

# Fan-Fiction

*Fan fiction* is defined by Lidia Gąsowska, the author of a book on the subject in Polish (and of many other related works), as a “form of pop culture disseminated via the mass media, consisting primarily of written works based on popular books, films, TV shows, comic books, and cartoons; they are created by fans of these works.”<sup>1</sup>

This definition contains three basic elements that tend to appear in other descriptions of the phenomenon. It designates the place of this creative practice in culture (its connection with mass or pop culture), indicates its dependence on previous, popular works in a culture, and identifies the creators as fans of such popular works.

Broadly speaking, the topic of fandom is the subject of a branch of scholarship called *fan studies*,<sup>2</sup> encompassing issues from the areas of cultural studies, sociology, and psychology.<sup>3</sup>

**Origins of the Phenomenon** | The origins of the phenomenon of literary works written by fans remain unclear – various accounts of this artistic perspective present different perspectives. Abigail Derecho notes two hypotheses that are frequently put forward in the literature on the subject: “1) fan fiction originated several millennia ago, with myth stories, and continues today, encompassing works both by authors who identify themselves as fans and those who do not write from within fandoms [...] 2) fan fiction should be understood as a product of fan cultures, which began in either the late 1960s, with *Star Trek* fanzines, or at the earliest, in the 1920s, with Austen and Holmes societies [...]”<sup>4</sup> We should also add that besides myth stories, apocrypha or the pre-Romantic culture of literary imitation (as opposed to the Romantic cult of originality) have also been recognized as having much in common with fan fiction,<sup>5</sup> while in terms of associations with phenomena of the more recent past, scholars have pointed to connections with intertextuality<sup>6</sup> or the poetics of postmodernism.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> L. Gąsowska, *Fan fiction. Nowe formy opowieści* (Fan Fiction. New Forms of the Story), Kraków: ha!art, 2015, 298.

<sup>2</sup> See A. Kobus, “Fanfiction a funkcjonowanie literatury popularnej. Zarys perspektywy historycznej” (Fan Fiction and the Functioning of Popular Literature. An Outline of the Historical Perspective), *Kultura Popularna* (Popular Culture) 2013, 3, 147-148.

<sup>3</sup> On the academic history of defining the phenomenon of fandom, see M. Hills, *Fan Cultures*, London: Routledge, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> A. Derecho, “Archontic Literature. A Definition, a History and Several Theories of Fan Fiction,” in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of Internet. New Essays*, ed. K. Hellekson and K. Busse, Jefferson: McFarland, 2006, 62.

<sup>5</sup> See A. Włodarczyk, M. Tymińska, “*Fan fiction* a literacka rewolucja fanowska. Próba charakterystyki zjawiska” (Fan Fiction and the Fans’ Literary Revolution. An Attempt at Description of the Phenomenon), *Panoptikum* 2012, 11, 92-93.

<sup>6</sup> See Włodarczyk and Tymińska, “*Fan fiction* a literacka rewolucja fanowska,” 96-100.

<sup>7</sup> See L. Gąsowska, “Od Borgesa do Manovicha. O kilku znanych metaforach” (From Borges to Manovich. On a Few Well-known Metaphors), *Panoptikum* 2012, 11, 22-34.

In the case of the second hypothesis mentioned by Derecho, linking fan fiction specifically to the development of fan cultures, the culture of cyberspace has played a particular role in that regard. Kulesza-Gulczyńska writes about four main aspects of the changes connected with the development of the internet that have influenced the form of fan-created works: “the way of publishing the text,” “the status of the text,” “the status of the author or the problem of authorship,” and “the functioning of the creators’ communities (and the appearance within them of new literary and paraliterary forms).”<sup>8</sup> Literary fan fiction, seen from the perspective of literary cyber-culture (the “litenet,” to use an attractive but rarely used term from an earlier phase in the scholarly study of the phenomenon<sup>9</sup>) leads us to renew our inquiry into the role of the medium in literary communication and ask questions analogous to those pondered by students of e-literature: do internet forms of literary creation constitute a truly new phenomenon, or a continuation of older situations, already present in culture before and now revealed to have “long shelf lives”?

In dealing with the close connection between literary fan fiction and fan communities, as well as sociological approaches to this issue, cultural studies and media studies can provide particularly helpful insights.<sup>10</sup> Fan culture is connected with popular and mass culture (leaving aside for a moment the terminological problems relating to these terms – we will give them some further consideration later on), with the shrinking space of culture.<sup>11</sup> The literary fan fiction that we know today is made possible by an acceleration in communication among people, first (in the 19th century) enabling texts to reach their audiences with unprecedented speed, and next their free exchange (the democratization of writing, the wide dissemination of “cheap texts”<sup>12</sup>). Finally, this communicative freedom is leading nowadays, according to many people, to a transition from the era of the “ubiquity” of communication (typical for mass culture) to an era dominated by the ephemeral nature of communication, symbolized by, among other things, live broadcasts.<sup>13</sup>

**Fan Fiction and Literary Studies** | In studies of literary fan fiction, academic literary scholarship has particularly been used in textual analyses of these works with a view to determining their typological status. Such an approach represents, up to the present time, the scholarly *topos* of inquiries into fan literature. One of the most well-known was proposed by Henry Jenkins. According to Jenkins, authors of fan fiction use the following types of approach (not mutually exclusive) to the original works: recontextualization (minor additions, clarification of plot threads); expansion of the time frame of a narrative series, “refocalizations” (focusing on characters who were attributed less importance in the originals); moral re-

<sup>8</sup> B. Kulesza-Gulczyńska, *Znaczenie internetu w rozwoju fan fiction, czyli twórczość fanowska i nowe media* (The Meaning of the Internet for the Development of Fan Fiction, or Fan Works and New Media), ed. K. Pokorna-Ignatowicz, J. Bierówka, Kraków 2014.

<sup>9</sup> *Litenet. Literatura i internet* (Litenet. Literature and the Internet), ed. P. Marecki, Kraków 2002.

<sup>10</sup> On “literature-centered” and “culture-centered” approaches to this topic, see for example: Adam Mazurkiewicz, “Nowe formy quasi-literackie w kulturze popularnej. Rekonesans” (New Quasi-Literary Forms in Popular Culture: A Reconnaissance), *Literatura i Kultura Popularna*, vol. XV, 43.

<sup>11</sup> See P. Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital: Towards a Philosophical Theory of Globalization*, trans. W. Hoban, John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> V. Flusser, *Toward a Philosophy of Photography*, Göttingen: European Photography, 1984, 13-14.

<sup>13</sup> R. Debray, *Introduction à la médiologie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000, 200.

alignments (radical refocalization transforming “bad characters” into positive heroes); changes of genre; cross-over (configuring elements from various texts); transference of characters (for example, assigning characters new identities); personalization (for example, making the details of the original resemble the authors’ own experiences); emotional intensification (for example, concentration on crucial, emotionally loaded elements of the plot); and eroticization.<sup>14</sup>

Among more recent conceptions, we should consider one proposed by Anna Perzyńska, who also begins by defining fan fiction as “literature of the second degree” and considers the relationship to the canonical work to be the decisive typological criterion. She places particular stress, however, on the idea that particular, distinct categories should not “overlap”: “I propose to divide fan fiction into **canonical** stories (which do not change the source works) and **alternative** ones (that permit themselves to make greater or lesser changes). Further, in terms of temporal perspective, we should distinguish among: **prequels** (presenting the earlier fates of characters), **sequels** (presenting the later fates of characters) and **parallel stories** (presenting events taking place parallel in time to the action of the source text). In terms of plot content, however, we should also refer to: **additions** (connected with the main plot – filling in gaps in the narrative of the main story and presenting the fates of the main characters), spin-offs (not connected with the main plot – filling in gaps in the narratives of subplots, presenting the fates of secondary or episodic characters), **changes of perspective** (presenting the main story from a different narrative perspective) and **alternate time lines** (proposing alternate versions of the main events of the plot, respecting the canon only up to a certain point).<sup>15</sup>

We can also speak of forms of fan fiction linked not so much by the form of their relationship to the original (though that aspect is in some measure related), but by their shared subject matter,<sup>16</sup> as in the case of, for example, fan fiction belonging to the subcategories of slash, mpreg, fluff, mary sue, and R/T (*Rape/Torture*).<sup>17</sup>

Sheenaugh Pugh offers some interesting reflections regarding distinctions made within the poetics of fan fiction in her book *The Democratic Genre. Fan Fiction in a Literary Context*. Pugh considers, among other things, how the length of works of fan fiction affects the introduction of original (non-canonical) characters into such works – works in series form are more likely to allow this, she finds, than shorter forms.<sup>18</sup> Short forms in fan fiction, on the other hand, may not be marked by any indefinite elements – they may even contain complex plot interventions or interpretations – since familiarity with the canon relieves the authors of any obligation to acquaint the reader with the basic background of the story being told.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup>H. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers. Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, New York: Routledge, 2005, 165-182.

<sup>15</sup>A. Perzyńska, “Literackie zabawy w środowiskach fanowskich. Studium przypadku” (Literary Games in Fan Circles. A Case Study), *Teksty Drugie* 2015, 3, 149.

<sup>16</sup>See D. Jankowiak, “Fanfikcja jako przykład instrumentalizacji literatury” (Fan Fiction as an Example of the Instrumentalization of Literature), *Litteraria Copernicana* 2013, 2, 108.

<sup>17</sup>Many other concepts and categories are important in the study of literary fan fiction. Interested readers should consult *Słownik fanowskich pojęć* (A Dictionary of Fan Concepts) and “Najczęstsze oznaczenia faników pojawiające się na stronach z fikcją fanowską” (The Most Frequent Designations of Fan Fiction on Fan Fiction Sites), part of Lidia Gąsowska’s text mentioned above (“Od Borgesa do Manovicha,” 298-300).

<sup>18</sup>S. Pugh, *The Democratic Genre. Fan fiction in a Literary Context*, Bridgend: Seren, 2005, 182.

<sup>19</sup>Pugh, *The Democratic Genre*, 172-173.

## Fan Fiction, Literariness, and the Literary Approach to Social Organization

Both fandom itself and scholars who study it (sometimes themselves having emerged from fan culture) use concepts typical for literary studies, particularly the definitions, proper to poetics, of genres, subgenres, and textual mechanisms. Less attention is given, however, to interpretative practices.<sup>20</sup>

The frequent use of terminology taken from poetics is a consequence of the nature of fan fiction works – primarily of their dependence on source works and the authorial rules that comprise the fanon (a set of accepted authorial behaviours developed over considerable time by the fan community). Fans' literary production exploits the plot, narrative, and thematic potential of texts from popular culture, in the process becoming an attractive object of study for poetics.

It is important to stress that this dependence on texts from popular culture brings with it limitations imposed and agreed upon by the fan milieu. As Stein and Busse state, fan fiction is “limit play”: it involves playing with those limitations.<sup>21</sup> In different fan cultures, different forms of creative control and critical reflection operate<sup>22</sup> – from commentators and fan-created beta-reader institutions to specialized analyses and meta-fan works. Certain scholars consider this to be a trait that links fandom with literary life: “We might say that works are created [in fan cultures with mechanisms for quality control in the materials they publish<sup>23</sup>] in a spontaneous way, without specialized institutions or formal dependence, a literary scene representing to a considerable extent an imitation of the one we know outside the web.”<sup>24</sup>

Literary fan fiction is by nature a social, community-oriented activity – now concentrated around the internet, which makes possible instant communication with readers and authors who share one's relationship to the canon and share one's addiction to the fanon. This, then, is “litenet” *par excellence*, based on relationships that differ significantly from the literary model developed in print or book culture. Its context is a specific version of literary life – less institutionalized, more privatized. In the literary scholarly tradition, we learn about such literary activity most frequently from biographical works, reminiscences, letters or literary sketches, rather than interpretative texts... The degree to which artistic (literary) facts are connected with social relations or everyday cultural life in the world of fan fiction is comparable to the way literature is perceived through precisely such texts.

<sup>20</sup>See D. Kaplan, “Construction of Fan Fiction Character Through Narrative,” in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities*, 134-152.

<sup>21</sup>See K. Busse, L. Stein, “Limit Play, Fan Authorship between Source Text, Intertext, and Context,” *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 2009, 4; See also P. D. Jankowiak, S. Krawczyk, “Granice kreatywności. Dyskurs dotyczący postaci typu „mary sue” w amatorskiej twórczości liteackiej a reguły funkcjonowania społeczności fanowskich” (The Boundaries of Creativity. Discourse on *mary sue* Characters in Amateur Literary Works and the Rules for the Functioning of Fan Communities), *Kultura i Edukacja* (Culture and Education) 2003, 2; L. Gąsowska, “Praktyka pisania fan fiction. Tutorial fanfikowca” (The Practice of Writing Fan Fiction. A Fanfic Tutorial), *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich* (The Problem of Types of Literature), 2013, 2.

<sup>22</sup>See O. Dawidowicz-Chymkowska, “Fan fiction. O życiu literackim w internecie” (Fan Fiction. On Literary Life in the Internet), in *Tekst (w) sieci 2. Literatura. Społeczeństwo. Komunikacja* (Text [in the] Net 2. Literature, Society, Communication), ed. A. Gumkowska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2009, 64-68.

<sup>23</sup>All remarks, addenda, and emphases in brackets belong to the quoted author unless otherwise attributed.

<sup>24</sup>O. Dawidowicz-Chymkowska, “Fan fiction,” 68.

In this sense, literary fan fiction can be counted among literary practices of everyday life (in the meaning attributed to everyday life, speaking very generally, by such scholars as, for instance, Michel de Certeau), and thus artistic practices that must be described both as a form of participation in the social field and in the field of art.

We should also add that although the study of fans' literary works requires study of artistic practices, fandom consists to a notable extent of audience members, readers, consumers,...<sup>25</sup> and co-creators constitute a milieu often not vocally represented (a fact confirmed by the sizable numerical preponderance of readers of internet content over its creators). Furthermore, I am here passing over a phenomenon akin to fan fiction – fans' literary criticism, whose position in relation to the field of knowledge (the discipline of literary scholarship) is arguably analogous to that of the fan fiction literary community.<sup>26</sup>

## Fan Fiction as an Inspiration for the Theory of Amateur Literary Creation

Fans' literary work is, to an enormous extent, amateur work (though there have been cases of professional writers undertaking to write such works<sup>27</sup>). The contemporary status of an "amateur" is, of course, problematic. Leaving aside the material factors conditioning writerly "professionalism,"<sup>28</sup> I would like to give some consideration to the aesthetic aspects of the problem.

Jacques Rancière, writing in the context of cinema, used the phrase *la politique de l'amateur*.<sup>29</sup> He used the category of the amateur to signify identifying with the figure of the enthusiast, the admirer, the cinephile – and his political position emerges from the democratic potential of "watching": the amateur is "a traveler, a mental cartographer whose imagination and memory draw psycho-geographical maps that coordinate knowledge and the forces of attraction that shape events comprising **intimate** and **common** experiences."<sup>30</sup> Rancière identifies the moment in the history of art when amateurs were able to "raise" their own emotions and beliefs against the forces of discourses of knowledge, since those were not yet established (to address new forms of art): "Cinephilia linked the cult of art to the democracy of entertain-

<sup>25</sup>See. D. Jankowska, "Pogoń za opowieścią – analiza motywacji czytelnictwa amatorskiej twórczości fanfikcyjnej" (The Pursuit of Story—An Analysis of What Motivates the Readership of Amateur Fan Fiction), *Studia Medioznawcze* (Mediological Studies) 2013, 1; S. Krawczyk, "Prosumpcja polskich miłośników literatury fantastycznej" (The Prosumption of Polish Fantasy Literature Fans), *WN Katedra* 2014, 175-210.

<sup>26</sup>The internet, Olga Dawidowicz-Chymkowska claims (in her article "Wynaturzone' Forum Fanów Małgorzaty Musierowicz jako interakcyjna maszyna interpretacyjna: studium przypadku" (The "Degenerate" Forum of Małgorzata Musierowicz Fans as an Interactive Interpretative Machine: A Case Study), *Teksty Drugie* 2012, 6, 297), has brought about the obsolescence of the distinction proposed over two decades ago by Erazm Kuźma between interpreter-members of the literary scholarly community and readers, differentiated by the scope of expression given to their opinions (critics expressing theirs publicly and readers privately).

<sup>27</sup>S. Pugh, "Across the Borderline. Fanfic and Profic," in Pugh, *The Democratic Genre*, 143-168.

<sup>28</sup>See, for example, L. Stetkiewicz, "Dla niektórych literata jest taka zapłata..., czyli dochody z literatury; Styl życia z konieczności i z wyboru" (Some Literati Don't Work Gratis, or Making Money from Literature; Lifestyle By Necessity or By Choice) in Stetkiewicz, *Szkice z „ziemi niczyjej” czyli z socjologii literatury* (Sketches from "No Man's Land," or Studies in the Sociology of Literature), Toruń 2009, 121-189; J. Sowa, "Habitus pisarzy i pisarek" (The Habitus of Writers), in: *Literatura polska po 1989 roku w świetle teorii Pierre'a Bourdieua. Raport z badań* (Polish Literature After 1989 in the Light of the Theory of Pierre Bourdieu. Research Report), Kraków 2014, 163-235.

<sup>29</sup>See Rancière *Now. Current Perspectives on Jacques Rancière*, ed. O. Davis, Cambridge 2013, 137 and passim.

<sup>30</sup>See Rancière *Now*, 149. Emphasis added.

ment and emotions by challenging the criteria for the induction of cinema into high culture. It asserted that cinema's greatness did not lie in the metaphysical loftiness of its subject matter nor in the visibility of its plastic effects, but in the imperceptible difference in the way it puts traditional stories and emotions into images. Cinephiles named this difference *mise-en-scène* without really knowing what it meant. Not knowing what you love and why you love it is, so they say, the distinctive feature of passion."<sup>31</sup>

That is one side of the story of amateurs – written from the perspective of an amateur-admirer who becomes an innovator, not necessarily consciously. There is also a different version of the amateur story. Many contemporary aesthetic practices and theories strive to question the domination of “discourses of knowledge” by “viewer emancipation.” At the horizon of this aesthetic path is located art that aims at breaking established aesthetic “divisions” and roles by ascribing viewers and readers the role of creators: “Twentieth-century art is often described in terms of the modernist paradigm that identifies the modern artistic revolution with the concentration of each art form on its own medium and opposes this concentration to the forms of market aestheticisation of life. We then witness the collapse in the 1960s of this modernity under the combined blows of political doubts about artistic autonomy and the invasion of market and advertisement forms.”

The French thinker underscores: “The story of the defeat of modernist purity by the postmodernist attitude of ‘anything goes’ passes over the fact that in other places, like the cinema, this blurring of [art’s] borders occurred in a more complex manner. Cinephilia has called into question the categories of artistic modernity, not by deriding high art, but by returning to a more intimate, more obscure interconnection between the marks of art, the emotions of the story and the discovery of the splendor that even the most ordinary spectacle could display on the bright screen in a dark cinema [...]. Thus it initiated a positive understanding, neither ironic nor disenchanting, of the impurity of art.”<sup>32</sup>

The French scholar thus puts forward two theories of the contemporary “impurity of art” that posit the use of amateur work – its neo-avant-garde emancipation (transmission by current artists of their voice as well as their artistic practices to amateurs, negation of aesthetic hierarchies) and the practices of fans who combine what is common and what is intimate (also, we should add, what is traditional and what is innovative), inhabiting the border between art and everyday life.

**Fan Fiction and the Culture of Everyday Life** | This second way of understanding “amateur-ness” tends to perceive fan fiction as a literary practice belonging to the culture of everyday life. The complex interdependence of the intimate and the common, the aesthetic and the social in practices engaged in by creators of literary fan fiction demonstrate that view.

<sup>31</sup>J. Rancière, “The Gaps of Cinema,” trans. Walter van der Star, *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies*, 2012, 1. Available online: <http://www.necsus-ejms.org/the-gaps-of-cinema-by-jacques-Rancière>. The original French essay was the introduction to Rancière’s book *Les Écarts du cinéma*.

<sup>32</sup>J. Rancière, “The Gaps of Cinema.”

In this kind of literary practice, we observe the mechanism of the **experimental** transformation of literature (and art, generally) into something “ordinary” or “everyday.” It becomes drawn out of its designated, defined, autonomous place into the space of the practices of the community of active reader-authors. On the other hand, the texts thus written become an element in the creation of social relations in fandom and a manifestation of personal artistic involvement, the exploitation of artistic communication for one’s own ends. At the same time, situating them thus means that models of creating everyday life – literary practices of everyday life – are presented by authors whose works’ status is unclear, works in essence partially linked to the domain of art (related to discourses of knowledge and official culture) and partially with private life and the non-artistic social practices of their authors. Let us keep in mind, however, that none of these mechanisms excludes the possibility of writers using fan practices in order to pursue their own economic goals.

Admirers of art (its amateur – “spectators”) and amateur-creators have ambiguous relations with dominant conceptions and aesthetic orders. On the one hand, their active participation in spheres not fully defined by discourses of knowledge can create a counterbalance to the indifferent or exhausted voices of “professionals.” On the other hand, fans of art and amateur-creators often – consciously or unconsciously – reveal traditional aesthetic attitudes or invoke dominant forms (deriving from mass or popular culture) of creative expression. Participating in popular culture, creating and co-creating content at the margins, in collaboration with or against institutions of the culture industry, authors of fan fiction constantly find themselves at the centre of disputes dealing with contemporary popular culture.

**Fans and the Culture Industry** | One of the most important topics in “fan studies” is the role of fans in the contemporary culture industry. This makes sense, since fans to a large extent assemble around works of popular culture that contribute to forming that industry. The industrial aspect referred to relates to both cultural production (relationships between fans and institutional mass communication) and economic relations. The terms consumption and presumption play a prominent role in studies devoted to the economic conditioning of fan culture. In the case of the latter term, the object of study is often the degree to which participants in culture become dependent on the economic interests of the purveyors of mass culture content.<sup>33</sup> Another important issue is the question of copyright in the context of the use of source material by authors of fan fiction.<sup>34</sup>

Questions concerning fan participation in the practices of global media institutions re-ignite the debate on the nature of contemporary popular culture. Certain scholars accentuate the mechanism of how mass communication is transformed by its audience: “Popular texts are inadequate in themselves—they are never self-sufficient structures of meanings [...] they are provokers of meaning and pleasure, they are completed only when taken up by people and in-

<sup>33</sup>See J. Fiske, “The Cultural Economy of Fandom,” in Lisa A. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, London: Routledge, 2002, 30-49; S. Krawczyk, “Prosumpcja,” 175-210; P. Siuda, *Kultury prosumpcji. O niemożności powstania globalnych i ponadpaństwowych społeczności fanów* (Cultures of Prosumption. On the Impossibility of the Emergence of Global or Supranational Fan Communities), Warszawa 2012.

<sup>34</sup>See D. Jankowiak, “*Fan fiction – wolność czy samowola?*” (Fan Fiction—Freedom or Lawlessness?); A. Czaplinska, P. Siuda, *Fandomy jako element ruchu społecznego „wolnej kultury”, czyli prawo autorskie a produktywność fanów* (Fandoms as an Element of the “Free Culture” Movement, or Copyright and Fan Productivity).

serted into their everyday culture. The people make popular culture at the interface between everyday life and the consumption of the products of the cultural industries. The aim of this productivity is, therefore, to produce meanings that are relevant to everyday life.”<sup>35</sup> To the extent that we can test whether “popular” meanings uphold the economic relations of power, or carry some kind of resistance, we cannot, according to Fiske, prove that the audiences that create popular culture are completely passive and powerless masses.

In *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins, referring to Michel de Certeau’s concept of everyday life, wrote of how fans poach on the territory of popular culture. Fans oppose their everyday life tactics to the grand strategies of media consortia.

Lev Manovich has gone back to de Certeau’s writings in order to bring them up to date with the realities of new media. In Manovich’s *The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life* we read that the everyday life “invented” by de Certeau has undergone a profound transformation due to the development of the “Web 2.0” paradigm: “during the time since the publication *The Practice of Everyday Life*, companies have developed new kinds of strategies. These strategies mimic people’s tactics of bricolage, re-assembly and remix. In other words: the logic of tactics has now become the logic of strategies. (...) Since [the] 1980s, however, consumer and culture industries have started to systematically turn every subculture (particularly every youth subculture) into products. In short, the cultural tactics evolved by people were turned into strategies now sold to them. If you want to ‘oppose the mainstream,’ you now had plenty of lifestyles available – with every subculture aspect, from music and visual styles to clothes and slang – available for purchase.”<sup>36</sup>

Of course some scholars feel that the mechanism of commodification of amateur, audience or fan participation in culture operates throughout all of popular culture, not only its “Web 2.0” version. That is the gist of the narratives put forward by McGuinon<sup>37</sup> (and Fiske himself draws similar arguments from the Althusserian category of ideology or Gramsci’s concept of hegemony<sup>38</sup>), who declares that the production of symbolic meanings, constituting individual cultural resistance against mass ideologies, is, in a broader reckoning, of very little use. In the global (globalizing) system of late capitalism, what matters above all is control of the means of consumption, and thus of economic relations.

Tomasz Umerle

<sup>35</sup>J. Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, London: Routledge, 2005, 6.

<sup>36</sup>L. Manovich, *The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life*. Available online at Manovich’s website: [http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/059-the-practice-of-everyday-media-life/56\\_article\\_2008.pdf](http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/059-the-practice-of-everyday-media-life/56_article_2008.pdf). (last accessed: 15.03.2016).

<sup>37</sup>See J. Storey, “The politics of the Popular,” in Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. An Introduction*, Harlow, 2009, 213-246.

<sup>38</sup>See J. Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, 174 and passim.

# KEYWORDS

fan fiction

FANS

**ABSTRACT:**

This keyword presents fan-produced literary work in the context of poetics, amateur literary production, and selected topics of cultural and media studies.

cyberculture

amateur literature

**NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:**

Tomasz Umerle is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Polish and Classical Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University, and a member of the staff of the Department of Current Bibliography at the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He is the author of the book *Trocki – storczyki – literatura. Miejsce literatury w (auto)biografii intelektualnej Richarda Rorty’ego* (Trotsky, Orchids, and Literature: The Place of Literature in the Intellectual Autobiography of Richard Rorty, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2015), as well as scholarly articles published in *Ruch Literacki* (Literary Movement), *Przestrzenie Teorii* (Spaces in Theory), *Wielogłos* (Polyphony; print version), *Tematy z Szewskiej* (Topics from Szewska Street), *FA-art* and works of literary scholarship for a popular audience. |