledging their presence and contextualizing them within the history of the franchise, albeit without openly challenging or contradicting Lucasfilm's canon.

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[380] Rinzler, *The Making of Star Wars*, Kindle.
[381] Mike Ryan, "Lucasfilm's J.W. Rinzler Talks About The Making of Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back," *Vanity Fair*, October 10, 2011, https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2010/10/jw-rinzler-talks-about-the-making-of-star-wars-the-empire-strikes-back.

Sansweet has consistently emphasized that Lucas's contributions to the *Star Wars* storyworld are at the top of the canon, and the filmmaker has the exclusive right to effect changes to characters, worlds, and narratives. Examples of his defense of the Lucasfilm-sanctioned canon can be found in a Q&A section on the website StarWars.com, in which he again and again argues that all non-cinematic works should be considered as belonging to lower canons or as non-canonical. For instance, when fans were wondering how the appearance of Boba Fett in Episode II would impact continuity with the Expanded Universe, Sansweet left no doubt that Lucas can and will do with the character whatever best suits his storytelling. As Sansweet explains, "it's fairly safe to say that [Lucas] won't be held to any of the back stories that have arisen over the years," and continues that if "there is any hint of Fett's beginnings, it will be all George [because] the only true canon are the films themselves."[382]

Moreover, Sansweet has avoided voicing criticism of the special edition films or the prequel trilogy. In the case of the former, Sansweet has adopted Lucas's argument that films are never finished but "abandoned or […] ripped out of your hands, and […] thrown into the marketplace, never finished."[383] Hence, Sansweet supports the idea that the special edition was merely Lucas's return to three films he was never able to complete due to financial and technological constraints.[384] In the case of the latter, Sansweet argues that "nothing could have lived up to the combination of media hype, fevered speculation, and inflated expectations, as many reviewers themselves noted."[385] And instead of addressing older fans' perception of *The Phantom Menace*, Sansweet tends to emphasize the shared enthusiasm among *Star Wars* fans in the months and weeks before the three prequel films' releases. For instance, in *The Star Wars Vault*, a fan book filled with detailed information and removable memorabilia, Sansweet's only direct reference to the backlash of *The Phantom Menace* occurs in passing when he refers to the fully computer-generated Jar Jar Binks as a character who most "young kids love and many older core fans love to hate."[386]

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[382] Sansweet cited in "The Star Wars Canon: Overview," *www.st-v-sw.net* [blog], accessed August 20, 2018, http://www.st-v-sw.net/CanonWars/SWCanon2.html%20The%20Star%20Wars%20Canon:%20Overview.
[383] George Lucas cited in "Lucas Talks as 'Star Wars' Trilogy Returns," *Today*, August 4, 2010, https://www.today.com/popculture/lucas-talks-star-wars-trilogy-returns-wbna6011380.
[384] Sansweet, et al., *The Star Wars Vault*, 96.
[385] Ibid, 102.
[386] Ibid.

As the example with Jar Jar Binks shows, it is not only a question of what Sansweet is saying but also how he says it. Sansweet's fan, cultural and social capital is based on his vast knowledge of every aspect of the franchise and his relationships to the industry and other fans. If he appears to restrict his knowledge to select aspects of the franchise, Sansweet risks losing his fan capital, especially if he neglects texts like *The Star Wars Holiday Special* whose existence is well known among fans. Therefore, instead of withholding narrative development from the Expanded Universe or completely denying the existence of unsuccessful moments in the franchise's past, Sansweet frames them in a way that quickly points back to the film and its glory moments. In regard to textual developments, the *Star Wars Encyclopedia* tries to acknowledge content from the Expanded Universe before their narratives were replaced by new storylines in the films. For instance, Boba Fett's different backstories are framed as rumors and myths that circulated about the bounty hunter, before his real backstory, as seen in *Episode II*, was presented.[387] As such, Sansweet and his co-authors manage to walk a thin line between bowing to fan knowledge and protecting the canonical status of the films, and between acknowledging fans' transmedia memory and triggering transmedia amnesia for the sake of textual continuity.

Similar strategies of framing can be found on the level of cultural memory. Sansweet's *The Star Wars Vault* acknowledges everything *Star Wars*, from the films to merchandise to tie-ins like Robert Turk's ice show *The Ewoks and the Magic Sunberries* (1986). Even if such productions are mentioned, however, their purpose in the book is simply to illuminate the brilliance of Lucas and his films. *The Star Wars Holiday Special* is mentioned in a section on *Star Wars* on television, with references to the fact that the television special introduced the character of Boba Fett. Moreover, Sansweet emphasizes that thanks to *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, Ralph McQuarrie produced concept design for the Wookie Planet that would later be used in Lucas's *Revenge of the Sith* (2006). Otherwise, the television special is openly labeled as "forgettable" or a "misstep—no, a stumble," and non-representative of the innovative storytelling of Lucas and the franchise.[388]

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[387] Stephen J. Sansweet and Pablo Hidalgo, *Star Wars Encyclopedia: Vol. 1*. (New York: Ballantine Book, 2008), 266
[388] Ibid., 50.

Similarly, *The Star Wars Vault* addresses Lucasfilm's foray into animation with the series *Ewoks* and *Star Wars: Droids*, albeit with the purpose of pointing towards Lucas-sanctioned current animation project *The Clone Wars*.[389] In turn, *Star Wars* themed rides or circus performances, figure skating shows, and stage productions are presented as national peculiarities, or as an indication of the extent of the film's global success. These examples do not challenge the films' and Lucas's creativity as much as mediocre television films like *Ewoks: Caravan of Courage* or *Ewoks: Battle for Endor*. Both films are absent from *The Star Wars Vault*, which may be due to the fact that they have not generated as many fan projects as *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, and therefore require less historical framing and memory management.

Sansweet has been central in writing the material culture of *Star Wars* history, as evidenced by his fan biography. He has been the ultimate force behind the re-contextualizing of toys from a mere commercial ancillary product into a defining aspect of the *Star Wars* pop cultural phenomenon (although these works have been primarily addressed to fans interested in the toys in the first place). As is the case with the textual canon, Sansweet as a collector and fan has the freedom to address the craze around action figures and other tie-ins to an extent that is not evident in the work of Rinzler or the museum exhibitions aimed at a larger audience. Since *Star Wars: From Concept to Screen to Collectible*, Sansweet has been responsible for researching and writing Lucasfilm's merchandise history. His work therefore supplements *Star Wars* histories in print, television, and museums that provide no or only minor information on the production history of the toys. As the title *From Concept to Screen to Collectible* indicates, Sansweet places the material culture of *Star Wars* directly in line with Lucas's ideas for the film, providing insights into how toy designers translated the intangible images of the first trilogy into tangible playthings. Indeed, in his work *The Action Figure Archive*, Sansweet provides a comprehensive overview of all vintage Kenner action figures, describing the material characteristics of the figures as much as the characters they represent.[390]

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[389] Dave Filoni directed the animated feature film *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, which was released in 2008. In the same year, Lucasfilm released the animated series *The Clone Wars*, which aired until 2014. In 2018, Disney announced that the show would receive a seventh season.

[390] Stephen J. Sansweet with Josh Ling, *Star Wars: The Action Figure Archive* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999).

He follows a similar approach in *Star Wars: The Ultimate Action Figure Archive*, which provides images and brief anecdotal information on every action figure produced between 1978 and 2012. And as aforementioned, *1000 Collectibles, Memorabilia and Stories from a Galaxy Far, Far Away* provides information on how Sansweet himself assembled his collection. In addition, Sansweet's detailed knowledge of the production process is dispersed in fan magazines such as *Star Wars Insider*. Although Lucasfilm's support of such projects acknowledges the collecting community, the company has shied away from histories that go deeper into the production of merchandise than the direct translation from film to object. Sansweet's work primarily focuses on the finished works in description and depiction. Hence, he leaves space for other fans to write specialized histories on prototypes and packaging design without Lucasfilm's support.

With regard to the *Star Wars* merchandise, Sansweet's knowledge of the toys, and how he built a career around them, have been central to the memory management of *Star Wars*. Not only did he deemphasize the commercial nature of merchandise through his insights into design projects, insights into how he engages with the toys have been central to this memory management. Sansweet's histories of toys have shaped a certain code of conduct for collectors of merchandise, negotiating between the consumption necessary to start, build, and exchange one's collection, and the production of personal memories. In particular, Sansweet has advocated for the proper preservation of toys as much as he has urged fans to play with the action figures. Although he does not criticize the fact that children see dollar signs when they look at their action figures—and considers such developments a new stage in the entertainment industry—Sansweet has been careful in his *Star Wars Insider* column to remind readers that toys are playthings that are meant to be played with.[391]

In 1996, for instance, Sansweet shared his discouragement about fans who only focus on the price and monetary worth of collectibles, and who do not acknowledge their potential as toys. For Sansweet, the risk is that collecting becomes all about the money and not the fun.[392] In the same year, he encouraged a mother to let her son play with the toys, despite the evident loss of value that it would entail, and points to fan practices to buy two or more figures in order to play with them as well as to preserve them in mint condition. This attitude is also present in

[391] See Stephen J. Sanssweet, "Scouting the Galaxy," *Star Wars Insider* 32 (1997), 82.
[392] Stephen J. Sanssweet, "Scouting the Galaxy," *Star Wars Insider* 28 (1996), 62.

interviews beyond *Star Wars* media, when he tells those unpacking their toys "Good for you, you had fun playing with them!" and proclaims, "I rip open many packages and play with many toys, because that's the fun part of it."[393] In this regard, Sansweet urges fans to make memories of play rather than just to consume toys as commodities, and trade them as such with other collectors in the future.

As a fanboy historian, Sansweet functions as what Scott has called the industry's desired "everyfan" who can be used to model desired fan behavior. Using the example of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) and her textual and paratextual reading of the fictional character of Agent Carter as a transmedia producer and everyfan, Scott explains that "the transmedia everyfan is modeled as an avid canonical consumer, collector and completist."[394] The concept of the everyfan in relation to *Star Wars* and Sansweet is a fitting model, because he is a collector *and* completist—both in relation to the textual and the material aspects of the franchise—and "has a passion for everything *Star Wars*" without (at least publicly) questioning Lucasfilm's canonical hierarchy. Thus, Sansweet enacts Lucasfilm's ideal consumer behavior in both metaphorical and practical terms. Indeed, Sansweet has also presented himself as a role model for how to acquire *Star Wars* products. An article in *The New York Times* includes reference to how he has built his collection without taking any advantage of his position at Lucasfilm, a fact he has also emphasized in interviews with fans. Michael Joseph Gross explains in his portrait of Sansweet, and quotes him:

> But Mr. Sansweet gained his colleagues' respect [at Lucasfilm] and takes pains not to exploit his situation. He buys merchandise at StarWarsShop.com with the standard Lucasfilm employee discount of 10 percent. But, he added, 'I'm out there at Midnight Madness at Toys 'R' Us and 48 Hours of the Force at Wal-Mart just like everybody else. People say, 'What are you doing here?' I say, 'The same thing you're doing here! Buying toys!'[395]

Such anecdotes help to reinforce Sansweet's standing as "one of us" in the fan community, but also portrays him as someone whose life has not been taken over by his fandom. In other words, the image of Sansweet is that of a fan who had to take out several mortgages to finance

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[393] "Steve Sansweet: The Force Is Right," *National Public Radio*, March 3, 2016, https://www.npr.org/2016/03/03/468926083/steve-sansweet-the-force-is-right.
[394] Scott, "Modeling the Marvel Everyfan," 1047.
[395] Gross, "The Force Is with the Fans."

and house his collection, but also someone who built a reputable career out of his fandom. Indeed, his fandom has led from a respectable career as a journalist to Lucasfilm, after which he founded the museum project Rancho Obi-Wan. It is organized and structured, personal and rich with anecdotes, and therefore also models an idea of how fans should engage with each other as well as how they should represent their fandom in public.

In his role as fanboy historian and everyfan, Sansweet contributes to Lucasfilm in two significant ways. First, the fanboy historian acts as a transmedia producer who writes and disseminates *Star Wars* history across media, including books, print magazines, websites, social media and museum exhibitions. Sansweet himself has become, like other fan historians who work with Lucasfilm's support, the center of a transmedia narrative that consciously guides readers, visitors and spectators from one entry to the other, steadily expanding their knowledge about the franchise with the help of different media specificities. Second, Sansweet the everyfan has become a character in Lucasfilm's transmedia historiography, as a result of his extensive sharing of autobiographical information, which place him either at Skywalker Ranch or Rancho-Obi Wan. The fact that some fans indeed proclaim him "the closest thing there is to George Lucas" can be considered the result of his appearances as *Star Wars* specialist in *Star Wars* media as well as his very public fan biography, which takes him from the *Wall Street Journal* to Lucasfilm to his own museum. And while Sansweet's opinions and fan identity should not necessarily be considered as cynically constructed or insincere, his example demonstrates how Lucasfilm appropriates fans' knowledge and labor, as well as their position between industry and consumers, to actively shape knowledge about their past and the cultural memory of *Star Wars*.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the notion of transmedia historiography as a way of understanding how contemporary multimedia franchises such as *Star Wars* use and manage their IP through non-fiction media. While not all non-fiction media is expressly woven into historical narratives, a good deal of it is. This, in turn, leads to it becoming the source for subsequent historical iterations of *Star Wars*. In the first section, the chapter revisited the development of *Star Wars* from a single text into a transmedia storytelling project through the lens of transmedia historiography, chronicling how the company has retold and dispersed its past across analog and digital non-fiction media, as well as memory sites like the museum. In the second section,

the chapter argued that transmedia historiography represents more than just another ancillary market exploited for the purposes of profit. For Lucasfilm, transmedia historiography represents a strategy to produce, disperse, and manage textual and cultural canonicity in order to negotiate the relationship between different texts as well as how the franchise is remembered within fan communities and among general audiences. The third section examined the role of a particularly important or exceptional fan in the making of Lucasfilm's transmedia historiography. Using the work of fan historian Stephen J. Sansweet as a case study, the chapter developed the notion of the fanboy historian, who in his dual role as an insider to Lucasfilm and the fan community, communicates Lucasfilm's notion of the textual and cultural canon to the fan community. Moreover, the chapter has shown how Sansweet as a transmedia producer as well as through his recurring appearances as a specialist in *Star Wars* histories functions as a role model for the everyfan: He consumes everything *Star Wars* without questioning Lucasfilm's decisions regarding the narrative developments of the franchise. Thus, the concepts of transmedia historiography and the fanboy historian can be used to investigate how non-fiction media navigates intertextual relationships as well as fans' relationship to the media industries and to each other.

However, as is the case with transmedia storytelling and fanboy auteurs, fans do not unconditionally accept the visions of the past promoted by fanboy historians in transmedia historiography. The fact that fans talk about the "canon wars" indicates that fandom represents a community that thrives on debates about textual authenticity as well as cultural memory. As such, it is not surprising that despite Lucasfilm's proposed canonization fans still present their own point of view. Several fan-run websites—which are themselves historical projects—exist simply to debate the issue of canonicity, as they meticulously document statements issued by Lucas, Lucasfilm representatives, and Sansweet and other fanboy historians on the matter.

The preservation projects of the first trilogy are the clearest indication of this dissonance, as they do not simply collect arguments about how the changes made to the special edition impacted the storyworld as a whole. Websites like SaveStarWars.com, for example, also document Lucas' statements in the past concerning film preservation in general, therefore holding him accountable to his own position regarding the preservation of film history. They quote him saying that "our cultural history must not be allowed to be rewritten...Attention should be paid to the interests of those who are yet unborn, who should be able to see this generation

as it saw itself, and the past generation as it saw itself."[396] Hence, their mobilization of language from contemporary film preservation and heritage debates moves the discussion from the films themselves to the question of who owns history, and the responsibilities that come with it:

> Not only is this robbing the world of a very important part of its cinematic and cultural heritage, but it is engaging in the re-writing of history. […] George Lucas' open desire that [the original *Star Wars*] disappears, and his actions in pursuit of that goal, therefore represents a profound destruction of an important historical artifact. […] This is a serious issue in cinematic preservation. This website is designed to inform people of the aspects surrounding this issue, and also act as a form of protest. Here you will find information on the *Star Wars* 35mm materials surviving, the philosophical and social issues revolving around the preservation of cultural heritage, and the history of cinema preservation and restoration. Let Lucasfilm know that the original theatrical *Star Wars* films are important and don't deserve to be buried in time.[397]

Lucasfilm has given immaterial support to projects that respect its canon and are not solely dedicated to criticism of works that do not fit into their conception of the past. On StarWars.com one can find a whole section on Lucasfilm-sanctioned projects that cover films, but also in some cases the toys and the expanded universe novels. However, critical websites like SaveStarWars.com, or the thorough TheStarWarsHolidaySpecial.com are not referenced on StarWars.com, despite the care and detail invested in them. They (continue to) function outside the company's realm of officially endorsed authenticity, providing fans and those interested with alternative views on the past, albeit not without fear of legal consequences, as the disclaimer "We ❤ *Star Wars* and give it all the moneys. Please don't sue us" on OriginalTrilogy.com indicates.[398]

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[396] George Lucas, "Lucas and Spielberg, in Defense of Artist's Rights," *The Washington Post*, February 28, 1988, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/style/1988/02/28/lucas-and-spielberg-in-defense-of-artists-rights/90f4ee29-d742-4b22-8834-e11b94ba40b3/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.86a62f90d811.
[397] "Save Star Wars Info," *Save Star Wars: Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Two Centuries…*[blog], accessed August 20, 2018, http://fd.noneinc.com/savestarwarscom/savestarwars.info/.
[398] *OriginalTrilogy.com* [blog], accessed August 20, 2018, https://originaltrilogy.com/.

It remains to be further investigated in the future how such works impact Lucasfilm's approach to writing *Star Wars* history. In terms of *The Star Wars Holiday Special*, StarWars.com celebrated the 40th anniversary of Boba Fett's first appearance in an article on animator John Celstri November 15tt, 2018, bringing the number of articles on the variety show to two. In the end, the article focuses on the animated skit as Fett's "memorable" debut that laid "the foundations for one of the saga's most elusive and mysterious icons," thereby ultimately redirecting attention back to the films.[399] Yet, it also shows an awareness that fans commemorate parts of the franchise that they deem valuable, and that there company is willing, at least to a certain degree, to follow such demands on select platforms. If this extends from the official websites mainly directed to fans to other platforms, such as the museum, has to be seen in the future.

The notion of transmedia historiography and the fanboy historian provide the theoretical tools to investigate the complex historiographical debates and struggles between media industries and their fan communities. Yet, both concepts complicate rather than resolve existing binaries and contradictions between fandom as a form of resistant reading and conforming industry-consumption, between collaborative authorship and participatory spectatorship respectively, and authorial control by a single individual, small group of agents, or a company. That said, these concepts enable the study of processes in which media industries create and commodify cultural memory, utilizing fans who share a similar version of the past, and how fans react to, and counteract these histories with their own work and point of view. As long as memories are culturally constructed as the private property of the self, thereby freeing fans from the restrictions of intellectual property rights that would prevent them from sharing and even selling their memories, fandom will be as much about the interpretation of the past as it is about the interpretation of a storyworld. While fans might be restricted in sharing imagery from the *Star Wars* films, they are free to share their personal accounts of their fandom and documentation thereof. And with the mounting life span of franchises across decades and (fan) generations, the past will become an increasingly important discursive field that defines textual relationships

[399] Lucas Seastorm, "Animator John Celestri's Road to The Star Wars Holiday Special and the first appearance of Boba Fett," *StarWars.com*, November 15, 2018, https://www.starwars.com/news/the-star-wars-holiday-special-boba-fett.

as much as the cultural memory of popular mass media texts. There, histories written by the media industries and fans will meet, and at times collide.

Chapter 4: *Star Wars at the Swimming Pool: Fans and the Making of a Tourist Attraction*

From May to November 2015, the Canadian-born exhibition Star Wars: Identities (2012), which travelled internationally, was on display in the Odysseum, a science centre in Cologne, Germany. Curated with the support of Lucasfilm, the exhibition approached the Star Wars galaxy from two perspectives. On the one hand, Star Wars: Identities featured a vast amount of original production material. It included costumes, props, models, concept art, and production notes from the first two trilogies and the animated film and series *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (Dave Filoni, 2008).[400] On the other hand, Star Wars: Identities approached the films through the lens of psychology. It outlined how genetics, upbringing, friendships, and environment, among other factors, impact our character traits and behaviour. Throughout the immersive exhibition, with its elaborate display cases and dioramas, visitors were able to create their own Star Wars characters. They could choose their species, gender, and home planet, form friendships, answer questions about their own character traits, and so on. All answers were digitally stored in a bracelet that was handed out at the entrance. At the end of the exhibition, each visitor's personalized character appeared on a large screen before they exited the exhibition through a gift store.[401] While in Germany Star Wars: Identities received supra-regional advertising and media coverage. Articles appeared in national news outlets such as *Stern*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Kölnische Rundschau*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung,* Deutschlandfunk, and N-TV.[402] As a result, the exhibition

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[400] The animated series *Star Wars: Clone Wars*. which was broadcasted between *Attack of the Clones* and *Revenge of the Sith*, was not included in the exhibition.

[401] For a detailed discussion of Star Wars: Identities see: Beatriz Bartolomé Herrera and Philipp Dominik Keidl, "How Star Wars Became Museological: Transmedia Storytelling in the Exhibition Space," in *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling*, ed. Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 155-168.

[402] "*Star Wars* Ausstellung in Köln Rundgang zur dunklen Seite der Macht, "*Stern*, May 23, 2015. https://www.stern.de/kultur/star-wars-ausstellung-koeln--rundgang-zur-dunklen-seite-der-macht_6219324-6245036.html#mg-1_1540594266819; Alexander Armbruster, "Er ist ein Mensch und keine Maschine," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 14, 2015. http://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/mythos-star-wars-er-ist-ein-mensch-und-keine-maschine-13945429.html; Henriette Westphal, "Star-Wars-Ausstellung in Köln Am Freitag startet *Star Wars* Identities im Kölner Odysseum," *Kölnische Rundschau*, May 20, 2015. https://www.rundschau-online.de/region/koeln/star-wars-ausstellung-in-koeln-am-freitag--startet--star-wars-identities--im-koelner-odysseum-1283678; Jannis Brühl, "Star-Wars-Austellung in Köln Mehr Spaß auf der Dunklen Seite der Macht," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 27, 2015, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/star-wars-austellung-in-koeln-mehr-spass-auf-der-dunklen-seite-der-macht-1.2495314; Christoph Sterz, "Star-Wars-Ausstellung Die Macht mit dir

became a popular attraction for locals as well as visitors from all over the state of North Rhine Westphalia, the rest of Germany, and neighbouring countries.

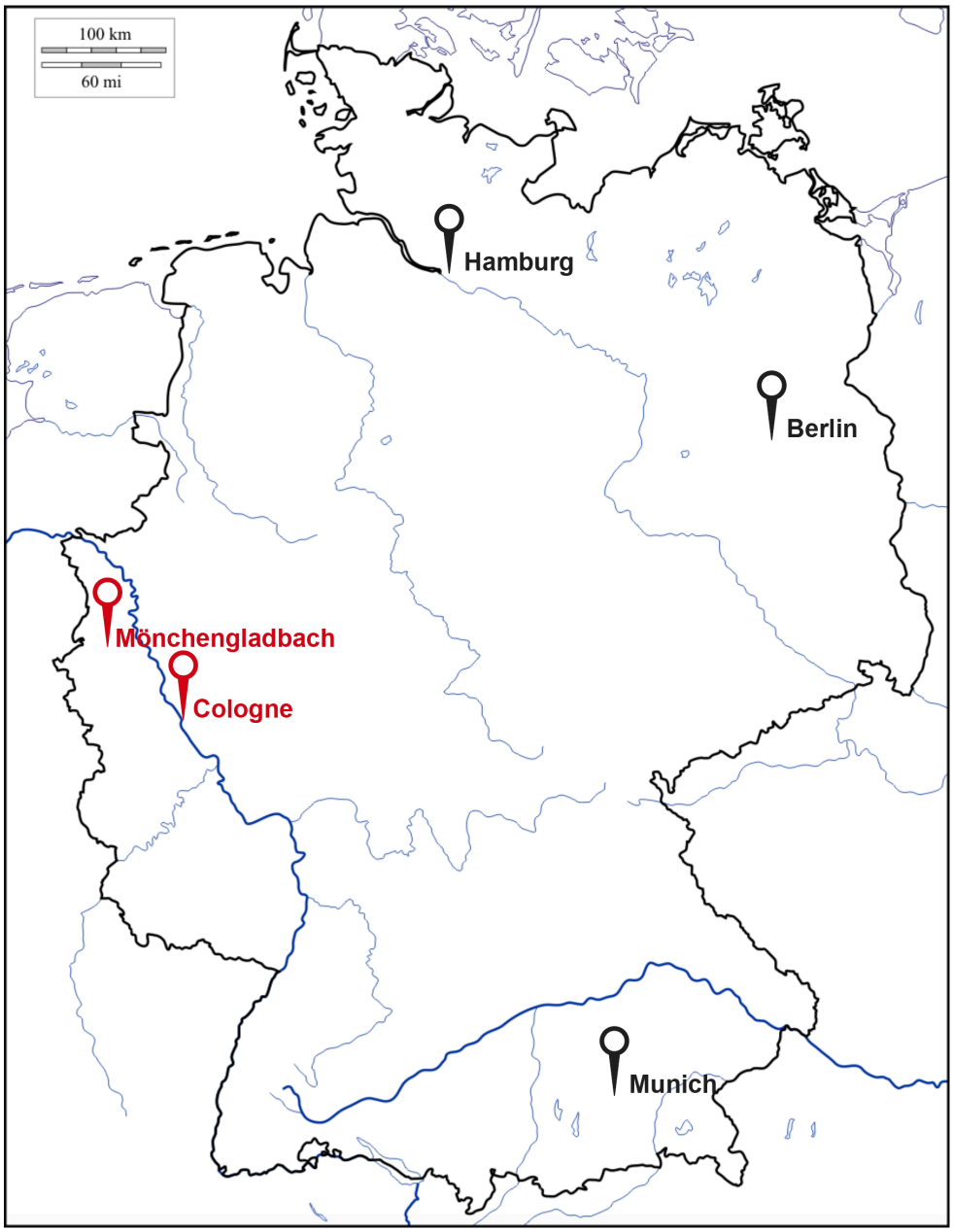

Figure 4.1 Map of Germany.

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sein möge," *Deutschlandfunk*, May 22, 2015, https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/star-wars-ausstellung-die-macht-mit-dir-sein-moege.807.de.html?dram:article_id=320601; "Original-Kostüme und -Requisiten '*Star Wars* Identities' in Köln eröffnet," *N-TV*, May 21, 2015. https://www.n-tv.de/mediathek/videos/unterhaltung/Star-Wars-Identities-in-Koeln-eroeffnet-article15140131.html.

Star Wars: Identities stopped only temporarily in Cologne, giving fans about five months to visit the exhibition before it moved on to its next stops in Vienna, Munich, London, Utrecht, and finally Brussels.[403] A more permanent attraction and travel destination for *Star Wars* fans is located only approximately 65 km away (a 50-minute car ride) in the city of Mönchengladbach, with a population of approximately 269,558 inhabitants.[404] The city is home to the fan-curated museum Stars of the Galaxy, which presents a vast array of merchandise and figurines predominantly from the *Star Wars* franchise and a few original props from other science-fiction productions such as Karyn Kusama's *Aeon Flux* (2005). The museum project took shape in 2005, when five *Star Wars* fans and collectors got together and transformed a former cinema into a public exhibition space for their collections. Opened under the name StarconstruX, the exhibition showcased approximately 30 dioramas with more than 300 four-inches action figures, 70 life-size movie figures, as well as original and replica movie props.[405] In 2011, the curators moved the exhibition into a former indoor swimming pool facility vacated by the city because its small size made it unsuitable for school lessons. By transforming the former changing rooms and showers into approximately 400 square metres of exhibition space, the renamed Filmfiguren Ausstellung (Film Figures Exhibition) had considerably more exhibition space. Moreover, the new building offered enough space to organize workshops, host special events, and establish a museum shop.

The curators and volunteers running the Filmfiguren Ausstellung further expanded the exhibition in 2017. They converted the pool into a multi-level exhibition space, and nearly doubled the available exhibition space. This increase in exhibition space also included a thematic expansion with new objects on display. Although the vast majority of the museum is still

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[403] Vienna: December 2015 to April 2016, Museum für Angewandte Kunst / Gegenwartskunst (MAK) Munich: May to October 2016, Kleine Olympiahalle; London: November 2016 to September 2017, The O2; Utrecht: September 2017 to March 2018, CineMec; Brussels: April to September 2018, Palais 2, Brussels Expo. Before Cologne, the exhibition was on display at the following locations: Montreal: April to September 2012, Montreal Science Centre; Edmonton: October 2012 to April 2013, TELUS World of Science; Ottawa: May to October 2013, Canadian Aviation and Space Museum; Paris: February to June 2014, La Cité du Cinéma.

[404] "Demografiebericht Mönchengladbach 2007-2016," *Stadt Mönchengladbach*, accessed October 26, 2018, https://www.moenchengladbach.de/fileadmin/user_upload/statistik/Demografiebericht_2007_-_2016.pdf

[405] "StarconstruX Headquarters," *StarconstruX* [blog], accessed October 25, 2018, http://www.starconstrux.de/hauptquatier/headquater.htm.

dedicated to displaying merchandise, it now also presents a collection of original costumes from films other than Star Wars, including the aforementioned *Aeon Flux* or Mel Brooks's *Star Wars* parody *Spaceballs* (1987). To reflect these modifications, the museum changed its name yet again from Filmfiguren Ausstellung to the English-language Stars of the Galaxy, thereby highlighting the broadened focus of the new exhibition space. Since the museum's opening more than a decade ago, the project has not only won considerable attention on fan sites, but also in reports produced by local, regional, and national media outlets. As a result, the curators and volunteers have transformed Mönchengladbach into a hub for *Star Wars* and its fans with their curatorial work. Articles about the museum have appeared in the online versions of the *Rheinische Post*, *Westfälische Rundschau*, and *Der Westen*, as well as the public broadcaster Westdeutscher Rundfunk, the regional section of the private broadcaster RTL.[406] In addition, and as will be discussed in more detail below, fans report about the museum on their blogs and video channels. While these media outlets arguably do not have as much prestige and audience reach as the media outlets that covered Star Wars: Identities, they nevertheless indicate the regular and sustained interest of regional media in the fan-curated museum project. Moreover, all of these regional reports appear in online searches for *Star Wars* exhibitions and merchandise. As a matter of fact, the museum appears in German as well as international search engines, therefore rendering the museum's German-language website accessible to non-regional readers and viewers.

The experiences that Star Wars: Identities and Stars of the Galaxy offer are vastly different from each other. The former draws in visitors with original production materials but lacks any display of merchandising and tie-ins that would redirect attention away from the films

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[406] Ludwig Jovanovic, "Filmfiguren-Ausstellung: Die Macht ist stark in Mönchengladbach," *RP Online*, October 13, 2017, https://rp-online.de/nrw/staedte/moenchengladbach/wo-star-wars-zum-leben-erwacht-filmfiguren-in-moenchengladbach_aid-20811165; Georg Howahl, "Nicht nur für Star-Wars-Fans: Die Sternenkrieger im Museum," *Westfälische Rundschau*, January 12, 2018, https://www.wr.de/wochenende/nicht-nur-fuer-star-wars-fans-die-sternenkrieger-im-museum-id213097115.html; Georg Howahl, "So lacht das Revier - Hennes Benders Sternstunden der Komik," *Der Westen*, August 21, 2014, https://www.derwesten.de/wochenende/so-lacht-das-revier-hennes-benders-sternstunden-der-komik-id9759625.html; n/a; "*Star Wars*-Ausstellung - die "Macht" in Mönchengladbach," *WDR*, December 13, 2017, https://www1.wdr.de/nachrichten/rheinland/star-wars-ausstellung-moenchengladbach-100.html; Stars of the Galaxy (@starsofthegalaxy) "RTL WEST zu Besuch in der Filmfiguren Ausstellung," Facebook video, accessed October 25, 2018, https://www.facebook.com/starsofthegalaxy/videos/974911602555160/.

and George Lucas's role as an auteur. In turn, the latter primarily displays mass-produced action figures and LEGO sets, with only few original production materials, most of which are not from the *Star Wars* franchise. Some of the most valuable items in the fan museum are *Star Wars* action figure prototypes sponsored by Hasbro, as well as limited edition replicas of lightsabers. While Star Wars: Identities can offer elaborate exhibition design and a vast array of moving images and sound effects, Stars of the Galaxy is never able to hide the original purpose of its location, even though the swimming pool is used to its best potential. As one visitor remarks in an online review, from the outside the building is not very impressive, and once inside it is undeniable that one is inside a swimming pool.[407] And while Star Wars: Identities promotes visitor participation through sophisticated digital technologies and interactive workstations, Stars of the Galaxy offers Princess Leia parties for adults and Jedi-themed birthday parties for children, with lightsaber training included.

These differences are best exemplified by a set of dioramas on display in the fan-curated museum that depict scenes from the pre-production process of the first trilogy. Since Stars of the Galaxy cannot offer original production materials, and copyright restrictions and licensing fees prohibit the use of behind-the-scenes footage to document how the films were made, the fan curators make do with these limitations by offering highly detailed miniature depictions of post-production moments. For instance, one diorama shows how Lucas and his special effects artists worked on the battle scene on Hoth from Irvin Kershner's *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), and includes miniature reproductions of the models used for the special effects, concept art, and other work materials. If Star Wars: Identities marvels fans with auratic originals, Stars of the Galaxy convinces them with the industrious originality of its curators and a fan perspective on the history of the franchise and its fandom. In this regard, the fan-curated museum represents a new form of media tourism that offers a distinct experience from original filming locations, studio tours, themed environments, and museum exhibitions, all of which have become a central part of contemporary tourist industries.[408] Crucially, instead of primarily drawing film and television

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[407] LasVegas62010, "Derzeit (noch) eine reine *Star Wars* Ausstellung," TripAdvisor, June 12, 2016, https://www.tripadvisor.de/Attraction_Review-g187380-d10420346-Reviews-Stars_of_the_Galaxy-Monchengladbach_North_Rhine_Westphalia.html#REVIEWS.

[408] See, among others: Roger C Alden, *Popular Stories and Promised Lands: Fan Cultures and Symbolic Pilgrimages* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007); Will Brooker, "A Sort of Homecoming: Fan Viewing and Symbolic Pilgrimage," in *Fandom: Identities and*

fans into immersive and affective encounters with their objects of fandom, the experience of fan-produced works themselves become the main interest and attraction.

Figure 4.2 Star Wars: Identities. The exhibition featured original production materials from the *Star Wars* franchise, including costumes.

Figure 4.3 A look behind the scenes in Stars of the Galaxy: The diorama depicts the work on special effects for *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Scholarship on the intersections of fandom and film and television tourism has predominantly explored the question of why fans make "pilgrimages" to media-related or themed sites and environments, what experiences such locations offer, as well as how fans individually

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Communities in a Mediated World, edited by Jonathan A. Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington. (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 149–164; Will Brooker, "The Blade Runner Experience: Pilgrimage and Liminal Space," in *The Blade Runner Experience: The Legacy of a Science Fiction Classic*, ed. Will Brooker (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 11-30; Nick Couldry, "On the Set of The Sopranos: 'Inside' a Fan's Construction of Nearness," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan A. Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington. (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 139–148; Tanya Erzen, "The Vampire Capital of the World: Commerce and Enchantment in Forks, Washington," in *Theorizing Twilight: Critical Essays on What's at Stake in a Post-Vampire World*, ed. Maggie Parke and Natalie Wilson (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011), 11-24; Katherine Larsen, "(Re)Claiming Harry Potter Fan Pilgrimage Sites," in *Playing Harry Potter: Essays and Interviews on Fandom and Performance*, ed. Lisa S. Brenner (Jefferson: McFarland, 2015), 38-54; Christina Lee, "Have Magic, Will Travel: Tourism and Harry Potter's United (Magical) Kingdom," *Tourist Studies* 12 no.1 (2012): 52-69; Craig Norris, "A Japanese Media Pilgrimage to a Tasmanian Bakery," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no 14 (2013), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2013.0470; Jennifer E. Porter, "To Boldly Go: Star Trek Convention Attendance as Pilgrimage," in *Star Trek and Sacred Ground: Explorations of Star Trek, Religion, and American Culture*, ed. Jennifer E. Porter and Darcee L. McLaren (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 245-270; Rebecca Williams, "Fan Tourism and Pilgrimage," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 98-106.

and collectively engage with these destinations and with other fans, non-fans, and regular tourists during their travels.[409] This chapter will contribute to research on fan and media tourism, albeit from a different perspective. Instead of theorizing fans as consumers of media tourism, this chapter examines how fans actively produce and run their own tourist attractions, targeting members of their community as well as tourists in general. It will argue that the primary appeal of these sites is the encounter with, and experience of fandom and fan productivity itself. Fans' connections to a film or media text, a shooting location, or production materials are only secondary. Another appeal for visitors is how fandom is practiced, and materializes, in specific local contexts. Lucasfilm-supported exhibitions like Star Wars: Identities focus often on the global success and appeal of the franchise. Accordingly, they do not engage with, or address, with any detail local specificities of the franchise or how fans live and engage with it on an everyday basis. For instance, Star Wars: Identities only focuses on the production of audio-visual narratives and does not acknowledge any specificity in the reception of the franchise in different national and local contexts. Also, whereas Star Wars: Identities is on display around the world, it never engages specifically with any particular location. In contrast, fan-curated museums display and interpret transnationally produced and globally distributed media texts and objects in specific local and regional cultural environments. They draw visitors through the display of fan output itself. In the case of Stars of the Galaxy, the exhibition's complex dioramas make the fans' own knowledge, skills, and craft as much of a selling point as an encounter with the *Star Wars* texts themselves. This ultimately frames fandom as an integral part of the cultural life of a mid-sized German city, in ways that are far removed from any over-determining connection to the franchise's production history.

In order to understand these dynamics, this chapter discusses the work and impact of fan-curated museums from three different perspectives. First, it positions fan curation within the context of labour in relation to the preservation and presentation of action figures and fan productivity, as well as within local cultural and tourist industries. Secondly, it proposes a shift in our understanding of film museum spaces and why fans flock to them. This chapter develops the idea of media pilgrimage and film-induced tourism into the practice of *fan-induced tourism*.

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[409] See, among others: Alden, *Popular Stories and Promised Lands*; Hills, *Fan Cultures*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 110-121; Sandvoss 2005, 53-65; Liza Potts, Melissa Beattie, Emily Dallaire, Katie Grimes, and Kelly Turner, *Participatory Memory: Fandom Experiences Across Time and Space* (Intermezzo, 2018), http://participatorymemory.org/book/index, e-book.

As this section will show through an analysis of media reports on the museum as well as visitor reviews, fan-curated museums attract visitors not only through the display of more or less rare collectibles, but also because they focus on aspects of fandom that are often neglected in non-fan-run exhibition sites: fan creations and fans' perspectives. Thirdly, this chapter will close with a discussion of how fan museums and fan-made histories in general contribute to the formation of fan communities, partly by providing access to the everyday life and experiences of fans in specific local contexts. As this section will argue, fan-made histories are part of a larger trend of mapping and building a *geography of fandom* by providing "armchair travels" through local representations of global franchise fandom.

Stars of the Galaxy in Germany will function as the primary case study of this discussion, but I will also refer to other examples throughout the chapter to demonstrate that Stars of the Galaxy is not a singular phenomenon but forms part of a larger trend: the growing public display of fans' collections in elaborate galleries and dioramas in homes or other re-purposed and dedicated spaces. My analysis of Stars of the Galaxy and other museums is primarily based on analysis of their respective websites, media reports, and visitor reviews on social media. Moreover, I conducted onsite research at Stars of the Galaxy in 2015, when the exhibition was still called Filmfiguren Ausstellung and had an exhibition space of approximately 400 square metres.

The chapter focuses on media reports for two reasons. First, my onsite research took place before the expansion of the museum in 2017, and my knowledge of the current focus of the exhibition is built on the museum's website and press and fan coverage. Moreover, time and financial restrictions did not allow me to travel to the other museums I will refer to in this chapter. My focus on press and fan coverage allows for a certain degree of methodological consistency. Second, as I noticed early on in my research on the topic, Stars of the Galaxy and other fan-run museums have been very careful in the presentation of their exhibition in order to avoid copyright complaints. This is evident in the naming of the exhibitions, which avoid any direct reference to *Star Wars* or any of their characters, arguably because of Lucasfilm's restrictive policies regarding fan productions and potential copyright infringements. Most fan-curated museums refer in their title to abstract terms such as "galaxy" or focus on the toys on display to avoid copyright infringement, such as The Galaxy Connection, Brett's Toy Museum, or Stars Toys Museum (all in the USA). In the case of Stars of the Galaxy, this type of caution

is even evident in interviews, when curator Thomas Manglitz carefully reminds interviewers that they are not at a *Star Wars* museum but a museum of merchandise that also includes *Star Wars* toys.[410]

Manglitz, who has become the museum's face in the media, generally avoids any questions about the expenses or income associated with the museum. He claims that the museum does not count visitor numbers and hesitates to give information about the costs that go into running the museum. One of his strategies to dodge budget-related questions is to do a nondescript "currency transfer" into "monthly pocket money," leaving it to the viewers to calculate how many months they would have to save their own "pocket money" to afford the acquisition.[411] The information he provides about partnerships remains vague. In one interview he mentions that there had been an initial contact with Disney after it purchased the rights to the franchise. In the same interview he indicates that Hasbro provides figures and ships for the large dioramas, and that the museum, in turn, provides the toy manufacturer with dioramas for fairs and other exhibition events. But the details behind these contacts are not further explained.[412] Consequently, I decided to build my argument with the information the curators feel comfortable sharing with a wider public through the media.

4.1. Fan Curating as Labour

Before the release of Rian Johnson's *The Last Jedi* in December 2017, German national and regional television stations visited Stars of the Galaxy, asking Thomas Manglitz for comments on the franchise's history and his expectations for the latest film.[413] While such reports introduce the museum to a broad audience beyond Mönchengladbach, Manglitz and the other volunteers who appear in such reports ultimately provide free publicity and advertising for the film as well as for *Star Wars* merchandise licensers. Media and fan scholars have addressed fan labour often in relation to fan activity on the Internet, where fans use websites, blogs, social media,

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[410] Die Pierre M. Krause Show, "Folge 526," YouTube video, 29:47, November 28, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pp6oF3Z9on0&feature=youtu.be.
[411] Vorhees82, "Follow me Around - Filmfiguren Ausstellung in Mönchengladbach," YouTube video, 52:15, August 1, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfXmaYuCA04&t=2544s.
[412] See Vorhees8, "Follow me Around." Also see: Marc Thiele, "Filmfigurenausstellung: Paradies für *Star Wars*-Fans," *Hindenburger-Die Stadtzeitschrift für Mönchengladbach und Rheydt*, September 2014, 16-18, https://issuu.com/hindenburger-mg/docs/hindenburger_09-2014.
[413] See: "*Star Wars*-Ausstellung - die "Macht" in Mönchengladbach."

and video platforms to share their close readings and productions with others. For instance, media scholar Tiziana Terranova has described the process of content creation on the Internet as free labour:

> I call this excessive activity that makes the Internet a thriving and hyperactive medium 'free labor'—a feature of the cultural economy at large and an important, yet unacknowledged, source of value in advanced capitalist societies […] Far from being an unreal, empty space, the Internet is animated by cultural and technical labor through and through, a continuous production of value that is completely immanent to the flows of the network society at large.[414]

Although fan-run museums also engage in online activities through their website and social media pages, their main work takes place offline. The curatorial work and free labour that fans perform are therefore part of the flow of capital, but this flow is closely tied to the local contexts of the cities and towns in which these museums operate. Thus, Stars of the Galaxy's online activities and issues of free labour in terms of publicity and advertising for Lucasfilm and Disney are of less interest here. Instead, this chapter's focus is the labour performed in fan-run museums in regard to the preservation and presentation of cultural heritage, and how the museum's initiatives are embedded in the cultural life and tourism industry of Mönchengladbach.

Fan productivity is often related to the idea of the gift economy, in which the sharing of work is considered to be a means of producing and maintaining fan identities as well as relationships among members. According to fan scholar Karen Hellekson, fan communities

> as they are currently comprised, require exchanges of gifts: you do not pay to read fan fiction or watch a fan-made music vid. They are offered for free (although circulation may be restricted and you have to know where to obtain them), yet within a web of context that specifies an appropriate mode of "payment."[415]

As Suzanne Scott explains in reference to Karen Hellekson, this "strategic definition of fandom as a gift economy serves as a defensive front to impede encroaching industrial factions" and highlights how fan scholars have used the notion of gift economy as a form of legal and social

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[414] Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor," in *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*, ed. Trebor Scholz (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), Kindle.
[415] Karen Hellekson, "A Fannish Field of Value: Online Fan Gift Culture," *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 4 (2009): 114.

protection against industry claims of copyright infringement.[416] Abigail De Kosnik, however, argues that fan activities are a form of free labour, and "should be valued as a new form of publicity and advertising, authored by volunteers, that corporations badly need in an era of market fragmentation."[417]According to her, the media industries should compensate fans for the advertising and resulting revenues they are creating for them, and fans should use their productivity and work to generate revenues for themselves.[418] In consideration of these two seemingly opposite poles, Scott reminds us that "commodity economies and gift economies are always already enmeshed, and there is perhaps no better example of this than fandom itself."[419]

Fans' production of histories is such an example of the awkward position fan productivity straddles between formal and informal cultural economies. As was discussed in the second chapter on action figure media, and in reference to Hills, fan historians have been more likely to commodify their works, facing less criticism from within their respective fan communities.[420] Fan-run museums do charge visitors, although the entry prices differ from project to project. As a matter of fact, fans determine prices in dialogue with competing fan projects. Brett's Toy Museum advertises its exhibition with reference to its content as well as to its affordability as compared to Stephen J. Sansweet's Rancho Obi-Wan. He also informs his audience of how he is using the income:

> This is the second largest collection on display in the entire US! The only collection larger is Rancho Obi-Wan in California (which charges $200 per tour). Admission to Brett's Toy Museum is only $5.00 per person, or $10 for 3 people, and 1/2 of the proceeds go to the Make A Wish Foundation.[421]

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[416] Suzanne Scott, "Repackaging Fan Culture: The Regifting Economy of Ancillary Content Models," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 3 (2009), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2009.0150.
[417] Abigail De Kosnik, "Fandom as Free Labour," in *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*, ed. Trebor Scholz (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), Kindle.
[418] Abigail de Kosnik, "Fandom as Free Labor," in *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*, ed. Trebor Scholz (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 99.
[419] Scott, "Repackaging Fan Culture."
[420] See Matt Hills "Doctor Who's Textual Commemorators: Fandom, Collective Memory and the Self-Commodification of Fanfac," *Journal of Fandom Studies* 2, no. 1 (2014): 31-51.
[421] "Home," *Brett's Toy Museum* [blog], accessed October 25, 2018, http://brettstoymuseum.com/home.

Considering fan historians' position between formal and informal cultural economies, this analysis of fan curation follows fan scholars Mel Stanfill and Megan Condis's assertion that "fan labor, like duct tape or the Force, has a dark side and a light side, and it holds the universe—or at least fandom—together."[422] In this regard, the labour of fans creates value and meaning for their respective fan communities and fandom in general, while at the same time, fans' productivity and financial investments benefit third parties without any considerable financial stakes, or particular interest in the fan community.

For the fan community, fan curators' labour in preservation, exhibition, and programming represents positive aspects of the gift economy. Fan-run museums are spaces where mass-produced objects of fandom as well as select fan-made works are collected, archived, and displayed. Once in the museum, fan-made works are made available to fellow peers in tangible form (the final products) as well as in the intangible stories behind them (how and why they were made). The result is not a conception of fan heritage pandering to that of established heritage institutions, but the mounting of an alternative and fan-specific heritage that is based on the canons and principles of fan communities. Because of this focus on fandom itself, and unlike publicly funded institutions, fan-run museums are freed from the need to justify the incorporation of popular culture into the museum.

For instance, the foundation of many and often more well-funded object-based film museums was accompanied with debates on "if and why" cinema should find a home in such museums, or any museums. Historically, film entered established museums by reframing film away from entertainment and instead relying on discourses of art, technological process, and media literacy.[423] Many such strategies have continued as films have left the movie theater and made inroads in other kinds of cultural institutions. Similar trends exist for items that fall under the general category of the "popular." The foundation of The Museum of Pop Culture in Seattle (formerly the EMP Museum), for instance, had to provide a specific purpose for exhibiting popular culture. Built around the private popular culture memorabilia collection of Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen in 2000, the museum is run by professionally-trained curators and museum

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[422] Mel Stanfill and Megan Condis, "Fandom and/as Labor," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no.15 (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0593.

[423] Keidl, Philipp Dominik, *Film Museums: That's what Films are made for? Object-based Film Museums and their Potentialities in Film Education*, MA thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2011, 9-16.

staff who, "now distinct from Allen's world of collectors and operating in the world of museums, must make the argument that science fiction is museum-worthy and has important things to say."[424] According to Dorus Hoebink et al., The Museum for Pop Culture discursively frames popular culture as museum-worthy, for instance, by pointing to science fiction's contribution to the socio-political and cultural history of the 20th century. One example of such a discursive framing is the audio guide to the costume Nichelle Nichols wore as Lieutenant Uhura in the original *Star Trek* series (1966-1969), which explains:

> It might be hard now to remember what a big deal it was in 1966 for an African American woman to be portraying an officer on a spaceship on television. Lieutenant Uhura wasn't just a staff member; she was in the chain of command. She could conceivably have command of the ship, if need be.[425]

This is not to say that some fan-curated museums do not follow similar narratives that demonstrate the value of their exhibitions beyond fandom. Brett's Toy Museum, for example, describes the transition of his private collection into a museum as a celebration of George Lucas' artistry, thereby aligning himself with art museums. The Galaxy Connection, on the other hand, chooses a narrative framework that connects *Star Wars* to questions of religion, resembling the exhibition Star Wars: The Magic of Myth of the Smithsonian Institution. Yet, fan-run museums choose such narratives without sacrificing fandom as the core of their curatorial imprint. Topics such as art and religion emphasize rather than overshadow fan curators' interpretations of their objects, as they are free from the need to justify their collection and programming to a wider audience and funding agencies.

As the history of their object of fandom as well as their community finds a place and visibility regionally, nationally, and internationally, fellow fans benefit from the curatorial work of their peers—even if it is to a smaller degree than museums with government or industry subsidies. Fan museums are driving agents in the creation and dissemination of fan heritage, which operates independent of local, regional, or national conceptions of heritage. Although these museums offer insights into the specific local contexts of their communities and their object of fandom, they do not ask for inclusion, for example, into German definitions of

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[424] Dorus Hoebink, Stijn Reijnders, and Abby Waysdorf, "Exhibiting Fandom: A Museological Perspective," in "Material Fan Culture," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no 16 (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0529.
[425] Museum audio guide cited in ibid.

heritage—or, at least, I did not encounter in my research statements that showed fans actively seeking the acceptance of established institutions. Fan-run museums, then are an expression of confidence that the franchise and its material culture is heritage, no matter what others might say. Fans themselves take care of their heritage, and the message of such projects is closer to "don't mess with our heritage" than "please accept this as heritage."

With their curatorial labour fans preserve parts of film and media history that is simply marginalized in publicly funded institutions. They take on work that should be covered with more elaboration by state-funded institutions. Even though merchandise and fandom are addressed in film heritage institutions, the material traces of both have a comparatively small presence in state-funded archival collections and museum exhibitions. Select merchandise might find its way into the exhibitions and collections, but the material culture of the pre-production process does not. To this present date, no major film or media museum has comprehensibly covered in a dedicated exhibition the work of toy designers and the design, production, distribution, and reception of playthings. Film and media museums might promise a look "behind the screen" or "behind the scenes," but the stories "behind the toys" remain untold. Hence, fan-run museums take on objects, stories, and practices that do not fit into ideas of film and media heritage that value art cinema over popular cinema, education over entertainment, and handcraft over mass-production. Still, if required, as will be explained below, museums can and have drawn from fan collections if necessary.

Music scholars investigating fan-run music museums have emphasized fans' free labour in the preservation and presentation of cultural heritage within the context of the physical site of the museum. Sarah Baker explains that even though amateur museums share "similar goals to national institutions with regard to preservation, collection, accessibility and the national interest," they "do so with limited financial support, relying primarily on volunteer labour, grant funding, memberships and donations to continue running and are often dealing with significant space constraints."[426] While fan-curators are investing their capital, Lucasfilm is ultimately benefiting from hours of free labour and financial investments made by the fans that bring their products closer to fans as well as general audiences. And while Manglitz says that Hasbro is

[426] Sarah Baker, "Affective Archiving and Collective Collecting in Do-it-Yourself Popular Music Archives and Museums," in *Preserving Popular Music Heritage: Do-it-Yourself, Do-it-Together*, ed. Sarah Baker (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 47.

sponsoring figures in the museum, and asks to display the elaborate dioramas produced in the museum in return, other direct information on financial support is not made public. The fact that the cultural life of Mönchengladbach is promoted and enhanced through the museum, which works with fan-generated funds and with none or minor administrative support funded by public sources also goes unrecognized. In this regard, the city also benefits from the curatorial labour of fans. The next section will outline the curatorial imprint of Stars of the Galaxy, and how the museum has contributed to the cultural life of the city.

4.2. Fan-Run Museums and the Cultural Impact of Fan Heritage

Fan and museum culture are inextricably linked, and this is especially the case with object-based film and media museums and exhibitions. By displaying original production materials in survey exhibitions on film and media history, object-based film and media museums appeal to film and television fans because they display rare and auratic original production materials. Because these kinds of museums redirect attention from the screen to the gallery space, the musealization of cinema occurred often to the dismay of "true" cinephiles. Cinephiles considered the screening of films as the only true means to experience and appreciate the past of moving image culture. When Henri Langlois opened his Musée du Cinéma in Paris in the 1950s, François Truffaut argued that putting "a Garbo costume next to the skull from *Psycho* was a gimmick for tourists" and that the museum was an actual hindrance to film preservation: "Who cares about seeing a lot of old projectors? Both the preservation of films and the adventurousness of the programming of [Palais de] Chailot in its early days were sacrificed to the museum. It just wasn't worth it."[427] Although such criticism is still present today in regard to the programming and purpose of object-based film museums, the rise of new museology and more inclusive approaches to popular culture has resulted in the foundation of similar museum projects around the world.[428]

Today, film museums regularly combine both approaches, and curate screen-based programs in their cinemas, and object-based exhibitions in their galleries. Moreover, other

[427] François Truffaut is referring to the Palais de Chaillot, where the Cinémathèque française was located from 1963 to 1998. Truffaut in Alison Trope, "Le Cinéma Pour Le Cinéma: Making a Museum of the Moving Image," *The Moving Image* 1, no. 1 (2001): 40.
[428] Peter Vergo, ed., *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989); for a comprehensive, worldwide list of object-based film museum see: Stephen Bottomore, "Cinema Museums: A Worldwide List," *Film History* 18, no. 3 (2006): 261-273.

heritage and educational institutions have also recognised the potential of film and television to attract visitors, and many art, science, and natural history museums now display film and media-themed exhibitions. As is the case with Star Wars: Identities, such shows are often produced in collaboration with production studios such as Lucasfilm who consider the museum as another outlet to increase revenue.[429]

Fans have actively contributed to object-based film museums and exhibition by lending, donating, or selling parts of their collections. Consider two exhibitions presented at the Deutsches Filmmuseum in Frankfurt that would not have been possible without the support of fans and their collections. The first example is Charlie, the Bestseller (2012), which explored the popularity and transformation of Charlie Chaplin's character of the tramp across various merchandising, including toys, recordings, and print ephemera. The museum was only able to put together such a show by using objects belonging to one single collector who had amassed the collection over decades (it subsequently became part of the museum's official collection).[430] The second example is Zusammen Sammeln (Collecting Collectively, 2016), which followed the idea of showcasing the hobby of collecting by inviting private collectors to display some of their favourite objects alongside those from the Deutsches Filmmuseum's own archive.[431] In both cases, fans were invited to provide the displays for the shows, and at least in the case of the Chaplin collection, the effort in building the collection ultimately translated into economic capital. Nevertheless, the curatorial agency and responsibilities remained in both examples with the museum's curators, and not with the fans.

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[429] Examples include Star Trek (Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, 1992), Dinosaurs of Jurassic Park (American Museum of Natural History, 1993), The Lord of the Rings Motion Picture Trilogy: The Exhibition (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 2002), Harry Potter: The Exhibition (Museum of Science and Industry, 2009), The Hunger Games: The Exhibition (San Francisco Palace of Fine Arts, 2016).

[430] The Adolf und Luisa Haeuser-Stiftung für Kunst und Kulturpflege acquired the collection of about 6000 pieces from collector Wilhelm Staudinger, and has given it as a permanent loan to the Deutsches Filmmuseum.

[431] The exhibition genre of people's shows became popular in the 1990s in the United Kingdom and the USA. People's shows present the collections of popular material culture of private collectors. The act of collecting itself is often the main theme of people's shows, but collectors rarely have curatorial agency in production of the exhibitions. See: Susan M. Pearce, *Museums Objects and Collections* (Leicester: Leicester University Press) 36-88; Robin Francis, "The People's Show: A Critical Analysis," *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies*, no.1 (1996), http://doi.org/10.5334/jcms.1963.

The lack of curatorial agency is one of the main differences between fan-run and official heritage institutions. To a certain degree, both Charlie, the Bestseller and Zusammen Sammeln represent a "museumification of fandom," a phrase coined by Dorus Hoebink, Stijn Reijnders, and Abby Waysdorf in their discussion of the Museum of Pop Culture in Seattle. But as was the case with Allen's collection, and as Charlie, the Bestseller and Zusammen Sammeln also indicate: "the museumification of fandom" comes with a downplaying of fans' individual values, meanings, and interpretations in favour of legitimizing popular culture through a more objective and universal contextualization beyond idiosyncratic fandom. In fan-run museums, on the other hand, fans themselves are in charge of the interpretation of their collections and the writing of history.

This fan curatorial agency is what distinguishes a fan-run museum from professional museums that do not share fans' aims and objectives. Emphasizing fans' curatorial imprint on displayed collections, music scholars Amanda Brandellero et al. define amateur and fan-run archives and museums as:

> a set of practices around the collection and preservation of popular music histories and material culture set up by people with no formal training or background in archiving or museology. We conceive of these initiatives as non-professional in terms of how the organisations position themselves in relation to: whether it is a (paid) job or, as in some cases, a hobby or personal collection that turns into a bigger project; the extent to which they adopt formal institutional structures (e.g. job titles); the division of tasks; formal classification of material; and the quality of what is delivered (whether there are set standards for collection, such as categorical ways of collecting information on materials). While individuals may lack formal training in heritage practices, all initiatives share a strong curatorial imprint, driven by one or a few individuals acting selectively as gatekeepers, with clearly stated aims and objectives.[432]

[432] Amanda Brandellero, Arno van der Hoeven and Susanne Janssen, "Valuing Popular Music Heritage Exploring Amateur and Fan-Based Preservation Practices in Museums and Archives in the Netherlands," in *Preserving Popular Music Heritage: Do-it-Yourself, Do-it-Together*, ed. Sarah Baker (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 35.

In terms of labour, the curatorial work is structured around four practices: retrieving, cataloguing, sharing and displaying."[433] As Baker explains, such practices are executed in groups, which create affective relationships within the curatorial teams as well between the individuals to the institutions they are running.[434] The curatorial imprint and affective relationship offer an important means to differentiate them from those museums that are built on fans' private collections but have been organized to such a degree that the original collectors no longer have any direct agency in the acts of collection-building and interpretation. As will be further explained in the following section, the affective relationship fans have with this project is key to the generation of visitor interest in fan-run museums.

Taking its cue from Brandellero et al.'s definition of fan-run museums and fans' curatorial imprint, my definition of fans as curators draws from the International Committee for the Training of Personnel of the International Council of Museums, which defines the role of curators as follows: "The curator […] is responsible for the collections in [their] charge. Duties include the care, development, study, enhancement, and management of the collections of the museum" and also puts them in charge of exhibition and publications.[435] This definition brings together previous notions of curating used in fan studies that have either focused on preservation and archiving or presentation, without necessarily including all of these tasks in their definition. In their research on comic book fans, Jonathan David Tankel and Keith Murphy discuss fans' curatorial consumption in relation to practices of collecting and archiving, but not exhibition.[436] In turn, Derek Kompare primarily focuses on the organization of information of one's object of fandom but not on archival and preservation practices in his discussion of how older fans guide newer fans into their fan community and discourses.[437] Placing fan curators in professional contexts—in which they interpret and organize works away from the institutional gaze—

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[433] Ibid., 38.
[434] Baker, "Affective Archiving and Collective Collecting in Do-it-Yourself Popular Music Archives and Museums,"47.
[435] Angelika Ruge, ed., *Frame of Reference for Museum Professions in Europe (Preliminary Edition 2007)* (Unknown place of publication: ICTOP, 2007), 15.
[436] Jonathan David Tankel and Keith Murphy, "Collecting Comic Books: A Study of the Fan and Curatorial Consumption," in *Theorizing Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity*, ed. Cheryl Harris and Alison Alexander (Cresskill: Hampton Press Inc., 1998), 55-68.
[437] Derek Kompare, "Fan Curators and the Gateways into Fandom," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, edited by Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 107-13.

will also help us develop a better understanding of how fan museums impact cultural heritage preservation and presentation, as well as the cultural landscape beyond the mere act of private collecting.

As the aforementioned exhibition examples from the Deutsches Filmmuseum indicate, fans have a long history of contributing to the preservation and presentation of cultural heritage through their collections. It is not only film and media museums that benefit from private collectors, but a variety of (popular culture) museums, too. Museum scholar Kevin Moore argues that private collectors are taking over the museum's role as primary collection sites. Private collectors often find themselves in better and more flexible financial circumstances than museums, and therefore have higher spending capacities for the acquisition of new objects from the collector's market.[438] Following Moore, Lincoln Geraghty presents the example of Stephen J. Sansweet's Rancho Obi-Wan in order to argue that fan collections and museum initiatives destabilize ideas about "established hierarchies of historical and modern, high and low culture, artefact and commodity, worthy to keep and throw-away."[439] Popular culture museums are therefore sites in which different agents with different powers and impact come together under conditions of great dependency: While established institutions might have a great effect on how objects are interpreted, the choice of what is preserved and available for display lies in the hands of individuals and groups collecting the objects outside these institutional frameworks.

Stars of the Galaxy is not only Germany's most comprehensive collection of different figurines from the *Star Wars* franchise but also possesses a distinctive curatorial imprint. Film and media museums often utilize merchandising as a marker for the emergence of blockbuster cinema and fan culture, or a replacement for unavailable original production materials. However, the curatorial imprint of Stars of the Galaxy stresses the material and textual qualities of merchandise beyond economic factors or fan consumption. The name Filmfiguren Ausstellung (Film Figure Exhibition), the previous name of Stars of the Galaxy, gave a clear indication of the museum's curatorial approach. In German, the term "Figur" can refer (1) to a *fictional character in a movie, play, book, or comics*, among others; or (2) to the *tangible material portrayal of a human, animal, or abstract body*, for example, in the form of a toy. As such, the title Filmfiguren

[438] Kevin Moore, *Museums and Popular Culture* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 96-97.
[439] Lincoln Geraghty, *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia, Fandom and Collecting Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 136.

Ausstellung communicates a dual curatorial approach. It emphasizes how particular movie characters are adapted into toys, and what different qualities these objects bring with them. But it also uses the detailed materialization of movie characters into tangible objects as a way to communicate information about the characters to the visitors. Thus, Stars of the Galaxy enables visitors to investigate the film text itself *as* merchandising while also encouraging them to explore the film text *through* merchandising. Ideas about adaptation are central to this approach, as the variety of different figurines and their modes of presentation frame them as the result of a thoughtful conception of narrative into objects. This design and construction requires specific skills to successfully materialize and spatialize the figurines, and ultimately enables different play types and experiences for the user.

The curatorial imprint is reinforced by the exhibition design. The museum uses two approaches to display the figures in ways that highlight their material and toyetic characteristics, as well as their narrative functions within the film. First, simple display cases dominate the exhibition, which feature up-scale, hand-made collectible figurines. The reduced decoration directs visitors' attention to the craftsmanship involved in the production of the objects on display. In the case of SideShow collectibles, the display highlights hand-sewn gowns, striking modelling of faces and bodies, as well as the key scenes the figurines represent in their postures. In the case of the lightsaber reproductions, the highlight is the true-to-the-original look of the different weapons. Each lightsaber visually represents its owner and thereby functions as a means to access the characters in the exhibition. Second, different-sized dioramas display ¾ and ⅙ action figures, LEGO play sets, and life-sized figures in carefully recreated sets taken from the films. This selection of important and well-known scenes from the films and series enable the visitors to revisit the fictional text—as well as its making-of—through its material remediation. Individual sequences are spatially broken down into different sections within particular dioramas, such as a diorama depicting Luke Skywalker's arrival at the spaceport Mos Eisley, his meeting Han Solo, and the escape in the Millennium Falcon from *A New Hope*.

Together, these two very different approaches equally emphasize (1) the faithful adaptation of the fictional audio-visual text into tangible figures, (2) the skills needed to produce the objects on display, (3) the material or decorative characteristics of the objects, (4) the complex worlds created in the *Star Wars* universe, and (5) how the qualities of the fictional text come to life through costumes, props, and make-up. The museum particularly emphasizes the

latter point through its inclusion of original costumes and the name change to Stars of the Galaxy, which is more inclusive than Filmfiguren Ausstellung, and directs attention away from the physical toys towards the storyworlds and actors referenced by them.

Select fan-works are embedded into the presentation of toys and tie-ins as faithful adaptions, skills, decorative aspects, and world-buildings. For instance, the museum displays a gigantic LEGO star destroyer that was built over the course of two years in a private living room. Another example is a life-sized model of a star destroyer corridor: a fan in his home built it before his partner forced him to get rid of it. Stars of the Galaxy does not only take care of the objects, but shares the information behind them, therefore recording and presenting in tours the stories behind the objects. As Manglitz explains in one interview, the curatorial team plans to create a database in which such information would be stored and would therefore also be accessible to others in the future.[440] With their exhibitions—as well as initiatives such as a planned database—the museum ultimately represents a diversification of Germany's cultural landscape, one that is interlinked with film and media history and that is sidelined by other institutions for economic, cultural, or political reasons. Stars of the Galaxy fills gaps left by other local and national museums and archives that do not invest as much energy in the preservation of merchandise and fans' stories.

Thanks to the labour of the curatorial team, Stars of the Galaxy and the city of Mönchengladbach have become a known destination for *Star Wars* fans in Germany. This is notable because Mönchengladbach had no obvious connection to the *Star Wars* franchise prior to the museum opening. None of the *Star Wars*' films or series was produced here, no talent involved from the film has ties to Mönchengladbach, and the city has never functioned as a host for important events such as national premieres. Further, merchandise was not produced in or nearby the city. The curatorial team established the city of Mönchengladbach as a landmark for *Star Wars* fans from scratch, in a city without any connection to *Star Wars*, and without even presenting original production materials from the movies. The exhibits were comprised only more or less of mass-produced and commercially-sold merchandising as well as some hand-made fan productions. Hence, it is not only important to ask how Stars of the Galaxy engages in preservation and heritage discourses, but also how the opening of the museum, and the labour

[440] See Vorhees82, "Follow me Around."

performed in it, creates value for the city of Mönchengladbach as a tourist attraction and enhances its cultural life.

Besides the permanent exhibition in the former swimming pool and the facility to book tours and events at the museum, the curatorial team of Stars of the Galaxy has also organized several events at other locales in the city and the region. For instance, the team has organized special exhibitions in shopping centres and stores, thereby drawing visitors and potential customers into commercial spaces through the displays of their figures and dioramas.[441] But such initiatives also go beyond the curation of temporary exhibitions, as the museum offers demonstrations—for example, on lightsaber fighting techniques—in everyday locations such as supermarkets.[442] Additionally, the museum participates in organizing special events that are part of larger municipal initiatives, such as concerts and readings within city-wide culture festivals. One such festival is the Nachtaktiv (Nocturnal), for which cultural institutions all around the city present a special program. For the 2016 edition of the event, the museum hosted a photo shoot for guests with their figures of choice between 8:00pm and 2:00am, Hollywood-themed make-up tutorials, a space-themed concert and reading, and an audio-visual installation.[443] Two years later, the museum organized a photo exhibition, poetry slam, and exhibition tour, demonstrating how the museum combines its interest in science fiction with other creative forms of expression.[444] By participating in these events, the museum actively contributes to the city's cultural life. In so doing, it adds to the overall allure of the city's cultural showcases by covering popular culture typically neglected at such events.

The organization of special events is also part of the museum programming. One of these events was the German premiere of the fan-made documentary *Elstree 1976* (Jon Spira,

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[441] CityVision-Das Stadtfernsehen, "Filmfigurenausstellung in Rheydter Galerie am Marienplatz," YouTube video, July 27, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GYHu77BiPE.
[442] Stars of the Galaxy, "*Star Wars* Event bei EDEKA," YouTube video, 0:21, October 31, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PADe0TjDA9s; Stars of the Galaxy, "Familientag im Autohaus Krefelder Straße," YouTube video, 1:45, November 15, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJxOJdgAxuw.
[443] "Program", Nachtaktiv: Kulturnacht Mönchengladbach 16, accessed October 26, 2018, https://nachtaktiv-mg.de/presse/nachtaktiv-2016-programmheft-einzelseiten.pdf.
[444] "Program," Nachtaktiv: Kulturnacht Mönchengladbach, accessed October 26, 2018, https://nachtaktiv-mg.de/wp-content/uploads/Web-ES-180412-01-KN18_Programm_105x21_56S.pdf.

2015), which explores the experience of *Star Wars* extras during the production, release, and hype of George Lucas's *A New Hope* (1977). The film was screened twice back to back, and Manglitz, with the sponsors NEW and Busch Media Group, arranged to fly in Anthony Forest for the premiere, one of the extras in *A New Hope*, who was supposed to play Luke's friend but was ultimately cut from the film.[445] The museum also twice organized the SaberCon convention, which coincided with the release of *The Force Awakens* and *Rogue One* in 2015 and 2016 respectively. For two days, the convention brought together fans, merchandise vendors, and minor film celebrities who had worked behind and in front of the camera on the *Star Wars* franchise. Guests to the 2016 event included Bill Hargreaves, who built some of the models for the first trilogy, Paul Blake, who played the role of Greedo, Alan Harris, who played the bounty hunter Bosskas, as well as Ian Beattie and Ian Hanmore from the series *Games of Thrones*.

SaberCon represents one example in which the administrative support of the city and the range of sponsors becomes visible. In an article for the city magazine *Hindenburger,* the organizers thank a list of sponsors and the city department.[446] Although they do not provide concrete numbers, the list indicates that support was received from the city as well as from local businesses. This demonstrates how the museum has found its place in the cultural life of

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[445] Nina Jedrychowski, "Star-Wars-Nebendarsteller hautnah," *RP Online*, August 28, 2017, https://rp-online.de/nrw/staedte/moenchengladbach/star-wars-nebendarsteller-hautnah_aid-20819979.

[446] "Stadtsparkasse Mönchengladbach, der NEW AG, dem Leonardo Hotel Mönchengladbach, dem Hephata Gartenshop, der Galeria Kaufhof Mönchengladbach, der H. Herzog KG, Feinkost Reuter, Pflege Plus, dem Autohaus Krefelderstraße, der Rheinland Versicherungen Breuer & Buscher GmbH, B+B Autovermietung und der MGMG - Marketinggesellschaft Mönchengladbach, die die „Saber Con" erst möglich gemacht haben (Wir hoffen Sie sind 2017 auch wieder dabei!), den Kollegen der Presse, die uns durch ihre Berichterstattung so sehr unterstützt haben, der Stadt Mönchengladbach und dem Ordnungsamt, das schnell und unbürokratisch alle Genehmigungen erteilt hat."Translation by the author: Stadtsparkasse Mönchengladbach, the NEW AG, the Leonardo Hotel Mönchengladbach, the Hephata Gartenshop, the Galeria Kaufhof Mönchengladbach, the H. Herzog KG, Feinkost Reuter, Pflege Plus, the Autohaus Krefelderstraße, the Rheinland Versicherung Breuer & Buscher GmbH, B + B Autovermietung, and The MGMG - Marketinggesellschaft Mönchengladbach, who have made the "Saber Con" possible (we hope you are back in 2017!), the colleagues from the press, who have supported us so much through their reporting, the city of Mönchengladbach and the Public Order Office that granted approvals in a fast and unbureaucratic manner. "Fantastische Welten zu Gast in Mönchengladbach," *Hindenburger: Die Besten Seiten unserer Stadt*, accessed November 22, 2018, https://www.hindenburger.de/files/PDF/Heftarchiv2017/hindenburger-2017-01.pdf.

Mönchengladbach. The thank you note ended with the museum curators' expression of interest in organizing another pop-culture event for Mönchengladbach and its inhabitants.[447] However, the event was not repeated in 2017, perhaps as a result of an unexpectedly low visitor turnout, as mentioned in the article.[448] SaberCon was not as successful as anticipated. Nevertheless, such events generate coverage in regional media as well as in fan forums.

Finally, Stars of the Galaxy has collaborated with and advertised on various online tourist sites, such as ErlebnisparkDeals, a website that collects and offers deals for theme parks and themed environments.[449] The website featured a deal for Stars of the Galaxy that was advertised with their partner Groupon, offering entry for three people for €19.90 instead of €40.00.[450] Sites such as Das Gutscheinbuch have offered similar deals.[451] Moreover, Stars of the Galaxy appears in reference to hotels in Mönchengladbach, such as TripAdvisor lists of things to do in specific locations. For example, the travel website includes a list named "Hotels near *Stars of the Galaxy*"[452] and the museum appears on lists of hotels such as "Things to Do near Dorint Parkhotel Mönchengladbach"[453] or "Things to Do near Minto."[454] The museum is also mentioned on tourist websites such as Tourismus NRW. In this way, the fan-run museum becomes part of a wider network of tourist industries that links the museum to hotels and hotels

[447] Ibid.
[448] Currently, the website and the Facebook page for the event is unavailable, indicating that the event is on pause for a longer period.
[449] "Filmfiguren-Ausstellung Mönchengladbach für 14,90 €," ErlebnisparkDeals, April 23, 2016, http://www.erlebnisparkdeals.de/filmfiguren-ausstellung-moenchengladbach/.
[450] "Stars of the Galaxy für bis zu 3 Personen nur 19,90 Euro," ErlebnisparkDeals, April 27, 2018, http://www.erlebnisparkdeals.de/rabatt-stars-of-the-galaxy/.
[451] See "Gutschein 113" and "Gutschein 114," IhrGutscheinBuch, accessed October 25, 2018, http://download.ihrgutscheinbuchshop.de.w008b7c2.kasserver.com/2018/Beschreibung/Krefeld.html#114.
[452] "Hotels near Stars of the Galaxy," TripAdvisor, accessed October 25, 2018, https://www.tripadvisor.ca/HotelsNear-g187380-d10420346-Stars_of_the_Galaxy-Monchengladbach_North_Rhine_Westphalia.html.
[453] "Things to Do near Dorint Parkhotel Monchengladbach," TripAdvisor, accessed October 25, 2018, https://www.tripadvisor.ca/AttractionsNear-g187380-d671629-Dorint_Parkhotel_Monchengladbach-Monchengladbach_North_Rhine_Westphalia.html.
[454] Things to Do near Minto," TripAdvisor, accessed October 25, 2018, https://www.tripadvisor.ca/AttractionsNear-g187380-d6765506-Minto-Monchengladbach_North_Rhine_Westphalia.html.

to the museum respectively.[455] In sum, potential museum visitors become hotel guests in Mönchengladbach, and hotel guests in the city become potential museum visitors.

4.3. From Film-Induced Tourism to Fan-Induced Tourism

The previous section argued that fan curating as a form of labour contributes to the preservation and presentation of film and media heritage and established Mönchengladbach as a hub for *Star Wars* fandom. This fan labour in the museum is quite sophisticated and multi-layered, and navigates maintenance costs, cultural programs, organizational savvy, and strategic planning. As will be argued in the next section, the experience of fan practices and works—such as diorama building—and fans' skills in museum management—which require knowledge of cultural production, exhibition, and public relations—is what motivates the public to visit these museums.

Fan and tourism scholars have addressed the intersection of media and tourism from various perspectives. In fan studies, Matt Hills has developed the idea of "cult geographies" to discuss fans' emotional attachment to sites associated with popular media texts, such as *The X Files* shooting locations in Vancouver. "Cult geographies," Hills explains, are "diegetic and pro-filmic spaces (and 'real' spaces associated with cult icons) which cult fans take as the basis for material, touristic practices."[456] Other fan scholars have theorized such travels as "fan pilgrimages," describing media-themed travel destinations as liminal spaces outside everyday life. There, fans engage in "performances, fantasies, and rituals of transformation," as well as "imagining and enacting forms of social intimacy other than those constrained by the everyday."[457] Practices associated with cult geographies and fan pilgrimages include the discovery of filming locations and the sharing of knowledge thereof, re-enactment of scenes, vernacular memory practices such as leaving one's name on a wall, as well as interaction with other fans.[458] As Rebecca Williams explains, such destinations and practices often take centre

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[455] Silke Dames, "Kurios: Star Wars-Ausstellung in einstigen Schwimmbad," Tourismus NRW, December 20, 2017, https://www.touristiker-nrw.de/kurios-filmfiguren-ausstellung-im-schwimmbad/.
[456] Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 144.
[457] Erzen, "The Vampire Capital of the World," 12.
[458] Sangkyun Kim, "Extraordinary Experience: Re-enacting and Photographing at Screen-Tourism Location," *Tourism and Hospitality Planning and Development* 7, no. 1 (2010): 59–75; Derek H. Alderman, "Writing on the Graceland Wall: On the Importance of Authorship in

stage in fans' negotiation of questions regarding authenticity, commercialism, identity, and the interaction among fans, anti-fans, and regular visitors of those sites associated with an object of fandom.[459]

Fan pilgrimages fall into the broader category of film-induced tourism, a concept developed by tourism scholar Sue Beeton to examine destinations that attract a broader mix of travellers to sites connected to particular media works. Film-induced tourism refers to individually-planned excursions to original filming sites, participation in commercial tours of centres built after initial filming took place, visitation to sites where a film is set but was not actually filmed, outings to location sites such as film studio tours and theme parks, as well as armchair travelling by watching travel programs on television.[460] As a result of the adaptability of exhibitions into non-museum spaces, film and media exhibitions have often formed part of film-induced tourism, most prominently by turning original filming locations into museums, such as the *Lord of the Rings* sets in New Zealand (Peter Jackson, 2001-2003), or by displaying original production materials at off-location sites in blockbuster exhibitions such as Star Wars: Identities. Fan-curated museums are part of this form of film-induced tourism, and include the Mad Max Museum in Silverton (Australia), which opened in the location where *Mad Max 2* (George Miller, 1981) was shot, and features detailed replicas and original documentation from the production process, or Stars of the Galaxy that now includes original costumes.[461]

However, as the media coverage of fan-curated museums and visitor reviews in social media demonstrate, the prospect of learning and engaging with the *Star Wars* franchise is not the sole motivation for a visit. Rather, what is foregrounded is the work of the fans themselves, as well as the different steps and processes that went into the making of Stars of the Galaxy. The fact that the museum is run by fans without any formal curatorial training and no evident or obvious economic interest in running the museum seems to be one of the biggest selling points for the Stars of the Galaxy. In contrast, media coverage and visitor reviews of the official

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Pilgrimage Landscapes," *Tourism Recreation Research* 27, no. 2 (2002): 27-33; Abby Waysdorf & Stijn Reijnders, "The Role of Imagination in the Film Tourist Experience: The Case of Game of Thrones," *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 14, no. 1 (2017): 170-191; Williams, "Fan Tourism and Pilgrimage," 102-103.

[459] Williams, "Fan Tourism and Pilgrimage," 98-99.

[460] See Sue Beeton, *Film-Induced Tourism* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005), 10-11.

[461] "Mad Max Museum," *Silverton: Visit NSW*, accessed on October 25, 2018, http://silverton.org.au/mad-max-museum/.

Lucasfilm exhibition Star Wars: Identities do not address how the exhibition was made and only occasionally mention the name of the curators and their intentions behind it. Instead, the focus is on the opportunity to see original objects from the productions, gain background information on the making of, and the chance to create your own *Star Wars* character.[462] In other words, Star Wars: Identities is presented as an exhibition for fans but not as a site founded and run by fans for their peers.

Building on these observations, this section uses the idea of "fan-induced tourism" as a way of thinking about tourism motivated by the promise to see fan productions and hear about film and media history, as well as the history of fandom, from the point of view of fan curators. Of course, interaction with other fans has always been part of the pleasure of fan tourism and pilgrimages, but in these instances fan interaction occurs at sites outside of fans' everyday life and practices, such as temporary convention spaces. These spaces may not offer the immersion into a fictional diegesis that other tourist sites do, but they instead offer access to the everyday lives of fans and their practices. Indeed, Baker's argument that fan-run museums and DIY heritage projects create affective relationships through the act of collecting collectively can be extended to the exhibition space, where this affect materializes in a publicly accessible space that is open to its visitors and ultimately defines the overall experience of fan museums.[463]

Consider the article "Die Macht ist stark in Mönchengladbach" (The Force is Strong in Mönchengladbach) in *RP Online*, a regional newspaper covering news from the Düsseldorf and North Rhine Westphalia area, which demonstrates more interest in the work of the fans and the history behind the museum than the *Star Wars* franchise itself.[464] The article begins immediately with a description of the first display visitors encounter when they enter the exhibition: the aforementioned fan-built Star Destroyer replica made out of 400,000 LEGO bricks. It moves on to explain that the 800-square-metre museum is located in a former swimming pool and was founded by five collectors of action figures, LEGO sets, lightsaber replicas, and costumes. Later, the article explores the "becoming a fan" story of Manglitz, and the space restrictions each

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[462] See: Nerdkultur, "Original-Requisiten in Deutschland | *STAR WARS* Identities," YouTube video, June 9, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETclkzVpV9I; Die FILM Seite, "*Star Wars* Identities Odysseum Köln," YouTube video, 10:39, May 28, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMHz3GrYUMc.
[463] See Baker, "Affective Archiving and Collective Collecting in Do-it-Yourself Popular Music Archives and Museums," 47.
[464] See Jovanovic, "Filmfiguren-Ausstellung."

of the collectors encountered at home that motivated them to join forces and make their collection available to the public. It continues with an account of how the project developed as a result of the founders' private initiative, how one always discovers something new in the detailed dioramas, and how the museum plans to expand collaborations with kindergartens and schools. Although the *Star Wars* franchise is mentioned a number of times in the article, it primarily generates interest in the museum as a "dream-come-true" fan product, and does not bring the reader into the franchise storyworld per se.

The work of Manglitz and his peers in building their collection and museum, as well as the quality of the displays, is also often foregrounded in visitor reviews on social media. On Facebook, comments in the review section include "Es war einfach nur super! Einzelne Filmszenen sind sehr Detailgetreu nachgestellt," "Tolle Ausstellung. Sehr detaillverliebte Nachbildung bekannter Filmszenen," or "Es gab sehr viel zu sehen, zu entdecken und zu lesen. Dabei blieb die Liebe zum Detail nie auf der Strecke."[465] Another example is a nearly hour-long video exhibition tour and interview with Manglitz, uploaded by vlogger Vorhee82 to his channel. Throughout the tour of the museum, Vorhee82 shows the exhibition and explains in a voice-over who and how the dioramas were built. He repeatedly accentuates how much love and detail went into the pieces, such as the lighting. When he talks about the Mos Eisley diorama, which includes approximately 300 figures, he explains how "every little" detail is acknowledged and how much "heart and soul" went into the space, stressing that one can see the extent of fandom that motivates such a project.[466] Additionally, in the interview, the majority of questions are not about the detailed knowledge the fans have of the franchise, but rather concern the background of the museum and its everyday practices, such as visitor numbers, the number of figures on display, or the decision to use a swimming pool as an exhibition space.[467] These examples show that fan curators' labour shapes the experience of the exhibition, and plays an important role in the presentation of the museum as a tourist attraction.

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[465] Translation by the author: "It was just fabulous. Individual film scenes are restaged in great detail," "Great Exhibition. Very detailed replicas of film scenes," "There was much to see, discover and read. The attention for detail never fell by the wayside."
[466] GROBI.TV, "Hier ist das Paradies für *STAR WARS* FANS - die Filmfigurenausstellung in Mönchengladbach," YouTube video, 19:08, July 10, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biULxYqQBEc.
[467] See Vorhees82.

Figure 4.4 The former indoor swimming pool and current location of Stars of the Galaxy in Mönchengladbach.

Space and time are two themes that are particularly relevant in the framing of Stars of the Galaxy as a DIY institution run by fans. In the case of the former, one of the most recurring questions for Manglitz has been what motivated him and his peers to begin the museum project. In his answers, Manglitz always recalls that he and his peers suffered from a problem that he considers to be common among fans: too little space at home.[468] Indeed, fan scholar Benjamin Woo argues that fans constantly face "constraints of materiality," and must therefore "(inter alia) research, curate, organize, clean, repair, move, and dispose of objects" in order to manage the "domestic object-world" of their fandom.[469] Stars of the Galaxy can be described as the result of these restrictions, as well as the transition of these practices from the private into the public sphere. In terms of the latter, reports recognize the time that goes into the production of detailed dioramas that take up, at most, several square metres in the exhibition. For instance, the television station CityVision: Das Stadtfernsehen focuses in their coverage on one of the volunteers of the museum. The report shows her working on a diorama and explaining the different time-intensive and detail-oriented steps that go into preparing and placing the figures in the scenes.[470] Similarly, reports addressing the abovementioned Star Destroyer LEGO

[468] FANwerk, "Interview zur Filmfiguren Ausstellung & Saber Con | FANwerk," YouTube video, 10:35, December 1, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ws5rwJrES-o.
[469] Benjamin Woo, "A Pragmatics of Things: Materiality and Constraint in Fan Practices," *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 16 (2014), http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0495.
[470] Annika Schommer, "Filmfigurenausstellung, CityVision TV Bericht," YouTube video, 3:29, February 13, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9h7vpbs__M.

model, and life-size set replica of inside a space ship foreground how, where, and for how long fans have worked on (re)building their versions of the Star Destroyer rather than an explanation of the spaceship's meaning in the films.[471] By providing insights into fandom and how it is practiced at home, the Stars of the Galaxy exhibition establishes an aura of authenticity, both for the object on display (the spaceship) and the fan who made it.

The themes of time and space are also apparent in questions relating to the building in which Stars of the Galaxy is housed. Almost all media coverage of Stars of the Galaxy refers to the museum's location in a former indoor swimming pool. When reporters follow Manglitz on his tour, the curator explains which parts of the pool were transformed into exhibition space, explaining to viewers that the team first transformed the former changing room into the gallery space upstairs.[472] In other examples, volunteers directly address which sections of the former swimming pool building have been used, such as in a video in which a volunteer explains how he constructed a life-size replica of Han Solo frozen in Carbonite. Moreover, Manglitz has shown in reports the gradual transformation of the swimming pool into a multi-level exhibition space, a complex project that took several years to realize.[473] Fan reviews indicate that visitors could enjoy a tour of the unfinished space while it was still in the making.[474] The experience of the space and how it has been repurposed for the display of the fans' collection becomes as much an attraction for visitors as the actual objects on display. If Star Wars: Identities provides a polished look behind-the-scenes at the making of the *Star Wars* storyworld, Stars of the Galaxy distinguishes itself by openly discussing and showing what it takes to run and build a museum. The unusual re-making of an indoor-swimming-pool into a museum combines with the industriousness productivity of fans displayed within its walls, framing the museum as an ongoing "work-in-progress". Indeed, when I visited the exhibition in 2015, its "work-in-progress" character could be felt in the construction noise that echoed from the downstairs pool into the finished exhibition space upstairs. The noise was audible proof that the fans were not only running the museum from behind the counter but were still actively working on finishing

[471] GROBI.TV, "Wir waren wieder in der Filmfigurenausstellung in Mönchengladbach," YouTube video, December 30, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UySJSMqjz48.
[472] See Schommer, "Filmfigurenausstellung."
[473] For examples, see GROBI.TV and Vorhees82.
[474] volkerc, "Filmfiguren Ausstellung Mönchengladbach," *StarWarsFiguren* [blog], October 8, 2013, forum.starwars-figuren.com/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=584.

it in their free time during the weekend. While the renovation was ongoing, then, the re-making of the pool and other spaces within the building represented a unique aspect and experience of the space.

Figure 4.5 The image shows the transformation of the former pool into a multi-level exhibition space.

Figure 4.6 The image shows the finished exhibition space.

The idea of the museum being a "work-in-progress" is also referenced by reviewers when they describe their engagement with the richness of the exhibitions on display. As one visitor remarks, one has to go several times, as there is always something new to discover.[475] Accordingly, another recurring theme is the actual work that goes into the production of the displays and the museum. For example, the curators post pictures of smaller dioramas in progress on their Facebook page. Further, when discussing the transformation of the swimming pool into an exhibition space, Manglitz explains how mass-produced figures were customized and landscapes created with the help of such mundane objects as paper plates.[476] A visit to the exhibition does not only include the promise of finding details from the films depicted in the dioramas, but also the enjoyment of figuring out how and with what materials the dioramas were built.

The authentic nature of this fan project is also evident in the tours given by the curatorial team. Several visitor reviews highlight the knowledge of the curatorial team. Encounters with fans like this contribute to Stars of the Galaxy's reputation as a project "by fans for fans," a phrase that also regularly appears in reviews on their Facebook page and Trip Advisor. This is due to the work of the volunteers who enable fans to see their collections, recognize famous

[475]Michael Rip, Facebook post on Stars of the Galaxy, Facebook, January 21, 2018, https://www.facebook.com/pg/starsofthegalaxy/reviews/?ref=page_internal.
[476] See Vorhees82. "Follow me Around."

scenes in the dioramas, engage in practices such as re-enactment in reconstructions of sets, and role play in themed birthday parties with lightsaber training workshops. The success of the museum is described by other reviewers as dependent on fan support beyond the core curatorial team. One reviewer urges readers to visit the exhibition, arguing that:

> Wer diese Ausstellung nicht besucht ist selber schuld, das ihm so was großartiges entgeht. Mir ist nicht bekannt das es irgendwo etwas in der Art noch mal gibt. Darum sollte so ein Projekt gefördert werden, auf das sich noch viele andere Besucher daran für lange Zeit erfreuen können. […] Dort werden nicht nur tolle Sachen gezeigt, sondern ist auch eine tolle Anlaufstelle und Treffpunkt für Fan's. Also nicht lange warten sondern hin zur Filmfiguren Ausstellung. Jeder Besucher trägt dazu bei das dieses phantastische Projekt noch lange am Leben bleibt und Menschen glücklich macht![477]

As the quotation indicates, without any direct funding from the state or other heritage bodies, the survival of the museum depends not only on the motivation of the curators but also on the support of the fan community. The importance of Stars of the Galaxy, however, lies not only in its role as an exhibition space, but also as an archive for fan works. As Manglitz explains in an interview, fans have recognized the museum as a space where they can bring their collections, knowing that they will be preserved for the future.[478]

The notion of fan-induced tourism also helps us think about how these spaces might function as activators of fandom more generally. Fan scholar Mark Duffett has addressed the relationship between fandom and space by asking:

> How much can a place guide us to have an emotional response? Does that response occur because of what it is, what it represents to us, how it has been

[477] Translation by the author: "If you do not visit this exhibition, it's your own fault that you miss something that great. I am not aware that there is something similar somewhere else. Therefore, a project likes this should be promoted so that many visitors will be able to enjoy it. [...] Not only are great things shown there, but it is also a great place to go and meeting place for fans. Do not hesitate and visit the Film Figure Exhibition. Each visitor contributes to keeping such a fantastic project alive for a long time and makes people happy!" Ralf Dyckers, Facebook post on Stars of the Galaxy, Facebook, September 1, 2014, https://www.facebook.com/pg/starsofthegalaxy/reviews/?ref=page_internal.

[478] Erik Acker, "Krieg der Sterne: Das Treffen mit dem Kopfgeldjäger in Mönchengladbach," *Neue Rhein/Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, 26 January, 2018, https://www.nrz.de/region/niederrhein/wir-am-niederrhein/das-treffen-mit-dem-kopfgeldjaeger-in-moenchengladbach-id213091781.html.

> arranged […]? Can places do things to those who visit them? Or is the experience entirely down to what mental expectations visitors bring along?[479]

This emphasis on space does indeed offer new insights into fandom, as it encourages us to think about "how fandom emerges from engagement with specific mediated or fan-specific spaces," as Rebecca Williams explains in reference to Duffett. According to Williams, the study of specific mediated or fan-specific spaces has the potential "to broaden our understandings of the complex relationships between fans, texts/objects, and places."[480] Since this study has not consulted visitor surveys, investigating how fans reacted to the exhibition, or asserting that a visit to Stars of the Galaxy caused fandom for *Star Wars* or action figures is merely speculative. None of the reviews in this study explicitly states that a visit to the museum transformed a neutral visitor into a fan. However, further research working with visitor surveys and questionnaires could illuminate how visitors began to identify as fans of the franchise after visiting the museum**.**

Interest in exhibitions by fans for fans is not exclusive to Stars of the Galaxy. In Arkansas, The Galaxy Connection is an exhibition as much about *Star Wars* and its merchandise as it is about the curator's own religious beliefs.[481] As its website explains, The Galaxy Connection is a "one of a kind museum featuring the owner's (Jon Clowers) personal collection of toys, props and life size characters from *Star Wars* and Superheroes while tying in his own personal story."[482] In the state of New York, the website of Brett's Toy Museum explains in detail how the curator Brett conceptualized his collection as an art object which he "wanted to display […] in a way that symbolized the creative (and marketing) genius of George Lucas, the most inventive man in cinema."[483] Moreover, the website offers a detailed description of how his collection became too small for his old home, and how he transformed his new house into the museum that contains displays such as the "vintage tower" with "nearly every ship and

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[479] Mark Duffett, *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), Kindle.
[480] Williams, "Fan Tourism and Pilgrimage," 104.
[481] "Our Story," *The Galaxy Connection* [blog], accessed October 25, 2018, http://www.thegalaxyconnection.com/our-story.
[482]"Museum," *The Galaxy Connection* [blog], accessed June 3, 2018, http://www.thegalaxyconnection.com/museum.
[483] "About Brett," *BrettsToyMuseum* [blog], accessed June 3, 2018, http://brettstoymuseum.com/about_brett.

playset made from 1977 to 1988—the stuff Brett had when he was 24–30 years younger."[484] Thomas Atkinson, meanwhile, explains the motivation for the foundation of his Star Toy Museum as follows: "One reason I wanted make a museum and a corporate entity was to get recognition and draw the attention of other collectors […] As far as I know, no [collector] ever invited people into their home to see the stuff, which was one of the things I thought was important."[485] And reviews on Facebook express how visitors to Rancho Obi-Wan are impressed by Sansweet's life-long dedication to *Star Wars* memorabilia, and the knowledge he shares with fellow fans by displaying them in a former chicken barn as well as by offering regular tours.

These examples demonstrate how museums like Stars of the Galaxy foreground the labour that goes into the making and running of these museums, both through their own exhibitions and in media coverage. Indeed, reviews on Facebook and Trip Advisor, among other places, show that visitors, too, focus in their reviews on the work that goes into the making and running of the museum, putting more emphasis on fan labour than the media texts and merchandise on display. Again, this is in stark contrast to reports and reviews of commercial or industry-produced exhibitions, such as Star Wars: Identities, that focus on the display of original costumes as well as the kinds of activities these exhibitions offer for fans. Hence, while Star Wars: Identities falls under the category of film-induced tourism—visitors attend the exhibition to engage with the films and their production—Stars of the Galaxy is an example of fan-induced tourism: travel is motivated by engagement with other fans and their work in specific local contexts.

4.4 Fan-Curated Museums and Fan Geography

The previous two sections have discussed the labour that fan curators perform, as well as how their labour has become one of the main attractions of fan-curated museums like Stars of the Galaxy. The last part of this chapter complements the previous two sections by discussing how fan-curated museums and other fan historical practices evidence fans' interest and involvement in translating a global franchise such as *Star Wars* into local contexts of their everyday environments. It will show that fan-curated museums are not the only example of this interest in

[484] "Construction of the Museum," *BrettsToyMuseum* [blog], accessed June 3, 2018, http://brettstoymuseum.com/construction_of_the_museum.
[485] Brenen Jensen, "Charmed Life," *Baltimore City Paper*, April 13, 1999, http://www.startoysmuseum.org/.

the local specificities of fandom. Fan-produced histories beyond the museum have demonstrated interest in documenting memories of fans in regard to the geographic and spatial specificities of their experiences, be it through autobiographical writing, the sharing of images on blogs, or the recollection of spaces of fandom in podcasts. The content of these works ranges from representations of fans' domestic spaces to representations of their favourite cinemas, stores, and clubs.

In fan studies, Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" has often been used to analyse the processes of fan community building across geographical borders. As Lori Hitchcock and Bertha Chin explain in reference to Anderson:

> imagined communities arise through the interpellation of both local and expatriate citizens as national subjects under communalities of language, race, and ideology by means of the transnational reach of "print capitalism" […]. In its fan studies iteration, a theory of imagined communities foregrounds the transborder, transnational reach of the Internet in creating a sense of simultaneous shared popular cultural experience.[486]

The creation of this sense of simultaneous shared popular culture experience has often been associated with online fora and social media, where fans discuss their objects of fandom and also share their own works. However, this section is primarily interested in the question of how fans create a sense of community by building a geography of fandom: the mapping and description of specific local contexts in which fandom is practiced. Hence, this section will demonstrate that fans show interest not only in textual and material variations of their object of fandom across borders, but also in the confined contexts in which they are sold, bought, consumed, and used. The result is the conception of a trans-local fan community that develops a sense of belonging by engaging with the local environments of other fans.

This section returns to the idea of world-building that was discussed in chapter three in relation to transmedia historiography. Whereas that chapter focused on how Lucasfilm uses world-building strategies to construct and represent the environment in which Lucas produced *Star Wars*, this section places more emphasis on how such processes are applied in the creation

[486] Lori Hitchcock Morimoto and Bertha Chin, "Reimagining the Imagined Community: Online Media Fandoms in the Age of Global Convergence," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World (2nd edition)*, edited by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 174.

of a fan-world by fans. To recall, Henry Jenkins argues that "storytelling has become the art of world building, as artists create compelling environments that cannot be fully explored or exhausted within a single work or even a single medium" so that fictional worlds are becoming "bigger than the film, bigger even than the franchise—since fan speculation and elaborations also expand the world in a variety of directions."[487] Drawing from art history and the conception of the art world, Matt Hills uses the concept of "world" beyond storytelling. He develops the notion of "fan world" to enable the study of different fan group practices and prevent the further fragmentation of fandom into categories such as "traditional" and "brand" fans. As he explains, rather

> than mapping the fan world, the point here is to recognize its fuzzy boundaries and openness, so that theorizing fandom can mean more than merely empirically studying self-declared fans (instead including "support personnel" along with those whose fandom may be disputed or unclaimed), as well as not erecting an a priori or misrecognized line separating the fan world [from the rest of society].[488]

Hills' conception of the fan world also acknowledges "how fandom is supported and enabled by a range of professional cultural intermediaries [e.g. PR and paratextual industries) as well as people seemingly "outside" a fan community also deserving and requiring fan studies' analysis."[489] However, while Hills uses the notion of world to avoid exclusion of certain fan practices and groups in definitions of and scholarship on fandom, my discussion focuses on the question of how fans map and represent where they practice their fandom on an everyday and regular basis.

In this regard, the argument presented in this section is closer to Benjamin Woo's discussion of stores, clubs, and organisations as subcultural networks and intermediaries that represent "another kind of world-building [that] is even more important to the ongoing viability and vitality of geek media cultures."[490] According to Woo, no "practice can exist—at least, not for long—without the support of institutions" that provide "an economic and organizational base

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[487] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*: *Where old and new Media Collide* (New York University Press, 2006), 114.
[488] Matt Hills, "From Fan Culture/Community to the Fan World: Possible Pathways and Ways of Having Done Fandom," *Palabra Clave* 20, no.4 (2017): 877.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Benjamin Woo, *Getting a Life: The Social Worlds of Geek Culture* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018), 131.

for subcultural activities."[491] Hence, local organisations such as a fan club or comic book store "surrounds, penetrates, and binds geek culture together."[492] As he explains, they:

> organize markets for commodities (i.e., goods to be collected and about which aesthetic judgements are made), act as venues for interaction (i.e., sites where people can showcase their familiarity with and mastery of relevant cultural references), and connect participants to networks for communication (i.e., opportunities to exchange information and build expertise within and across scenes). […] By organizing markets, providing spaces of interaction, and linking participants with communicative networks, the stores and organizations [contribute] to the maintenance of a social and cultural milieu, giving substance to the fuzzier qualities of subcultural identity and shaping the local scene's distinctive character.[493]

Moreover, the following analysis draws from Marc Steinberg and Edmond Ernest Dit Alban's argument that fandom "must be understood neither merely through particular foundational texts nor merely through specific ways of seeing […] but rather through a conjunction of these visual and narrative elements with specific patterns of urban [and rural] encounters."[494] As they explain using the example of Otaku culture, the inclusion of space in the discussion of media and material culture "takes otaku culture out of the living rooms and bedrooms of fans, and inscribes them in the city," therefore providing a means to think about the mobility of images, things, and persons.[495] Although they do not refer to the construction of fan spaces as a form of world-building, their argument nevertheless connects to Woo's emphasis on the importance of spaces and institutions, and frames fandom as a geographical experience in which fans move among different sites to consume images and objects and engage with fellow fans.

This notion of local subcultural networks and experiences of different local places is relevant for the discussion of fan-curated museums on two levels: First, fan-curated museums are part of local subcultural networks and therefore represent and contribute to the mobility of things, people, and images associated with the *Star Wars* franchise. They provide the basis for

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[491] Ibid., 132.
[492] Ibid., 150.
[493] Ibid.,132 and 138.
[494] Marc Steinberg and Edmond Ernest Dit Alban, "Otaku Pedestrians," in *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, ed. Paul Booth (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 289.
[495] Ibid., 290.

subcultural activities by: (1) organizing markets for commodities in their museum stores and conventions; (2) functioning as a collecting body for other fans' collections and works; (3) acting as venues for *Star Wars* fan interaction through their main exhibition and events; and (4) connecting *Star Wars* fans to other networks of expertise by bringing together knowledge of the *Star Wars* films and merchandise, as well as connecting the *Star Wars* franchise to other sci-fi productions and comic book adaptations. To recall what was discussed in the previous section, Stars of the Galaxy sells merchandise in its museum's store, opens its exhibition for three days a week to visitors, organizes special events independently in the form of screenings and conventions or in collaboration with city-wide events, and connects fans with industry professionals and with each other, across regions.

Second, fans document their experiences and impressions of subcultural networks across a wide range of media. For example, fan curators document the development of their museum projects as well as everyday work. While the fan curators of Stars of the Galaxy give impressions of their work and the progresses they made, The Toy and Action Figure Museum in Pauls Valley in Oklahoma publishes clips on YouTube, such as one video that follows founder Kevin Stark through his everyday routine of opening the museum—from unlocking the door to switching on television sets and lighting.[496] Further, fan historians document their experiences and the experiences of others in their respective subcultural networks through autobiographical accounts, interviews with other fans, or the recording of visits to these stores. Finally, these fan practices are complemented by reports in the mainstream media on fans and their local initiatives that challenge stereotypes of the loner fan in their basement.

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[496] In the year 2000, the city of Pauls Valley in Oklahoma started a citywide process that asked its inhabitants to think about initiatives that would make the city more attractive to tourists. Local toy designer and collector Kevin Stark proposed to use his collection as the foundation for a museum on the art of toy sculpting. After five years of planning, the museum opened in 2005, featuring section on designers and authors working in the toy and comic book industry from the area, as well as on *Star Wars*, Batman, and G.I Joe action figures, among others. According to the museum's website, the Toy and Action Figure Museum has had more than 50,0000 visitors from every state in the USA and from 40 foreign countries since its opening. Time Magazine listed the museum as one of the Top 50 American Experiences in 2009, and the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department's Travel Promotion Division has a picture of a Superman action figure as their header for the page on Pauls Valley. See: "About Us," *ToyAndActionFigureMuseum.com* [blog], accessed November 21, 2018, https://www.toyandactionfiguremuseum.com/about-us; "Pauls Valley," *Travelok.com*, accessed November 22, 2018, https://www.travelok.com/Pauls_Valley.

The home plays a particularly important role in this geography. Fan-curated museums represent an opportunity for fans to encounter each other as well as the general public, who might visit the museum after reading or seeing news report on it. But in addition to this potential dialogue between fans and non-fans, these museums also represent an interface between the private and the public, since they are often housed in or are close to the domestic quarters of the fan curator. Stars of the Galaxy and Rancho Obi-Wan may now be based in a former swimming pool and chicken farm respectively, but other fan-curated museums like Brett's Toy Museum and The Star Toys Museum are located within the fan curators' houses. That said, the theme of the home is still present in museums that are located in stand-alone buildings: for example, Manglitz and Sansweet's anecdotes about how the lack of space in their private homes motivated them to open their museums are part of the discursive framing of these spaces.

In all cases—no matter where the museum is housed—the references to space—or lack thereof—shine light on the mobility of the collections and how and where they have been *moved*, and focus less on transactions between businesses and collectors or among collectors respectively. For example, the website of Brett's Toy Museum includes a detailed account of how his collection moved from his childhood bedroom to the attic and back to his basement, where it spilled over into other spaces, such as his neighbour's basement, before he moved into a new house in which he built his museum. Hence, the home in these instances is not only a place for media consumption, but becomes itself a subcultural space that enables fans to explore through virtual or actual travel another fan's organization of their collection and storage/presentation facilities.

In some instances, fan-curated museums offer meta-narratives about the mobility of collections and the restrictions of materiality that Woo describes. Consider The Toy and Action Figure Museum, which features the "Adult Collector's Bedroom Diorama." As the label explains:

> This diorama depicts an average adult collector's bedroom. We know it is an adult collector's bedroom because only a grown man living at home with his mother could afford this many toys and still pay for other things such as food and clothing. Within this display we see many clues as to the nature of the specimen that inhabits it. The rather large size Superman boxer shorts and the empty box of "Little Debbie" oatmeal cakes lead us to believe that the subject is of a rather large stature.

> Perhaps weighing as much as three hundred and seventy-five pounds. Also, the dirty socks on the floor indicate a rather slovenly appearance and a possible lack of most basic social skills. The moment that is depicted in this diorama scene is the moment after the toys have apparently come to life and taken over the bedroom. It is not quite clear what the toys have done to the occupant of the bedroom, but we are confident that whatever it was, it wasn't pretty.[497]

Parodying the style of labels accompanying natural history displays to describe the specimen of the adult collector, the diorama is an example of fans' interest in other fans' domestic spaces and everyday practices—even if this depiction adopts a rather playful, tongue-in-cheek tone by turning into a toys-come-to-life story at the end. Placed at the beginning of the museum, the diorama represents the story of the museum and local toy designer and collector Kevin Stark, who brought his collection from his private quarters into the public space when he opened the museum in Pauls Valley (USA).

The notion of home is also evident in fans' description of other places important to fandom other than fan museums. In their autobiographies or in interview projects like the aforementioned *My Star Wars Story*, fans remember where they encountered the films for the first time, where they encountered the merchandise for the first time, as well as where and when they bought and played with them, with whom they exchanged and traded figures, and where they rediscovered them after years of neglect.[498] In addition, fans visit their favourite comic book stores where they buy *Star Wars* figures, encouraging people from afar to visit these places. In the YouTube video *The Ultimate Star Wars Toy Store*, Josh Venable and the owner of his favourite location to buy anything *Star Wars* give a detailed description of the store's location in the city of McKinney in North Texas, and instructions on how to reach it by car.[499]

Another example is the series *Hunting for Star Wars*, which forms parts of the video channel of the transmedia fan-project *Star Wars Junk*. This project documents how and where the "*Star Wars* Junkman" is looking for toys. The result is a loose mapping of the everyday

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[497] "Have You Been to the Toy and Action Figure Museum?," *Little Family Adventure* [blog], June 26, 2015, https://littlefamilyadventure.com/be-a-kid-again-at-the-toy-and-action-figure-museum/.
[498] *My Star Wars Story* [blog], accessed August 29, 2018, http://mystarwarsstory.com/.
[499] Josh Venable, "The Ultimate *Star Wars* Toy Store", YouTube video, 9:57, June 13, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhcO0FsERNM.

environment in which *Star Wars* was consumed and experienced, showing the Junkman regularly driving to and reflecting on regional antique stores and flea markets he frequents on his search for *Star Wars* toys. Such projects document local toy stores and multiplexes, comic book stores, flea markets, and conventions where individual objects are acquired, or the sites and storage houses where the collections might be stored when domestic space is no longer sufficient. Likewise, they not only portray the spaces but also visualize the time and distance required to reach these sites of consumption. In sum, they present fandom as a spatial and geographical experience.

This interest in fan spaces has also been adopted by the mainstream media, which often reports on outstanding fan projects around the world and offers insights into different local initiatives. The article "The World's biggest '*Star Wars*' Fans: Meet 17 people who have devoted their lives to the series," published in *Business Insider,* presents a survey of *Star Wars* fans around the world and defines their fandom based on the local initiatives they started.[500] Besides examples of collectors and the mobility of their collection—for example, Omar Al-Bahiti from Dubai is presented as the owner of the world's largest *Star Wars* collection outside the USA and Europe, part of which is also stored in his parents' house in Turkey—the article shows how fans impact the cultural lives of their cities through fitness and charity initiatives, among other projects. The article introduces John-Michael "JM" Arias, who founded the Light Saber team in California to improve the social health of his members; it now has five chapters across the state. Flynn Michael created a similar project in New York, entitled New York Jedi. There, one can learn combat skills with weapons known from the franchise. But the article also contextualizes fandom through the introduction of non-*Star Wars* related hobbies, such as Bill McBride's volunteer work for German Shepherd breed rescues in Washington D.C., or Kurt Montgomery's work as an academic adviser at Carleton University in Ottawa.[501] Even though the descriptions are relatively short, they nevertheless connect fandom to various local specificities and subcultural networks—such as Melody Deel's *Star Wars*-related charity projects

[500] Kim Renfro, "The World's Biggest *Star Wars* Fans: Meet 17 People Who have devoted their Lives to the Series," *Business Insider*, December 9, 2015, http://www.businessinsider.com/biggest-star-wars-fans-2015-11.
[501] Also see: Thomson Reuters, "The Force has awakened in these dedicated *Star Wars* fans," *CBC*, December 15, 2015, http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/star-wars-force-awakens-fans-collectors-around-the-world-1.3366559.

in Denver—which, in turn, enables individual fans to identify with "global" *Star Wars* fan communities.

On a more abstract level, fans have engaged with questions of the geography of fandom through maps—either self-made or published by mainstream media. Maps on where to find *Star Wars* filming locations are common, and have been circulated by Lucasfilm, media outlets, and fans.[502] However, alternative representations of the geography of *Star Wars* fandom beyond filming locations also circulate online. Under the hashtag #runwars one can find images of *Star Wars* characters drawn through movement trackers, putting images of Darth Vader, Yoda, and Resistance fighters onto the city maps of places like New York or Bordeaux.[503] Although the recorded movements do not follow specific *Star Wars* or fan locations, these maps and data nevertheless mark the presence of fans in non-diegetic places or sites connected to the production. Similarly, the website *PlaneteWars* displays the locations of its nearly 25,000 members using the addresses indicated in their profiles. As a result, it shows the geographical concentration of members.[504] In terms of commercial media, the *Idaho State Journal* published a map of the USA showing which *Star Wars* films were searched online the most in each state.[505]

In turn, *The Washington Post* named Utah the "state where people are most nuts about *Star Wars*" based on the Google trends of one month and which states looked for particular characters or the force or dark side the most.[506] HowToWatch.com compiled a list of which *Star Wars* films were the most streamed films from the franchise around the world.[507] *Business*

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[502] Talia Avakian, "This Map Shows all of the '*Star Wars*' Filming Locations You Can Actually Visit," *Business Insider UK*, December 14, 2015, http://uk.businessinsider.com/map-of-star-wars-filming-locations-2015-12.
[503] "#runwars," Instagram hashtag, accessed October 25, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/runwars/.
[504] "Consultez la carte des fans," *PlaneteStarWars* [blog], accessed October 25, 2018, https://www.planete-starwars.com/services/fans/list.php.
[505] "Study reveals each state's favorite *Star Wars* movie," *Idaho State Journal*, May 3, 2017, https://idahostatejournal.com/news/local/study-reveals-each-state-s-favorite-star-wars-movie/article_d8bbe57d-7263-5194-94a2-6dedd04a669a.html.
[506] Christopher Ingraham, "This is the State where People are most Nuts about *Star Wars*," *The Washington Post*, December 17, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/12/17/this-is-the-state-where-people-are-most-nuts-about-star-wars/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.24996517fbe0.
[507] Courtenay Stevens, "2018's Most Beloved *Star Wars* Movies Worldwide We're one with the Fourth and the Fourth is with us," *How To Watch* [blog], May 22, 2018, https://www.howtowatch.com/trends/most-popular-star-wars-movies-worldwide.

Insider published a map based on a real estate blog that asked Facebook users whether they preferred *Star Wars* or Star Trek, showing the former to be the winner in each state. They also provided another map that ranked the states according to the highest and lowest proportions of *Star Wars* fans.[508] Finally, the Match determined the cities with the highest absolute numbers of *Star Wars* fans.[509] While the methodology of these maps and data is not always sufficiently outlined, the reports nevertheless indicate the desire to grasp fandom within a framework of the local or regional, even though these concepts themselves are rather vague and open to interpretation.

Together, these examples demonstrate that fans imagine themselves as a community through, among other things, geographic proximity, and the representation, and travel to, local fan institutions and practices. In addition to the simultaneous consumption of popular culture, the sharing of opinions and criticism, as well as the production of fan texts, fans therefore also develop their identity by situating themselves in local contexts and through the imaginary or actual travel to other significant spaces. Besides favourite stores or local conventions, fan-curated museums are sites that enable immersion not only in the history of one's object of fandom, but also in another subcultural network. Thus, fans prevail over geographical borders—either through media consumption or their physical mobility—and highlighting the spatial experiences and distance between fans' local areas strengthens this sense of community. Investigating how these "communities are imagined" may offer insight into the diverse locations of *Star Wars* fandom, but it will not necessarily result in the deconstruction of normative community structures. Indeed, while each local fan community might differ in terms of its locality, the diversity represented in these media often remains within rather normative boundaries. In other words, in the majority of cases, fans are white, middle class, and straight, while mentions or representations of visible or invisible minorities are the exception rather than the norm.

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[508] Kirsten Acuna, "These Maps Prove '*Star Wars*' Is More Popular Than 'Star Trek' In The U.S," *Business Insider*, September 12, 2014, http://www.businessinsider.com/star-wars-liked-more-than-star-trek-in-us-2014-9.

[509] Kate Bratskeir, "These Cities Have The Most Single '*Star Wars*' Super Fans Now You'll Know Where to Look for Love," *Huffington Post*, September 12, 2015, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/single-star-wars-fans-dating-cities_us_56684e9be4b0f290e5215554.

As is the case with fan criticism of potentially LGBTQ characters in the franchise, or revisionist approaches to history, non-fiction practices like curating, history-making, and geography are less likely to be engaged in debates around political issues. While fandom has been conceptualized as a "vehicle for marginalised subcultural groups […] to pry open space for their cultural concerns within dominant representations," the most visible products of *Star Wars* fans' history-making have so far shown little interest in exposing uneven power dynamics within their own communities. Only a few women appear as curators or historians, and fan historians tend not to discuss queer sexual orientations in their work, failing to connect the experiences of *Star Wars* fans with those in the Gay Liberation and Queer Movements. The queering of action figures, as discussed in chapter two in regard to action figure media, occurs rather in fan-fic than in historiographical works. Indeed, accounts of the past that break with normative frameworks primarily challenge notions of the middle-class identity. One example is *Confessions of a Star Wars Fan*, written in the style of an autobiography, in which the author narrates his *Star Wars* fandom from the perspective of a youth spent in a poor family, who witnesses his dad and stepmom's passion for swinger parties, and steals *Star Wars* action figures from friends and stores.[510] Thus, fans' history-making—at least in its mainstream iteration—differs from fan fiction in that the latter, through the "combination of reality and fiction […] makes unreal events and characters […] real; makes absent events and characters present; and brings past or dead events and characters into the now" so that the "archive of history now contains cultural forms that hybridize science fiction and global crises and interweave popular entertainment."[511] In this regard, *Star Wars* historians still have work to do in terms of mapping not only reception histories of the franchise, but also the diversity of the community itself.

4.5 Conclusion

As this chapter has argued, issues of fan labour are not only relevant to discussions of the media industries, but also have impact on other realms. In the case of fan-curated museums, fan labour contributes to the preservation and presentation of film and merchandise as heritage, but it also

[510]Kurt Vonn Gutzman *Collect Them All!: Confessions of a Recovering Action Figure Thief* (Unknown place of publication: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012).
[511] Abigail De Kosnik, "Memory, Archive, and History in Political Fan Fiction," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World (2nd edition*), ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 282.

contributes to the cultural and touristic life of the city of Mönchengladbach—a place without any direct connection to the franchise. As such, this expansion of the term fan labour also enables us to think about how fans contribute to the cultural life of cities through their own curatorial work beyond the *Star Wars* franchise. In addition, this chapter has demonstrated that many fans are motivated to visit such sites not only because of their interest in the franchise, but because they want to see and engage with other fans' productivity—be it the collections they have built, self-built dioramas and replicas (a persistent interest in craft), or the transformation of private and other spaces like a swimming-pool into a display space—as well as their own interpretations that range from accounts of merchandise history to issues of art and faith. Finally, fans are also motivated to visit these spaces because they wish to engage with the everyday life of other fans, as well as the spaces in which the latter practice their fandom. Thus, this chapter has shown that fan-curated museums are part of a larger trend of what I call "fan geography," the mapping and documentation of spaces of fandom beyond shooting locations, themed environments, and other non-fan-run, for-profit attractions. However, while this fan geography visualizes and documents the wide reach of the *Star Wars* franchise and builds a trans-local sense of community, it does not automatically lead to the tackling of diversity crises within fan communities.

Together, these issues and concepts—fan labour, fan-induced tourism, and fan geography—can be used to further investigate the many other examples of fan-curated museums, such as the Laurel and Hardy Museum in Ulverston (UK), the Tom Mix Museum in Dewey, OK (USA), the Mad Max Museum in Silverton (Australia), or the Batcat Museum and Toys in Bangkok (Thailand). It also contributes to further studies on fan activism in specific local and economic settings, as well as the study of educational initiatives such as Star Wars in the Classroom. The project is "a website for educators and fans alike that provides resources for transdisciplinary teaching and learning with the *Star Wars* saga."[512] In other words, fandom has penetrated contemporary life beyond the media industries and consumption, and its impact on other industries and activities calls for further examination into how such practices develop in various local contexts. Fan-induced tourism and fan geography as concepts enable further investigation into how such places and spaces not only encourage and enable fan mobility, but also develop alternative networks in which fans move. Currently under construction, the Lucas

[512] "About," *Star Wars in the Classroom* [blog], accessed October 25, 2018, http://www.starwarsintheclassroom.com/about.asp.

Museum of Narrative Art and *Star Wars*-themed attractions in Disney theme parks will provide new sites for fan pilgrimage, providing close encounters with the production of the *Star Wars* films as well as immersion into their storyworld. Even though these spaces will be frequented by fans, they cannot offer them what they seemingly also desire: the opportunity to visit and see the spaces in which other fans live and practice their fandom.

Conclusion: Researching Fandom and the Past in the Future

"Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History" analyses what I perceived to be a general lack in scholarship on fandom: critical studies of non-fiction fan practices, with a particular focus on history-making. Fan studies has a long tradition of discussing fandom as active, creative, and participatory.[513] Yet, scholars have primarily focused on fans' engagement with fiction texts, either in regard to how fans produce their own fiction texts or in regard to their criticism of fiction. Indeed, fan criticism has been by far the most discussed non-fiction fan practice to date. However, non-fiction practices in which fans engage with, and produce accounts of, the past have found considerably less attention. As this dissertation has shown, however, fans are active and creative participants in researching, preserving, restoring, and disseminating the histories of their objects of fandom. By analysing fans through the lens of what public historians call a "participatory historical culture," this dissertation has shown, using the example of the *Star Wars* franchise, that the production of historical texts has been crucial to the development of the space saga as a pop cultural phenomenon as well as its fan community.

In the last forty years, Lucasfilm has consistently produced histories on the *Star Wars* franchise across different media and institutions. Parallel to these industry releases, fans began to chronicle and study the past on their own terms, often addressing gaps left by Lucasfilm. For instance, while Lucasfilm histories have tended to focus on the films and pay little attention to the material culture of the franchise, fans have meticulously researched aspects of the production, distribution, and reception of action figures and other merchandising. Throughout the introduction and ensuing three chapters, this dissertation has foregrounded practices, objects, and networks that so far have found little attention in fan studies: the distinct forms of historical media fans produce; community structures and hierarchies with historians and history-making at their centre; fan historians' relationship to the media industries; fan responses to cultural heritage initiatives; the impact of fan labour in specific local contexts and beyond the media industries.

This argument began with my conceptualisation of the fan-as-historian. Positioning fans as active agents in "participatory historical culture," I argue, enables us to further expand areas of investigation associated with the three waves of fans studies and its focus on defiance, hierarchies, and dynamics that shape relations among individuals and communities. By writing

[513] For a recent example, see Nicolle Lamerichs, *Productive Fandom: Intermediality and Affective Reception in Fan Cultures* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

their own histories and forming their own heritage projects, fans contest the authority of established institutions and industries, which benefit sometimes from governmental support and almost always from greater financial freedom. Fans challenge such histories in terms of content, covering objects and narratives that are sidelined in "official histories." Fan historians document negative and critical receptions of new productions and industry decisions, embed their fandom within concrete local contexts, and make issues of preservation and restoration a communal rather than professional endeavour located in select archives. Yet, despite its participatory character, fans' history-making is also institutionalised and hierarchized. Fan historians with the greatest cultural, social, and economic capital are the most recognized members of their community. Moreover, at least in the case of the *Star Wars* franchise, the majority of historians are white, male, middle-class men. Female historians are barely visible, and rarely cross from what Henry Jenkins has called an "underground economy […] that draws much of its content from the commercial culture" into more formal cultural industries.[514] As was mentioned in the introduction, a project like documentary filmmaker Annalise Ophelian's forthcoming six part doc-series *Looking for Lea*—which looks at forty years of female *Star Wars* fandom—is still the exception rather than the norm in terms of widely publicised projects on *Star Wars* history that give voice to how women have practiced their fandom over the last forty years.

In order to understand fans as historians, it is necessary to redirect scholarly attention away from the question of *why* fans collect objects from the past to *what* they are doing with their collections, and why they are practicing history. In many regards, "Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History" continued from where Lincoln Geraghty ended his seminal study *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia, Fandom and Collecting Popular Culture* on fan collectors in 2014. Unlike fan collectors, who according to Geraghty "almost always [collect] in isolation" and whose impetus to collect is to "reconnect with their own past through the interaction with memories and nostalgia embodied in the very objects they collect," fan historians construct a more inclusive, communal and encompassing cultural memory of their fandom and community.[515] For the fan historian, personal memories are only one of many animating forces that connects individual and communal memories of the past, making the past available for (re-

[514] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 285.
[515] Lincoln Geraghty, *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia, Fandom and Collecting Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 180.

)interpretation by a new generation of fan historians in the future. By focusing on the questions of what fans are doing with a diverse range of objects and collections, and why they are doing it, this dissertation establishes an alternative perspective on how fans produce histories in relation to, but also beyond, their personal memories and nostalgia. It argues that they do so through their engagement with a variety of sources and evidence that create a distinct cultural and epistemological economy of fandom focusing on the past.

The second and third chapter address among other things, the cultural economy of fandom, analyzing examples of how fans cross from informal to formal economies. Chapter two charts the phenomenon of *action figure media*, showing that fans engage with toys because they are their primary objects of fandom, not because they enable them to give new meanings to popular media texts. The chapter challenges the idea that "mass media toys" merely make intangible storyworlds tangible, and puts forward the idea of action figures as "mass media toys." These tangible characters are in fact made intangible through fiction and non-fiction media representations across various genres and formats. Moreover, the chapter highlights some key developments in the formation of and media productions by the *Star Wars* action figure fan community. With shows like *The Toys That Made Us* (2017-present), as well as examples such as Hasbro's toys-come-to-life-as-toys commercials, *action figure media* have found their way into the mainstream. Chapter three further theorizes how the media industries employ *fanboy historians* for what I describe as a *transmedia historiography*: the writing of the cultural and production history of the *Star Wars* franchise across different media. Again, my analysis redirects attention from fiction to non-fiction texts and fan productivity, shining light on how Lucasfilm has commodified the past of the franchise *Star Wars* and used its products as a form of memory management. Within this *transmedia historiography*, *fanboy historians* function as mediators between the fan community and the industry. This chapter plainly documents and illustrates the value of history and its construction to powerful corporate entities like Lucasfilm: exercising control over such practices is part of a clear industrial strategy to ensure the value of their sprawling assets in the present and future. Finally, the fourth chapter outlines, using the example of fan-run and fan-curated museums, how the free labour of fans generates value outside of the media industries. The chapter develops the idea of *fan-induced tourism* and analyzes the phenomenon of fan-made tourist attractions. It demonstrates that fans flock to these spaces in order to experience other fans' textual productivity, in this instance, through practices

supporting a kind of fan heritage. Moreover, the chapter argues that this interest in fan-run museums is representative of the larger phenomenon of *fan geography*: fans' interest in local contexts where fandom is practiced, as well as the visualization and mediation of the spaces where fans operate as fans.

These inquiries point toward two larger phenomena within fan culture and communities that will require further investigation in the future. First, many fan communities are becoming increasingly trans-generational, both in terms of their age and what specific material incarnations draw their main interest. For instance, in the last four decades, the *Star Wars* franchise has been reprised in cinemas, and there are now three cinematic trilogies. While some fans enjoy all of the films—even if it is to differing degrees—some focus their attention on one trilogy or another specifically. When it comes to *The Phantom Menace* (1999) in particular, many practices are better defined as anti-fandom than fandom.[516] Similarly, fans of action figures specialize in collecting certain toy lines, such as the toys produced by Kenner, while they show no interest in recent Hasbro products. In addition, some fans invest much of their time into novels or comics or video games, while others have no interest in any of these. Thus, fan communities are not only divided by their interest in different versions of *Star Wars*, but also by the moment when they became fans, and what period of the *Star Wars* franchise they focus on. They are also occasionally plainly divided by which media formats—or which combination of media formats—they most actively embrace. In other words, the *Star Wars* fan community consists of different temporal factions and media clusters. Some primarily perform their fandom in relation to the past (e.g. conducting research on production and cultural history), while others are more grounded in the present and the future of the franchise (e.g. criticism of new releases and anticipating what happens next). Some focus on histories, and others on new fiction, and myriad combinations beyond in between.

With regards to temporality, this is not to say that those fans practicing history are not fans in the present tense. Indeed, for some fans, their fandom is still strong, but the *Star Wars* they love is ultimately a thing of the past. Still, for others, *Star Wars* remains something to be anticipated and looked forward to, especially if they are younger than the "original" fan cohort from the 1970s and 1980s. History represents both a means for fans to negotiate the different

[516] See Jonathan Gray, "New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans," International *Journal of Cultural Studies* 6, no.1 (2003): 64-81.

temporalities of their fandom, and a struggle between upholding a positive afterlife for the franchise and negotiating the negative aftermaths of films like *The Phantom Menace*, the rebranding of the Expanded Universe into Legends, the changes made to the special edition, or most recently, the story development and casting of *The Last Jedi*.[517] Moreover, for other fan historians, especially those researching material culture, the making of history represents a means to give merchandise and its fans a historicity that is not acknowledged in other historical outlets or by other fans. Thus, fans' history-making is trans-generational, as these histories document and preserve *what* version of *Star Wars* is experienced, *how* fans practice and practiced their fandom, and *when* they became fans. In turn, this builds a cultural memory of their communities. Fans' making of history bridges these different temporalities within the communities by documenting and researching past fan experiences. It enables dialogue among older generations of *Star Wars* fans and younger members of the community, and also enables younger historians to position themselves within a longer community history.

The fact that fans choose to create institutional frameworks like museums, or books that may enter libraries and archives, further demonstrates their intention to make their past a part of, and relevant for, the future. Through their work—in particular, their emphasis on rupture within the community—fan historians create continuity among different generational factions. Rather than synchronizing the development of their communities alongside the production history of the films, which would imply an ongoing continuation of fandom across time, fans create a cultural history of their fandom which is desynchronized. It acknowledges how new fans discovered, formed, and expanded their fandom, while the fandom of others changed, stagnated, or ultimately stopped. This allows individual fans to connect to different faction within the community, and enables them to preserve a complex collective self-image of *Star Wars* fandom and transfer it over time. From this point of view, the making of history therefore also presents an opportunity for future research into how fans are changing over time and age, and to evaluate how fans "assess the interactions between self-unfolding-across-time and fan-object-unfolding-

[517] Aleida Assmann uses the idea of "afterlife" and "aftermath" to describe changes in temporality in nation building. According to her, collective national memories have shifted from emphasis on heroic action and events to issues of trauma and negativity. See Aleida Assmann, "Theories of Cultural Memory and the Concept of 'Afterlife'," in *Afterlife of Events: Perspectives on Mnemohistory*, ed. Marek Tamm (New York: Palgrave, 2015), 79-94.

across-time" in their works.[518] According to C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby in their research on age and fandom, "fans' *existence* is gradually transformed into *texistence*—the self develops in ongoing dialogue with the media texts that help define and sustain it."[519] Fan histories are a textual result and documentation of this evolving and shifting dialogue.

The idea of fan age is linked to what Abigail de Kosnik has defined as "fan time," which is opposed to the idea of "media time." Media time refers to "the schedules mandated by the culture industries' production and sales cycles: the time of broadcasting in the network television industry, the time of 'drop dates' or release dates" in the media industries.[520] Fan time, in turn, refers to fans' "own schedules for making and sharing performances, that are not so tightly pinned to media time."[521] Fan archives of fan works play an import role in this process, as they allow fans to "assert and defend their ability to determine the temporality of their engagements with media texts."[522] Indeed, she argues that fan archives "in addition to preserving fan works themselves […] also preserve fan time itself, allowing fan time to be variant and undecided […] even as market forces work […] to bring fan time and media time into as close a bind as possible."[523] This conceptualization of fan time vs. media time is motivated by the temporal changes to fandom that emerged with the Internet. As Matt Hills argues, with the Internet, fan practices "have become increasingly enmeshed within the rhythms and temporalities of broadcasting, so that fans now go online to discuss new episodes immediately […] perhaps in order to demonstrate the 'timeliness' and responsiveness of their devotion."[524] Fan's making of history contributes to the creation and preservation of fan time on several levels. Not only does history-making as a fan practice deny synchronicity with media time, due to the long research process and the temporal distance implied by history as the study of the past and as an immediate reaction, but it allows past, present, and future fans to engage with different eras of fandom rather than just that of the present moment. If fan-run archives create and preserve fan time, fan

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[518] C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby, "Aging, Fans, and Fandom," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 411.
[519] Emphasis by Harrington and Bielby, ibid.
[520] Abigail De Kosnik, *Rogue Archives Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 157.
[521] Ibid.
[522] Ibid., 158.
[523] Ibid.
[524] Hills cited in ibid., 156.

histories are similarly a means to further document and make available form of fandom that are less beholden to the media industries' emphasis on current production and consumption of new texts.

Second, just like other fan practices, fans make history not only in dialogue with other fans, but also with the media industries and how they are making and selling the past. As this dissertation's focus on Lucasfilm has demonstrated, *Star Wars* is not only a transmedia saga narrated across different media, but also a *transmedia historiography* that tells the past of the franchise on television, the web, home video specials, print, exhibitions, and action figures. In many Lucasfilm-sanctioned histories, George Lucas and the films are at the centre, while the Expanded Universe, action figures, and critical and commercial failures are marginalized, if not completely ignored. Only in select Lucasfilm histories written by *fanboy historians* are these objects mentioned, albeit more in passing than in elaborate detail. Indeed, the vast industry around the production of history and its non-fiction materials requires further investigation. More specifically, research should focus on the networks and agents in content production that are part of this *transmedia historiography* across different industries and, like other modes of franchising, "create value across multiple businesses and across multiple territories over a long period of time."[525] In other words, further research on fan historians has to be in dialogue with research on the history of the media industries' production of non-fiction texts, such as documentaries, visual dictionaries, interview and making-of books, museum exhibitions, as well as the personnel behind them.

Derek Johnson's seminal research on media franchising comprehensibly analyzes how economic, labour, technological, and social shifts have led to the media industries' adaptation of franchising logics.[526] Although the production of the historical works discussed in this dissertation only play a minor role within the broad phenomena of media franchises, his work provides the theoretical and methodological framework for the foundations of examining the dynamics of history within franchises. Following his example, future research needs to consider questions of how different history-makers imagine, manage, and navigate Lucasfilm's requirements. For instance, such studies could explore how stakeholders like curators and

[525] Robert Iger cited in Derek Johnson*, Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 6.
[526] Ibid., 4-8.

educators negotiate the content and form of museum exhibitions on *Star Wars*. Contracts signed between Lucasfilm and the Smithsonian Institution for the exhibition The Magic of Myth, for example, demanded that displays should only be composed of "original creative elements […] which appear in and have been associated with the motion pictures."[527] Moreover, Lucasfilm insisted on the right to "review and comment upon the overall 'look' of the exhibit," therefore restraining curatorial independence even further.[528] Such agreements indicate Lucasfilm's influence and control over other historical works created by writers and filmmakers, who have to manage the company's expectations, and adhere to their own professional and industrial standards. In the case of the museum, curators have to negotiate the boundaries between entertainment and education. A better understanding of all stakeholders involved in the making of the past will thus help to illuminate more fully fans' roles as stakeholders in these processes.

Finally, I would like to point to a third issue this dissertation has raised in regard to the relationship among media, material culture, and the past. It is a topic that is of interest not only for scholarship on fandom but also for film and media scholars in general. In my analysis, I primarily focused on how fans write history about merchandising. However, the importance of material culture points to the fact that people often learn about film and media's past in everyday life in the form of everyday objects. Ellen Seiter reminds us that "Charlie Chaplin and Shirley Temple were popular in the twenties and thirties" and that their character toys "have had a healthy life on lunch boxes, clothing, school supplies, and home decorations."[529] Indeed, scholars have stressed that media-themed merchandise was a common practice "long before conglomeration and convergence became industry buzzwords."[530] However, while Chaplin merchandise in the past was bought and engaged with while the actor was seen and known onscreen as the Tramp, I would argue that nowadays the majority of people are familiar with Chaplin not because they have seen his films, but because of his ongoing presence on postcards, cups, t-shirts, and Halloween costumes. Marlene Dietrich represents another example: her

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[527] License Agreement, 1995, Star Wars: The Magic of Myth, Accession 11-072, Box 1, National Air and Space Museum, Exhibits Design Division, Exhibit Records, 1991-1999, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington D.C., 1.
[528] Ibid., 2.
[529] Ellen Seiter, *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995) 198.
[530] Avi Santo, *Selling the Silver Bullet: The Lone Ranger and Transmedia Brand Licensing* (Austin: Texas University Press, 2015), 6.

movies, if they are broadcasted in Germany, are shown on late-night programs, but she has had a considerable afterlife in object-based exhibitions (Deutsche Kinemtahek—Museum für Film und Fernsehen in Berlin), as the (posthumous) face for luxury pen producer Montblanc, as the name patron of the Marlene pants, as well as on postcards. I would like to recall Amelie Hastie's statement here that film history operates at an "intersection between visual and written texts, between ethereal and material objects."[531] However, in consideration of my argument on *action figure media*, I contend that merchandising and tie-ins, as well as everyday costuming and fashion, point to a film history without films, or one in which films themselves take a considerably smaller role. Future research on the circulation of knowledge about films and their past through objects could further investigate and establish that film history is also an intersection between visual and written texts about merchandising that depict objects related to cinema, which then ultimately create and disseminate knowledge about the past.

5.1. Ethnography and Fan-made Histories

One of the most important developments documented in "Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History" is the construction of a cultural memory by and for fans. The case studies discussed all indicate an increasing institutionalisation of history by fans, in which the past is exteriorized and objectified through fan-produced media and projects like museum exhibitions. Hence, this dissertation evidences how fan communities are not only sharing knowledge about the past through communicative memory—the sharing and conveying of the past within a social group through social interaction—but also through their construction of a cultural memory that is communicated through media rather than direct interaction at conventions, clubs, fora, or chatrooms. However, this dissertation has focused on the textual productivity of fans, and, in turn, performed a textual analysis of fan-made histories. My position as a scholar determined this course of action: I am not an aca-fan but instead have experience researching and working with the material culture of cinema. Thus, I would like to stress here that my focus on cultural memory should not be understood as an argument that communicative memory is irrelevant in forming fans' understanding and making of the past.

[531] Amelie Hastie, *Cupboards of Curiosity: Women, Recollection, and Film History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 9.

As a matter of fact, I hope that future research will use, test, expand, and challenge my ideas on *action figure media*, *transmedia historiography*, *fanboy historians*, *fan-induced tourism*, and *fan geography*. Indeed, this is not simply a question of analyzing fans' textual productivity, but also of understanding how fans discuss the past through social interaction, social media, or in online fora. In addition to the examination of fan communities beyond *Star Wars*, I consider ethnographic research through active participation to be one of the most important and needed expansions of my research. Ethnographic research would offer insight into the intersection of fandom and historiography both in terms of the production and reception of fan histories and industry histories, but also in regard to the reception of fan and industry histories among fans. Given that I am not a *Star Wars* fan, and have had no further contact with, or participated in, *Star Wars* fan communities, I was unable to enter fan spaces, engage in fan practices, or explore communities in the same way that an aca-fan might. For instance, ethnographic or auto-ethnographic research could draw from a scholar's active participation in the making of histories, e.g. through their volunteering in a fan-run museum, or their conducting of structured and semi structured interviews. Moreover, structured interviews with fan historians throughout their demanding and time-intensive labour could afford greater insight into the work processes and challenges fans face in designing, executing, and distributing a project.

Ethnographic research within the media industries would provide similar insight into how *Star Wars* history is written across different media, and how different agents negotiate their position as subjects with the structural demands of various industrial and creative contexts. In particular, a focus on the history of the Lucasfilm Archives and its franchising of the past might shine new light on how the media industries produce historical paratexts.

In terms of studying the reception of such histories, ethnographic research would also help to sharpen insight into how fans value and use, or disvalue and reject, works produced by a peer or by Lucasfilm that detail the history of their object of fandom. A more social interaction in fan fora or at fan conventions, as well as in interviews, then, would expand our understanding of how fans engage with this history of material culture. And in the case of projects that are available and consumed by people who do not identify as *Star Wars* fans and have limited or no knowledge or interaction with the franchise, interviews about the reception of exhibitions such as Stars of the Galaxy could provide a qualitative assessment of the reach and reception of fan

works. This could then be combined with a quantitative analysis of sales, clicks, or visitor numbers.

5.2. Fandom amidst the Struggles for Historicity

"Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History" has focused on those fan historians who produce histories on their object of fandom: the *Star Wars* franchise. But fans also use their object of fandom to engage with, and connect to, historical debates with contemporary political implications. Thus, while this dissertation has examined how fans produce history on popular culture, future research needs to further investigate fans' use of popular culture to (re)write history. In sum, future research needs to further explore fandom as a site of struggle over historicity: that is, the authenticity and accuracy of narratives of the past as they relate to major historical events, connections, and developments.

I would like to briefly sketch fans' participation in the struggle over historical authenticity with the example of the blog *Disney Star Wars is Dumb: Deconstructing the Deconstruction of the Star Wars Franchise*. An anonymous author runs the blog, who describes the aim of the project as follows:

> When Disney purchased the property from George Lucas, I was skeptical. But I saw the trailer for *Episode VII* and was cautiously optimistic. I went to see *The Force Awakens*. I walked in anticipating the next *Star Wars* film. I walked out not caring if I ever saw another. What's interesting to me now, however, is not the franchise itself, but all the drama that surrounds it. It's clear to thinking people that the Golden Goose that was the *Star Wars* franchise is now being cooked. I find the story of how the *Star Wars* franchise is in the process of imploding to be absolutely fascinating. I've attempted to express my opinions on blogs, discussion forums, and comments sections. However, because those venues are more often controlled by progressives, opinions contrary to their own are expectedly deleted and/or marked for spam. So I've opened this little blog as a way to publish contrary and perhaps unpopular opinions that are not

> allowed to be expressed in various online safe spaces. […] Progressives are welcome to send their hysterical and uneducated hatemail to me […].[532]

A considerable amount of the entries on the blog concern the latest *Star Wars* films produced by Disney, and follow the same pattern of many other blogs, vlogs, and social media commentaries. Namely, they complain that Social Justice Warriors (SJW) have taken over and ruined the franchise. The term SJW refers both to producers (especially Kathleen Kennedy, current president of Lucasfilm, who dared to claim that she does not owe anything to male fans) but also to progressive fans themselves, who allegedly reject every form of criticism aimed at the recent iterations of the franchise, notably those that attack the rise of female and visible minorities, as racist, sexist and homophobic. As such, the blog falls into the realm of textual criticism, even if it is an example of a complex and conflictual fan/producer relationship. Of course, such blogs also remind us that disagreement amongst fans can also be plainly understood through the broader debates in American culture about identity and politics which operate from the left to the right of the political spectrum.[533] Fans are not simply political progressive and they don't always vote for Democrats. Notably, this particular blog also contains several articles that exceed textual criticism and claim to offer the reader a history lesson. These "lessons" explain how the SJW took hold of *Star Wars* and refer to Nazism, socialism, communism, critical theory, and the Ku Klux Klan.

Consider a three-part article series on the blog, in which the author intends to educate the reader on how "Cultural Marxism" has slowly infiltrated cultural institutions, among them Lucasfilm.[534] The first article, "Understanding The Historical And Foundational Basis Of Geeker

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[532] Ibid.

[533] Suzanne Scott, "Towards a Theory of Producer/Fan Trolling," *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 15, no. 1 (2018):143-159

[534] The urban dictionary defines cultural Marxism as follows: "A social and political movement that promotes unreason and irrationality through the guise of various 'causes', often promoted by so-called 'social justice warriors'. These causes and their proponents are often contradictory and are almost never rooted in fact. Indeed, true argument or discussion with proponents of these causes is almost impossible, as most attempts at discourse descend quickly into shouting, name-calling and chanting of slogans. Otherwise known as the 'regressive Left' - a play on their contradictory nature, specifically on how SJWs describe themselves as 'progressive' yet display strong authoritarian, 'regressive' tendencies. This term is even often used by members of the true Left who take reasonable stances based on logic and evidence, and are eager to distance themselves from the fanatics who have effectively hijacked their side of the political spectrum.

Gates", ponders how the theories of Antonio Gramsci, who the author describes as "a radical socialist turned communist," laid the foundation for recent geeker gates: the public clash between SJW and fans over an IP, which "[serve] as a microcosm of what is happening in the much larger scale cultural civil war."[535] As the author explains, Gramsci propagated in his writings

> 'the long march through the culture,' whereby Marxists would gradually and incrementally infiltrate the institutions of society's 'superstructure' such as entertainment industries, media, schools, universities, literature, civic organizations, churches, science, judicial systems, labor unions, pop culture, and at least one major political party with the purpose of creating ideological hegemony.[536]

At the end of this argument, the author concludes that "*Star Wars* is but one such cultural institution," and that this is the reason why the audience "is now treated to on-the-nose social justice lectures about evil rich people engaging in slave labor, illicit arms deals, and animal abuse, and a variety of other things."[537] This argument is expanded in the second article, "Culture War History Lesson 2," which follows a similar narrative but this time focuses on György Lukács and the Frankfurt School. According to the article, critical theorists infiltrated the US-American education system after they fled the persecution of the Third Reich. Once in the USA, they "experimented" on American children, which resulted in the "emergence of the hippie in the 1960s, and the beatnik[s]" who, "fueled with LSD and other mind altering substances, […]

NOTE: Naturally, Cultural Marxism itself is described by SJWs as a 'conspiracy theory', in an attempt to delegitimise their critics."
On blogs and websites associated with the contemporary right, the following definition circulates: "The gradual process of destroying all traditions, languages, religions, individuality, government, family, law and order in order to re-assemble society in the future as a communist utopia. This utopia will have no notion of gender, traditions, morality, god or even family or the state." Johann von Richter, "What is Cultural Marxism?," *Return of Kings* [blog], February 11, 2017, http://www.returnofkings.com/114104/what-is-cultural-marxism.

[535] "The Phases Of A Geeker Gate Updated–Plus Countermeasures," *Disney Star Wars is Dumb: Deconstructing the Deconstruction of the Star Wars Franchise* [blog], July 21, 2018, https://disneystarwarsisdumb.wordpress.com/2018/07/21/the-phases-of-a-geeker-gate-updated-plus-countermeasures/.

[536] "Understanding The Historical And Foundational Basis Of Geeker Gates," *Disney Star Wars is Dumb: Deconstructing the Deconstruction of the Star Wars Franchise* [blog], July 1, 2018,https://disneystarwarsisdumb.wordpress.com/2018/07/01/understanding-the-historical-and-foundational-basis-of-geeker-gates/.

[537] Ibid.

would then later go on to become teachers and professors themselves, and perpetuate the process leading to the SJWs that we know today."[538] The third article, "Culture War History Lesson 3: Cultural Subversion," considers StarWars.com author Bryan Young's "ignorant love of communism" as "a wonderful opportunity to discuss Yuri Bezmenov and Cultural Subversion," comparing SJWs' behaviour to the ideological and cultural subversion tactics of the KGB.[539] Although not presented as part of this series of articles, two articles on the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis are relevant to this discussion. The article "Pablo Hidalgo Tries To Connect #ComicsGate With The KKK" professes to connect the Democratic Party to the history of the Ku Klux Klan. It argues that the party went from preaching white supremacy to preaching white privilege, using the same strategies in the defamation of people who think differently since the 19th century. The article "SJWs Looking To Punch Nazis Should Be Punching Themselves" argues that contemporary SJWs and their leftist ideologies are closer to Nazi ideology than the political thought of the right.

In all instances, these arguments are brought forward with references to conservative and right wing media outlets and sources, ranging from publications by Concerned Women for America, the Christian non-profit American Vision, or the Tea-Party leaning PJTV, as well as the Modern History Project. What these outlets share is a series of distorted and partisan ideas about historical events and personalities. *Disney Star Wars is Dumb* follows the leads of its sources, presenting heavily politically-biased and misleading information on the past, decontextualized quotes and simplified and at times incorrect evidence and observations. For instance, in his attempt to connect the Nazis to SJWs, the author denies the Nazis' role in organizing and orchestrating book burnings by claiming that student activists were behind the event. Even though it is true that the National Socialist German Students' League initiated the burnings, the author fails to mention that the organisation was a division of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party).

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[538]"Culture War History Lesson 2," *Disney Star Wars is Dumb: Deconstructing the Deconstruction of the Star Wars Franchise*[blog], October 20, 2018, https://disneystarwarsisdumb.wordpress.com/2018/10/20/culture-war-history-lesson-2/.
[539] "Culture War History Lesson 3: Cultural Subversion," *Disney Star Wars is Dumb: Deconstructing the Deconstruction of the Star Wars Franchise* [blog], October 30, 2018, https://disneystarwarsisdumb.wordpress.com/2018/10/30/culture-war-history-lesson-3-cultural-subversion/.

While there are many other examples of such incorrect presentation of established historical facts, such an endeavour would exceed the length of this conclusion.

Still, I would like to direct the reader's attention to the author's selective choice and reading of sources as it illuminates how fandom and popular culture represent sites of struggle over historicity. This becomes evident in the blog author's claim that SJWs consciously, as well as due to their lack of rigour, turn to biased and simplified sources. Indeed, he implies that SJWs turn to popular culture before anything else, and uses Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones: The Last Crusade* (1989) and the aforementioned book burning to misleadingly demonstrate SJW's lack of historical understanding:

> But we have to understand that comic books and movies depict caricatures of much more complex scenarios. For instance, *The Last Crusade* depicted the Nazis as book burners, when in fact it was German student activists who actually did the book burning. Movies and comic books are fun, and I enjoy them too, but they're poor substitutes for learning history the old fashioned way: by reading lots and lots of dusty old history books and long form articles. Movies and comic books just don't cut it.[540]

I do not mean to suggest that fans' engagement with the past is generally "toxic," nor do I wish to revivify old stereotypes of fans as fanatic individuals.[541] Still, just like any other fan practice, fans' making of history is not inherently positive, innocent, accurate or inaccurate in its presentation, argumentation, and organisation. The dialectic of the past and present is rehearsed in multiple contexts and by multiple agents, and therefore forbids the construction of simplified binaries. Thus, fan scholars need to be attentive to fans' constructive and deconstructive contributions to the writing of the past, and also to the making of history beyond fan/producer relationships. As this last example indicates, fan activists integrate debates over the authenticity, canon, and history of popular franchises like *Star Wars* into a wider discourse about the authenticity of history and some of its most consequential conflicts. By giving more attention to

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[540] "SJWs Looking To Punch Nazis Should Be Punching Themselves," *Disney Star Wars is Dumb: Deconstructing the Deconstruction of the Star Wars Franchise* [blog], August 10, 2018, https://disneystarwarsisdumb.wordpress.com/2018/08/10/sjws-looking-to-punch-nazis-should-be-punching-themselves/.

[541] See Joli Jensen, "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 9-29.

how fans position themselves and their views on the past ideologically and politically, we will be able to further our understanding of history as integral to fandom, and in doing so, we will expand the critical framework for studying "historical participatory culture" in relation to media convergence.

Even though this dissertation has not exhausted all the complexity and range of historiographical practices that fans conduct, "Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History" provides some theoretical frameworks and direction for further study. It has shown that history, as a "social form of knowledge and "the ensemble of activities and practices in which ideas of history are embedded, or a dialectic of past–present relations rehearsed" is part of fandom.[542] My discussion of a "participatory historical culture" in relation to *action figure media*, *transmedia historiography*, *fanboy historians*, *fan-induced tourism*, and *fan geography* has demonstrated the important role of the past and history in conceptions of fan identities and communities. Especially in the case of long-running franchises like *Star Wars* and its diversity of texts, objects and sub-fan communities, the idea of what it means to be a fan is negotiated with the awareness of how one's object of fandom changes, but also how fans in the past practiced, experienced, and, in some cases, lost and eventually rediscovered their fandom. In other words, "Plastic Heritage: Fans and the Making of History" has begun to reveal how fans are making history and history is contributing to shaping fandom.

[542] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London and New York: Verso 1994), 8.

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