

CULTURAL MEMORY AS FANDOM IDEOLOGY IN THE REMEDIATED WORLD

Introduction

Remediations are not new. They likely go back 40,000 years ago in Spain when early humans splattered their understanding of their environment on cave walls. An essential tenant of humanity, if there is anything essential at all, is that we create narrative out of reality. A mediated object is the product of that creation. A mediation becomes remediated when it is removed from the context of its initial mediation – or, as Bolter and Grusin state in their book on the topic, “All mediations are remediated.”¹ This initial mediation does not occur in an object, like a book, a movie, or a cave painting, but in the mind of the individual. An individual mediates the world through whatever already-there reality that forms the shape of their identity.² How do individuals take what is in the initial space of mediation, basically the human brain, and remediate it into the world? The answer is as simple as it is elusive: technology. Bernard Stiegler, whose work in *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation* will reveal itself to be fundamental to this discussion, suggests that the very formation of memory and knowledge are only possible because of technology. Even the act of writing words on paper takes what has already been (presumably the spoken word) and puts it into a technological transmission.³ Every act that uses a construct to mediate the interiority of a human agent is done so through a technologized rendition. Thus, all remediations are technological in nature.

¹Bolter, J D, and Richard A. Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999. Print. 44.

² For more on how reality works to form identity see: Identity Theory by Peter Burke.

³Stiegler , Bernard. *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009. Print. 110.

Stiegler stops before getting to what is the most basic form of technology when he writes: “Writing, whose science is grammar, gives rise to the rules of memory.”⁴ While memory will come to function as the significant element in this discussion, my interest in this quote is in what Stiegler suggests about grammar. If grammar is the science of writing, it is safe to suggest that spoken language falls under the same category. If we think of technology as any object or structure constructed by human desire, then language becomes humanity’s chief structuring technological body. Instead of regarding technology as deterministically anything materialized from the earth, we must not forget the many social structures that cannot exist outside of excessive mediation. Honor, justice, fairness, balance, dignity, ad infinitum are all technologies with language, the very definition of a baseline technological medium, rooted at their core. As Marshall McLuhan states, “Language does for intelligence what the wheel does for the feet and the body. It enables them to move from thing to thing with greater ease and speed and ever less involvement. Language extends and amplifies man but it also divides his faculties.”⁵ What McLuhan suggests about language is likely true for all technologies to some degree. Technology functions as either an extension of human physicality, or as a tool that exteriorizes human interiority.

Language takes the cognitive interior life of the person, and manifests it into an exterior reality. This process is continued when life is turned into a story via the technology of language. Life is mediated into a different mediation – or remediated– into what we call narrative. When a narrative is produced and distributed by an “authorized” media body (the legal owners of the text, or put more simply, those who hold the ability to profit from a text’s distribution) it will be

⁴Stiegler 110.

⁵McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Critical. Corte Madera, CA: Ginko Press, 2003. 113.

considered a canonical remediation.⁶ This mediation transmits to an unlimited degree of variance to whoever is the receiver of the message. This is what Bolter and Grusin mean, or perhaps ought to mean, in their book *Remediation: Understanding New Media* when they define remediation as “the representation of one medium into another.”⁷ The initial mediation exists in the mind of the individual and is then remediated into the physical universe.

The interiorized thought that is projected into the world as an object of remediation is a product of a constant stream of images, experiences, cultural expectations, and other such influences. When this happens, it creates a cultural memory-object for both the reader of the object, and the object’s creator to share. This cultural memory-object is then consumed, analyzed and sometimes transformed by the readers of the object into a new, different cultural memory-object, which is what I call a fanonical remediation. This paper argues that the authorized remediations of the initial canonical remediation, and the fanonical remediations of any remediations construct a disparate group of cultural memories, or ideological positions, that are potentially different from the original, or canonical remediation.

One of the goals of this discussion is to illustrate how the cultural memory of a text disguises itself as normative and essential – as if the text were speaking the truth about the world – all while carrying a hidden ideology that interpolates the readers of the text into specific

⁶Canonical, in this sense, means the initial, or better put, “authorized” story of a text. By fanonical, I mean the events of the canon transformed away from their original cohesion and re-imagined in a variety of ways by members of fandoms. By fanonical, I mean the events of the canon transformed away from their original cohesion and re-imagined in a variety of ways by members of fandoms. Understanding the value of the term canonical remediation is particularly necessary when dealing with textual bodies that have multiple, inter-dependent, but somehow still separate, layers of canon. As is the case with the subject of this essay: *Iron Man*. Busse, Kristina, and Karen Hellekson. "Introduction: Work in Progress." *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*. Ed. Karen Hellekson and Ed. Kristina Busse. 1st ed. Jefferson, North Carolina. McFarland & Company, 2006. 5-33. Print.

⁷ Bolter and Grusin, 45.

positions.⁸ However, some texts require more than just a surreptitious ideological positioning, they also allow their readers to produce specific kinds of fanonical content. In contrast, other texts try to eliminate fanonical fecundity altogether. All of this is done through a texts' cultural memory. I will analyze this through the ideological variations found in the fanonical remediated content of the *Iron Man* film and comic book fandoms. By closely examining the comic and the film, as well as the remediations created inside of their fandoms, I locate how the moral underpinnings at work in each canonical text determine the ideological reproduction of the fanonical remediations.

Cultural Memory

Popular cultural memory formation is the key element to understanding how identity (and through that ideology) is constructed through the production of fanonical remediated texts. In order to explicate this idea, I will first need to define how I'm using cultural memory, and then move to synthesizing that with Bernard Stiegler's idea of *eventization*. Together, these two ideas will explain how the products of cultural memory are proliferated inside of the formal elements of a mediated text. Then they will show how, once those elements reach a particular fandom, they are deconstructed textually and ideologically by the fandom through a selection process based on the pre-existing ideology.

Karin Kukkonen breaks down popular cultural memory by stating first, that, in order for someone to fully understand a text, they must first be armed with a certain amount of contextual

⁸Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Monthly Review Press. (1971): n. page. Print. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm> Fanonical remediation is the act of the Althusser's interpellated subject hailing back to the subject par excellence (God, or in this case, the authorized media body of the canonical remediation) and equalizing the two as subjecting, and being the subject of each other.

information.⁹ Those who hold that textual information make up a possible fan community.¹⁰ Thus, Kukkonen states: “The first criterion for cultural memory is that it allows for the concretion of an identity through the community of its recipients.¹¹ What Kukkonen is stating here is that you need to have a pre-existing complimentary worldview in order to read a text in a certain way in order to enter into a fandom. If you do not understand the diversity of what it means to be in a queer relationship, you will not be able to view the relationship between Tony Starks and Pepper Potts as queer, particularly within the context of most major Hollywood pictures.¹² By understanding and accepting that relationship in this way, along conversing with other like-minded individuals, an identity is created. Cultural memory is thus a process that creates its consumers and then their desire reflects back on the producers so that identity and ideology can become products of one another. In this sense, fanonical remediations are a political act of queering. They erase the binary line between what is a text and what is not a text by imbuing a text at the moment of consumption with an ideological form that manifests itself in new content. As Stiegler might also state, the technologization of memorization means that the capacity and speed by which an individual can express their feelings on a text via Tumblr or Fan Forums or Twitter, etc., as they are, or sometimes even before, they consume it, has increased exponentially. Then to have those feelings either validated or censored by the greater fandom body means that identity and ideology are constructed in quasi real time of one another. At the

⁹Kukkonen, Karin. “Popular Cultural Memory: Comics, Community, and Content Knowledge.” *NORDICOM Review* 29.2 (2008): 261-273. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 3 2012.

¹⁰ On page 263, Kukkonen makes a clear distinction between how cultural memory is transmitted in a larger, national system, and those that work on smaller, audience communities. Nationally, memory is proliferated through organized systems like schools, rituals, and other moments highlighted for “remembrance” purposes. 9/11 – “We Will Never Forget” seems applicable. Audience communities, on the other hand, transmit memory through shared knowledge of media objects.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² In *Iron Man 3*, the relationship between Pepper and Tony is reconfigured into a queered space by shifting the hero/damsel paradigm. Towards the end of the film, Stark is unable to save Pepper from seemingly falling to her death. Later, when it is revealed that Pepper is alive, she saves him from the film’s antagonist, and then ultimately defeats him by herself.

fandom level, texts, and their cultural memory output, are in constant flux. They are deconstructed and reconstructed at the speed of someone's internet connection.

Kukkonen's second criteria for cultural memory is "its capacity to be constantly reconstructed in relation to the current situation."¹³ While Kukkonen addresses this issue in regards to the differences in historical cultural values will lead to different readings of historical events, it seems easier to understand this idea in the variations of readings during contemporary time periods. For example, in both the *Iron Man* movie and comics fandom there is a ship called "Superhusbands" or "Stony," depending on your preference, that pairs together Captain American and Iron Man. This ship has the potential to directly oppose the Tony/Pepper ship "Pepperony." If we assume that people inclined to ship, or even that those people are inclined to ship at all, make their shipping choices based on their cultural values, then we can see that the "current situation" is not the same for everyone, even in the same time period, and thus the cultural memory is reconstructed from sub-group of fans to sub-group of fans. A sub-fan community's reading goes through an alteration at the moment of transmission from the textual object to the person reading the object. Certain moments will read differently based on pre-existing cultural values. This is what Bernard Stiegler calls *eventization*.

Eventization

For Stiegler, eventization is the process by which the "already-there," meaning that which has already occurred, transmits into a "remembered" memory through a choosing of preferred moments over less preferred moments. To elucidate this point, he states: "Event-ization means selection. All events are inscribed in a memory, and event-zation is memory's functioning."¹⁴ However, this process for Stiegler is problematic due to who gets to decide what becomes an

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Stiegler, 100

event, and what does not.¹⁵ However, John Fiske, in his groundbreaking text *Understanding Popular Culture*, suggests that the public consuming the reading of a text is not deterministically locked into the “preferred” meaning of a text, but may, instead, reconstruct the meaning to their own liking.¹⁶ This act allows the audience to subvert the gatekeeper tradition that concerns Stiegler as the audience becomes “a producer of meanings and pleasures.”¹⁷ In Stiegler’s own words, eventization causes a de-territorialization to occur in the information matrix.¹⁸ If meaning or “what already occurred” is up for grabs during the process of eventization, then the actual product of this selective process is a negotiation between what has occurred and what has not. In the fanonical sense, this means that the preferred meaning, or the already-there has no greater value than the reconstructed one, or “altered-there” since all meaning-making is a negotiation between what is and what is not.

Using the previous example, readers who go against the preferred meaning of the *Iron Man* franchise by de-territorializing specific moments from the preferred textual locality of the original mediation are not in violation of the actual events since their negotiation is not a threat to the already-there eventization, or any other alternative eventizations, that might be perceived. The altered-there eventization is processed specifically for the use of that fanonical cultural audience. The cultural memory birthed from the altered-there eventization is both a reification of the ideology already present, and a means by which more ideology is constructed. Fandom ideology, that is the integrated belief system within a fanonical text that is separated from the

¹⁵ Stiegler, 112, his suggestion here is that media itself creates the news that they later report as an event. This is not fundamentally different than what I’m suggesting here. In the transmission of media objects, eventization is a significant part of the way content is sold. Television “Sweeps” weeks have turned an economic rationale of using the ratings for certain months to sell ads in the future into creating “event television” in order to bolster those ratings. Fandoms, however, have the capacity to ignore these so-called events in favor of lesser moments that speak to their own particular tastes.

¹⁶Fiske, John. *Understanding Popular Culture*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2010. Print.

¹⁷ Fiske, John. ‘Moments of Television: Neither the Text Nor the Audience’, in Seiter, Ellen, et al., *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*, London: Routledge. 1989. Print. 58-59.

¹⁸ Stiegler, 100

ideology of the canonical text, inserts into a text in the same way as in any popular mediated text: through a secondary sign system that works to erase the distance between, to use Barthesian terms, form and meaning.¹⁹

The Technology of Ideology

In order for the fanonical remediation to erase the distance between form and meaning, it must first displace the meaning from the concept. This is accomplished, as previously suggested, through eventization. By disrupting the canonical text at the point of transmission, then renegotiating its terms through an existent lens that is searching for certain ideological markers, fandoms can replace the old meaning with any meaning that they see fit. Ideology, in this sense, is what Barthes would have called *myth*. As if speaking to the future from the past, he writes: “The meaning is already complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions.”²⁰ Ideology succeeds when meaning and form seem seamless. As we will see later when discussing the movie and comic versions of *Iron Man*, the meanings of technology in the comic book and the film seems transparent and perhaps even teleological, but are polarizing when compared against each other. This is because meaning in a mediated text is bound in how objects (setting, characters, props, etc.) are manifested – change how that object manifests, and the meaning becomes altered. Ideology is then created when meaning (the signifier) “empties” itself into the form, imbuing the form with its powers, but erasing its history and then intertwining its presence with the concept. In return, the concept (the lifeblood of ideology) creates a new contextual history for the form.²¹ Simply put, characters, plots, stories, mean different things when readers choose to read them differently. The ideology

¹⁹Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. 25th. Paris: The Noonday Press, 1991. Print.

²⁰ Barthes, 116.

²¹ Ibid., 116.

of a mediated text is neither hidden, nor obvious. It exists at once in the parameters of the text, and the historically and culturally located minds of the viewers. As Barthes points out, “However paradoxical it may seem, myth hides nothing: its function is to distort, not to make disappear.”²² This is precisely the case with the now famous photograph of the French black soldier saluting.²³ Outside of the cultural context, the photograph would not suggest anything at all, but given the politics and history surrounding the picture it takes on an ideological affect. To this point, a summary of Roland Barthes’ “A Myth Today” might read that the secret of cultural myths is not that they do not exist but that they do not exist without mediation. The act of remediation (particularly fanonical) alters the mythic mediated object. It vanquishes the historicity of the object given to it by the content and imbues it with a different myth chosen by the fandom community.

Like Barthes’ myth, fanonical remediations layer the myth with an endless portrayal of signifiers. Regarding the mythical concept, Barthes writes, “it has at its disposal an unlimited mass of signifiers.”²⁴ In the same sense, like a compound sentence, the remediated text can be layered with an infinite layer of texts, and therefore, ideology – each one stacked on top of the other, neither displacing the previous, nor contradicting the one to follow. This is not to say that the ideology in a canonical text is unimportant to how the fandom consumes and transmits the fannish content. As Barthes points out, “The meaning is always there to present the form; the form is always there to outdistance the meaning. And there never is any contradiction, conflict, or split between the meaning and the form: they are never at the same place.”²⁵ While this degree of unification is perhaps too extreme, it highlights a significant element in popular media objects

²² Ibid., 120.

²³ Ibid., 116.

²⁴ Ibid., 118.

²⁵ Ibid., 122.

– that form and meaning or plot and ideology are thought to be inseparable by the subject and thus the ideological output becomes, for the fan creator, either a, beacon, an obstacle, or an albatross.

Open Ideology and Closed Ideology

Sheenagh Pugh, in her book: “The Democratic Genre” suggests that fan remediations are not necessarily indebted to the specific content of a text, but the “openness” or “closedness” of a canonical text. By this, she means that an open canon is a text perpetually “within progress.”²⁶ This allows for more content to be produced within that text. A typical television show episode, or a movie that clearly allows for a sequel, is exemplary of this concept. Conversely, a closed canon text reduces (but not to extinction) the amount of content that can be produced past the point of its conclusion by installing a definitive ending at the conclusion.²⁷ However, if we expand upon this idea outside of the purely content driven, we might be able to find an even more useful evaluation of open and closed for the canonical text. Instead of simply situating the binary in terms of content and placing it upon the ideological formation of a canonical text, what we find is that certain types of ideologies produce certain types of fanonical objects. The “openness” in this sense relates more towards the morality inherent in the canonical text, more so than whether or not the main characters die.²⁸ Cultural memory of the remediated object, to go back to Kukkonen, is not merely a specifically regimented fandom choosing a particular text to deconstruct, and reconstruct in their own ideological image, but a fandom of a text born because the ideological construct of the canonical text allows, maybe even suggests, a certain kind of subversion.

²⁶Pugh, Sheenagh. *The Democratic Genre*. 1st ed. Bridgend: Seren, 2006. Print. 26.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸There’s no doubt that endings holds some sway. It might be just as easy to suggest that, like in the old Hollywood system, killing off of characters at the end, or wrapping everything up in a nice pretty bow, is equally moralistically closed as it is closed in the plot driven sense.

Iron Man: Film versus Comic

Why do some canonical texts produce more fanonical remediations than others? We might be able to suggest that the relevant size of the larger fandom applications are significant in this determination, but when we analyze the fanonical remediations of the *Iron Man* movie fandom against the fanonical remediations of the *Iron Man* comic fandom, we start to see how the expansion of Pugh's open text versus closed text model works to explicate how the canonical content creates space for the fanonical remediation in an ideological way. In terms of raw content, the first thirty minutes of *Iron Man* and "Tales of Suspense #39" (the comic character's first appearance) are roughly the same. Each text starts with Tony Stark depicted as a rich playboy weapon-maker for the United States government. He goes on to get captured by racist representations of whoever was at "war" with the America at the time so that he can make weapons that the Communists and terrorists can use to fight their seemingly mightier American foes. As he is captured, Tony Stark suffers a grave wound to his heart that requires him, with the help of his "indigenous" friend, to create a mechanical apparatus that simultaneously saves his life and gives him access to the power of an "iron" suit that enables his escape. While the content is almost identical, what is illustrative is the way each of the two texts handles technology. In the comic version, Tony suffers through a "man in the iron mask" moment when he realizes that he has had to imprison himself in an iron suit for all of eternity in order to save his life, he states, "My brain still thinks! My heart still beats! But in order to remain alive, I must spend the rest of my life in this iron prison."²⁹ At the end of the comic, this sentiment is re-visited when Stark says: "As for the Iron Man, the metallic hulk once known as Tony Stark, who knows what destiny

²⁹This "prison" is completely forgotten by the next issue. Lee, Stan. (p), Lieber, Larry. (s), Heck, Don. (A). "Iron Man Is Born!" *Tales of Suspense* #39 (March. 1963) New York: Marvel Comics.

awaits him?”³⁰ The first statement is a reflection on the dangers of human life being dependent on technology, and thus being made less by the mediation. The second one suggests that due to that mediation, the human identity is forfeit. Together, they encapsulate what will be a common theme in American superhero comic books: the synchronization between the human and the machine is tantamount to sin. If a “good” character is the partial product of technological mediation, they are punished for those bodily transgressions or seen as lacking in a fundamental “humanism” that situates them as a politically disenfranchised *other*.

As seen as recently in Marvel Comics mini-series *Age of Ultron*, those who exhibit a profound association with technology are doomed to a compromised or destructive existence. In the case of the aforementioned Tony Stark, his bodily reliance on technology makes him vulnerable to preferring machine “life” to human life, and thus risk putting the entire human race under the thumb of machines. With Hank Pym, who is not at all a cyborg, though he sees a kind of perfection in the machine, the entire human race is ultimately destroyed because he imbues a machine with a human consciousness, but not with a human conscience. Those two characters notwithstanding, there is Wolverine. Wolverine’s skeleton is bonded with metal and thus suffers through an occasional transformation into the sub-human. Cable suffers from a technological virus that threatens to overwhelm his “soul” and make him fully machine or just kill him. It is not until he removes himself of his technological harness that he gains full control of his capabilities. Even those that maintain “abnormal” relationships with those people are subject to the moral judgment of the universe. Scarlett Witch, who was married to an android, is judged as performing a fraudulent female existence for being involved in such a relationship.³¹ The judgment, from within the comic book, that is foisted on Scarlett Witch for her sexual infraction

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Brian Michael Bendis (w), David Finch (p) and Daniel Miki (i) “Chaos” *Avengers* v1 #500 -504 (Sept – Jan 2004 -2005) New York: Marvel Comics.

highlights the fact that super-hero comics, and the Marvel Universe in particular, impose rigid moral standards to gender and minorities as well. For instance, women who hold power are often positioned as being anti-female in their gendered performance. A woman that holds power is historically shown as being incompatible with other normative women roles. These are just a few examples of this trope at work– the list could go on and on likely into perpetuity with the message (meaning) carried on the back of each passing example (content) clear: technology, even in the “right hands,” is dangerous.

Historically, films have exhibited similar judgments on the fusion of technology and humans (not to mention depictions of gender and race).³² However, recent popular texts like *The Matrix series* (1999 – 2003), *The Terminator series* (1980 – 2009), *Battlestar Galactica* (the reimagined television series) and others have sought to erase the presumed moral authority of the human and, along with it, the amorality of the machine. Films have thus offered the capacity, if not the implicit suggestion to the opposite like in comics, for the opportunity for an ideology that allows for a more expansive reading. While ultimately the ideology within the film will be dependent on a number of different factors, not the least of which is the perspective of the film’s creators, there is more ideological space for subversive readings, and re-readings, than in many superhero comics. The ideological position that locates technology as benign is embraced in *Iron Man*. In the film, technology is not depicted as positive or negative, but as purely a tool. The way Tony Stark saves his life in the film is through the Arc Reactor, capable of either powering an army of destructive robots, or proving a source of clean energy. In the comic, Tony Stark’s omnipresent butler, Jarvis, is a stereotypical British butler from some bygone age. However, in the film, he is an artificial intelligence. The very idea of an AI in the comic might be subject to

³² De Coster, Jorie. “The Cyborg Villain: Mechanical Hybridity and Existential Fear.” *Villains: Global Perspectives on Villains and Villainy*. (2011).

some anxiety and, maybe, hostility. Nevertheless, in the movie, no such thing anxiety exists. There is no sense that the technology will “turn” on its creator, or that Tony Stark is somehow less of a hero because he uses the suit, and no less of a human by relying on technology. Indeed, as the movie franchise moves on, Stark is shown as needing the suit less and less, but not necessarily technology. In the third film, Stark disavows himself with the reliance on technology to live. However, at no point is he shown as gaining any greater humanity because of it.

Conclusion

The openness of a fandom does not just relate to its moral content. In fact, the openness/closedness of the moral content of a fandom might speak to the fandom’s level of access. Rightly or wrongly, comics’ fandom is seen as resistant to include females.³³ While this perception is slowly changing, it has stagnated some of the fandom output because of how necessary women have been for the creation of media fandom. Thus, comic fandom has taken on an orientation more similar to sports fandom, than other media fandoms. This is not to say that comic fandom in general, or specifically the *Iron Man* comic fandom, have lower fandom output, just that the output created centers around traditionally “male-centric” exercises, like videos detailing which superheroes *Iron Man* could and could not beat up.³⁴ Whereas the *Iron Man* movie fandom takes on more of the taxonomy of a typical media fandom with their ardent shippers (relationships), slashing (making normatively heterosexual characters into homosexual ones) and gender swapping.

³³Like sports fandoms, the comic fandom has historically been a place that rejects female involvement. Yes, females can buy comics, but their involvement in the culture is seen as being fraudulent, or downright corruptive. See: the geekgirl meme. Swafford, Brian. “Critical Ethnography: The Comics Shop As Cultural Clubhouse.” *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*. Ed. Matthew J. Smith, Randy Duncan. 1st ed. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012. 291-302. Print. 298.

³⁴ Youtube has an entire multi-fandom sub-culture dedicated to making and commenting on these types of videos.

What becomes fascinating in this context is that many of the remediations that are spread through the movie fandom, started either in the comic itself, or as a remediation of the comic fandom, and found a greater sense of existence inside the movie fandom. For instance, in the “Fantastic Four: Dark Reign #2” there is a panel of a female Tony Stark kissing Captain America.³⁵ While largely insignificant in the comic fandom (fanfiction) this has created huge motions within the movie fandom that appears to be run like most other media fandoms, and maintained mostly by women.³⁶ In doing so, a large amount of demediated embodiment (cosplay) where women dress up like the movie version of Iron Man, but call themselves the female comic book version of Iron Man, Natasha Stark.³⁷

Queering, in this sense, is a political practice of the fanonical creator. To brazenly displace the order of the “essential” characterization by virtue of rearticulating their gender or their orientation is to construct a discourse away from patriarchal hetero-normativity, and into postmodern, anti-structural universe.³⁸ This is an act of eventization across remediated boundaries. The “Stony” fandom takes the comic remediation ship or genderswap and removes it from its aesthetic relationship by placing it within a new remediated framework. Cultural memories are created outside of the boundaries of the remediation, but then repurposed into the aesthetic and spatial foundations of a different remediated world. The ideological assumption here is that fandoms are constantly in search of “moments” that their community can latch on to

³⁵Hickman, John. (w), Chen, Sean. (p), Ruggiero, Lorenzo. (i). *Fantastic Four: Dark Reign #2* (April, 2009.) New York: Marvel Comics.

³⁶ This is despite the fact that the Tony/Steve pairing was initially birthed into existence in the comic fandom. Still, prior to the first Iron Man film, and subsequent Captain America film, there were relatively few remediations involving the pairing. Even the fanfiction that is credited with creating the sub-fandom wasn’t written until 2007, forty-four years after the first issue of the Avengers.

³⁷ Numerous examples of these can be seen on the “Natasha Stark” tag on tumblr: <http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/natasha%20stark>

³⁸Willis, Ika. "Keeping Promises to Queer Children: Making Space (for Mary Sue) at Hogwarts." *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*. Ed. Karen Hellekson and Ed. Kristina Busse. 1st ed. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2006. 153-171. Print. 156

and reify in their own discourse, but perhaps due to the stagnant way in which film content is produced, they are forced to go elsewhere to find the building blocks of their ideological remediations. Content is transferred into the appropriate aesthetic ideological input before being discharged with new mediated principles. Decentralizing moments of content, both aesthetically and philosophically, inserts a new reality onto the moment itself. Thus the already-there can exist alongside the altered-there, neither connected nor apart, neither essential to its existence, nor divorced completely from its future.

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