"All the Feels!": Music, Critique and Affect in Fanmade Music Videos

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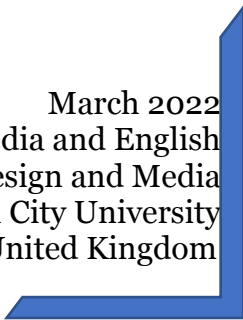
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Dedication

To my parents, Helle and Louis, without whom none of this
would be possible

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Abstract

This study explores the fan practice of vidding and the resulting works, vids. Vids, created within transformative media fandom, are narrative grassroots music videos, which argue something about their visual source/s and use the combination of music and moving images to do so. I argue that the use of music in vids is a key element in creating meaning, and that affect is a central part of how this happens. Thereby, vids play an important part in fandom's 'feels' culture as critical reflections on media that also inspire such reflection in their (fan) audiences. Previous studies of vids have established their narrative nature and their ability to communicate through images and lyrics, but have not explored the role of music or affect in this. This study investigates these two factors.

Drawing on a theoretical framework that engages with fan studies, audiovisual music and affect, I introduce an innovative ethnographic methodology, that incorporates interviews with vidders, analysis of vids where music analysis is included and online observation of their reception. I show how such an approach allows for scholars to understand a vid's ability to communicate through an audiovisual language comprised of music and images together. The findings from this method are interrogated using a theoretical framework that incorporates fan studies, audiovisual music studies and affect theory.

I argue that vids speak through an audiovisual language that is received and understood within media fandom, and that 'feels' are a central part of the communication in this language. 'Feels', inspired through music and editing, are important to how a vid becomes critically reflexive and to its ability to inspire critical engagement in other fans. Vids merit further study within not only fan studies, but musicology and wider media studies because of their ability to communicate in this manner.

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Introduction: Feeling Vids

This study focuses on the fan practice of vidding, the creation of remixed music videos, vids, which present an argument or narrative. It is especially concerned with how music functions in vids as an affective, structuring and communicative device. To understand this function, the study utilises a form of musical and textual analysis I have created for this purpose. Combined with reception studies and interviews with vidders, this mixed methods approach expands on existing research by taking a wider as well as deeper approach to vid studies. Regarding the former, this is accomplished through a consideration of a vid from inception/idea to reception/reaction as well as analysis, while the latter is achieved by incorporating music analysis into textual analysis of vids. This project is also about affect, music and fandom, and about how fans use music in vidding to express their feelings about and critical reflections on the texts they are fans of. The title "All the Feels" echoes a sentiment often uttered in fan spaces and reflects the complexity of emotions and affect expressed by the vidders who participated in this study with their vids and words. The fan term 'feels' has an ability to encompass this complexity, for example as collective affect (Stein 2015, 14) and to denote the impact of emotion (Russo 2017, 1.9). When someone states that something gives them "all the feels" it is there in the wording, both the "all" and the "feels" - the entirety of a plurality of possible emotions. Feels, then, can be many things, often at once, and is therefore a term well suited to talk about the intersections of fandom and critique. Because of the way vids work, as de- and reconstructions of texts set to music, they are ideal for negotiating this complicated meeting of emotions of many kinds. This suitability as communicator of feels is, I argue, due to the music, to how music accesses and influences on an emotional level, and how a piece of music has an affective register just as it has a tonal one.

The idea for this project emerged out of my own fandom. I first entered online transformative media fandom (Jenkins 1992) around 2005 and saw my first vid not long after, but I did not understand what I was seeing. I knew from fans around me

that these were fanworks[1] in the same tradition as fanfic[2], and something that media fans have been doing for a long time, but the vids I saw did not capture me or my imagination the way fic did. It was not until a couple of years later when I met more fans in the physical world that I understood - and then I was instantly captured. Seeing vids curated and introduced by other fans helped me understand the concept, as other fans have also experienced (Turk & Johnson 2012). This understanding lead me to wonder about music's role in vids. One of the reasons I became a musicologist is my fascination with what we experience when we listen to music, and how music affects us as human beings. I had studied film music as part of my undergrad and MA studies for this reason, and this knowledge informed how I consumed vids, as well as sparked my interest in the communication happening in vids and how it was brought about. How do vidders do this, the complex layering of meaning that comes from co-creating along the three axes of lyrics, music and images? It is perhaps telling that my first thought was not how to make a vid, but how to pick it apart and understand how it made me react and feel as I did. As an academic, I have always been guided by what I love. This initially led me to watch vids obsessively, rewatching those I particularly liked and pay attention to details; then to reading vidders' posts about their vids; then, finally, to begin to speak about vids in academic spaces.

When I first began to wonder about the function of music in vids, I sought out scholarship about it. At the time, very little existed, and the field specifically interested in vids is still a small one, an emerging sub-field in the already small and relatively young area of fan studies. Though vids are mentioned by early fan studies scholars, such as Henry Jenkins (1992) and Constance Penley (1991), and have a long history that far predates the internet (Coppa 2008a), they are not widely studied, and at the time I first began to look at them with an academic lens, there was no writing that spoke directly about the music in vids. During the 2010s, vids received more attention, led by the work of Francesca Coppa (ibid.; 2009a; 2011b). As the decade progressed, more voices emerged and began to consider music, particularly Tisha Turk's (2015; 2017) work. Meanwhile, YouTube ensured that more people than ever

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[1] Creative works made by and for fans, based on existing media properties. I return to this in more detail in chapter one.

[2] I deliberately use the term fanfic or fic to denote fan fiction in order to reflect fandom terminology. The terminology is not completely fixed, though published work tend to use the more formal "fan fiction", despite its lack of use in fan spaces; this is for example the guideline for *Transformative Works and Cultures* (Cultures, No date given), which defers to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary use of terminology. This creates a divide between fan and academic terminology that I wish to contribute to break down.

saw vids and vid-like works. Simultaneously, the humanities at large began to consider affect as a way to analyse texts and our relationships to them, providing a new way of talking about fandom's relationships with fan objects. A pivotal text for this is Louisa Ellen Stein's (2015) *Millennial Fandom*, which explains fandom as a "feels culture". (ibid., 158-160) To this body of work I bring my background in musicology, particularly my interest in audiovisual music, which has an existing body of academic work that speaks about music as a way of invoking particular affective responses in audiences. Building on the works of Michel Chion (1994), Anahid Kassabian (2002; 2013b) as well as the earlier works of Claudia Gorbman (1987) and Kathryn Kalinak (1992), it is possible for me to bring music analysis into the study of vids. Particularly Chion's concept of synchresis is central to my understanding of how vids function. Synchresis denotes moments where music and image work together; I expand on this and its significance in chapters two and four.

My study is, therefore, interdisciplinary and uses affect theory as an underlying guiding principle to bring together the fields of fan studies, as part of media studies, and musicology to better understand vids and vidding. By using Stein's (2015, 158-160) concept of the feels culture I examine how feels are shared in and through vids. I investigate what techniques vidders use to communicate their messages, how these messages are to varying degrees predicated on sharing feels, and how these are received, mirrored and felt in (fan) audiences. I use music analysis and film music's understanding of affective responses to show music's constant presence in the creation and understanding of vids. I have chosen to focus on vids which engage reflexively and critically with a text and/or fandom, both because I personally find such vids engaging, but even more so due to the difficulty in communicating a concept as complicated as a critical reflection.

My research is guided by the following question:
To what extent do fans within transformative media fandom use vidding to present a critical reflection on text/s and fandom/s, and how does music function in the audiovisual language of vids in order to create meaning?

To answer this question, I build on three approaches of interrogation, combining textual analysis with analysis of music and ethnographic research methods. Specifically, I bring music analysis into the textual analysis of vids. I analyse them

through reading the images with the music to understand how music influences the affective impact of the images and the vid as a whole; how music *is* feels in vids and how this is a form of speech. Throughout this research, I have been guided by my own affective and fannish relation to vidding, something I have expanded on by taking up vidding as a practice during the thesis work. I combine and compare this with information from a series of semi-structured interviews I conducted with the vidders who made the vids in question in order to better understand their creative choices, backgrounds for making the vids, and why they argue what they do. Finally, I used online ethnography to explore the vids' reception. I compared this to both my own analysis and the vidders' ideas and responses to the reception in order to understand whether and to what degree the vidders' intentions, my analysis of their vids and the audience's understanding of them were congruent, using this as a way to consider if a vid had been effective in its communication. In this process, I paid particular attention to mentions of music as well as emotions in the reception.

The opening chapters of this dissertation are a review of existing literature and consider the theoretical background and underpinnings of the research. In chapter one, I provide an overview of fan studies as they pertain to fan production, particularly vids, vidding and my research. I identify how vids have been studied so far and show how the research has not sufficiently accounted for the role of music. Music, then, is the subject of chapter two, where I explore key works on audiovisual music, drawing on film music studies as well as existing work on music videos. In chapter three, I look at how affect has been used as a tool to study fans and texts alike, and show how this approach is a necessary step to understanding how vids are used to communicate between fans, because of the affective properties of music.

Chapter four shows my methodology; how I researched the vids, vidders and fans in this project. I open the chapter by explaining how this study form an ethnography of vids, which leads me to discuss how interviews and online ethnography have been combined to provide a nuanced view of vidding culture, as well as consider the ethical implications of conducting this research. I then explain how I have studied vids. This is also where I show my innovation of music-informed textual analysis and how it can be used to analyse vids more fully, taking all their elements into account.

Chapters five, six and seven are chapters of findings, each focusing on analysing a thematical selection of three vids. Each analysis is prefaced by one or two

quotes from the vidder whose vid I am looking at to aid in the contextualisation of the vid as well as in highlighting the voices and contributions of the vidders in this project. Chapter five examines vids which critiqued their source texts for their links to the military-industrial-entertainment complex and their use of colonialist narratives. In this chapter, I focus on how the lyrics are used in close co-reading with the images by the vidders in question, and how the use of folk music, a genre linked to protests and peace campaigns, is invoked as a way to guide the audience's perception of the vids and their arguments.

In chapter six, I turn to three vids which all critique media texts along axes of racial representation and racism. I show how traditions of Black American music are used to center the experience of Black, Indigenous and other peoples of colour, and critique the texts for not doing so themselves. This chapter also discusses how the sound of Blackness is a way for vidders to draw attention to these issues. Finally, in chapter seven, I look at vids which reflect on the experience of being a fan. This chapter deals with vids which add an extra layer of reflection onto an already reflexive medium and art form. They show how fans can use vidding to explore their own feelings about being a fan, and how they can share their feels with others.

This dissertation concludes that music plays a central role in vids, not only as through-line and structuring principle, but as a communicator. Music can evoke feels, and guide an affective reception of the vid, which is part of what allows a vid to present a critique. I suggest that the field of fan studies needs to pay more attention to music and to the affective impact of vids, as well as the critical, transformative potential they possess through this impact. Furthermore, I hope to inspire a consideration of vids as musicological objects of analysis as well, thereby expanding musicology's interest in video art.

Chapter One

Labours of Love: Fan production, vidding and critique

In my first three chapters I explore the literature I have engaged with in this research, provide the context within which my own work sits and outline existing scholarly debates that I am in dialogue with. These three chapters each focus on a field of theory as it pertains to my work, namely Fan Studies, Audiovisual Music and Affect. They reflect the argument of the thesis; it is about vids that critique, it is about music in vids that critique, and ultimately about how music is used to express feelings in vids and how those feelings are a fundamental part of the vids' messages. The present chapter is the first part and engages with fan studies, focusing on the anglophone scholarship on fan production and the practices of vidding in particular, including how this scholarship has and has not considered music. Throughout, I look at how fan production, particularly vids and vidding, has been studied previously and where my work is situated in relation to this. I use fan studies as something to build on, but also show that the study of vids and vidding has not yet addressed music adequately and begin to suggest ways in which this may be remedied.

Although fan studies is a relatively young field, attempts to periodise it has been done several times, for example by Hills (2002), Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington (2007; 2017) and Duffett (2012), and provides a starting point for thinking about the field and the ways of studying fan productions. The approach taken by Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington (2007; 2017) is that fan studies has waves; in their 2017 edition they identify three. Briefly stated, the first focused on fans and fandom as active, creative, participating and resistant, the second on fandom as a part of wider social structures, and the third is divided between a focus on fandom as an insight into modern life and a focus on intrapersonal pleasures and motives for fandom (ibid., 26-27). The wave concept allows for a thinking about the field as having periods, which influence the field beyond their peak, where previous waves coexist with later and current ones. These waves can account for some of the different approaches to fans that were and still are present, especially when combined with the interdisciplinary nature of fan studies.

Combined, these factors afford a multiplicity of viewpoints which provides a richness and variety of approaches that can aid a more nuanced understanding of fans. On the other hand, this variety is also at times confusing and coherence can appear to be lacking, particularly where methodology is concerned (Evans & Stasi 2014). Consequently, I consider fan studies as an approach as much as a field. Perhaps it is best encapsulated by the concept of a sensibility, in the vein of Susan Sontag's (2018) work on camp, where a sensibility forms a lens, a way of thinking, rather than something more solidly defined. For fan studies, this lens is characterised by centering specific types of audiences, those we call or who call themselves fans, and experiencing (through) their viewpoint, but takes on many forms and aspects, influenced and in turn influencing the diversity of the field. This field-as-sensibility may well be fan studies' strength, one that may also help us come to terms with our constant negotiation of the fan/academic identities (Jenkins 1992; Hills 2002), something I also consider in chapter four. Fan studies is a sensibility, applied through many different disciplines that intersect and interact, creating waves that influence further thinking.

In the following, I examine the wave-influenced diversity of work on fan production and labour. From there, I move on to look specifically at how vidding scholarship, as a subsection, has considered the work and productions of vidding and vids. Finally, I finish with an overview of the concept of the critical fan, as the vids I am analysing are all created with criticality and reflection on texts and fandoms.

1.1 Fan Production and Labour

Interest in fan productions and labour reach back before the first wave of fan studies, where it was considered as part of the pathologising view of fans and fandom common at the time (Jenson 1992). My interest in vids and vidding means I have a specific lens through which I engage with the scholarship around fan production, but in this section I have attempted a view of productive fandom where vidding is just one aspect of the many ways fans produce and create. By opening with a wider perspective of fan production and labour, I am able to include work which explores facets of the field that I can enter into dialogue with outside the much smaller sub-field of vidding scholarship.

The diversity in fan studies means a diverse vocabulary and need for clarification. A central term for me is 'fanworks', which encompasses all

transformative works (fanfic, vids, fanart etc.), and also contains more affirmative or dual mode practices such as wiki creation or crafting. I use this term mostly to talk about transformative works, but want to acknowledge that there is no clear-cut division, and that the divide between affirmative and transformative practices (obsession_inc 2009) is a constructed and somewhat reductive one, though it has been useful in furthering thinking about different kinds of fanworks and fan engagements. Other terminology is related to the attempts at conceptualising the relationship between love and labour. Fan studies and cultural studies have attempted to describe and understand what fans do when making fanworks, including value and motivation, and have created differing typologies of fan interaction and production (Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998; Hills 2002; Sandvoss 2011). I also want to define the concept of 'fan text', which I refer to repeatedly in the analyses. I use this term to denote the things that fans are fans of, regardless of the form or medium. I use the term 'text' because I am signalling that whatever this object is, it can be analysed as text, and that this is how I am primarily interested in them.

With this initial terminology in place, I now look at literature on fan production. Early on, in fan studies' first wave, Fiske (1992) identifies fandom as having a "shadow cultural economy" (ibid., 30) related to semiotic production. He notes that fans produce and that these productions are meaning-making and have value within fandom. His writing celebrates fandom as a space for creation and resistance against the mainstream through the production of fanworks, and is an example of the first wave of fan studies emerging at the time. Eileen Meehan (2000) develops the idea of the producing fan with her work on fans doing labour through the act of consuming; an example of second wave focus on structures of society upon fandom. She significantly expands the idea of what constitutes fan labour to encompass both production and consumption, meaning that producing fans are dually productive/labouring. Meehan's perspective pushes at the boundaries for what is considered labour and value by reversing the producer/fan relationship, seeing the fan as the value creator. It is a perspective that perhaps takes the idea of labour a step too far when thought to its conclusion, but also adds the much needed perspective that the fan is a necessary part of the media production cycle and that fans contribute value to media. Hills (2002, 27-44) attempts to synthesise these two views. He considers fans' appropriation of text as part of the consumption, and links

this to the idea of the fan as the "ultimate consumer" with a significant loyalty to their fandom. Hills' synthesis becomes a starting point for much of the later writing on fan production, and through it it becomes clear that fan consumption has monetary value in the form of consumer loyalty.

The idea of fandom as a form of labour returns in work that is interested in the slippery boundaries between concepts such as play/work, passion/monetisation and similar constellations of the spheres of leisure and labour, such as Joyce Goggin's (2011) and Giacomo Poderi & David J. Hakken's (2014) on the work gamers do within video games. Where Fiske and Hills were more general in their outlines, many of these later works have a narrower scope. These examples are illustrations of the point that people, including fans, do a lot of work that is not necessarily considered fun or relaxing, but is part of an engagement and enjoyment that is nonetheless of value to the person doing the work. Abigail De Kosnik (2009) applies a similar view to the writing of fanfic, arguing that the value fic has is real and represents something that could and perhaps should be given monetary value. She expands on this in later work (De Kosnik 2012) when reworking the ideas of cultural and subcultural capital to encompass the value of fanworks.

De Kosnik's work extends the idea of fan labour and its value from that which is more work-like to that which is generally considered to be fun. Her work allows me to expand this view to encompass vidding, and furthermore reflects views that vidders themselves often express, such as jokingly referring to vidding as a "terrible hobby". Vidders often share the many difficulties and struggles with software, hardware, source (image and music) access and hours spent fine-tuning seconds of video. All done without ever gaining anything other than personal satisfaction and the ability to share the result. In addition, a vidding set-up can represent a significant cash investment, and video editing is a marketable skill, showing that vidding is something which outside of fandom would have monetary value. However, this is not something fandom at large considers to be the case, neither for vidding nor fic. Transformative fandom differs from more affirmative and differently producing forms of fandom in this respect, such as the cult film fans and producer-fans found in Oliver Carter's (2019) ethnographic work. Carter shows how these fans do significant labour, but also manage to monetise it more than is common in transformative media fandom.

Carter's work begs the question why such monetisation does not happen with transformative fan productions. Fans invest in their work in direct ways (equipment, source media) and by doing labour, activities capitalist society tells us are for sale. Bethan Jones (2014) explores the tensions between transformative fandom based around an ideal of a gift economy and fans who "pull to publish" their fic (ibid., 1.1), i.e. remove the original fanwork and rework[3] it to publish it for profit. As Jones compares and contrasts this praxis with sales of fannish arts and crafts, she comes to point out that the difference might not lie in profits, which these aforementioned fanworks can be sold for - seemingly without there being tension - but rather the refutation of fandom in pull-to-publish. Fic that is pulled disappears outside the sphere of fandom, whereas art and crafts are sold within fandom, thus adding community value to fandom as well as being monetised. Vids are even less saleable; it is nearly impossible to remove the existing texts from a vid and still have it be recognisable as a vid. Even if they were relatively easily sold, it is, given Jones' work, doubtful they would be. The value of fanworks is chiefly one of fan capital rather than monetary. This keeps a cycle of production going that is grassroots and functions on its own scale of value inside fandom/s. Vids are not produced for money because it is both culturally undesirable and practically difficult.

On a different scale lies fan labour harnessed by industry, where fan production becomes free labour and promotion. In such cases, the question of remuneration changes; these works are nor longer existing within the subcultural value system of fandom, but is being monetised outside of it. When a fan text's official owners promote sanctioned forms of fanworks, a tension arises between the sanctioned and unsanctioned works, complicating the already complex copyright issues related to transformative works. An example of this is *Battlestar Galactica*'s (2004-2009) use of fan video making as part of their proprietary promotional website (Russo 2016). Roberta Pearson (2010) uses this case to problematise corporate monetisation of fan labour, while Julie Levin Russo (2016) examines the same case as an example of hybridity and convergence. Both note the attempts from industry side to control and limit fan creativity while also monetising it with no compensation for the creating fans. Given that vids are showcasing clips of the works they are engaging with, they are a strong case for the argument of fanworks-as-

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[3] As Jones also points out, this is known in fandom as "filing off the serial numbers" (Jones, 2014), a term I find very apt in describing the process involved.

publicity. As Bacon-Smith (1992) discovered, this is not only the case for the visuals in vids, but also for the music. By functioning as unofficial music videos as well as promotional visual remix, vids can draw audiences to both music artists and visual media products. Vids, then, not only represent value for the producing fan and their fan audiences, but also for the owners of the intellectual property of which they are made. However, as Russo (2016) and Pearson (2010) show, there is continuing tension between the fan and creator positions in this question. As Meehan (2000) and Simone Murray (2004) both argue, fans' devotion and labour invested with this emotion can be used to control them.

However, Bertha Chin (2014) cautions against assuming that such fan labour is always exploitative, citing fans' own statements of enjoyment in maintaining or contributing to industry-promoting and/or owned websites. Thereby, Chin exemplifies the work of the third wave of fan studies, with an interest in the pleasures of fandom and a reintegration of the 'why' of fan labour (Sandvoss, Gray & Harrington 2017). Even where fan labour is the closest to that which we see as requiring some form of compensation or payment, it is not necessarily clear-cut from the fan perspective. Monetary capital is not always the most important in fan contexts, though it does beg the question of the value of fanworks as publicity and as a way to create and maintain hype (Williams 2012) and feedback to creators (Andrejevic 2008). Fan labour has complex values that exist on several scales, and the central two, (fan) cultural and monetary, are often in conflict when fan productions are involved.

The concept of value assigned to fanworks is not only considered as capital(s). In Matt Hills's (2013) attempts to reintegrate the concept of expertise in fan production into fan studies. This work also attempts to bridge a divide in fan and audience studies between those who consider fanworks a priori as 'high' or 'low' quality. As Alan McKee (2007) reminds us, fans and their texts need to be afforded the same level of consideration as any other creator or textual production. This means that expertise and artistic value assigned to fanworks is not simply a matter of placing a 'high' or 'low' marker on all fanworks but requires a nuanced approach based in the aforementioned expertise. The view of fan productions as something that represents and carries capital, monetary as well as cultural, is one way of making visible the value of fans' work. Such value is inescapable in a capitalist society and

therefore also (regrettably) necessary if we are to argue on a broad scale for the legitimacy of fanworks.

As the above shows, fans have been - simulteaneously at times - considered the ultimate consumers and disrupters of media power. In the case of vidders, labour is done and products are created from it, products which are not assigned monetary value, but instead shared freely and as gifts with cultural and artistic value as are other fanworks (De Kosnik, 2009; Hills, 2013). Vidding is therefore work, and by function of being acts of deconstruction and reside in one of copyright's grey areas (Pearson, 2010), it can be considered a resistant form of production. At the same time vids can be virtually indistinguishable from officially produced promotion material and other kinds of remix music video, especially when viewed from an outsider perspective. (Russo 2016). Thus, the resistance narrative is not clear cut either, and it is a limited view of fandom that sees only the resistant aspects. These complexities become clearer when adopting a narrower focus in the area of fan production, which is what I do in the following when examining work that is focused on vids and remixes.

1.2 Vids, Vidding and Remix Video

As mentioned previously, there is a small but growing scholarship on vids and related types of fanworks, such as AMV[4], fan film and political remix. This is the subset of fan studies that I am most closely in dialogue with. As with fan studies as a whole, the interdisciplinary nature of the field is noticeable. This does presents a challenge when attempting to summarise as there are no obvious commonalities to track. In the following, I nevertheless draw out main perspectives in vidding scholarship, especially to note how vids have been analysed and how vid studies has (not) considered the role of music in vidding.

Jenkins (1992), Penley (1991) and Bacon-Smith (1992) are the earliest academic writing on the subject that I have found. This does, of course, not mean that vids did not exist before this, as is well documented by Coppa (2008a; 2008b) nor that fans did not create reflexive and analytical writings about vids before this, though archival research to discover such writing is outside the scope of this

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[4] Anime Music Video is abbreviated to AMV so consistently that I wonder if the original meaning is not all but erased by the abbreviation.

dissertation[5]. Penley's consideration of slash[6] vids contains a detailed description of a vidding workshop at a fan convention and covers the technical difficulties in making vids using VHS and cassette tapes. She notes that in comparison to fic writing "fewer of the fans are involved in making videos" because of the difficulty involved (Penley 1991, 145). Her observations include aesthetic advice, such as taking inspiration from commercial music videos, and not being too literal in matching lyrics to images. Bacon-Smith also gives a detailed description of the process of making vids, and writes about how vidders must keep in mind all the parts of their collage to make it work. She points out that

> "When assembled into a new whole, the clips set up a narrative or lyric message in the video portion of the songtape that reinforces the text in the song or runs counter to it for an ironic or humorous effect." (Bacon-Smith 1992, 177)

Bacon-Smith's vid scholarship has at its core similar observations to much of the following work, namely the focus on the way lyrics and images speak to each other, and the use of the term "narrative". Furthermore, her use of the phrase "new whole" is a foundation for how I think of vids as something more than the sum of their parts. Jenkins also contributes some still foundational understanding of vids:

> "Most frequently, the song lyrics amplify, critique, or parody aspects of the original series, while the images become meaningful in relation both to the song's contents and to the fan community's collective understanding for the aired episodes." (Jenkins 1992, 277)

Jenkins points to some of the same aspects of what vids can do that I am interested in, the critical and, at times, parodic elements. As is evidenced, the interplay between lyrics and image are key in all three treatments of vidding, while there is no direct mention of music. Penley notes that the songs are usually rock songs with a love theme, in keeping with her slash focus, while Jenkins elsewhere refers to songs rather than lyrics, showing an awareness that there is more than words in a vid, but without articulating this. These three texts laid a foundation for the study of vids with several threads of inquiry and key points that are still present today: the ideas of

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[5] I am grateful to Charlotte Stevens for many fantastic conversations about her archival findings re. the history of vidding in fanzines and look forward to more in person and reading about it in published form.
[6] Slash denotes the fan practice of romantically and/or sexually pairing characters who may be, but usually are not, an item in the source text. Slash usually indicates male characters, while femslash/femmeslash indicates females and het indicates a heterosexual constellation.

lyrics and images together, the complexity of vidding, the idea of vids as narrative, and the sidelining of music as a factor in vidding.

The specific attention to vids appears gone from fan studies for a decade and a half after this early attention, and is taken up again by Coppa (2008a), whose extensive work on vids and vidding is formative. Coppa's work primarily deals with the history of vidding, the gender/ed aspects of vidding (Coppa 2009b; Coppa & Tushnet 2011; Coppa, 2011b), vid analyses (Coppa, 2009a; Coppa 2008b), and interviews with vidders (Coppa 2011b; Coppa 2010). Coppa's work has documented vital vidding history, as well as formed a basis for an analytical method based on textual analysis of vids, which focuses on the interplay between lyrics and images in order to make a point, or, to quote Coppa (2008a, 1.1), "stage an argument". With her focus on vids with a critical or reflexive aspect, Coppa's work is some of that which I base my own method on. Katharina Freund (2018) also has a succinct history of vidding, including some of the history of the study of vids. Their earlier work focuses on the issues of fair use for vidding (Freund 2014) and the female vidding communities Coppa is also interested in (Freund 2011). As this shows, the history of vidding is well documented, and there is an important focus on centering vidding as primarily women's work, and the ways in which female vidders bring in particular fan engagements and sensibilities which influence vidding culture.

The third moment in vidding research I want to mention is the more explicit inclusion of music. First and foremost Tisha Turk's (2015) formative work on music in vids, which is the first I have encountered that accounts for the role music plays in vidding. Turk's work opens the otherwise missing discussion on music and vids, something she expanded on with her presentation at the Fan Studies Network Conference in Huddersfield (ibid.). Her understanding is grounded in film music and also employs Chion's concept of synchresis to explain how vids function, particularly how specific moments in a vid take on significance through matches between music and image. Turk focuses on the meaning of music for vidders, a much needed perspective, and one I also engage with. I expand on her work through similar music theory grounding and by widening the understanding of music's role in vidding through to its reception and emotional impact.

Nina Treadwell's (2018) work is to my knowledge the first to add musicological analytical aspects to the analysis of vids. Treadwell's method is analogous to my own, based in an analysis of two vids, which explores how music

and images interact and co-create meaning. Treadwell focuses on two femslash vids, on the way music is used to queer the narrative of television shows; despite the emotional centre in slash, which is about love and desire, Treadwell does not incorporate affective impact, however. I expand on her work by also considering this aspect, expanding the use of music analysis, and looking at vids with a different narrative and meaning, namely those which critically reflect on a theme.

These two works are notable for being the only ones which explicitly address music in vids. In other analyses of vids, the music is most often mentioned, but it is brief or it quickly disappears from the analysis. However, lyrics stand in for the music to some degree; textual analyses of vids tend to use the matching of lyrics and images as a basis, something I return to in more detail below, which allows readers to identify what musical moments the author is referring to. This model does, however, break down when looking at vids without lyrics, such as the last vid I analyse in chapter seven. The above constitutes some of the milestones in the study of vids and vidding, but there is a wide range of vid and vidding scholarship, and I am now going to outline some of this as it relates to my work.

First, I want to return to Coppa's (2008a) foundational idea that vids are/have arguments. This has been a starting point for my own central idea that vids are objects of/with language and speech. Virginia Kuhn (2012), theorises remix videos as speech acts. Coming from the field of rhetoric allows Kuhn to argue not just that vids speak, but also to suggest a way of considering how they do it. Kuhn (ibid., 1.3) argues for a rhetorical approach to remix video, which "can help illuminate the various registers of sound, image and words, as well as the interplay of the three". She makes some of the same arguments that I do, including that the focus on visuals in the analysis of remix video has all but drowned out the sound (ibid., 1.6). I agree with Kuhn's point that vids are language, that they speak and can be understood as speech acts, though I think of this as an audiovisual language because of my focus on music, whereas Kuhn's background in rhetoric informs her viewpoint. Kuhn also raises the point that it is difficult to use words to describe sound and image, because they occupy different rhetorical registers (ibid., 1.4), a problem I also face. Further, she argues that "sound, already crucial to cinema and television, increases its importance in remix because it often provides the glue that holds disparate clips together". In other words, Kuhn agrees with, for example, Coppa (2008a) and Turk (2015) that music is a throughline and guiding principle in vidding. What my work

adds is the explanation of how music helps a vid to perform those speech acts, to make those arguments, and to tell those stories that previous scholars all agree exist, though they may not agree on how to explain or discuss those functions. These works all show clearly that lyrics have important meaning in vids, but I argue that the lyrics cannot stand alone, music occupies a third axis in a vid. Kuhn also suggests that by looking at videos as speech acts, we can get rid of the terminology of appropriation and recycling, which suggests the original creator/s as the primary creative force (Kuhn, 2012, 2.1). I only partly agree that this is possible - and desirable - in the case of vids, because, as I show in my analyses, vids rely on the original context of the clips to varying degrees. If we remove that context, a layer of meaning is lost, one that is integrated in the fandom-specific expertise involved in reading vids (Turk & Johnson, 2012). While I agree that the original creators of the parts vids are made of are not more important, creative or original than vidders, their creation forms a layer of understanding in a vid, one that becomes clearer the better one knows the source/s and the more one watches a particular vid.

Secondly, I want to look at the historiographic and television studies approach taken by E. Charlotte Stevens (2020). Stevens's work is a thorough and comprehensive examination of vids as text, both with regards to vid taxonomy and vidding history. Stevens firmly establishes vids as genre in its own right (ibid., 14), and, later, as "parallel to, but not an equal part of, other forms of contemporary moving image re-use" (ibid., 77). Through continuous comparison with art video, Stevens's work also takes large strides towards an approach to vids which is analogous to how academia approaches other forms of video art; an interest in the form as equally valid of academic attention as other video art, as well as providing an argument for vids as transformative and artistic on all levels. She also points out that in vidding, musical performance can be used to express a character's interiority (ibid., 21), but also the particular perspective of the vidder/s, as well as that music can do much of the work of conveying meaning in a vid (ibid.). What I take from this is further assertion that music contributes more than simply conveying lyrics, and does so in different ways in different (genres of) vids. Stevens sees vids as a form of "intensified television" (ibid., 37), where vids can be understood as a condensed examination of aspects of a text, shaped into a self-contained and coherent narrative which argues something. This view of vids as an intensified form is useful in several

ways: to understand vids as narrative works and to account for how dense they are in packing meaning into series of very short clips.

Finally I want to mention Louisa Ellen Stein's (2015) analyses of vids as commentary or critique on media products, especially as coming from millennial women and girls. The way Stein views vids as critique resonates through my work as well. Several of the vids in my corpus deal with politics of representation, and several foreground a female point of view. However, Stein's strongest impact on my work is in how she considers fandom, affect and feels, which I return to in chapter three. Stein's (2017) keynote at the Fan Studies Network Conference in Huddersfield, UK, further expanded the perspective on women's use of vids as part of activism, as well as showed some of the intersections between personal politics and personal fandom. Her talk expanded my consideration of what might be considered a vid with the kind of critical engagement I was looking for, and at the same time showed that the boundaries between vids, video essays and political remix (McIntosh 2012; Davisson 2016) are blurry and porous.

Vids have most commonly been analysed through forms of textual analysis, and I will now draw out a few examples that can provide a fuller understanding of how vids are analysed. Russo (2017) points to the ways in which gaze plays a role in vid aesthetics and the understanding of (queer) desire, showing an aspect of transformative media fandom that is as important as its female majority, namely its large population of queer, i.e. non-cishetero, people. Russo also points to how vids can show us what a vidder sees or experiences in the originating text/s by looking at vids, something that lies in the line of Jonathan Gray's (2010) point about how a vid can show a vidder's path through a text. That a fan gaze exists (Busse 2009; Morimoto 2019) suggests something about the learned expertise of understanding vids (Turk & Johnson, 2012), and the connection between fan gaze and vidding, something I further address during the analyses.

Russo is not alone in approaching fandom through a queer perspective. This view also appears in Elisa Kreisinger's (2012) work on queer video remix, Sarah Fiona Winters' (2012) on vidding and fannish critical pleasure, Eve Ng's (2008) on the tension between romantic normativity and canonical femslash in vids, and Treadwell's (2018) examination of lesbian desire in vids. The idea of queer fannish desire as resistance runs through these analyses of vidding, and while queer desire is not explicitly part of this project, the ideas of potentially resistant fandom, which can

simultaneously reproduce societal norms, as well as of fannish gaze are present. Treadwell (ibid.) observes that slash has been part of vidding from its inception, as evidenced by Penley (1991), and remains a dominant presence. She argues that vidding is an act of queering the text through the destabilising effect of remix. Even when not analysing the queer aspects of vids, this destabilising effect, as well as the discourses of queerness within fandom, influences the understanding of vids. I prefer to think of this as a deconstruction rather than queering, but also see the two as closely related. However, as Ng (2008) notes, celebration of same-sex romance can also be have norms that run parallel to those of wider society. Like fan production in general, this shows that vids are not inherently resistant, but that they have a potential to be.

As mentioned early in this chapter, the idea of fandom as resisting/-ant is one that appears along with fan studies' consolidation as a field in the early 1990s. This history of the resistant or critical fan is what I turn to next to be able to better understand the role of vids with a critical and/or reflexive argument.

1.3 Critical Fans

In the next paragraphs, I discuss examples of ways fan studies has considered fans and fandom as critical, activist or resistant, still with particular focus on fan production and vidding. Within fan studies, there has been a tendency to focus on the critical fan as someone who is using fandom for activism (Hinck 2012; Wilkinson 2012), as a tool for social justice (Brough & Shresthova 2012; De Kosnik 2016), or on fandom force for positive transformation (Yockey 2012; Jenkins 2014). It is still rare to see the complexities and contradictions of fandom's political potential and actual politics being discussed in the same vein as celebratory or joyful fandom, a lack that does not address the politics of *what* people like. Some work already exists, such as Ashley Hinck and Amber Davisson (2020) and Rukmini Pande (2018), which begin to address fandom as a political space and racism in fandom. Such work exemplifies some of the third wave of fan studies with their view of fandom as an insight into modern life, though particularly Pande's work also shows that fandom has a conflict between pleasure and politics, especially where racism is regarded, an approach that points forward to work yet to be done. I am pleased to have noticed more attention to the intersections between politics and fandom in later years, and look forward to

more published work on this.[7] However, the influences of the previous waves of fan studies remain, including both the "fandom is beautiful" wave and the earlier views of fans as duped consumers that the first wave of fan studies responded to (Hills 2002; Carter 2019). The vids I analyse and their arguments show that the tensions between joy, injustice and politics are present in fanworks and have been for a long time. They sit side by side, perhaps not comfortably, but nevertheless present, in fanworks and fandom spaces alike.

The focus on the fan as someone with a resistance to mainstream and on fandom as a utopian space harkens from the second wave of fan studies, where it is present in particularly Henry Jenkins's work. The 1992 *Textual Poachers* did much to reorient how academics view fans, a correction of the narrative of the uncritical/duped consumer/fanatic that had dominated before, and is thus a pivotal work. Jenkins has returned to this view of fandom several times, for example in his examination of the charity work of *The Harry Potter Alliance* (Jenkins 2012). Similarly, this thread runs through much of Francesca Coppa's (2008a; 2011b; 2014a) work, showing the ways in which vidding can be understood as part of a critiquing fandom practice.

Since fan studies popularised the view of fandom as a critical/resistant practice, the most widely examined and mentioned form of fan critique is fan activism. Both Aswin Punathambekar (2012) and Ritesh Mehta (2012) point to participatory culture as directly linked to activism, which provides a model for thinking about why it is that fandom has this critical/political potential. A brief overview shows that there is a branch of the study of fan activism based on Liesbeth van Zoonen's (2004) work. This work considers fandom/s as publics or communities, which foster activism of different kinds, such as fan activism as collective action (Brough & Shresthova, 2012), as charity (Hinck, 2012; Xanthoudakis 2020) as well as considers intersections between politics and fandom (Schulzke 2012; Hinck & Davisson, 2020).

Brough and Shresthova (2012) see a link between transmedia storytelling and activism, in that they propose considering activism a form of transmedia in and of itself. Stevens (2020, 10) identifies fanworks as part of "the cross-platform narration

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[7] As I am editing this in May 2021, a collection titled *Participatory Culture Wars,* edited by Simone Driessen, Bethan Jones and Benjamin Litherland, has just been announced, which promises to address some of these topics.

that extends storyworlds", further underpinning the idea of transmedia storytelling as fan created as well as official. This opens up a space in which we can consider the interplays between fan activism, fandom engagement, and politics that Stein (2015) also identifies, and see them as aspects of the same thing. When combining these perspectives, we reach a point where fanworks might be understood as dually activist. If the stories fans consume inspire activism through the text (Hinck, 2012; Jenkins, 2012) and activism is also transmedia, then this dual property becomes visible. While fan activism has seen quite a lot of attention, more is needed, particularly to interrogate the links between fandom and/as politics and vice versa.

Stein's (2015) work updates the idea of the critical fan to point out that fans of the millennial generation are very aware and critical consumers of media. She also points to how fanworks play a part in expressing this critical thinking. Stein shows that generational attitudes influence the ways in which fans engage with their fandom, and thereby how influences from new fans gradually change fandom attitudes and practices. Furthermore, Stein's (2017) keynote speech at the Fan Studies Network Conference illustrated a synergy between vidding and political remix. Her words helped me consider just how difficult it is to draw boundaries between these categories. As is the case with vids versus AMVs, fan trailers or political remixes, these are not discreet genres, but instead blend, meld and inspire each other. The category of remix video is large, and while I am drawing some sharp boundaries in this research, which I return to in chapter four, these delineations are not set, nor do they necessarily make sense or are even considered by the makers of the videos in question. Jason Mittell (2018) further illustrated this point by considering vidding a form of essay making. There are avenues for exploration of video essays and political remixes as forms of vidding as well, which would be enlightening to explore at a later date. Such work could provide another avenue to thinking of the political potential in vidding as well as the fan aspects of creating political remixes or video essays.

Particularly slash fanworks have been considered as critical and resistant during much of fan studies' history. This consideration is a theme in the field, for example Russo (2017) and Treadwell (2018) apply it to vids. It has remained quite prominent and originates in the second wave of fan studies as exemplified by Green,

Jenkins and Jenkins (1998). As I do not analyse any vids which 'ship',[8] slash or not, it is not directly relevant to what I am doing here. However, I would like to acknowledge that this is another common way of thinking of fanworks as potentially critical. This angle was also pointed out by at least one of the vidders I interviewed, giving me extra cause to take a moment to consider this perspective.

Dan Fielding's (2020) article on social justice fandom and its resistance to norms is a newer development in thinking about critical fanworks. Fielding suggests that social justice oriented fans practice a form of queernormativity, a construction of norms which run counter to the wider society's cisheteronormative worldview, and that queer norms and values are presupposed by the participants in this section of fandom. Thereby, the fans Fielding is engaging with represent another influence in norms of the kind that Stein (2015) saw in the millennial fans. Fielding (2020) places fanworks at the centre of this norm de- and re-construction, thus showing that fanworks can be political in ways that expand from the earlier assertions that slash is inherently resistant. Fielding's work shows that the norms circulated in and by fanworks point to a more wide-ranging view of fanworks' potential for criticality. His work is more about the fandom community and its norms rather than singular fanworks' presentation of these norms, without disregarding that fanworks are how these norms are proliferated and mainstreamed within fandom spaces. In this way, his work synthesises several strands of scholarship about fans, fanworks and resistance, and accounts for both fandom as community and for the role of the individual fan and fanwork within this. This is a potential way forward towards a future wave of fan studies, towards more work attempting to say something about fan communities as spaces which produce and proliferate norms, affiliations and identity, without engaging in exceptionalism or erasure with regards to the singular fan or work. By looking at fandom norms, it is possible to move beyond fandom as a priori resistant or conformist.

1.4 Conclusion

In the above, I have likened fan studies to a sensibility due to its diversity, exemplified by its interdisciplinary and coexisting waves of thinking, something which both complicates and widens the field. While fan studies has expanded and

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[8] To 'ship', a fan vernacular originating in an abbreviation of the word 'relationship', is to desire a romantic and/or sexual pairing between two or more characters.

fandom has become mainstream, the attention to fandom as a serious field of study, and thus to fan studies within the academy, is still emerging. Nevertheless, there is a distinct history of this area of study, and the field is constantly evolving, yet still influenced by its foundational modes of viewing fans and fandom, creating tension between optimistic and pessimistic views of fans. I also showed that fan studies has been interested in the production and works created by fans since its inception, and pointed to the many ways in which fanworks have value to different actors. Under capitalism, the producing fan is both the ultimate consumer and a disrupter of media power conglomeration, just as fanwork is both labour and fun. The notions of value and capital assigned to fanworks means that we must be aware of the complex power dynamics inherent in the producer/IP owner to fan relationships.

Vids as examples of fanworks encompass all of these factors and can be studied and understood as parallel to other kinds of (fan)work. They are also particularly poignant cases of the potential for reflection on fan texts because of the way they are deconstructions of the texts they relate to. A case can be made for remix media, such as vids, as always resistant, at the very least resisting notions of originality because of this deconstructive nature. This points to the idea of fandom as something with a potential for critique and political engagement, though whether or not that potential is realised is a different question, and one I return to in chapters five to seven.

Last, but not least, I have demonstrated that there is a significant gap in the research of vids as audiovisual art, namely that the audio part of vids is understudied and often ignored. This gap is so pronounced that music has all but disappeared from this chapter too. There is music in fan studies where it relates to music fandom, the work of Mark Duffett (2013; 2017), amongst others, exemplifies this, as well as work on filk[9] (Childs-Helton 2016) or the phenomenon of wizard rock[10] (Hall 2016). However, this is not the music I am searching for. What is lacking is attention to music as part of vids, as a communicator of meaning. This lack is coupled with a similar gap in attention to the ways feelings play a part in how fanworks are produced and consumed within fandom, and how this connects to the critical

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[9] Filk denotes a type of music written and performed by and for fans, which most often uses existing music with newly created lyrics with nerdy or fannish content. The name derives from an error in typing the word 'folk', which is the musical style most associated with filk. (Coppa 2006)
[10] Wizard rock is a label for bands - and the music by those bands - with roots in Harry Potter fandom. The bands often have names that are plays on Potter-esque terminology, and perform original songs which are about and/or taking place in the Potter universe.

potential in fanworks. Emotions are acknowledged as part of the fan experience in much of the fan studies literature, but the connection to vids and music is missing, as is a deeper understanding of how fan feelings are complicated and can be both love and critique at once (Svegaard 2019).

      In the next chapter, I look at audiovisual music as a first step in addressing these gaps. These areas can aid the understanding of what music does in vids and in the creation of a better model for vid analysis. I also further draw out the second gap in the research, that relating to affect, to lead into chapter three, where I focus on affect theory and feels. I touched on this above, regarding subjects such as fanworks as part of culture and norms (Jones, 2014; Fielding, 2020) and how fan labour is also fun (Chin, 2014), but, as the next two chapters show, feelings are a part of how fandoms - and vids - communicate.

Chapter 2

Listening with Prejudice: Audiovisual Musics

In this chapter, I explore how previous research has considered the function of audiovisual music as creator of meaning and emotion; a form of language and speech. I use the term audiovisual music to denote music which is meant to enhance, cooperate and work with (moving) images, a term I have adapted from Michel Chion's (1994) *Audio-Vision*. Such audiovisual music includes, but is not limited to, film music, TV series soundtracks, video game scores, trailer music, theme songs and jingles. As I showed in chapter one, there is an awareness in vid scholarship that music matters, but no consistent approach to this nor clear articulation of the importance of music. In one of the few works on music in vids, Turk (2015, 167) writes that for vids "the song is especially critical because, like sound in film, music is the throughline of a vid". Not only does Turk show the importance of music in vidding, she also points to where we can look for a deeper understanding, namely in film music. In this chapter, I show how and why audiovisual, and especially film, music theory provides a foundation for studying music in vids.

The main reasons for the focus on film music studies are that this field pays attention to the emotions in or affective impact of music (Kassabian 2002), its acknowledgement that film music has to be co-read with the images (Chion 1994), and that the two influence each other and create meaning together (Gorbman 1987; Kalinak 1992). As Chion (1994, 40) writes, "there is no image track and no soundtrack in the cinema, but a place of images, plus sounds". So is the case, I argue, for vids. In the study of film music, this impact of music on the audience is also considered as a narrative factor (Gorbman 1987), perhaps it is the most studied part of film music (Reyland 2017) and the feelings which music inspire in audiences are a vital part of telling the story of a film. Nicholas Reyland (ibid.) argues that it is prudent to be more explicitly aware of affect in film music, and not just its part in narrativity, while Kassabian (2013a, 179) argues that sound (and music) has a privileged relationship to affect. When bringing this perspective to vidding, it opens up a possibility for discussing vids as arguments on more levels than has been previously examined. Film music studies, concerning itself with music in a visual

media, also provides a counterbalance to the privileging of visuals in vid studies (Kuhn, 2012). By employing the framework of film music, it becomes possible to better account for the whole of a vid.

      Like fan studies in the previous chapter, I am limited to anglophone and Scandinavian scholarship, which also tends to privilege a particular kind of film and music. The foundational texts are focused on the Hollywood model, with all the limitations that come with that. Furthermore, much of the literature does not go further into the affective side of music, meaning that some of the foundational work in the field are still those referred to for this aspect; this has informed my choice to start with this scholarship myself and expand directly on them. Therefore, I open this chapter by discussing some foundational texts in film music studies, then move on to popular music in scoring, where the connection to vids is the clearest because of overlap in music genres. In the latter part of the chapter I address other kinds of, especially, popular music in audiovisual contexts to further expand on how such music is used.

2.1 Film music

In this part of the chapter I focus on film music and its ability to, as Kathryn Kalinak (1992, 15) writes, "do something" in film, and how this is paralleled in vids. I also address the use of popular music versus compositional music in audiovisual media, which can tell us something about how vids function as audiovisual art set to one piece of music. Overall, there is a general consensus in film music scholarship regarding the origins of compositional film music. This consensus understands film music's style as descending from the Romantic style of the late 19th century; especially Richard Wagner is considered an aesthetic godfather (Gorbman 1987, 3-4; Kalinak 1992, 61-63; Chion 1994, 51-53). The influence of the Romantic style in general, and Wagner in particular, is chiefly found in the use of leitmotifs as a way to structure narrative, though it can be argued that programmatic music is also related to this concept[11]. Motifs or themes can be used to characterise an aspect of a film and emotionally influence the audience's relationship with this aspect (Gorbman 1987, 9091; Kassabian 2002, 56) and are still in use despite film scoring practices having changed considerably over time (Tincknell 2010; Franklin 2017). When applied to vids, the motif and the song can be understood as one, whereby the song becomes the

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[11] My thanks to Monica Hjort Traxl for the conversation and insight which inspired this.

leitmotif for the vidder's argument, or elements of the song can be used as leitmotif on their own, allowing for one song to speak to and about different aspects in a vid.

When considering what film music does, views overlap but not completely. Drawing from psychoanalysis, Gorbman (1987) posits that music in film works because it is *not* heard. In Gorbman's view, film music influences us by subverting our conscious, more immediate visual understanding of the film and speaking to our subconscious emotional state. Similarly, Kalinak (1992) argues that film music functions not unlike easy listening music, designed to render the audience "an *untroublesome* (less critical, less wary) *viewing subject"* (ibid., 35). Anahid Kassabian (2002) identifies two main ways in which film music works on its audiences: affiliating identities, which I return to later in this chapter, and assimilation (ibid., 3). The strategy of assimilation is one she links with composed scores and argues will lead the viewer to "find themselves positioned anywhere" (ibid.), transported into the film itself. As the above shows, there is agreement that music works through making the audience feel something with/for the images and sweep them into the experience of the film, despite different theoretical approaches. Meanwhile, Reyland (2017) argues that affect and representation should be analysed separately in film music, an approach that I find counterproductive in vidding, and thus may also be a divide between composed scoring and popular music scoring. In vids, as I will show in chapters five to seven, affect, representation and signification are interwoven, and for this reason, I have not attempted Reyland's division.

Another agreement is that music and image in film have what Gorbman (1987, 15) refers to as "mutual implication". That is, music and image have an effect on each other, not simply that the music influences the experiences of the images, but also vice versa, and feelings are part of this influence. Kalinak (1992, 29) identifies that there is an affective link between the seen and the heard, a link which goes both ways. She understands this as a projection from the aural realm onto the visual field and connects it to music's associative power. Michel Chion's (1994) concept of synchresis is perhaps the most functionalist articulation of these implications. He defines synchresis as "the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time." (ibid., 63). What Chion explains here is the connection between sound and image. The obvious ones, such as the sound of a gunshot and someone falling over can be explained like this, but also the mutual constitution of

music and image that happens when film music is used, such as the link between a character and their leitmotif. Turk (2015) has shown that the concept of synchresis is central in vidding, and I return to it when explaining my analytical method in chapter four. Synchresis is therefore a central part of reading the audiovisual language of vids. That mutual implication exists for vids is already established by, amongst others, Booth (2012), Turk (2015), Treadwell (2018) and Stevens (2020), and this idea is a foundational principle for how I understand music in vids and for my analytical model. In a vid, music and film coexist and work together to communicate; a vid is a gesamtkunstwerk, and it does not make sense to attempt to separate the parts of a vid for analytical purposes.

However, all of the above also underlines that music is working on emotional levels, only partly consciously experienced. Vids differ from most audiovisual media[12] in that the music is a constant presence and always insists on being heard. Film music does not; film music *sometimes* insists on being heard, and at other times prefers to slip under our colloquial radars and into the subconscious. Gorbman (1998) nuanced this position, particularly with regards to popular music in film, showing that popular music is similar to composed scoring, but also more 'heard'. Film music can be used to comment and create counterpoints, what Kassabian (2002, 56) outlines as "identification, mood and commentary", and thus challenges the privileging of the images.

In particular popular music does this. As most vidding music is popular, popular film music is particularly relevant, as it is where Kalinak's (1992) mutual implication is more easily mapped onto vids. Here, Kassabian's (2002) concept of the affiliating scores can aid. As with the assimilation, her work explores how audiences take musical paths of identification to relate to - or feel with - the characters on screen. She links the affiliation path to compiled scores of pre-existing music (popular and not), and states that this music uses audiences' existing relationships with the music to forge a link with the film. Such music can provide commentary, draw on particular connections, such as nostalgia and gendered discourses (Tincknell 2010). Thereby, Kassabian's work shows that a single piece of music, as in a vid, can function in a similar way to composed scores, and that such songs can form motifs and create connections between audiences and images. The function of film music as

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[12] The obvious exception being commercial music videos, where the song is the product on display.

an affective factor is not influenced by which kind of music is used, instead it is a fundamental effect of audiovisual music.

Coppa (2008a) argues that vids are narrative works, and narrative linked to affect/emotion is something film music scholarship repeatedly returns to. Understanding narrative as the way a vid makes its argument becomes central to the analysis of music in vids, especially when considering how affect and narrative are co-constituting each other. Kalinak (1992, 30-31) writes of music's contribution to the narrative in film that:

> Narrative is not constructed by visual means alone. By this I mean that music works as part of the process that transmits narrative information to the spectator, that it functions as a narrative agent. Mood, emotion, characterization, point of view, even the action itself are constructed in film in a complex visual and aural interaction in which music is an important component.

As can be understood from this quote, the ideas of music as narrative and the feedback between audio and visual are deeply intertwined. It is also noteworthy that Kalinak foregrounds "mood" and "emotion" as something where music plays a part, thereby indicating the affective properties of music as key to its use in film. She also explains several of the conventions of how to score; conventions which contribute to the audience's understanding of particular moments, such as the use of tremolo strings (suspense), horns (martial, heroic), and open fourths and fifths (the "orient"). The films Kalinak analyse form the basis for the conventions of classic Hollywood scoring and have undoubtedly had enormous influence that can still be found in contemporary film and TV, but are rooted in a Western tradition that must be marked out as such to account for its limitations. Invoking Chion (1994), it is possible to see each of the factors Kalinak (1992) outlines above as potential parts in synchresis. She also outlines the details of music, that can be used to pinpoint moments of meaning-making, and once more these are elements that function in synchresis. These elements - tonality, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, pitch, timbre and motif - also correspond to the elements Anders Aktor Liljedahl (2019) refers to as musical parameters in popular music, the elements one must consider in an analysis. When analysing audiovisual music, it is therefore necessary to consider all the elements and factors above, including any connotations brought in from past use, weigh how each is emphasised in the syncretic moment, and what the resultant audiovisual message can be. These elements also each bring in their own affective

resonances to the audiovisual work, which influence how the audience experiences character, space and emotion (D'Adamo 2018).

Kassabian (2002, 20) takes the narrative role of music a step further and argues that music works similarly to spoken language, and has a vocabulary, a grammar, and a structure. She also points out that "The significant difference between words or pictures and music is, rather, that music is *understood* as nonrepresentational" (ibid., 6). That is, music is representational, but we tend not to consider this aspect. Music, also when unmarked, is representing something, and does not exist devoid of its contexts. Kassabian (ibid.) employs Philip Tagg and Robert Clarida's (2003) work on music semiotics as a way of considering musical elements and audiovisual language, where Tagg and Clarida showed that audiences' understanding of musical codes correspond to film maker intentions to a high degree. She argues that music has culturally coded incidents that carry meaning, and this leads her to consider the concept of a language of (film) music (Kassabian 2002, 24-25). Kassabian's work allows for a thinking of (audiovisual) music as (audiovisual) language. This narrative and meaning-making quality in music means that it supports film in such feats as establishing place and time, setting and supporting mood, and matching actions between sound and image.

The universality of understanding the signals sent by music is, however, not a given. Gorbman pins this idea of a common understanding of music to the idiom of romantic music, chiefly symphonic and operatic (Gorbman 1987, 78-79). This is a very Euro-centric conceptualisation of music and thus presupposes a dominant white and European-influenced cultural understanding. Through Kassabian's (2002) understanding of music as language and audiovisual music as culturally coded, it becomes clear that the understanding of scores is not necessarily predicated on the white, European romantic music canon, and that multiple audiovisual languages may exist.

While the tropes of scoring practice are created for the analysis of compositional film music in the romantic style, they still contribute in the use of popular music. The 'heroic horns' might not make an appearance in pop songs very often, but all music has the qualities outlined in Kalinak's (1992) and Liljedahl's (2019) lists of influencing elements and parameters. These influence the audiovisual work in which they contribute, regardless of genre, style or medium in which they appear. Crucially, these elements still influence the audience emotionally, regardless

of the type of music. Elements like these are what makes some moments of synchresis stand out more than others in vids and make some matches more significant and (emotionally) meaningful than others.

Regardless of the source or style of the music, the power of film music is that it "inflects the narrative with emotive values via cultural musical codes" (Gorbman 1987, 4-5) and gives each audience member a sense of being bathed in affect, turning the story personal. Again, the centrality of the affective properties of music is important to understanding what it is that music does. To further quote Gorbman (ibid., 55):

> Music removes barriers to belief; it bonds spectator to spectacle, it envelops spectator and spectacle in harmonious space. Like hypnosis, it silences the spectator's censor. It is suggestive; if it's working right, it makes us a little less critical and a little more prone to dream.

Music takes the audience on an affective journey through and with the images, which is why affect theory is the third theoretical foundation of this dissertation (to be discussed in chapter three). Vids, like film, can use music to bond its audience to them, afford feelings to be experienced, and, as affect theory can help show, not just allow an audience to "dream", but to feel with, for and about texts. Here, popular music's insistence on being heard (ibid., 19-20) also does some work, in that its presence, more intrusive than composed scores, also demands to be taken into account more consciously. Gorbman states that lyrics, when present, can "provide a choruslike commentary" (ibid., 20). Her point that lyrics can function as commentary also shows how lyrics can be considered in vids from an audiovisual music standpoint, and also must be considered; lyrics are a way for vidders to use music to comment on images, in ways I will return to in more detail in chapters four to seven. This, then, can also help account for the prominence of lyrics in vid analyses hitherto - and why lyrics are important also in an analytical model which incorporates music. I am aiming to discuss music *more*, but not to reverse the balance of music to lyrics; rather I argue that *both* must be considered.

So far, this chapter has identified musical elements to be alert to in an analysis of audiovisual music and calls attention to the importance of affect in the "doing something" of this music. This brings us closer to understanding how a vid song is able to communicate complex ideas. It becomes possible to see how single elements in a song can stand out and take on as well as impart extra meaning alongside the

mutual implication of music and image, how this implication is affective, and how experiencing music and image together is different than experiencing them on their own. Having looked at these foundational works on film music and its broader implications, I now focus on more detailed work on singular instances of scoring, particularly with interest in popular music in film. Such examples are those that correspond most closely to vids, as I have already begun to show in the above.

In some aspects, popular scores are very like composed scores. Ronald Rodman (2006) argues, much like Kassabian (2002) above, that popular music can function as leitmotif, and that any pre-existing connections with the audience influences how this happens. Rodman's examples (2006), Vincent Vega (John Travolta) in *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino 1994) and Iggy Pop's impact on *Trainspotting* (Boyle 1996), show that this influence can happen with a character or a whole film. I want to add that his examples show that genre can have a similar effect. Where the audience might not know the song, genre associations still play into perception of the music; consequently, a song has affective influence based on these associations. Rodman's work provides a parallel for the way a song in a vid becomes significant for an argument or a feeling that the vidder wants to communicate. Vid and fan studies can in turn contribute to thinking about singular songs in film by showing that the mutual implication goes both ways; a song is also transformed into "that song from that film/vid" as it is used.

The mutual implication of popular music and film is nuanced by Mike Cormack (2006) and Kristi A. Brown (2006). They note that music can lose some of its pre-existing context when used in film, and that reiterations of the same music in several films also adds to the context of the music. Brown points out that by using a well-known piece as film music it ends up being in flux between a conformant relationship, where music and image generate each other, and a contest relationship, where each element is attempting to deconstruct the other. Music with strong pre-existing connotations can contest the images in ways that she sees as not entirely constructive.

On a more detailed level, film music studies has also looked at music as a way of organising a shot, something which finds parallels in how vidders use the music to edit to. Gorbman (2006) as well as Jeongwon Joe (2017) provide examples of this. Gorbman (2006) on Stanley Kubrick's (1999) use of music as a choreographic principle in *Eyes Wide Shut*, and Joe in how Milos Forman lets speech mirror music

in *Amadeus* (Forman 1984). Vids use music to a similar effect when cutting to beats and matching movements to instrumental elements (Turk, 2015), while the mirroring finds its parallel in what I refer to as musical literalism, when music and visuals appear to play one another, something I return to in chapters five to seven. Through combining Joe (2017) and Kassabian's (2002) ideas with those of Kuhn (2012), considering vids as speech acts, it is possible to think of audiovisual music as speech acts too, acts that impress meaning upon the audiovisual work in its entirety, and are in turn influenced by the mutual meaning-making.

Vanessa Knights (2006) takes a different direction in the linking of voices, speech and music on film, looking at lip-syncing and sing-along. Knights is especially interested in the queering that happens when characters perform songs where the singer's voice is differently gendered than the character's body, something she refers to as "transexuated" (ibid., 96) performance. While I do not agree with Knights' terminology and suggest cross-voicing or cross-singing as alternatives,[13] her analysis of the queering that happens in such instances finds parallels in vid. This happens in cases where a vidder has chosen to use a female voice to indicate a male character's interior life, or vice versa, creating a blurring between the identification with the song's perspective and that of the character. There is a definite gender trouble (Butler 1990) happening when this appears in vids, and is something I would like to examine in future research.

Before finishing this part of the chapter, I want to problematise that the dominance of a Western/European-centric music style in film music is taken for granted in almost all the work cited here, and to acknowledge that there are significant gaps in such an approach. Music is, as Kassabian (2013b) demonstrates, a cultural expression and part of identity formation. It is reasonable to presume that the impression music gives is also influenced by cultural codes, though it is also reasonable to presume that fast and loud music feels more intense than soft and slow music, regardless of cultural background. The idea of a global perception of music as being equal is, then, somewhat ignorant of the importance of culture, something scholarship in general has become more aware of since the time when Gorbman and

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[13] I suggest terms which emphasise 'cross' to align with the use of "cross-playing" as it is used in literature about larp in order to enhance the playfulness in such performance (Sihvonen & Stenros 2018; Seregina 2019), as well as to de-emphasise the link with transgender terminology, which does not appear appropriate in this context. Where 'cross' implies performance, 'trans' implies identity, which is inaccurate for Knights's examples. Lastly but not least, "transexuated" brings to mind outdated terminology for transgender people, which many find hurtful and offensive.

Kalinak were writing. However, when working, as I do here, with primarily anglophone North American and European media and music, this cultural gap is perhaps less significant. The fact that in order to vid, one must have an intimate knowledge of the source, which in the case of the vids I work with here are all anglophone, ensures that the vidders and their target audiences have been subjected to at least the ways music is used in those particular media properties. Even so, fandom is a global and diverse phenomenon, and it is necessary to acknowledge that the presumption of a Western and anglophone understanding of media is, at best, limited. These presumptions are true for other audiovisual musics as well, including those I look at next, chief among them commercial music video, though I open this section with a consideration of montage and its similarity to vids.

2.2 Music video and montage

The filmic device of montage has aesthetic and narrative connections to vids, and is such a specific form, that I have chosen to engage with it here rather than in the film music section. Montage, in its British/US American meaning, is a sequence of clips, often employed to describe a longer stretch of time by condensing it to show movement through time and/or place (Reisz & Millar 2009, 87). It is a term that might describe a vid, though the passage in vids is not in time, but through text. This condensation of narrative is what Stevens (2020) also refers to as intensified television. Gorbman (1987, 15) quotes Sergei Eisenstein as saying that music is an element in the construction of montage, while Kalinak (1992, 82) points to the essential function of music in montage as the narrative cohesive agent. This quote is very close to the observations by Turk (2015) and Coppa (2008a) about music as the throughline or basis of creation in a vid and Kuhn's (2012) about music as the glue in remixes. Steven Shaviro (2017, 12-13) argues that commercial music videos are similar to Soviet montage, but that the technological advances make them fundamentally different too, a point that is also true of vids. The wider agreement on music's ability to make a whole out of seemingly disparate or disjointed parts in montage is surprisingly consistent across various kinds of scholarship, and shows the importance of a conscious focus on music's contribution in all audiovisual media.

This observation includes commercial music video, which, as Penley (1991) notes, provides aesthetic inspiration for vidders; indeed, the immediate impression of a vid is that it is a music video. A casual viewer searching YouTube for a specific

song may very well end up watching a vid without realising it. As Tomáš Jirsa and Mathias Bonde Korsgaard (2019, 11-12) note, YouTube is a major platform for listening to music, and, they argue, music video is a dominant form of experiencing music itself because of this. They also point out that, despite this prominence, the sonic aspects of music video are somewhat overlooked in the study of them (ibid., 118), which suggests that music video scholarship is in a similar place to vid scholarship. Liljedahl (2019) underlines this understudiedness, and furthermore argues why musical analysis is an important part of understanding the medium of music video. He argues that words like rhythm or melody are not expanded on or used with precision. Liljedahl also points to the fact that musical analysis is contextual, and different forms of analysis may be more or less suited to different videos, which I have found to also be the case in my analyses. Nevertheless, he emphasises a focus on musical parameters, the very same aspects (tonality, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, pitch, timbre, motif) that Kalinak (1992) indicates are the vital elements in film music. This shows an agreement across differing takes on audiovisual music of where the focus in analysis of such musics must lie.

While Liljedahl attempts to address the lack of music analysis in music video scholarship, Jirsa (2019) does the same for the gap around affect and music video, a similarly needed effort. Jirsa shows that affect in music videos is not a one-way form of communication, though his examples are picked carefully and must be considered special cases in that both are narrative videos which rework historically significant events and periods. However, his analyses show that for videos like these, affect is not simply embodied in the audience, but rather that "affects tend to be triggered by aesthetic forms, and that they, in turn, *trigger* emotions, moods, thoughts and, even more importantly, experience" (ibid., 204). Jirsa's work suggests that in music video, the mutual implication of Kalinak's (1992) film music is also present, and that this implication is linked to affect. However, Jirsa seems to deemphasise that there is a sender (creator) involved, and that those responsible for the creation of the music video may also be considered as part of the affective exchange of meaning. This is unexpected because he is so interested in the communication possible through an affective understanding of the format. What Jirsa shows is that affect must be further investigated in the mediums of music videos of any kind, and that, at least for narrative music videos, there are parallels to film music and vids to be explored as well.

While not focused on music, Carol Vernallis (2004) emphasises the affective importance of songs to provide context for the images in music videos; in fact she points out that music provides "affective cues" (ibid., 58-59) and that the mood of a song provides much of the context for the images. Thereby, she shows a parallel to film music, and strengthens the idea that all audiovisual music functions in similar ways. Vernallis also outlines a scale of narrativity in music video as a way of differentiating between types of video. She argues that relatively few music videos have a central, coherent narrative, while Coppa (2008a; 2011b) and Jenkins (Jenkins 1992, 232) argue that this is a defining aspect of vids, where Jenkins also sees this as vids being in opposition to commercial music videos. In reality, narrativity in vids is more on a sliding scale as well (see for example Stevens (2020, 137-178), though one that runs more from simple concept to the highly complex. Vids are therefore always narrative, whereas music videos are most often not; this further enhances the likeness between vids and film over vids and music videos.

Vernallis (2004, 3-26, 54-72) also points out that it is often unclear who the people in a music video are, what they are doing, why they are there and what their relations are; in vids this is all to various extents (presumed) known in advance. In single-source vids, the intended audience of other fans will know; in multi-source vids, at least a certain number will usually be known. While Vernallis' work indicates some similarities between vids and commercial music video, it is overall much easier to see the differences between the two forms in her work. Jirsa (2019), Liljedahl (2019) and Vernallis (2004) evidence why it is difficult to find scholarship that allows me to draw parallels between music video and vid analyses, especially the former two who identifies significant gaps in the scholarship. In the following, I therefore focus on showing where vids and music video overlap and differ, in order to ground the understanding of vids as an art form distinct from music video, one that is deserving of attention from musicologists as well.

Like vids, music videos have been likened to remix. Timothy Warner (2006) considers pop music videos as a form of sampling and blurs the divide between the original and the remixed that otherwise can be used to differentiate commercial music video and vids. He also points out that in music video, the music is the privileged medium, while in film, the images are. I argue that vids are more like film than music video in this respect, but are placed between them on a spectrum of

relative privilege given to either medium. Similarly, Railton and Watson (2011, 2) show the privileging of music in music video:

> The fact that music video is always already a secondary product, an advertisement for another cultural form, tends to short-circuit discussion of music video itself by re-routing energies towards putatively more valuable objects.

Railton and Watson show a key difference between vids and music videos: A vid is not a secondary product, and its (sub)cultural value is not predicated on being attached to an existing music release. While it is possible to see vids as secondary to their constituent parts, the point of the vid is not to be a secondary product *to* those parts, nor is there a commercial intent behind. Music video directors, writers, choreographers etc. are of course creating a unique piece of art, as are vidders, though with the knowledge that its raison d'etre is to promote the music. As Railton and Watson state, it is both "promo and product" (ibid.). Even recruiter vids, meant to convince someone to watch the source, are not doing so with a (monetary) capitalist motive; the vidder may want the text to succeed and grow in fandom, but is not themself gaining anything financially from this endeavour, though they may gain cultural capital.

As can be seen from the above, the differences between vids and music video are many and relate to the ethos behind their production, their degree of coherent narratives and their privileging of the constituent parts. However, there are similarities and the ways in which they can be analysed as audiovisual media also have significant overlaps with each other and with film. For example, Railton and Watson (ibid.) consider genre distinctions in music video as separate from the music genre. Such distinction is more akin to that seen for vids in, for example, Stevens's (2020, 18-23) work, where vid genre is not linked to music genre either. In vids, the type of narrative is used for genre definition, not the pre-existing genres of the music or images.

There are also similarities in analytical method. Like myself, Warner employs Chion's concept of synchresis to make a connection between film and music video in order to analyse the latter using techniques from film music analysis. Warner further argues that there is a similarity between animated film and music video, in that Mickey Mousing - musical "imitation" of visual action (Gorbman 1998, 45) - is employed in music video. This is paralleled in what I term musical literalism, as well as in Joe's (2017) use of the term visual music to denote mimicry in film. Thereby,

such moments of mimicking can be understood as significant to meaning making in many kinds of audiovisual music. Related is Shaviro's (2017, 16) point that music videos are so detailed that they call to attention microscopic details. This calling attention to is marked by synchresis, and, as I show in the analyses, vids draw attention to details, particular words, sounds or images, that then ground their larger message. Shaviro notes how visual effects in the video for Rihanna's (2008) "Disturbia" follow rhythm and are used to evoke the message of the song. What Shaviro describes is parallel to (musical) literalism in vids, and I wonder if this terminology might not also be productive in music video studies.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on music and how music functions in audiovisual media and contributes to the experience of this media, particularly on how film music can form a precedence for understanding the narrative and emotional impact of music. As Gorbman (1998, 45) states: "music provides a foundation in affect for narrative cinema". I have found that while music video and vids have visual aesthetics in common, the ways in which music functions in the two forms is more different than similar, and thus analyses of music videos are less directly applicable to vids. However, there are links, such as the detailed attention needed to analyse these works, certain aesthetics, and a growing understanding of how music and lyrics can emphasise each other as well as the role of affect. Because of this, and the relatively sparse attention paid to musical analysis in this field, work on commercial music video plays a comparatively small role in my understanding of vids.

On the other hand, film music theory is, despite the many and obvious differences between film and vids, a better foundation for vid analysis. Film music scholarship concerns itself with the co-construction and mutual implication of music and moving image, and has a larger body of work that uses forms of musical analysis to explain how music and image communicates something to the audience. This exact focus is what is missing in the study of vids and what I want to bring to it. Not only is the academic focus on film music similar to mine on vids, it is also the clearest developed model for analysing audiovisual music. This is especially true because film music scholarship shows that (film) music does what it does because of the attention to music's affective properties. Combining aspects of music video and film music theory also allows for thinking of one song as a soundtrack in itself, and of that song

as having the ability to do what film music does. Each song has affective hooks, and an affective register on which it functions; this is one of the key contributions of music in vids.

Understanding this leads to an intersection between music and fandom: feelings. In the above, I have examined how film music scholarship identifies the functions of music in film, and that this is built on a foundation of music being mutually implicating with images, meant to make us feel something in response to the film. In chapter one, I showed that vids have value in fandoms and fan cultures, but what I have not yet done is show that this is also predicated on how they make us feel. With music's ability to evoke feelings in audiences, it would seem that vids can be strongly affective fanworks. This indicates how vital it is that we begin to consider what music does in vids, how they make us experience "all the feels" and how this influences our understanding of them. Feels are part of what music does in vids, and feels are part of what makes vids speak. However, the foundational scholarship in this chapter was written before the affective turn in the humanities, and most later work sidesteps this developments. It is found, at times, in sound studies, where, on the other hand, the music is often only tenuously present (Kassabian 2013a), or the relationship between music and affect is reversed to consider affect's influence on music rather than music as influencing affects (Mowitt 2013). Therefore affect is less directly articulated in this chapter than is desirable. This creates a need for a more thorough grounding in affect in order to fully understand the role of feels in vids and vidding. As affect is where music and fandom intersects, and as a result of the gap in both musicology and fan studies relating to it, I realised I needed to involve affect theory directly in my work. Affect is therefore my focus in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Feeling the Feels: Affect

In chapters one and two I have outlined two fields which inform my work and my analyses, and at the end of both identified further gaps relating to affect. In this chapter, I explore theoretical bases for addressing that gap in my research. The idea of affective engagement and affective responses, i.e. the feels, runs through this project as a structuring and guiding principle. I build on the idea that the fan relationship - to text, to other fans, to fandom - is an affective one, and that one of the things fandom is is investing and expressing emotions relating to a text and its fandom. I also draw on the fact that music influences us emotionally and that it does so in particular ways when experienced as part of a vid. Much of what I am developing with this dissertation rests on the concept of music as able to, as I showed in chapter two, do "something" in audiovisual media, and that "something" has to do with narrative and emotions. In chapter one, I showed that vids are labouring as well as products of labour, they speak to and influence their audience, and do this through music and affect. Affect theory opens a view of vids and vidding which has space for complicated emotional attachments and engagements to exist and interact, not least as the vids I analyse all have a reflective engagement with fandom, which I return to in chapter four. I have come to think of what many of these vids do as 'critiquing with love'. This term synthesises two apparently opposing parts of fan engagement and show them to be aspects of the same feelings (Svegaard 2019). Feelings for the text, for fandom itself, for your fellow fan - all of which are complex and multifaceted, because that is what feelings are. I use the term 'feels' to encompass this contradictory, messy and often overwhelming affective response, something I explain further towards the end of this chapter.

To begin to account for this, affect theory becomes necessary as a framework, and in the following I explore this in further detail. Thereby, I build a basis for understanding what moves a fan to vid in a critically reflexive way and simultaneously what enables fans to receive that message, including what role music plays in this understanding. I begin with outlining some of the core works within affect theory, then move on to look more specifically at work about fandom and

affect, and finally define more specifically how I use terminology around affect and feels.

3.1 Affect Theory

The field of affect theory has experienced a rapid growth and spread in the 21st century, to the degree that there has been mention of an affective turn (Clough & Halley 2007), a turn that, as Kristyn Gorton (2007) shows, is present in a wide range of fields and disciplines. As outlined above, this is of interest to me because it opens up new ways of exploring fandom and, specifically, vids. That fandom has affective aspects is not a recent realisation (Click 2019, 15). Already Grossberg (1992) argues that it is affect, understood as investment of feelings and sense of importance, that distinguishes fans from audiences, and that the pleasure of a text is a key aspect for audiences. Fan feelings have been used to discredit fans, render them - especially young women and girls - irrational or duped (Jenson 1992). Conversely, fans' feelings have also been understood as motivator for their supposed resistance to the mainstream, in their insistence on creating for themselves the representation denied by the texts they are fans of (Ng 2017). However, with the appearance of a system of theory that can nuance affect and theorise its workings, there is a chance to also further nuance this as it relates to fans. Likewise, as outlined in the previous chapter, the fields interested in audiovisual music agree that music influences our feelings, but struggle to fully explain this, again there is a chance with affect theory to begin to explore this.

Affect theory is and can be many things, and it is therefore necessary to take a look at some of the developments of this theoretical discipline, not least in the understanding what affect is and if/how it might differ from emotion and/or feeling. As Gorton (2007, 334) shows, some scholars, like Elspeth Probyn (2005), sees a strong distinction between affect and emotion, while others, like Ngai (2009), do not. However, Gorton (2007) argues that this does not mean that any theorist ignores one side of the affective equation in favour of the other; rather, both are always present in their work. Joanne Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) further show the porous and slippery divides between concepts of emotion and affect. The authors outline some of the ways emotion has been understood as a mental aspect, while affect contains the bodily reactions to such emotions, and also that the aforementioned slippage happens in this divide too. My main inspiration comes from the work of Sara Ahmed,

who is herself building on the work of Silvan Tomkins (1963), which understands affect as a motivational system, to formulate her theory (Ahmed 2014a)[14]. As Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013, 31) also point out, Ahmed is one of the thinkers who works with the complexities of the divides within the pairs of affect/emotion, social/personal and the productive thoughts that lie in the areas where these divides interact and mix.

I am using Ahmed's approach to affect as my starting point because of how it engages with this slippery intersection between categories, and because her work engages with experiences that map onto fan affect - and she is interested in what emotions do more than what they are on their own (Click 2019, 13), a perspective I am taking for music. An important aspect of this mapping is the aforementioned ways in which she works to break down existing dichotomies and barriers between the concepts of 'feeling' and 'reason', 'mental' and 'physical' as well as the 'collective' and 'individual'. Our physical reactions to emotions show, according to Ahmed, that there is a commonality rather than an opposition between these pairs; we cannot separate our bodily reactions from our mental ones, nor our feelings from our reasoning. This bodily and mental co-reaction to emotional impact is a way into reading fan responses to texts. Due to Ahmed's work, I have been able to better understand and track these kinds of responses as expressions of fan affect when looking at vid comments. As she points out, the word 'emotion' means to move, and we are compelled to move by them (Ahmed 2014a, 11). When a fan expresses their emotional state through their inability to stay still, it connects to Ahmed's theory. I would also argue that Ahmed's examination of other emotions, particularly hate, would be a productive way of looking at the creation of anti-fan identities, though this aspect is outside the scope of this project.

Furthermore, Ahmed's (ibid.) focus on and use of the concepts of queerness and feminism align well with factors which play a part in fan critical reflection and critiquing with love. As, amongst others, Coppa (2011b) has pointed out, vidding is a space influenced by feminist perspectives, and Fielding (2020) has argued that fandom has queer norms. In the humanities, queer and feminist perspectives also often overlap, particularly where influenced by Judith Butler's (1990; 1993; 2004) work. Ahmed's (2010; 2014a) work focuses on the impact of norms on queer bodies,

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[14] First published in 2004.

and on queer grief; she works through what a societal "we" that largely excludes queer experiences mean. Her focus on feminist feelings is towards hope and the power to imagine a different world, different norms, which contrasts some of the other work on affect and feminism, that sees more of a challenge in this relationship, such as Ngai (2009) and Cvetkovich (2003). As Fielding's (2020) work shows, such norm creation is one point where Ahmed's theoretical framework is visibly expressed in fan activity.

Another key reason for drawing on Ahmed's work is her concept of emotions as "sticky"; they stick to bodies and texts and imbue objects with meaning (Ahmed 2014a, 11-13, 89-95, 194-5), and in the process they construct us as subjects to ourselves and others as objects (ibid., 92). This property of stickiness or transmission, especially, is relevant when analysing vids. Fans place meaning in the texts they are fans of, and common readings of particular moments in texts take on a life of their own, solidifies into a commonly accepted interpretation sometimes referred to as 'fanon', a portmanteau of 'fan' and 'canon' (Fanlore, No date given). Fanon is taken as near canonical - except that everyone knows it is not. One example of fanon is the fleshing out of characters based on very brief appearances in the text, such as Arthur (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) and Eames (Tom Hardy) in *Inception* (Nolan 2010), who are also a case in which the few moments of interaction between the two characters created a shorthand for how and why to 'ship' the two with each other. Moments relying on fanon appear in vids as shorthand to signal to fellow fans that there is a particular reading of the text happening, as Jenkins (2006b) explains with the use of clips and contextualisation in *Closer* (Jonesy & Killa 2003). The vidder's own feelings are stuck in with the clips, imbuing the entire vid with meaning and emotion. Following the feels expands on Jenkins' understanding of the role of fanon clips from shared knowledge of a clip to shared affect related to it. A fan with similar knowledge of the text can easily decode this emotion, feel it stick to them in turn, influencing them as they experience the vid. As Ahmed (2014a, 9) writes, "signs" become sticky, they are not inherently so, and the meaning that is attached with that stickiness is culturally constructed. Fandom/s constitute culture/s, placing emotional meaning into the objects they create to express the same emotions, encode them in the fan product for fellow fans to decode and be affected by in turn, though as Ahmed (ibid., 10) also shows, not everyone responds equally to the same feeling. In essence, the shorthand moments and fanon knowledge are such signs. Ahmed's way of

conceptualising emotions show them to be performative and iterative (ibid., 13) and the circulation of moments of emotional import within fandom is exactly a performance of iterative affect.

Ahmed (2010) further develops her concept of emotions when focusing on the meaning of happiness. Here, she suggests that being unhappy and exposing the norms that allow for happiness can be a productive point of resistance. What we might refer to as negative emotions, such as anger or sadness, can thus be motivators for action. Through a comparative understanding of Susanna Paasonen's (2013) idea of 'resonance' with the idea of resonance in the music and sound studies work of Veit Erlmann (2014) and Michel Chion (1994), I have previously argued (Svegaard 2019) that such motivation is one of the ways in which fannish critique can be understood and, indeed, is constructed. The work of Lauren Berlant (2011; 2012) can be used to further understand how fannish critique and emotion interplay. Like Ahmed's (2010) writing about the norms of happiness, Berlant's (2012) thoughts about how the norms of what constitutes a good life and, conversely, resistance to this norm, can be constructed out of fantasy, shows another aspect of fan emotional engagement. Berlant also allows for the space in which critiquing with love can happen through the affective relationship between fan and text. In her concepts of the interplay between "the pleasure principle" and "the death drive" (ibid., 25), Berlant understands the simultaneous wish to destroy and preserve an object of desire. A fan's reflective relationship with a text is emblematic of this. The desire for more of a text, for a deeper relationship with it, co-exists with the need to point out its flaws, wish for it to do better, to tear away that which is not up to par. Both are part of the love, and the inherent contradiction is expressed in the overwhelming sense of feels. Through Ahmed (2010) and Berlant (2011; 2012), it is possible to better understand both fannish affective links to texts and fellow fans, but also to better understand the ways in which criticality and fannishness can co-exist. With this in mind, I move on to look at how fan studies and affect have intersected before.

3.2 Fannish Affect

Given that there is a widespread understanding that fandom and feelings go hand in hand, it is surprising that the affective turn has not influenced fan studies more than it has. As mentioned above, the interest within fan studies for exploring affect goes back to at least 1992 (Grossberg 1992), and with it a desire to see affect as more than

something used to cast the fan as an affectively compromised or labile character. Yet, this interest seems to permeate fan studies as an undercurrent rather than as an explicitly examined aspect. However, some work exists which makes more direct progress in integrating affect into fan studies, which I now turn my attention to.

Beginning with Grossberg's early work can illuminate how the understanding of fan affect has developed since. Grossberg uses affect to offer a taxonomi of fans, where the level of affective engagement is a factor. This approach appears dated now, for example when Grossberg suggests that collector fans are not affectively engaged in their fandom, which has since been disputed (Duffett 2012, 179-184). A collection represents a large investment in time and money, which means that the collector most certainly cares (Geraghty 2014). Hills (2002, 90-95) reworks Grossberg's ideas and uses affect in fandom as a way to think about the fan's possibility for identifying with the object of their fandom. This provides a way of thinking about why fans create; that fanworks allow not just more content, but also more to identify with and feel for. Both of these relatively early forays into affect in fandom deal with fan creations in a way that presupposes that the creating fan is creating with positive emotions behind and in mind; there is love but not critique.

While fans may be characterised as having positive affective relations with their fandom or fan object, these feelings are not always returned from the media production side. Melanie E. S. Kohnen (2018) shows how fan affect can be rendered problematic and divided in a gendered way through official transmedia stories, which seek to guide fan affect in particular ways. Where Grossberg (1992) shows that popular culture matters to fans, Kohnen (2018) finds that the way this mattering is expressed is not equally desired from the production side. The affects that provide profit, ie. collecting, shopping for merchandise etc. are the desired kind. The undesired kind is often the transformative works, which do not directly generate income and can be understood as excessive from the production side. However, this excess is shown by Grossberg (1992) to be present also in rock fans' direct engagement with music, thereby problematising the divide that producers construct. The dismissal of deep emotional engagements through transformative works shows that fandom is not always considered an immediate positive for a media property. A dedicated fanbase can drive buzz and keep engagement with the text high, but if they engage in ways that run counter to the property owners' wishes, trouble appears. Fan affect is not only a matter for fans themselves, but also for those who create the

media they are fans of. However, as I mentioned in my reading of Ahmed (2010; 2014a) and Berlant (2011; 2012) above, fan affects are complex, and these complexities can also be present in fanwork creation, which is where both the concept of critiquing with love and my particular use of feels stem from.

Fan activism can be viewed as expressions of what we culturally accept as being positive feelings - such as happiness, love and excitement. For example the way Wonder Woman fans ans use their identification with the superhero to engage in charity work, in what Matt Yockey (2012) refers to as displays of public emotions that recirculate affective agency gained from this identification. The central affective note in this practice is a "compassion that critiques hegemony" (ibid., 1.1), and a relationship with Wonder Woman's long history as a utopian and feminist icon which motivates a desire to change the world. Not all fandom affect is positive in these ways, but as I wrote above, complex emotions also open up for critical engagement, and love and anger can co-exist. In her work on Lady Gaga fans, Lise Dilling-Hansen (2015) describes both the positive sides of fandom, but also that the struggle to get closer to Lady Gaga was a source of frustration and despair for some fans. She also observed in-fandom struggling regarding how to be a "good fan" and live up to perceived codes of conduct within fandom. Such conflict in the individual fan as well as in the larger fandom can lead to negative affective responses, such as the mentioned frustration and despair, but also anger, resentment and attempts at shaming other fans for not being good enough (ibid., 5.4, 5.5, 6.3, 6.4).

The negative reaction can also be to the text, and fan critique can be nuanced and engage with the text on several levels, be it through analytical writing or in transformative works (Stein 2019; Svegaard 2019). This is a form of disagreement, that Hills (2002, 28) also touched on regarding fans disagreeing with showrunners. At times, fan disagreement tips over into anti-fandom, or anti-fans are drawn to aspects of a text that they find unacceptable. Gray (2003, 70) defines an anti-fan as someone who is "bothered, insulted or otherwise assaulted by its presence", it being the fan text. When reaching this side of fandom, love and happiness give way to feelings like hate, anger, disgust and hurt. However, anti-fan affect can be equally community building and intense as fan affect (Jones 2015). The history of anti-fan research shows that the two are very closely related also in the specific feelings expressed (Click 2019) and indeed that negative feelings are an intrinsic part of many fan experiences (Stein 2019). Indeed, as Stein (ibid., 85) argues, the meme "right in

the feels", a common descriptor of an affective fan response, connotes pain, though it is a pain that comes out of a deep attachment with the text. These emotions are therefore not in themselves markers of anti-fandom, but can be an expression of any kind of fan engagement, as can enjoyment and pleasure. Instead, the divide between fan and anti-fan is the primacy of the feelings associated and how they associate to the fandom and text. It is a question of whether the mode of critique is based on a sentiment like 'I love this, but it fails in these ways' or 'this is wrong and cannot be redeemed', while the fan/anti-fan still retains the passionate engagement that marks out fannishness.

That fandom and critique can sit side by side with relative ease has been my argument so far, but this is not always the case - especially not when the critique is levelled at fandom itself and touches upon sensitive topics. This is the case for Pande's (2018) formative work on race and fandom. Pande (ibid., 13-17) shows that the character of the fandom killjoy, parallel to Ahmed's (2014a) concept of the feminist killjoy, is a site of contestation and aggression within fandom itself. Her research shows a deep contrast between what I have argued around fannish critique of texts and what she has found regarding fannish critique of racism in fandom. Such critique does not sit easily next to fannish love and community building, and is uttered at risk for those who speak up, particularly fans of colour. This contrast only highlights my point in chapter one that we must not fall into the habit of understanding fandom as a force for progressiveness. Fan activism can as easily be turned against fellow fans and towards conservatism as it can towards progressive ideals of inclusivity and representation.

Russo's (2017) article on queer goggles in fandom, which I mentioned in chapter one, applies affect to vids and provides a link between vids, music and affect that I want to explore further. In the following quote, she expands on Turk's (2015) earlier work and shows how music is both structurally and emotionally a guiding principle for vidding:

> "Beyond offering interpretive cues, "music is the throughline of a vid...[and] thus a crucial factor in whether the audience experiences a vid as a coherent whole" (2015, 167). Song choice also carries, in large part, the affective tone and impact of the vid (in Internet vernacular, the "feels")." (Russo, 2017, 1.9)

Russo draws out the fannish affect in both creation and reception of fanworks, and looks at music as an affective communicator in vids. The above quote also

demonstrates the reason why affect is central to my research; it is a link between vids, music, vidding practice, and fans. These links are like a web of affective engagements, drawing threads between vidders, vids and audiences, and between audience members. Lastly, Russo's use of the term "feels" is also of special interest to me, and what I focus on in the last part of this chapter.

However, before I do so, it is necessary to also use this moment to further discuss vocabulary and nomenclature. As part 3.2 begins to show, the ways in which affect has been addressed is influenced by a - often deliberate - lack of clarity. The use of terminology is influenced by the slippages between words and concepts, and the ways in which different thinkers use them in different ways - as also evidenced in the few examples of the use of "feels" above. By basing my work on Ahmed's (2010; 2014a), I embrace this slippage as an integral part of what "feels" means and does in fan affect as something overwhelming, multi-faceted and complex. This deliberate lack of one clear definition should not come at the cost of understanding or clarity. Therefore, my use of the terms 'feeling', 'emotion' and 'affect' is more singular, yet as per the nature of affect work not fully so. The aforementioned slippages are part of how affect becomes a useful analytical tool, allowing for uncertainties and mixes of aspects of affect. In general, I use 'affect' to mean the complex and both-and ways in which we are experiencing something affective, while emotion is used to point to specific emotions. Meanwhile, the use of 'feeling' is multiple in itself, as it is also influenced by the use of this term in musicology, where the 'feel' of a song or 'feeling' of a voice is a way in which to denote a quality of the music, while the ways in which this feeling might influence a listener is something I conceive of as the music having an affective register to go with its tonal registers. 'Feeling' in this text can also be a less-specific, slipping or multiple emotional state.

3.3 All the Feels

Feels as a term became present in this project very early on. Then a relatively new internet vernacular, it is now in more general use. It has been, for example, used in film titles (*The Feels* (LaMarque 2017), in letters to BBC radio's film review programme,[15] causing a discussion between the hosts as to the meaning of the term. I first came across the term on tumblr, known for generating slang in its tagging system especially, and while it may not originate there, it is likely at least partially

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[15] As an aside on that note: Hello to Jason Isaacs.

responsible for the spread of the term. For further discussion of tumblr and other internet language, I refer to Gretchen McCulloch (2019). Whatever the origins, feels is a term that is uniquely suited to talk about fannish affect, and thus I want to outline its academic use as well.

I already mentioned Russo's use of the term above, where she defines feels as an internet vernacular term for "affective tone and impact" (Russo, 2017, 1.9). Anna Wilson's (2016) work on affect in fanfic also uses the term, though she does not define it. Wilson theorises fic as a form of reception that is grounded in feelings and sees fic as an affective hermeneutics and interpretive tool, which is guided by feels (ibid., 1.3). She links this tool to Sedgwick's concept of reparative readings (ibid., 2.6) in that both insist on reading while guided by a positive relationship with the text. Wilson's reparative reading through feels can be understood as another form of critiquing with love, but one that reads with the text and redeems it, rather than point out its failings. (An inverse application can easily be theorised, and may well be applied to the concept of hate-watching (or -reading) something.) Like fic, vids can be understood as a form of reception (Freund 2018). With Wilson's work it is possible to also see vidding as a reception guided by feels, given that one way of describing vids is as a form of visual fic (ibid.) and also through Gray's concept of vids as a vidder's path through the text (Gray 2010).

Stein's conceptualisation of feels is, however, the one I find most useful. Stein (2015, 14) defines feels as "collective affect", and later on shows that fandom can be understood as a "feels culture" (ibid., 156) in which emotions remain intimate but no longer private, much like Ahmed's (2014a) point about emotions being public and collective. This feels culture functions by building an intimate collective: a fandom. In Stein's model, emotions are what fuels transformative creativity and defines creative communities of fans (Stein 2015, 156). Kohnen (2018, 339) uses feels to denote fan affect as something that is collective and, in her words, a "strong emotional attachment" and distinguishes this from the bodily responses in some affect theory. My use of 'feels' differes from Kohnen's in encompassing all these aspects rather than separate them. 'Feels' can contain the sharing and resharing of emotional engagement, the creative impulse from ones' attachments to a text, the experience of having these feelings received and mirrored by others. However, feels are, in my work, also immediate and messy, bodily and cerebral at the same time,

much like Ahmed (2014a) uses affect. This use of feels as affect in a fan context marks a departure from the above works.

Furthermore, feels is a useful shorthand in and of itself. In its use, it generally means something overwhelming, or "high emotion" (Stein 2015, 9), something that is so big it cannot be expressed easily. The term 'all the feels' is currently in the dictionary Merriam-Websters catalogue of words to watch, with a beginning etymology reaching back to 2010 (Merriam-Webster, No date given). As Gretchen McCulloch (2019) shows, internet language, which the term feels belongs to, has a special need for ways of discussing emotion, as we cannot easily convey our tone of voice in text. This gives rise to other forms of communication than pure text, such as gifs and emoticons, but we also still use words. McCulloch shows the typology of the keysmash (ibid., 17) to "signal a feeling so intense that you can't possibly type real words." The keysmash, then, is an expression of feels, just as the exclamation of "right in the feels!" or indeed "all the feels" is. It is an expression of that which is inexpressible in detail, because the shared, collective fan emotion is simply too big and amorphous, too multiple, to put into succinct words; feels are immediate and meant to be performed to those who are expected to share them.

This also means that feels are neither positive nor negative, but always undefined, blurry and plastic. Feels, then, is a term that can carry much meaning, from the deeply anguished to the overjoyed - as long as it is intensely and (at least performatively) genuinely felt by the person uttering the term. This complexity again brings back Berlant's (2012) duality of pleasure principle/death wish in that feels can encompass both at once. Sianne Ngai's (2010) explanation of cuteness as something which both inspires a need to protect and aggression is similar; an expression of affection so strong that it can be destructive. Ngai's cuteness, being linked to female domesticity and consumerism (ibid., 949), is not unlike fandom in itself; fans reacting with overwhelming feels to texts is, perhaps, a response that matches that inspired by cuteness. Ultimately, being a fan is feeling feels, being part of a fandom is experiencing those feels as shared, whether it is through the knowledge that others are watching the same thing as you and also having responses, through seeing blogposts you disagree with, being angered at your favourite TV show's failures, or sharing emotional engagement through fanworks.

3.4 Feels as Affect: A conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have explored affect theory, including how I am basing my use of this particular field primarily on the work of Sara Ahmed (2010; 2014a). Ahmed's work provides a way of thinking about feelings as something that is imbued into fandom and fan texts, and communicated through fanworks and fan interactions. Her breaking down of dichotomies of reason, emotion, body and mind are also useful to consider a community which exists both online and off with the digital presence being the primary interaction between most fans. Furthermore, this breaking down also allows for complex and seemingly contradictory feelings to co-exist and to be expressed as bodily responses as well as mental ones, something that can be expressed in words and text, but is experienced as embodied.

Looking at existing work on fandom and affect, I have traced the use of the term 'feels' and how it is employed to explain and describe fandom, especially in the way that Stein does to understand fandom as a "feels culture". Using Ahmed's work to read with and through some of the existing work on fan affect, I come to the conclusion that feels are affect. The complexities inherent in the use of the term affect can be encompassed in the term feels as well, though one is largely academic and the other largely vernacular. Feels and affect are both used to describe disparate and contradictory experiences, and break down divides between personal and communal, body and mind, in their attempts to articulate experiences which are both. In the feels culture of fandom, feels/affect is a foundational experience. Fans declare themselves fans because of feelings, they gather with and seek out fellow fans who share those feelings. In this sharing and consolidation of fan cultures, they use transformative fanworks as part of the exchange and sharing of feels, and vids are uniquely placed to do this because of the way music also works through our emotions.

In my work, I use feels in a way that is an expansion of the previous use of the word in work on fan affect and feels. I ground it in Ahmed's affect, while retaining the ideas of feels as strong emotional attachments as well as something which connects fans and forms a foundation for fan cultures. Much like feels are the binding factor of fandom/s, affect theory is the binding theory of this thesis. As I showed in chapter two, music communicates emotions that can be experienced affectively, as I show in the analyses, and this is utilised in audiovisual media such as vids. The experience of music can result in feels, the surge of emotion that takes over

and makes a foot tap or a tear roll. In audiovisual texts like vids, these music-induced feelings help tell the story or argue the point of the text. From the above it can be seen that fans are fans largely because of feelings around and for a text, and that fan creations come out of this as a part of the affective reception in fandom. Feels, then, provide the link between music and fans; they are the glue in the thesis as well as the glue in the vids themselves.

In the previous three chapters, I outlined my theoretical basis for my work. I showed how vids and fan productions have previously been studied, how vids have been analysed, how music can be considered in audiovisual works, and how affect is the theory that can bring together these fields into a theoretical framework for analysing vids. Having established this, I now turn to my methodology and explain how the above can be turned into an analytical model, and how I examined vids and their ability to communicate complex concepts and emotions.

Chapter 4

How to Analyse Vids and Vidding

This chapter explains my methods for gathering data and analysing them, how I created what I came to consider an ethnography of vids, and how to apply the theoretical framework established in chapters one to three to study vids and vidding. My methodology is interdisciplinary in several ways. It uses textual analysis as part of its ethnographic methods (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007) to give a comprehensive picture of how vids function as affective objects and what the role of music is in their doing so, while the textual analysis itself is a combination of approaches from different fields, which I return to in more detail later. For this reason, it is possible to understand my work as either textual analysis of vids supported by ethnographic study, or as an ethnography of vids themselves as objects that move through fan and vidding spaces drawing and marking affective links. My thinking on this has changed over time, and I now believe it began as the former, but is the latter. By viewing my research as an ethnography of vids, I allow the vids to speak, but maintain that they do not exist outside of their culture nor are divorced from their creators' intents. In using textual analysis as part of the ethnography, I nuance the understanding of the fanworks analysed in this project and center the text and creator together, aiming to avoid the dual risk of othering the fan through ethnography or erasing the creating fan through textual analysis (Evans & Stasi, 2014). Furthermore, adding the perspective of vid audiences, a consideration of the role of vids as speech becomes possible, viewing them as objects that communicate (through) feels. In order to do so, it is necessary to analyse vids as objects which use music as well as images and lyrics to speak, and to further examine the role music plays as a communicator of the affective part of this form of speech.

In the following, I show how I built this ethnography of vids, beginning with my methods for interviewing vidders and studying the reception of vids in online spaces. Subsequently, I consider my position as researcher and the ethics of this study, then explain how I created and used an expanded analytical method, and finally outline my corpus selection.

4.1 An Ethnography of Vids

From the inception of this study, I was interested in examining how vids communicate the vidders' intents and feelings. My reasons for this were that looking at the vidder's idea for the vid's argument and the reception of the same vid is a way of finding out how the encoding and decoding of vids as texts happen, and to what degree the arguments in vids are successfully communicated. With ethnographic methods I can assess the function of music in vids by examining if and how authorial intent and reception are congruent. Textual analysis is a part of this understanding, allowing me to go in-depth to understand how, why and what the vids are communicating and find if they communicate as intended, and what it is that audiences are reacting to. In the following, I explain my ethnographic work, interviews and online observation, then move on to consider my position as researcher.

Using ethnography in fan studies is a praxis with as long a history as the field itself, with for instance the work of Penley (1991) as an early example. The way in which ethnography is used has, however, changed a good deal over the years, particularly regarding the position of and view from the researcher position. Stein (2015), for example, takes a different approach than Bacon-Smith (1992). Both observe and participate in fandom activities, the former primarily online, while the latter wrote before the internet came to prominence as a social gathering space. Likewise, their view of fans shift from Bacon-Smith's distanced and somewhat othering perspective to Stein's more personally engaged and affirming stance. In addition, the growth and now relative dominance of online spaces as sites for fan activity has called for methods to be developed which can better research these. The field of online ethnography seeks to address this and has been in rapid growth as online spaces have themselves become more and more important sites for academic study. My own work also deals with these spaces, primarily as sites for distribution and reception of vids, but also as places to meet research participants. Digital platforms have provided the sites for the majority of my interviews as well.

When embarking on the ethnographic research, I wanted to ensure that I had and maintained a dialogic (Bakhtin 1981) relationship with the vidders who participate/d, and that I portrayed them and their experiences as nuanced and accurately as possible. Doing so also ensures a certain polyvocality to come into play and thus a more open and varied approach to understanding vidding. Paula Saukko's

(2003, 89-92) work attempts an analytical strategy of contrasting the informants' stories against each other; this process has formed a basis for my approach. Comparing and contrasting vidders' processes and responses to each other as well as to my own analyses allowed me a nuanced view of vidding as art and process. As Saukko argues, different participants might experience the same discourses in widely differing ways. For the participating vidders, it is a way of using their own viewpoints to nuance each other's and as a way into a deeper understanding of vidding.

As such, the participating vidders can be likened to research partners, whose input I weigh and consider as I work. This, however, calls for a high degree of self-reflexivity (ibid., 84-88) in my work as it is imperative to maintain academic rigour. My dual position as fan and researcher only increases this need. I am aware that in seeing vidders as research partners and by interviewing them about the vids I am analysing, I am privileging authorial intent. I chose to do so because the ways in which vids do or do not communicate is at the centre of my research project. Therefore, I have to be attentive to what the intended messages were, understand why a particular song was chosen, and compare that to the reception as well as my own analysis. By being aware that I have made this choice, I am also aware that this intent should not overpower my analyses. Instead, my reading, the vidder's intent and the reception enter into a discussion about what the actual meaning/s of a vid can be.

To reach the point where such a discussion was possible, I interviewed vidders. For the first part of the primary research, I conducted seven semi-structured, open-ended interviews. I chose this approach because there were key questions and themes I wanted to ensure were covered. At the same time, I wanted to let the conversation flow and see which direction it took and where the vidders themselves felt that emphasis should be placed. This method allowed the vidders to speak about their work in as open a fashion as they were comfortable with and allowed their priorities and values to come to the front, while I could guide the conversation if needed. Due to the wide geographical spread of vidders, most of the interviews took place via online means of communication, with two being text-based chats, one being face to face and four being via video chat. All voice-based interviews were recorded and saved on a dedicated drive, which was kept separate from any other access points for privacy reasons. I also took notes during the interviews, and in one case this became relevant as large parts of the recording was corrupted and

unplayable. To further protect the identities of the vidders, I have included anonymised samples from two of the interviews, one text based and one voice based, in the appendices. Five of the vidders were based in the continental North America, and two were in the United Kingdom. While vidders are found worldwide, this selection reflects the anglophone media of the vids, which skewed toward texts produced in the USA. Interviewing vidders also presented challenges in terms of logistics - finding time, ways to meet or communicate - as well as in collecting seven individual voices into something unified. This meant quickly abandoning an early idea of finding universality in the interviews. Initially, I had the notion that perhaps something about how vidders thought of or used music would be similar and that this could be a finding, but because of the very different ways our conversations played out, I stopped consciously looking for such things - it did not fit the actual ways the data collection was working out. Yet despite this, some commonalities still presented themselves, but in a less concrete way.

In deciding on this method, and in order to be able to construct an interview manual, I looked at existing work which uses and/or explains this method, as well as at previous work on vidders and film/TV creators, which have employed similar methods. My choice has been informed by previous work using semi-structured interviews, such as Barbara DiCicco-Bloom and Benjamin F Crabtree (2006), which provided an overview of this interview method and technique in addition to the more in-depth examination found in Steinar Kvale's (1997) work on conducting research interviews. As Paul Booth (2013) shows, there is a tradition of using interviews in fan studies. For examples of how to interview vidders, Coppa's (2011b; 2010; 2014b) series of interviews have formed a starting point, as has vidder Counteragent's (2012) interview with fellow vidder Bradcpu. Interviewing vidders was a vital step in understanding how vids function and what goes into the process of vidding with a message in mind. However, to see if the vids were communicating what was intended, I also needed to look at their reception.

To examine reception of vids and the ways and extents to which a vid's message or narrative is understood by vid audiences, I employed online ethnography, more specifically a form of online observation, where I examined commentary attached to the vids on different online sites. Defining the space in which I am observing was not done along lines of particular fandoms, nor limited to specific platforms. Instead, I looked wherever I could find the vids shared with an audience.

This led to looking at a wide range of online media fandom, and tracking down multiple postings of the same vid across different platforms, each of which could be understood as a space in their own right and which had different norms for comments and interactions. Given the amount of different online spaces, the observed conduct vary through different established cultural codes. In addition, fandom practice changes over time, and this must also be considered due to the more than ten years between the earliest and latest vid included in the corpus. Fandom has changed a lot in that time, but it is a period where I have myself been active in fandom and experienced these changes first hand, which allowed me to be aware of and account for them. This includes, not least, the move away from journaling sites like LiveJournal onto tumblr, with archives consolidating around Archive of Our Own (AO3),[16] and lately the increased uses of Twitter and Discord.

As Robert Kozinets (2015) points out, online methods have limitations in understanding interpersonal relations. As observer, I might not be able to gather the complex social relations between the commenters, and between commenters and vidders, leaving me oblivious to such factors (unless stated) as whether or not these people are acquainted already, are vidders, have watched vids before, or are having a first time reaction to vids and/or to the creator. Adding to this is the different affordances of different social networks, which also shape how interactions take place. There is a world of difference between tumblr's reblogging, Twitter's short micro-posts, and AO3's longer, threaded conversations in terms of community and affordances (Bury 2017). My own experiences as fan, vid watcher and fanworks creator does, however, allow me to be aware of these factors and be able to take them into consideration. Threaded comments like those on AO3 and the journaling sites (Busker 2008) are chronological, time stamped and nested in conversation threads, making them dialogic. On tumblr, the dialogic aspect is harder to trace because of the site's structure (Morimoto & Stein 2018), and comments are often shown in tags (Hoch 2018) that are not visible in overviews of posts. This makes tumblr engagements much harder to follow, but I did my best to capture these comments,

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[16] This archive, often referred to as AO3, is a fan run and fan financed independent archive, which hosts fanworks. It has become a hub for reading, writing, art creating and viewing fans, but less so for vidders as the archive does not currently have the capacity to host vids, due to the sizes of vid files. Instead, it is possible to embed vids hosted on YouTube, Vimeo and vidders.net into the archive, which makes them searchable to the audience. There is also no category or official tag or search term for vids on AO3, meaning the infrastructure is not quite there on this front either, with vidders and audiences relying on ad hoc created tagging practices to make vids searchable.

though the risk of overlooking something is greater there. All sites also have comments and users disappearing over time, resulting in gaps that become larger over time, meaning that the older vids have less comprehensive commentary now than the newer ones.

In praxis, I looked at the comments on the vids' primary postings, wherever they might be, looked at cross-postings to other sites where available, as well as searched for possible reaction posts by other fans. I have found these by a mix of internal search engines on the sites as well as through general search engines. For audience reactions, I have, in particular, looked for responses that commented on the vids in terms of message or argument, for responses to particular moments and matches with music (including lyrics), and for expressions of affective impact and feels. Through this approach, I have been able to consider a section of responses by audiences that show the communicative abilities of the vids as well as what roles music and feels play in the understanding of these vids. However, my choice to safeguard commenters' identities means that there is less nuance and detail in my analysis of comments than could be desired. This choice is based in my research ethics, which I expand on below.

Working with participants directly in the interviews as well as observing online spaces required thorough considerations of ethics and research position, which I explain next. Within fan studies, there is a long tradition of the aca-fan, a term often attributed to Henry Jenkins (Deller 2018; Garner 2018) and similar positions of intersections between academic and fan (Hills 2002). A similar tradition of the vid scholar who vids exists, such as Stein (2017) and Alexis Lothian (Busse & Lothian 2011). I, too, am such a fan-scholar-vidder-academic, something which requires me to constantly negotiate my position to ensure academic rigour, especially as parts of my research are influenced by my own experiences and networks as both fan and academic.

Fan studies scholars come from different disciplines, and we bring with us different ethical and methodological frameworks. Adrienne Evans and Mafalda Stasi (2014) outline some of the differences in method and ethics that stem from this interdisciplinarity, and how these lead to different ethical approaches. If one is concerned primarily with text as text and not with the creators, then considering consent is not necessarily a concern that immediately arises. In contrast, ethnography has a focus on human research, where consent has come to be a central

concern. Or, as Thessa Jensen (2016) puts it, it is about whether we are working with data or persons. Jensen also points out that, in fandom, a text is never just a text, it is also a cultural artefact and connected with the (fan) culture around it, leading her to call for the text to be treated as if it were a person. She recommends that we see the work as an extension of the fan, and bear in mind that we are also engaging with the person when we engage with their fanworks. Building on Jensen, my process of interviewing the vidders strengthens the ethical position by engaging directly with the person as well as their work and gives agency to the fans as producers/creators as well as through their works.

This leads to the conclusion that we must consider consent and wider ethical issues, such as the risk of harm, when working with texts as well as when working with people. This approach also aligns with the guidelines suggested by the journal *Transformative Works and Cultures* (Hellekson & Busse 2009) on how to conduct research involving fans. The editorial guidelines for the journal have also formed part of my considerations regarding masking links to individual posts and, especially, comments on vid postings. While the participating vidders have consented to their words and posts being shared, the commenters on those posts have not, and for this reason I do not link directly to any posts, nor do I quote verbatim from comments, as this would make it far too easy to discover the identity of the commenters. For the vidders (save one) as well as the commenters, the fannish praxis of using pseudonyms also adds a layer of anonymity, though this is not enough to avoid potential harm as it is fairly simple to find an email address associated with an account name, or even attempt to discover an IP and reveal someone's location. This has further cemented my decision to avoid quotes and links.

Position is also a matter of identity markers and demographic factors. I made the choice early on to not enquire about demographic information when interviewing vidders, though some commented on such factors unprompted. This is something I would have done differently had I started today, not least because of the growing realisation that fan studies and fandom has a problem with racism and whose voices are heard (Pande 2018; Rouse & Stanfill 2021), and the focus on race and representation in chapter six. Given this realisation on my own part as well, I would have liked to enquire on how race and intersecting identities such as gender, ability and sexual orientation might influence a vidder's point of view and how they argue through their vids. There is also my own place as a white, queer man in (vidding)

fandom, which is dominated by women and their (fan)work (Stevens 2020, 13). Because of this disparity and the privilege of a white male academic, I had to take extra care to acknowledge and mark the role of women in fandom and vidding as well as my own whiteness. Otherwise, I risked perpetuating the structures of privilege already in place and speaking over the people I worked with rather than let them speak for themselves. I did not entirely succeeded in this, as my own analyses make up the bulk of the word count in this study, though the role of authorial intent in this study goes some way towards a better balance. An awareness and counter of privilege is a goal I continue to have and work towards.

As I have built and executed this research project, my ethical considerations have been constantly negotiated. Part of that is informed by experiences of friends, who have faced consequences in their life, including loss of employment or relationships, as a result of being outed as transformative fans, and my own worries that the same could happen to me. Similarly, the public exposure of fanworks, even when credited pseudonymously, has had consequences for other fans, as well as been the subject of discussions between myself and fellow fans, where the consensus tends to be that fans prefer to be able to consent to works being exposed in any way or form outside of fandom. In the aforementioned article, Jensen (2016) calls for an ontological ethics in fan studies, and for researchers to consider each case on a one-to-one basis rather than employ a more rigid framework, which might not be able to account for the individual fan's needs. I have incorporated Jensen's suggestion in working with participating vidders separately to find a level of anonymity and protection that suits that individual, including the option to withdraw from the project at any time up until submission.

My experience so far, when I have asked vidders if I might use their vids for research purposes, is that they appreciate being asked and often consent. All of these factors have led me to adopt a strict principle of ensuring vidder consent before I work with or present their vids. This does, however, create a problem in terms of whose voices get represented in the research. Vidders might have left fandom, closed the account I found them through, changed their pseudonym, died, or lost internet access for any number of reasons. Any vidder in these circumstances will not be able to give consent, which in turn silences their vids and their critical reflections. This is a definite loss to research, much as lost vids are in themselves a loss to the

community (Wille 2015). Next I explain my method for vid analysis, then return to the issues around vid selection.

4.2 Analysing Vids

The textual analysis method I have used is a key innovation of my research project and forms the last part of the ethnography of vids. In the simplest terms, it fuses methods from musicology and media studies to perform a textual analysis, which takes both the visual and aural parts of a vid into account and analyses through both. In her book on vids, Stevens (2020) outlines a method for studying vids through qualitative textual analysis based in television studies. Stevens and Gray (2010), along with other scholars who have researched vids and vidding, such as Coppa (2008a; 2009a; 2008b), Russo (2009a; 2009b; 2009c) and Stein (2015; 2008; 2010), establish that a form of textual analysis is suitable for the study of vids, though all fall short of engaging with music in full while also attempting to include it. Stevens's (2020, 49) goal is to "take the vid seriously as form in its own right", which Alan McKee (2007) also argues when stating that we as scholars must take fanworks as seriously as we take any other text and use analytical tools to match. Stevens (2020, 49) further argues that textual analysis allows for a "rich analysis that can draw out a vid's textual density". The above use lyrics as a shorthand for music, something I mentioned in chapters one and two; lyrics are important in vids, but should not erase the music.

Vids are remix art, and one way of thinking of them is as post-structural works; they literally deconstruct a text in order to examine and reflect on it through reconfiguration. As such, there is an argument to be made for all vids having an element of critique regardless of their argument. This is supported by Lothian (2015), who shows that both an intended critical vid and one that is seemingly not can be understood as critical reflections on the source, and that vids which are not explicitly critical also work through deconstruction. By picking the source apart and reconstructing it to show a particular emphasis or interpretive path through the text, a vid is always a work of textual analysis, though with varying degrees of nuancing. Given this, it is fitting to use textual analysis to understand how vids themselves perform their analyses. Such an analysis can take many forms, but since I am interested in better understanding the role of music as part of vidding language and communication, I have created a method which is aimed at discovering this.

I argue that including music is key to fully understanding vids. They are multi-media art works, gestamtkunstwerke, and by ignoring one medium and centering the other(s), there is a risk of ignoring a third of the text (half if the vid has no lyrics). To analyse vids comprehensively, it is necessary to take into account music, lyrics and image in combination and as a whole. As I demonstrated in chapter one, previous work on vids, as most work on music videos (see chapter two), have not engaged with music as part of the analysis in any detailed manner, with a few notable exceptions, particularly Turk (2015) and Treadwell (2018). Turk (2015) explores the vidding process and how vidders choose and use music for their specific purposes, as well as how music transforms the images and is in turn itself transformed through vidding. Treadwell (2018) opens for a musical analysis influenced vid analysis, where she takes into account the use and impact of, for example, particular chords and rhythmic structures of music as part of her analysis, resulting in a reading of vids that brings some musical elements into the understanding of the vids' arguments. In doing so, Treadwell opens for such a method and shows how much even relatively brief analyses with elements of music can bring to vidding scholarship. These two form precedents for my own method, Turk (2015) through the understanding of what music means in the vidding process, and Treadwell (2018) in showing that music can inform and enhance a textual analysis of vids. My contribution is to do both, and in particular expand on the work Treadwell began with a more consistent use of music analysis through whole vids, with consideration of more elements of music (Liljedahl, 2019) than she included, and with the specific focus on affect as part of what the music brings to vids.

In order to do so, I once more look to film music analysis, which, as I showed in chapter two, is concerned with music's function in audiovisual media, especially as a communicator and as a way of imbuing feelings. I combine this with the methods for textually analysing vids that have previously been used. As such, this method is, like my theoretical foundation, an interdisciplinary one, which adds itself to fan studies' tradition for such methods (Evans & Stasi, 2014) and in the process adds music analysis to the range of methods employed within fan studies. In the following, I further explain the textual analysis bases for my method as well as the musical analysis bases, and how I have combined them.

In chapter one, I found that close readings of lyrics with image is a common factor in several scholarly works. This existing work also takes slightly different

approaches to how to analyse vids, while using fundamentally similar techniques of textual analysis of images with lyrics. Stein (2010) and Lothian (2015) both employ close readings. For Stein's (2010) part, she describe parts of the two vids she is analysing through matches of lyrics with images. From this, she draws an interpretation of the vids and what they are accomplishing. Lothian (2015) focuses on one vid as her main example and draws on others with similar arguments, using lyric-image matches to make her point. Lothian (ibid.) also shows that grouping vids with similar messages is a productive form of vid analysis, thereby providing inspiration for my choice to address vids thematically in the three chapters of findings. A strength of close readings such as those by Lothian (ibid.) and Stein (2010) is the attention to detail. This approach can show a vidder's craft and argument, and the way in which the elements of a vid come together to form a whole which is more or different than the sum of its parts.

The analysis done by Coppa (2009a) reverses the emphasis of overview to examples compared to the two above. Coppa's (ibid.) work focuses on feminism, and is related to my own with its focus on vids as (applied) critical theory, thus providing an example of how a textual analysis method can be used to explore this particular kind of vid. Sarah Fiona Winters (2012) also emphasise the larger argument or narrative of a vid. Her focus is on how vids can also reflect on fandom and fans' text engagements, something I also do in chapter seven. These two scholars show the efficacy of textual analysis of vids and provide examples for how to analyse critical vids and their role in fandom. Given the much longer format of a dissertation as compared to the articles I have mentioned above, I was able to do analyses which combined elements of these two types of analyses, something which is also seen in Stevens's (2020) book on vids. Like Stevens, I could explain a vid's argument in broad strokes and devote time and space to comparing it to others, while at the same time doing close readings of larger parts of the vids than was possible for Coppa (2009a) and Winters (2012).

All the analyses above focus on the lyrics as a way of pinpointing a particular moment in a vid and thereby engaging with the song. This method of connecting song and image can bring music in through the lyrics, which are easier to write about because they are words, sidestepping the problem of describing music, which is at least partially indescribable. However, not all vids have lyrics, though those without are relatively few, and yet they also communicate and employ the strategies seen in

vids with lyrics. This shows that a different approach to vid music is needed; not to erase the lyrics, but to bring in the music. As James Deaville (2016) shows, changing the music can change a trailer's entire meaning. Therefore it should not surprise that the meaning of a vid is also dependent on its music and the interplay between sound, words and image. Turk's (2015) emphasising of Coppa's (2008a) point that music is "an interpretive lens" and an "analytical tool" (Turk, 2015, 169) supports this understanding.

Musical analysis, like textual analysis, can take many forms; studying the written music on its own, performance practice, and sound studies are some. There are several ways to engage in musical analysis, some of which focus on what music does and how it is used, while others are more interested in the formal construction of music. My approach uses the former mode of analysis, which is closely related to textual analysis as it is known in, for example, language and film studies. Combined with the textual analysis methods from vid studies, this results in a three-pronged textual analysis of music, lyrics and image together, rather than as separate aspects.

Much of the film music work I am using to construct my method uses listening as the basis for understanding the effect of music, aided by some sheet music study as a form of written documentation of the sounds. This approach is well suited to considering music as a narrative and affective force as it examines what happens when music functions in tandem with moving images to tell a story and to influence the audience emotionally. Examples of this form of analysis can be found in, amongst others, the work of Gorbman (1987), Kassabian (2002; 2013b), Rodman (2006), Reyland (2017) and D'Adamo (2018). These scholars all discuss music by describing it through identifying elements and functions. Some use sheet music or outlining chord structures and functional harmonics, that is, the way chords relate to each other, form cadences and progressions as part of this, while others rely on description. This allows for a mapping of how music influences the experience of the audience, also with regards to affect. I focused on chord structures, functions and elements in my analyses, while sheet music is not directly part of the written analysis, but has in some cases informed it.

I also pick out music connotations (Kassabian 2002; Tincknell 2010) and singular elements as signifiers (D'Adamo 2018) as well as music as identification, mood, emotion and commentary (Kalinak 1992, 30-31; Kassabian 2002, 56). As I have outlined above and in chapter two, such analyses can tell us what music is doing

in and with moving images, and how the two influence each other. Because I am particularly interested in the affective aspects, I have used this style of analysis to examine how musical elements influence the feels that a vid can contain and communicate. This approach of seeing music as a force that furthers narrative and affective attachment focuses on what the music *does* in audiovisual art rather than what it *is*; the music as-is is less relevant than what it is *with* the images. In the case of my analysis of vids, what I seek to analyse is a thing that music does, namely bring the feels through the music and use the music and affect to make an argument.

This brings me to explain how I incorporated the analysis of music into the types of readings done above, as seen in the brief example by Treadwell (2018) earlier in this chapter. As Stevens (2020, 182) points out, a vidder can use lyrics, instrumentation and other connotations of the song as their method for adaptation, something Turk (2015) shows from a vidder point of view. In Stevens's (2020, 182) work, this is explored as a way to give a character a voice, but this can, as I show, be expanded to any kind of vidding argument. The similarity between her list of possible elements of music to that of Kalinak (1992) shows the links between the art forms of film and vids in their use of music. Kalinak's list - tonality, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, pitch, timbre and motif - contains functional descriptors of musical elements, and thereby describes what makes up the instrumentation and much of the connotations of music. Such terminology therefore allows for a closer, more precise, examination of music's role in vids.

According to Turk (2015), the function of music in vidding rests on the concept of synchresis (Chion 1994). Synchresis, as I explained in chapter two, describes a vertical moment of relationship between video and audio, and, like Turk (2015), I see this as an essential interpretive element of vids. Where Turk shows that vidders seek out these moments as significant in their work, I show how they can be understood as parts in vids' analysis of their source texts. Such synchresis can happen in many ways, with image elements linked to any number of musical elements - of which the lyrics are one. When scholars use lyrics to pinpoint moments in vids, they are pointing out synchresis. However, synchresis may also occur with beat, instrumental flourishes, shifts in intensity, a chord or even a note to name the more prominent ones - or, indeed, any of the elements in Kalinak's (1992) list above. Music does not only function through moments, it also influences the larger argument or narrative of the vid, the way the vid works affectively and as comment

on and with the images; what Kalinak (ibid., 30-31) refers to as "Mood, emotion, characterisation, point of view". This can help describe how and why vid music also influences the mood, pace and narrative argument of a vid. Thereby, music analysis allows for a greater precision and detail in describing and analysing vids, where mood, characterisation, argument and narrative all are influenced by and described through each other by use of the elements of music.

4.3 The Vids

In the following, I explain where and how I discover vids, and the factors I took into account as I worked on how to limit and categorise the vids in order to analyse them as both individual works and parts of a larger project. My selection of vids have been informed by years of watching vids myself, which has led me to gain a wide knowledge of the form, genre, and sub-genres of vids. I have found vids via a system of sources which complement each other. There is, as Stevens (2015, 24) argues, a rudimentary canon of vids already used in academic work, and I, too, am adding to the canonisation of some of these vids. However, I am also using vids, which have not, to my knowledge, been analysed in an academic context before, though all but one have been analysed and discussed within fan and vidding subcultures[17]. Therefore, previous academic study did not factor into my selection process. The criteria I did use are outlined in the following.

There are far more vids in the world than I will ever be able to watch, with more created daily. My selection is therefore limited by my own awareness and the channels through which I search for vids. There may well be entire vidding cultures I am not even aware of, and there are some I am, such as the Russian vidding site CreaSpace[18], which I have not engaged with, something I return to below. As mentioned in chapter one and two, I am researching through the lens of anglophone scholarship and anglophone media fandom as another delimitation. The vidding culture I am most aware of, and which the vidding scholarship in chapter one and this chapter has focused on, has been centered around vidding conventions and

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[17] The exception being beccatoria's *America*; in my analysis of this vid in chapter five, I go into further detail about how it is that this vid has not had the kind of fandom reception that the other vids in the corpus have.

[18] Vidder BrokenMnemonic brought CreaSpace to my - and others' - attention through his annual vid show at VidUKon intended to showcase this vidding site's work and aesthetic style.

journaling platforms, initially LiveJournal, later Dreamwidth[19], and to a lesser degree AO3.

Fandom has moved around online in the years since I began looking for and at fandoms and vids (circa 2005), where the majority of activity was on the aforementioned journal sites (Coppa, 2008a; Freund 2018; Stevens 2020, 11-13). As fandom began to migrate towards tumblr, Twitter and later Discord for interaction and AO3 for hosting, vids became harder to find. However, some of the journal-based infrastructure remains in place, as do one of the two anglophone media fan vidding conventions. The cons, VidUKon in Cardiff, Wales and Vividcon in Chicago, USA (last con 2018), are/were hubs for vidders to meet, watch and share vids and experiences. These cons also distribute vids on hardcopy and/or for download to con members. The 2020 and 2021 VidUKons have been online conventions, where vid watching takes yet another aspect, that of a large, online synchronous gathering of people who watch together. Cons also publish playlists for vids along with a short description of the vids. A handful of other, more general purposed cons, such as WisCon, have vid programming as well and publicise this to various degrees. At cons, vids are curated by a person who has put together a thematic vidshow, meaning there is a layer of metatext added to the vids by this curator. As such, vidshows can be a source of inspiration for different readings of already familiar vids, as well as a valuable suggestion for new vids to watch, including vids which fulfill some of my criteria for how they engage with their source material.

Journal communities still in existence on, primarily, Dreamwidth are also a source of vids for me. Some of these are dedicated to vids and vidding in general and host question spaces, discussions and vids, some are rec journals[20] where fans and vidders alike recommend vids to the readers of the journal. Last, but not least, annual vidding fests, hosted on a mix of journals and AO3, provide another source of new vids, again with attached descriptions. Chiefly Festivids, a Christmas gift exchange, and Equinox Vids, a biannual vidding fest, are my go-to sources. (Stevens 2020, 53; Turk 2014) There is a parallel culture of vidding where the vidders have their primary community on YouTube, and this is a culture I am less familiar with. It

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[19] Dreamwidth is a non-profit clone of LiveJournal, though adapted by the site's creators to focus on the needs and wants of fandom in particular.

[20] Rec is fandom vernacular for recommendation. Fans publish recs of different fanworks, usually with links and creator credit, and varying degree of detail about the work in question, so a rec takes the form of a review of sorts. These can be posted in the reccer's own social media, or in a dedicated space. A rec journal is a journal or blog, dedicated to posting recs.

also has stylistic differences from what one might call con vids and/or journal vids, though the boundaries are blurry. However, so far I have not found explicitly critical vidding in this culture, though I would be very interested to see how such vidding would differ from as well as be similar to con/journal vids. This distinction is, as far as I am aware, also present with regards to CreaSpace, which is an aesthetically different community, less interested in narrative, though there are similarities to the two previous vidding cultures as well. As can be seen, vidding is widespread, with disparate communities and cultural practices that may or may not overlap, and where distribution and interaction differs due to platform and community differences. For this reason, I have chosen to stay within the vidding culture that I am most familiar with and where the bulk of academic work has so far been done. In future work, it would be enlightening to examine other vidding communities to better understand the ways in which they function.

In deciding which vids to include in this study, the vidders themselves were important factors. From the start, it was clear that I wanted to speak with vidders about their work and choices, and that it would make for a more coherent research if I interviewed the vidders who made the vids I was analysing. This allowed me to add another layer of understanding to the creative choices made as the vids were created, and to understand if the vids had communicated as intended. For this reason, I have chosen to focus on vids which have been created by vidders who were interested in participating in this research. In praxis, I did this by creating a longlist of possible vids, reached out to their makers, and finally interviewed seven of them.

This longlist was created from vids I considered to have a critical reflexivity. Such vids only constitute a small sub-set of vids, thus further detail can explain what they are. Stevens (ibid., 17-21) outlines several genres of vids, amongst them meta vids, which "make a comment about an issue or situation beyond the narrative in the vid itself" (ibid., 20). The vids I am analysing are all meta vids. What I want to expand on from Stevens's points, is that the reflective engagement with the source and with fandom is a particularly poignant kind of vid for analysis. The process through which a vid is created is already a form of reflection and curation on the source/s. When also reflecting on something the source is doing or saying "beyond the narrative" and/or the vidders' own response to or relationship with these messages, then a further layer of reflection is added.

The arguments in such vids are complex and layered, they are not easily communicated the way a 'ship' vid or recruiter vid is (ibid.). While the latter forms are drawing out a particular - textual, subtextual or constructed - relationship between characters or, respectively, showcasing the pleasures of fandom of the text, the critical vid takes its textual analysis a step further into the reflexive and metatextual. Such vids present a unique challenge for the vidder: how to communicate a complex critical reflection on a text through a vid. Similarly, there is the question of how the audience understands the vid and know what is being communicated. This issue and its difficulties make such vids particularly good subjects for research which aims to understand how vids communicate through music.

However, this focus presents a selection conundrum: how to establish that a vid fulfils the criterion of critical reflexivity without yet having analysed it. One way is through the processes of curation described above. Be it through a rec or a vidshow, vids can come with pre-existing metatext and contextualisation, as well as their own paratexts (ibid., 56). Another is through examining creator intent in the original posts accompanying a vid, an authorial metatext. As I moved through the selection process and began the analyses, I also found it necessary to think about how my corpus might fit together into coherent chapters and allow for a progression in the dissertation as a singular piece of work. This part of the process also accounts for why there are two instances of two vids by the same vidder, as these vids were the ones that fit the larger argument best. I had preliminary results from analyses and interviews, which addressed vids which did ultimately not make it into the finished project. However, these have informed my overall understanding of critically reflexive vids.

As I have progressed in my research, I have also realised that my selection criteria are unusual within fan studies; I am not studying a particular fandom, nor a single or pair of fanworks for similarities. In a way, I am doing what vidders themselves articulate, which is that vidding itself is the main focus. This is a study of vids and vidding as a fan culture in itself, echoing the sentiment from several vidders in joking exchanges about how vidding has become their main fandom (Close 2018, 340), something I have also witnessed at cons and in online spaces. This is another reason for considering this project as an ethnography of vids.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented an analytical model for studying vids which addresses the gaps around music and affect in existing research, and showed how this ethnography also includes vidders, their intentions and creative processes, and the reception of vids by (fan) audiences. In order to do this I engaged in semi-structured interviews with the vidders who made the vids, as well as in online ethnography to follow the responses of the audiences who participated in commentary. This mixed methods approach allowed me to understand the role of music in vids, how it connotes feelings, and how music and feelings alike are used to communicate meaning and critique in vids.

This nuance innovates fan studies through using musicology in the analysis of vids, and further adds to the field by taking an expansive view of vidding through considering the entire process of a vid from inception and idea to reception by audiences in different online spaces. It also contributes a feels-centric approach to fanworks in both the points of creation and reception; this approach brings affect theory into closer conversation with fan studies and musical analysis. At the centre sits an in-depth analysis of the vids in question, which examines how they use music - along with the more studied aspects of images and lyrics - to function as speech, giving a fuller and more nuanced vid analysis. With methods in place, I now move on to how they were put into practice with the first of three chapters analysing vids. In the first of these, chapter five, I will be looking at three vids which examine and reflect on colonialism in media.

Chapter 5

Critiquing Conquest: Colonialism, militainment and the folk music vid

In this and the coming two chapters I discuss my findings and employ the method developed in the previous chapter. My focus is on drawing out the specific role music plays in how vids argue and communicate; how music is used by vidders and how audiences receive and respond to it. The main body of this work is the analyses which are combined, compared and contrasted with my interviews with vidders and observations of audience responses, creating a comprehensive view of the vids and their fandom presence. This leads to what I referred to in chapter four as an ethnography of vids. These three chapters are divided along thematic lines, something which allows me to explore different strategies by vidders in taking on similar topics and how the music used and the feels evoked differ and align. Each chapter covers three vids that share a theme or type of critique, starting with the present chapter, which is about colonialism. In chapter six, I analyse three vids that focus on race and racism, while chapter seven explores vids that centre around fandom itself.

When looking at the possible vids in my corpus, the theme of colonialism and militarism presented itself as a good starting point for a few reasons; the shared music genre, folk, which I return to momentarily, and the complex critical engagement. This large-scale perspective on media replicating historical injustices is also a way of opening with something that is less immediately personal, though, as the analyses show, the vidders involved are passionate about their critique. This passion also comes through in the feels invoked by the vids, which are a central part of how they critique. Throughout the chapter, I show the ways in which the vids use the combination of folk music and sci-fi to engender the intended responses. Sci-fi as a genre has been privileged in fandom, where sci-fi fandom has been fundamental in creating the structures and cultures around fandom (Coppa 2006). Furthermore, the genre is often used to draw parallels to our present societies, to enhance or twist aspects to allow us to see them in a new light; the three vids in this chapter perform a similar trick with their texts. Sci-fi is always already about colonialism (Rieder 2012,

1), think only of *Star Trek*'s (1966-1969) idea of space as the "final frontier" and how this parallels the original frontier of the "wild West" (Booker 2008). These vids highlight this by drawing out often unremarked upon parts of the texts and challenge their audiences.

The first vid I analyse is *Masters of War* (2012a) by bironic. Its source text is *Stargate: Atlantis* (2004-2009), an American TV show about a present-day military unit going to the Pegasus galaxy, and its song is the eponymous "Masters of War" (1963a) by Bob Dylan. I then move on to *America* (2019) by beccatoria which has the video game *Mass Effect: Andromeda* (2017a) and Tracy Chapman's "America" (2005a) as its source and music. The game is set some 700 years in the future where an already spacefaring humanity along with four other peoples colonise the Andromeda galaxy. Finally, I analyse *Hey Ho* (2014) by Thuvia Ptarth. Its source text is (most of) the Marvel Cinematic Universe as it stood at the time, comprising a total of six films and one TV show, all focusing on superheroes on a present-day Earth. The song is "Hey Ho" (2005) by Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer.

The three vids are presented in an order which is informed by music and argument alike. The first of them has the song with the simplest arrangement and the most foregrounded lyrics; a classic folk and protest song. By opening with this vid, I am able to lay the ground for the following two, which use more contemporary folk songs, have more complex layers of sound and different uses of lyrics and vocals. With 'classic', I am referring to both sound, the melody is a traditional, and the persona of Bob Dylan. With his well-known history as an anti-war voice during the Vietnam War (Marshall 2007), Dylan provides the voice for another war protest in this vid. A characteristic voice and an argument about colonialism in media links it to the second vid, beccatoria's *America,* where Tracy Chapman's critique of modern-day as well as historical colonialism is used to talk about colonising another galaxy. Finally, in *Hey Ho* by Thuvia Ptarth, Carter and Grammer's modern-day exploration of the costs of war and capitalism brings us back to warfare and to Marvel Entertainment's links with the US military. This red thread of music genre is also my reason for placing this chapter as the first among the findings. Musically, these songs are simple in structure, while the lyrics are foregrounded and important to the vids in question. By focusing on these vids first, I can build on the existing work on vids (Coppa, 2008a; Stevens 2020; Russo, 2017) as explored in chapter one, which

centres on lyrics and images, and show how the addition of music analysis can add to this, even when the music is relatively simple.

These vids are about colonialism, but also specific practices of colonialism, namely military action and the concept of the military-industrial-entertainment complex. Common for the sources are that a clean war (Stahl 2009), one where casualties happens to someone else, is the kind of war used for entertainment. This militainment (ibid.) is part of what is critiqued, overwhelmingly through feelings that empathise with the victims of colonialism, who are not the protagonists of the source texts, and through anger at what is being done to them. In the first vid, bironic's *Masters of War*, these notions and emotions are in conversation throughout.

5.1 bironic's Masters of War: United States of Intergalactic Colonialism

[T]he people who were making the show didn't seem to notice what they were doing. And I was really taken by this discussion, and it was happening at a time when I was just starting out as a vidder and wanting to do different and more difficult things with vidding and I heard that song on the radio - it might have been a cover or it might have been the original. And I thought "ooh, that sounds just like these conversations going on in this fandom right now, and I wonder if..." So that was the whole idea of that vid, to take that song and use it to present those arguments in a visual way.

...

Well, I mean, I feel like song is kinda everything. There are, so, suppose you're making a vid for a canon and you're sharing it with fans of that canon, everyone already knows the story. So what are you adding, what are you offering? It's the music. It's that source in conversation with that music. Or using that music to tell that story in a different way or to pull out an emotion of the source. I feel like - I don't know if I'm saying this right but - without the music in the vid, what is the vid? - bironic[21]

bironic made *Masters of War (Pegasus Rising Remix)* from a single TV show, *Stargate: Atlantis* (SGA), and intended the vid to engage with the colonialist discourses in the TV show, which she, along with fellow fans at the time, felt the show's creators were not addressing - and perhaps not even aware of. As the introductory quotes show, bironic was inspired through this discussion and hearing strong parallels to it in the song she chose. To her, and other fans at the time, the

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[21] Interview conducted via Skype 24th February 2019.

colonialist under- and overtones in the show were very clear. The chosen song is by a well-known artist, Bob Dylan, which also gives me the opportunity to look at how the weight carried by both parts of a vid - visuals and music - inform the vid, the vidder's choices and the reception of the vid. The second quote underlines that this influence is important to the vidder's process. SGA is about a group of people who set up a base in the Pegasus galaxy, which they enter from Earth via the eponymous Stargate. The show is in the tradition of, for example, the many *Star Trek* series, following - as well as evolving to play with - many of the genre's conventions (Hipple 2006). SGA is also a part of a larger franchise; the originating show *Stargate SG-1* (1997-2007) was based on Earth and was itself a continuation of a film, *Stargate* (Emmerich 1994), and included key characters (though not actors) from the film. Part of the show's sci-fi heritage is in its use of symbolic and mythological themes from, chiefly, ancient Egypt[22].

Crucial to the understanding of the vid is that the humans from Earth are from a branch of the US military. They are soldiers and scientists who take over an existing base, Atlantis, in a galaxy far, far away. While the Atlantis base is empty when they arrive, and their mission is part exploration, the Atlantis team are also a colonising force. They arrive in what is, to them, uncharted territory, establish a foothold, and begin to expand their influence from there through superior technology. This is the tension bironic explores in her vid. With bironic's inspiration being the song, it is fitting to start with looking at it in more detail.

5.1.1 Dylan in Space

Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" is emblematic of its time and of the artist at that point. It was released in 1963, shortly after the Cuban missile crisis and as the war in Vietnam was beginning to escalate. The lyrics (see appendix 1) reflect the these events. According to the liner notes for the album it appeared on, the song was written as a protest against the build-up of the cold war, which reflects both historical moments mentioned above. When speaking about the vid, bironic said that "the lyrics were telling a lot of the story" of the vid, and that she, when this was made, focused on creating moments where lyrics and images reflected each other. As a result, the vid leans on a strong use of literalism, instances where the image matches

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[22] Being Danish, I feel obliged to point out that the other mythology, chiefly used in *Stargate SG-1,* is the Norse pantheon.

the word/s sung at that moment. In *Masters of War*, the amount of matching between words and images bring to mind Gorbman's (1987, 20) argument that lyrics in film scores can provide a choruslike commentary for the film. For this reason, *Masters of War* lends itself well to a traditional analysis of vids, such as those by Winters (2012) or Lothian (2015) where the lyrics matched to images is the focus of the analysis. However, I argue in the following that Dylan's music, his voice and his persona also need to be considered. Not just because it provides the "glue" that holds the clips together (Kuhn, 2012, 4.2), but also because it influences the mood of the vid (Kalinak 1992, 30-31; Vernallis 2004, 58-59).

Due to the amount of literalism in the vid as well as the political nature of the song, it is a vid that is quite accessible for non-fans of SGA- even for non-watchers[23]. When I first encountered the vid, I had not watched the show myself[24], and yet I understood the overall idea of the vid and was able to get the meaning of many individual clips as well, something that is echoed in the vid's reception. Words like "ship" to a starship or "hide in your mansion" to the Atlantis base closing its shields are examples of such immediately understandable clips and literalisms. However, a deeper knowledge of the context of the clips allows more layers of meaning to appear. bironic explained that she (with a few exceptions) used clips in their original context, which means that the fannish knowledge of the source text becomes more important. These links and the resulting layers of meaning will be apparent to watchers and fans of the show in a way they are not to those unfamiliar with it. *Masters of War* therefore shows the fannish expertise involved in not just making, but also watching, a vid (Turk & Johnson, 2012). Being a fan is not necessary to understand and enjoy the vid, but if you are, and know the clips, the impression of the vid is changed and deepened.

The song is a traditional folk song; the lyrics are Dylan's while the melody is adapted from the traditional song "Nottamun Town" (Scalet 1975; Callesen 2015). This can account for the structure of the song as a type of folk song and the simple tonal progression, intended to be easy to play and sing. Folk music has a long history of being linked to protest (Phull 2008), and this connotation is a part of how the music works. As Kassabian (2013b) has shown, music is linked to identity and

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[23] Some fans will engage with transformative works of a text without having engaged with the text itself. For the purposes of this analysis, these fans can be considered non-watchers because the distinction here relates to knowledge of the original context of the clips.
[24] I am indebted to Rikke Aabenhuus for her assistance in providing context for clips I did not know.

subjectivity, and the use of a traditional folk song is noteworthy. It invokes the history of anti-war protest songs and the image of Bob Dylan as a figure in the forefront of protest song (Marshall 2007, 97-98) as well as radical politics of folk at the time (Mitchell 2007, 1). The song has an even rhythm which guides the editing pace of the vid into a steady progression of clips. At times, this is broken by editing to the cadence of the lyrics rather than the beat of the song, giving a succession of shorter, quicker clips, while at other times, the vid rests on a pause in the lyrics and shows a longer clip to match. By following different elements of the song, bironic avoids the vid becoming monotonous to watch with equal length clips, while still using the music to pace the editing and allow the vid to feel as a whole.

The original version of the song has eight verses, while the vid has seven. bironic edited the music to exclude one verse because, as she explained to me, it did not fit the overall argument of the vid. This makes the song itself a form of transformation or remix, something reflected in the title of the vid. Sound editing in vids is not uncommon, though more often it is a matter of making a song slightly shorter rather than cutting in the body of it. The practice of sound editing in vids is outside the scope of this project, but is itself deserving of attention as an understudied aspect of vidding as art and craft. "Masters of War" is simple in structure, consisting of only 2 chords for the majority of the song, with 2 extra chords in the final line of each verse to provide a cadence (see appendix 1 for details). To analyse the music, I used a mix of sheet music and listening, partly to verify that the sheet music matched what I heard. The song is in d-minor, chiefly using only that chord and its parallel dominant, C-major, simply alternating between the two. The embellishing chords in the final lines are e-minor and a-minor, where a-minor is the regular dominant to d-minor, and e-minor is leading into it by being its dominant. Effectively, this is a chain of dominants pointing towards d-minor and allows for an efficient cadence, giving a sense of finality and satisfaction when it concludes in the return to d-minor at the end of each verse. At the same time, the simplicity of the chord and tune allows Dylan's voice and words to come to the front and remain in the centre of the perception of the music. This simplicity, and its feeling of being unpolished, also fits well with the TV images and their production values, which are less crisp and clear than we are accustomed to in the 2020s.

The tonality provides a wistful, melancholy sound, the constant shift between the d-minor and C-major imparts a lilting impression, as if it is rocking gently on a

small wave. The change in colour and the harmonic dynamics between the two chords gives a tension that sounds far more complex than the simple structure would appear to be on paper. Over this gentle, lilting chord progression with its melancholy feel, lies Dylan's characteristic voice, nasal, reed-like and sarcastic in sound. It is a voice that is instantly recognisable, and carries with it a lot of connotations, not least to the tradition of the links between folk and protest, as mentioned earlier. This voice is what carries those words bironic was so interested in using, and it is the quality of this voice and the mood of the song that carries the feels in the vid. The above already shows that feelings are being brought out by the music in several ways: the lilting melancholy of the melody and chord progression and Dylan's voice and its quality; these two carry the main affective register of the vid. I examine this more fully later, but before I do, a summary of the vid and its story is needed in order to understand what the vid is saying and to be able to speak about its impact and affective influence.

5.1.2 Masters of the Pegasus Galaxy

Masters of War sets up its argument in the first verses, then retells part of an arc from SGA as an example of this argument, and finally reaches its conclusion in a subversion of the show's narrative. Thereby, bironic works to also subvert what she spoke of in the introductory quote, namely the show runners' apparent ignorance of the colonialist themes inherent in SGA; she addresses this head on in contrast to how the text itself does not appear to consider it. The first two verses establish the SGA team as military/militaristic and as invaders. The focus is on their weapons and destructive capabilities, and on situations where the team arrive on a planet with guns at the ready. Sabine Schmidt (2006) writes that in *Stargate SG-1* the relationship between the Earth people and the aliens they meet is an unequal one; Earth is almost always more technologically advanced and the team act in a parental way towards the aliens. As Christine Mains (2006, 65) has pointed out, while the original *Stargate SG-1* series

> "...never explicitly makes the connection between the SGC's fictional war with alien enemies and America's political war on terror, it is impossible to ignore the implications of the show's depiction of the ethical concerns surrounding the subordination of the pursuit of knowledge to military needs."

From the beginning, the vid, in line with Schmidt and Mains, presents the protagonists as part of a superior military force, showing clearly that it considers the

show to be part of Stahl's (2009) militainment. The mixed civilian and military crew in the show defer to military needs (weapons, technology) over civilian ones (social research, cultural exchange), and the military elements are a core part of the entertainment value.

Fig. 1. Large scale destruction on other planets, while watching from afar as the masters of war in Dylan's text.

Parallel and contrasting this portrayal of the team, the vid shows the people native to the Pegasus galaxy as being at a disadvantage in the meeting with the Earth humans, partly by their lower technological advancement, partly by showing them as frightened and cowering. Thereby, the vid is pointing to some of the same issues as the next vid in this chapter, beccatoria's *America*. It is also worth noting that the only two main cast characters played by actors of colour - Teyla Emmagan (Rachel Luttrell) and Ronon Dex (Jason Momoa) - are both native to the Pegasus galaxy, while the Earth main cast are all white.[25] Furthermore, the use of familiar Earth mythologies, primarily Egyptian as mentioned earlier, is mapped onto alien cultures (Storm 2006). As Gaile McGregor (McGregor 2006, 133-135) writes, the entire *Stargate* franchise has a root in a primitivist and colonial perspective on the other, something which is also evident in the way the original film rests on the premise that the pyramids were built by aliens rather than the Egyptians. This creates links between a racial other on Earth and the alien other in space, with the dual effect of rendering the Pegasus team members visibly other and playing into colonial and racist ideas of white people as the unmarked norm. This othering is part of what gives the show a visibly colonial ideology, something which is illustrated in the vid by showing these two characters as collaborators with the invading SGA team.

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[25] The Season 1 Earth crew did include a Black cast member, Lt. Aiden Ford (Rainbow Sun Francks), who then disappeared out of the series. He does not appear in the vid.

The middle section of the vid is the aforementioned remix and retelling of a part of the SGA narrative, a storyline centered on the character known alternately as Michael Kenwood and Lastlight (Connor Trinneer & Brent Stait). He is a member of an antagonist alien people, the Wraiths. This character is coercively, and unbeknownst to himself, turned into a human by the Atlantis team. He discovers his true identity and ultimately uses the genetic engineering used against him to create a weapon to enslave other Wraiths, leading him to become a main antagonist for parts of the series.

Fig. 2. Left: "you lie and deceive" Lastlight (Connor Trinneer) realises his true identity. Right: The SGA team arrives on another world, guns ready. This clip is used between verses, as is the case for several clips of the team acting as a military force; this serves to illustrate the overall militaristic behaviour of the SGA team.

For the last two verses, the vid shows the fallout of this biological warfare and attempts at genocide from both Lastlight and Atlantis. In its conclusion, it creates a situation which never occurred in the show. The humans of the Pegasus galaxy fight back and ultimately triumph over the Atlantis team. By cutting together isolated scenes of the team being overpowered and cross-cutting to Pegasus inhabitants fighting, the vid fashions an ending which is entirely new. The vid becomes an AU, fandom terminology for 'Alternate Universe', which is when a piece of transformative work deviates significantly from its source. Common AU tropes are placing the characters in a different situation, such as superheroes without their powers or Arthurian characters as baristas, or with significant changes, such as a different outcome of a storyline. This latter example is what happens in *Masters of War*, and this AU gives justice to the colonised peoples in this fictional world. Thereby, the vid becomes an act of what Souvik Mukherjee (2017) refers to as playing back against a colonial narrative, a transformation of the source that changes the narrative to work against colonialist narratives rather than normalise them. The vid sides against the protagonists and the white, colonial narrative, subverting it to provide a different

history of the Pegasus galaxy. In its final seconds, after the vid has faded to black and the music has fallen silent, a clip of Dr. Rodney McKay (David Hewlett) appears. It features a cheerful McKay who says, upbeat, "We're the good guys". With this, the vid points to the arrogance of the team, who are seeing themselves - as the audience is led to do - as heroic and good. They are who we (are supposed to) root for. The vid, however, roots for the people of the Pegasus galaxy. It questions the heroics of the Atlantis team and problematises the audience assumptions of who the good guys really are. SGA creates identification with the team and portrays them as people the audience empathises and identifies with, but *Masters of War* attempts to undermine that empathy and redirect it to the Pegasus people. It does this by playing to the audience's emotional and affective responses to the vid, which is where I turn next.

Fig. 3. Left: "till I'm sure that you're dead" - Lt. Colonel John Sheppard (Joe Flannigan) is knocked out. Right: "We're the good guys" - Dr. Rodney McKay (David Hewlett)

5.1.3 Second-hand Anger

In this section, I analyse what the affective impact of the vid is and consider its reception, particularly with respect to the way it makes its audience feel. For the latter purpose, I looked at the vid's original LiveJournal post as well as followed links from it to other commentary, which again led me further. The comments were all on LiveJournal or Dreamwidth, and the bulk from bironic's own post with the vid, which she made shortly after it had premiered at VividCon in 2012.

As I have pointed out earlier, *Masters of War* relies on lyrics to create its argument, and it also uses them to help the audience empathise with the Pegasus people. The first of these is that the "I" of the song is used to signify Pegasus people, while "you" is used to signify Earth people, leading the audience's identification. The second is, as mentioned above, that the vid relies heavily on literalism. This vid is very much one that can be analysed as a string of moments of synchresis (Chion 1994) between lyrics and images. The matches illustrate the song's point and create

meaning through emotion. One example is dead people being dumped in a pile matched with "as the death count gets higher". Several of the people commenting on the vid use the term "gut-punch" to describe their reaction to the vid, a sign of the affective impact and the effectiveness of this vidding strategy.

The music in all the verses is identical, including in dynamics, something bironic referred to as it being "droney". It does not have an affective arc based on shifts in dynamics or chord progression as is the case for most of the vids I look at later, and yet, as bironic also argued in the opening of this analysis, the music is in conversation with the visual source. On an immediate level, the function of the music is to transmit the lyrics which make the point of the vid, and its apparent monotony is an effective way of accomplishing this. The music allows the lyrics to have prominence and the audience easily focuses on them, allowing the lyrics to comment on the action. As I wrote earlier, the music contributes in other ways, through the mood or feel of the song as a function of its tonality, harmony, rhythm etc., as well as through Dylan, his voice and its qualities. The music contributes through the wistful sadness of the melody and lilting chord progression, coupled with the particular nasal quality and timbre of Dylan's voice. Adding to this is the connotation of Dylan's status as one of the best known protest singers of the Cold War and Vietnam War eras (Marshall 2007). Dylan's status as a person (and voice) important for both a specific generation and a specific time adds to this. As Lee Marshal (ibid., 457) puts it:

> "Dylan has come to stand for and represent the maintenance of a link with the past, of the importance of a tie with an idealised tradition for reclaiming the authenticity of the present. For a variety of reasons, this has resulted in a dramatic intensification of Dylan's status in recent years and, I would argue, this contemporary star-image is characterised by an association with an ineffable tradition rather than, as previously, with an ideal of 'the sixties'."

Dylan also contributes this authenticity and link with the past. Outside his playing and singing, the knowledge of who the singer is adds its own set of connotations, which match with and underpin the protest and anger in the song. This link is not lost on the audience either, where a few comments note that Dylan is a good choice for this particular argument, while some draw on personal feelings towards the artist or the song to point out why it is a fitting choice for a vid about an invading force.

Furthermore, Dylan's voice is an important affective key. As the song progresses, he sounds increasingly bitter, pent up and approaching anger. In the final verse he emphasises "I hope that you die" and "till I'm sure that you're dead", the latter, the final words of the song, are biting and sharp against the softness of the music, which gives the song a powerful ending. The escalation in Dylan's intensity of delivery becomes a way for the song to have a dynamic build towards its conclusion - not using musical elements, but vocal expressiveness. The anger that is communicated through Dylan's voice in this song is part of the emotional and affective impact of watching the vid. Tiina Rosenberg (2013, 181) writes that:

> "the singing voice that conveys a haunting melody in a performance is not merely representing a given piece of music. It is the key to something forgotten that was once important to the listener. [...] it is always a physical occurrence."

Voice and its quality is an important part of the affective impression of the song, also in eliciting a physical, bodily response. It is Dylan's build-up of anger and bitterness that brings the feels, layered on and working with the lilt of the melody. Together, the melancholy mood and the bitter voice critique the present images and call for something better. This creates an affective dynamic in the song, one that bironic uses to build to a conclusion where the Pegasus rebellion feels like a release to the audience. This mediated anger is discursively constructed through the vid and is reflected in the comments (see below) (Wahl-Jorgensen 2019), but it is also communicated more directly through the music, where the complex affect and the changing, increasing emotions influence the audience. The song's progression from wistful melancholy to increasing bitterness, its implicit call to change on behalf of the powerless, matches the narrative arc of the vid and the role of the Pegasus people in it. To begin with, we see them scared and hurt, but as the vid progresses, they become defiant and the vid culminates in them fighting back and ultimately triumphing.

The reception of the vid supports my analysis. The affective arc is reflected in several comments which express feelings of building anger during watching, and that this was released into cheering for the Pegasus people when they finally rise up. These feels are communicated through the vid, from vidder to audience, who respond with mirroring the feelings they get from the experience and sharing them in the comments. When, at the very end, Dylan's bitter voice is replaced by McKay's cheerful one, the contrast is part of what drives the message of the vid home. The

pull-back to the canonical story where the Atlantis team, whose downfall felt so satisfying, are supposed to be the heroes, is effective.

It is notable that a few commenters remark that they understand what the vid was saying despite not being fans or even having watched the show. This suggests a certain universality in the vid's communication, though the watchers may be presumed to be fans, already familiar with vids and their strategies of speech. The reactions to the vid show that it inspires feelings as a part of its criticism of SGA; indeed, the mounting resentment turning to realease *is* the critique. Melancholic music drives the empathy, the bitter voice the anger; together these complex feels are communicating a critical engagement that the audience can emotionally connect to, as film audiences are in Kassabian's (2002) analyses. Being allowed this perspective, the vid's audience is then able to understand the vid as critiquing the show's colonialist narrative and militaristic ethos. In the next section I move on to the second vid in the chapter and look at another kind of critique of a different colonialist narrative, where the commonalities with this one lies in music genre as well as human colonists in another galaxy.

5.2 beccatoria's *America*: Colonialism Across Galaxies

> They leave before the events of Mass Effect 3. So they just think that they're wonderful explorers and they have no idea about the tragedy that they left. And I think that was a mistake. Because if they were refugees, that would be a very different political equation in terms of why they showed up there and why they were messed up.
>
> ...
>
> You can make an intellectual argument, but I think for me at least, if it wasn't an intellectual argument I cared about on some level I wanted someone to feel something about, yeah, I mean that's why it works. That's what music does, right? That's what art does, what stories do, that's why we like them. - beccatoria[26]

Like *Masters of War*, beccatoria's *America* comments on colonialism in space and was made to enter into a fandom debate, though one that was not widespread. beccatoria, like bironic, also sees feelings through music as a way to engage with debates and reflections. Her emotions around the visual text are central to why the vid exists; it is a vid that was made to process feelings of being let down,

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[26] Interview conducted via Skype 19th August 2019.

disappointment and anger, that was not as much part of a debate as it was beccatoria's personal response to her own emotional response. beccatoria's *America* centers on people colonising another galaxy, this time the Andromeda galaxy, while Tracy Chapman, another political folk artist, provides the song. The song, "America", deals with the colonising of the Americas and how this process still exacts influence on everyday life in the USA (see Appendix 1). It is therefore an apt choice for a critique of colonialism, and opens up avenues for thinking of contemporary colonialism in conjunction with that of the past. This is a vid which critiques BioWare's *Mass Effect: Andromeda* and is the only vid in my selection which is created from a video game. *Mass Effect: Andromeda* (hereafter: *Andromeda*) was the follow-up to BioWare's *Mass Effect* trilogy (2007; 2010a; 2012a). This original trilogy of games is known for the way it affords the player nuanced influence on the game's narrative through dialogue options, and was one of BioWare's efforts in pioneering more diversity in gaming, particularly in creating options for same-sex romances (Schallegger 2016; Sihvonen & Stenros 2018). Where the original trilogy of games have the same lead character, Shepard[27], and is set in the Milky Way galaxy, *Andromeda* is a shift in focus and setting. It spins off from the series after *Mass Effect 2*, and follows a fleet of colonists which leave the Milky Way in the 2100s, and arrive in the Andromeda galaxy 600 years later.

The game centers around these colonists trying to establish themselves in a new galaxy and finding local allies and antagonists. A large part of this game is exploration, but there is also a strong militaristic component to it, making it an example of what Matthew Thomas Payne (2016) calls "ludic war", with the gamer acting as a ludic soldier in the game - an experience Payne points out is "a co-creation of gamer and text, of user and industry" (ibid., 14). This complicity, and the way video games afford strong relationships with the characters one plays (Waggoner 2014), sets up the affective response that beccatoria has communicated in her vid. When asked about the message of the vid, beccatoria explained that she had been a little worried when she initially heard that the *Mass Effect* franchise was getting a new game focusing on colonialism, particularly as she has a lot of feelings about the game series. With reference to their history of progressive representation politics,

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[27] This Shepard shares a last name with Sheppard from SGA; a name which they are both primarily addressed by in the texts and which carries strong Christian connotations. It would be interesting to explore the use of such names in sci-fi and what exactly needs shepherding in outer space.

she said that her thought was that: "it's BioWare, it'll be okay". This expectation shows the contract BioWare has entered into with its fans (Kuling 2014; Groot 2016; Schallegger, 2016) that they will deliver on certain things. beccatoria's feelings, as evidenced in the tension between the two quotes above, were moved because of this failing, and the result is an example of critiquing from a starting point of love (Svegaard 2019). The quotes show at once an example of where BioWare failed its fan contract, and also that beccatoria desires to make an intellectual argument - in this vid related to this contract - and at the same time, she cares enough that she also wants others to feel, to care in an emotional as well as intellectual capacity. Already at this point, feels are entering into the equation; the mixed anticipation of more of something you love with the added worry that it might fail in some way.

This contract is also worth noting as the reception of the vid is very limited, something which may be a result of a few factors. beccatoria created the vid foremost for herself, to release emotions related to the game, and for a few friends she knew would be interested. This corresponds with my own findings, where there are only a few responses to the vid on Twitter by friends of beccatoria. In addition, beccatoria also believes that the reception relates to the limited appeal and fandom of *Andromeda* - as opposed to the earlier *Mass Effect* games, for which she has also made vids. This is a likely reason, though it has also become more difficult to follow reception of vids since her earlier *Mass Effect* works. As I outlined in chapter four, this correlates with fandom migrations from journaling platforms and onto a wider range of online spaces. The release of *America* consisted primarily of tweeting a link to the vid, which is behind a password on Vimeo to avoid copyright detection, whereas for example *Masters of War* was posted to LiveJournal with the result that much of the response was placed alongside the vid itself. For these reasons, the reception of *America* is treated differently than for the other vids. As can be seen, the understanding of BioWare as progressive and its contract with its gamers around expectations are central to which feels are expressed in this vid. To be able to further unpack thus, it is necessary to first examine the narrative and argument in the vid.

5.2.1 Conquering Andromeda

America utilises footage from cutscenes rather than gameplay, which makes it appear as if made from an animated film rather than a game. This choice renders invisible the interactive side of the game as the vid's audience never sees the interface

one would see while playing. Every video game vid I have seen also excludes interface footage, therefore this could be considered a vidding genre convention on par with that of rarely have people visibly speaking in vids[28]. This latter convention has developed in tandem with advancements in editing technology and allows for more visually dynamic vids (ibid., 143, 202). As Stevens (2018) points out, the lack of showing the human interface in game vids is a noteworthy choice, since the interface is such an integral part of the gamer experience. The game footage choice, as well as the preference for non-dialogic images, show a focus on what is aesthetically pleasing over what might be the clip with the strongest intratextual context. In the case of *America*, beccatoria mentioned that this choice made it harder for her to make her point, but she did not want all the "stuff" (ie. the interface) on the screen to show in the vid. *America* examines the game in a non-linear fashion typical of vids. This is not a retelling of the game's story, but a narrative about the themes of the game and the tools it and its players use to further the plot. This distinguishes the vid from, for example, play-through videos or shorter clips lifted directly from gameplay or cutscenes (with or without music) as well as from machinima. *America* can thereby help demarcate some of the boundaries between vidding and other game fanworks in video format.

In *Andromeda*, the player plays as either of the Ryder twins, allowing one to opt for either gender, and affords racially diverse[29] options for customisation too, in keeping with BioWare's reputation for inclusivity (Schallegger, 2016; Harper 2017; Sihvonen & Stenros 2018). In beccatoria's vid, the focus is on the male Scott Ryder, portrayed in the default white, male version, that was used in the game's publicity. Ryder is the central character, and the vid opens with him literally falling to the ground on a new planet, to the words of "came upon the shore". A recurring theme in the vid is the use of exoticism in the source text, here brought to attention by showing the sense of wonder and joy on Ryder's face when facing new worlds. The

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[28] Not all vidders agree on this, but some strongly dislike what is referred to as "talky faces" (Stevens 2020, 143) in vids. In the comments on Thuvia Ptarth's *Hey Ho*, which is the third vid in this chapter, she and another vidder discuss the difficulty in vidding Tony Stark because of the characters verbosity. At the same time Thuvia Ptarth is enthusiastic about the theatrical expressions Robert Downey Jr. uses as Stark because they are easy to vid, showing that the strong emotive expressions are desired by vidders to further their narrative/argument.

[29] The avatar in *Andromeda* is very customisable, allowing for racial diversity, though they default to being white. There are 10 looks for either gender option to choose from, and these can be further tweaked. However, they are still normatively abled and attractive bodies and faces, who are tall and at peak fitness. For more on BioWare's development of body types, see Schallegger (2016).

first verse focuses on this, and begins to set up the wider theme of the vid by using the "You spoke of peace, but waged a war" lines to show Ryder reaching out to help a friend - who then brutally shoots an already fallen enemy. This sets up the other recurring theme of critique, the violence perpetrated by the games' protagonists.

Fig. 4. Left: "waged a war": one of Ryder's team members shooting one of the first aliens they encounter. Right: "while you were conquering America": Ryder's wonder at the planet he finds himself on.

The enemy killed in the vid's first seconds is from an alien people, the Kett, who are also colonising this part of the galaxy and subjugating the local Angara people. However, the characters do not know this at the point in the game when this incident takes place. They simply shoot the people they meet, their moral higher ground presupposed by the game (Payne 2016). Though these people have appeared hostile to the humans, the vid questions if this is reasonable; after all, from the point of view of the inhabitants of this planet, aliens came out of the sky and began looking for resources. While the vid does not quite invert the point of view, as *Masters of War* did towards the end, it exposes the protagonists' actions as having deeper implications than the game shows. In *America*, beccatoria performs the same kind of transforming of a game to privilege the colonised people, that Souvik Mukherjee (2017) found in gamer practice. That she does it via vidding rather than, for example, streaming her gameplay, makes it a permanent documentation of her argument, as well as spreadable transformation.

  beccatoria's focus on Ryder's reactions brings to mind Edward Saïd's[30] (2014) *Orientalism*. Saïd's formative work shows how a Eurocentric world has portrayed 'the Orient' in simplistic, clichéd ways which enhance the difference to 'the Occident'.

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[30] Originally published 1978.

At the same time this Eurocentric viewpoint flattens cultural distinctions in time and place within 'the Orient' into an unspecified otherness, that is itself both reactionary and exotic. Ryder's reaction of exaggerated wonder evokes this because what he sees is alien, yet not fundamentally different from the many worlds his people know of and visit in the *Mass Effect* games. The Andromeda galaxy is Ryder's 'Orient'. His expression others the place and its people in a way that seem disingenuous for a character who is already at home in a large and diverse universe; the colonising force he arrives with have members of multiple alien peoples. Remarking on this wonder allows beccatoria to set up her next level of critique.

Game studies literature shows that players identify with their avatars to varying degrees (Waggoner 2014), and that the identification has many effects on the player (Teng 2017; Green, Delfabbro & King 2021), one of them being that it can enhance the experience of the game in terms of immersion and flow (Waggoner 2014). The *Mass Effect* games are considered roleplaying games, where player-avatar choice is important and where identification is desirable. When *Andromeda* plays up Ryder's wonder, the player is expected to mirror this emotion. The player-as-Ryder experiences the newness of a different galaxy, but is also locked into doing this in a particular kind of way through predetermined cut-scenes, which cannot be influenced by the player. These are the scenes beccatoria draws her source footage from. What beccatoria emphasises is that the player is placed in a position where the only possible reaction to landing on an alien world is to other it, and where the only reaction to meeting a new people is to shoot them.

This tension beccatoria sees between wonder and conquest is illustrated in the vid through juxtaposition. She edits to show that the solidarity the Milky Way people have with the native Angara people exists in the same space as them being brutally killed, and that the two acts are part of the same larger story of colonisations. Mukherjee (2017) finds this type of narrative in *Assassin's Creed: Freedom Cry* (2014) where a story that ostensibly criticises the history of slavery also perpetuates the dehumanising of slaves through game mechanics. Likewise, beccatoria shows that the player-as-Ryder's quest to free the Angara from their evil Kett colonisers is perpetuating the problem by simultaneously colonising new worlds in the Angara's area.

In the vid's third verse, the opening sentence of "The ghost of Columbus, haunts this world" signals a more direct critique. This sentence is matched with a clip

of Ryder Sr., the father of the player's character, who is one of the architects of the colonisation. Ryder Sr. is matched to Columbus every time the lyrics mention him, which draws a strong parallel between the two. In our interview, beccatoria emphasised the combination of Ryder Sr. with Columbus as a particularly important editing choice. By linking them, she equates the actions of the two and points towards the problem with creating a heroic narrative out of the act of colonising already inhabited lands. Her critique follows that of Mukherjee (2017) writing about the issues with playing colonisers in games such as *Civilization V* (2010). By making a game out of something which reflects or reenacts dark periods of history, there is a risk of trivialising; this is especially true when the focus is on the conquerors, such as in *Civilization*. beccatoria shows that *Andromeda* is doing this exact thing, despite presenting itself as a game where one frees the colonised. With *America*, beccatoria argues that this perpetuates harm rather than work to correct or problematise colonialist violence, despite any good intentions there may have been behind the design of the game.

Fig. 5: Left: The Angara when Ryder first visits their home planet. Right: "While you're conquering"; Ryder Sr. examining a planet.

beccatoria has chosen to use clips out of - as well as in - context for the vid as a way of constructing her critique. The use of this technique allows for the vid to cast the Milky Way people as perpetrating some of the atrocities actually committed by the Kett in the game. This constructed narrative, not unlike the one towards the end of *Masters of War*, is a way of enhancing the problem of colonisation by playing against the game in order to criticise it. The game sets up a conflict between what I would - in deliberate quotation marks - call 'benign' (human/Milky Way) and 'malign' (Kett) colonialism. When beccatoria uses actions perpetrated by the Kett, but attributes

them to the Milky Way people, she deliberately conflates the two forms of colonialism and shows that they are two sides of the same coin. beccatoria also strengthens her critique of the way the game others the native Andromeda people. The Angara are shown in ways that focus on their difference in culture, including having greetings which differ from what the Milky Way people expect. One clip shows Ryder attempting, and failing, to engage in this greeting, though it is a simple gesture of touching arms.

Fig. 6. Left: Two Angara greeting each other. Right: Ryder Jr. attempting to learn the greeting.

In several ways, the Angara are coded as parallel to racialised people on Earth. Their non-handshake greetings, their beliefs (reincarnation) and culture (emotionally expressive, collectivism, communal living) - all constructed against the presumed norms of white, North-American culture. A norm that is shown in the game's marketing, which uses the white (male) Ryder (Kuling, 2014) and paralleled in Chapman's song when she sings that in the minds of the colonisers, they are doing "God's will". As Adrienne Shaw writes (quoted in Mukherjee (2017, 7)) about *Assassin's Creed III* (2012a):

> "Even as the game carefully offers one of the only, and best developed, Native heroes in a video game, so much else of how history is constructed in the game demonstrates that the ultimate audience for the game is imagined as white, male, and Western."

On top of this othering, the Angara are less capable of fighting the Kett than the Milky Way colonisers. The less technologically capable Angara are nearly powerless and beaten back until the arrival of the colonists turns the tide. All of this contributes to casting the Milky Way colonialisation as 'benign' to the Angara by placing it against the abject evil ('malign') colonialism of the Kett. By sidelining the Kett and

showing that the two forces are engaged in the same behaviour, beccatoria rejects the idea of 'benign' colonialism.

The final shots of the vid underlines the point by showing the climactic crash of the human ark ship, the craft that carried humanity's colonists to Andromeda, onto the paradisiacal central world that is the final goal of the game. Humanity[31], like Ryder in the beginning, crash and tumble to the ground on a whole new world, and begins a takeover. The narrative as critiqued by beccatoria does not live up to Mukherjee's concept of "playing back" towards the empire, an affordance he sees in games that allows for alternate history (i.e. an African nation colonising Europe in *Civilization*). With the trust placed in BioWare, beccatoria expected something like that, a way of countering or problematising colonialism. Instead, the game imagines a future that perpetuates the colonialist history of Earth. The non-player aliens are unable to effectively play back against expansionism, meaning that in this game, colonialism is inescapable and unavoidable. The player is locked into the story and has to play out the role of coloniser and see themself-as-Ryder cast as the winner of the narrative arc for this reason. The identification afforded by games between player and character carries dual implications; either the player agrees with Ryder/the game and feels validated in the game's conquest, or they disagree and are disappointed or feel coerced into participating in something they find objectionable.

5.2.2 Signifyin(g) Colonialism

Where the other two songs in this chapter are protest songs, this is not entirely the case for "America". While it does have an element of protest, as it is criticising European and US American colonial policies, it is not an anti-war song as "Masters of War" and "Hey Ho". It is written and performed by Tracy Chapman, who, as Sheila Whiteley (2000) points out, is situated in folk and protest music. Chapman also employs a broad range of genre elements that invoke Black American music - just as her lyrics are grounded in the Black American experience. "America" must therefore be understood in the context of Chapman's work as a song that is political in not just its lyrics but also its composition. Before delving further into this, it is important to note that I, when writing about Black American music, am referring to a wide range of musical traditions, all influenced by the African diaspora in North America, chiefly

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[31] Here it is, in fact, only humanity, not the other Milky Way peoples. The human "ark" crashes on this planet, while the other sleeper ships do not.

the USA. I am therefore also referring to cultural codes when detailing sound and rhythm elements that belong to these traditions, not an essentialist idea of what "Blackness" sounds like. As Nina Sun Eidsheim (2019) shows, such ideas are constructed by the listener, not the performer, and are encultured and learned. This means that this *hearing* of Black American history and experiences in the music is what I have analysed, and that this hearing is a learned, cultural experience of expectations to music that draws on the cultural history of the Black diaspora. It is thereby also situated in (North) America as well as Black, and not directly connected to the musics of the African continent today.

The harmonics of the song are quite simple in keeping with the folk tradition. The same chord progression repeats throughout the song, regardless of it being verse or chorus, only the melody differs in the two. "America" is in c#-minor and the chord progression is c#-minor -> A-major -> E-major -> B-major and repeat, ending on a c#-minor. The functional harmonics then is I (tonic) -> IV (parallel subdominant) -> III (parallel tonic) -> VII (parallel dominant) -> I, providing a cadence. All the chords belong to c#-minor's scale and refers back to it, though they are functionally parallels. This tonality gives the song a feel of sadness and longing, not a strong minor, but feeling of striving towards the minor even when the major chords are playing. The feeling is enhanced by Chapman's vocals, which I will return to in more detail shortly.

The music in "America" builds gradually, and the vid builds its argument in tandem with it. It opens without stating its argument too strongly, working in parallel with the beginning of the song, which is very pared down. From here, there is a gradual build-up of layers of instruments throughout the song, which leads to a feeling of growing intensity as the soundscape becomes fuller and richer, all the while grounded in the steady and nuanced drum beats. As beccatoria matches this to the expansion of her argument, music and vid narrative build and reinforce each other. At various points in the song, the sound is changed as instruments disappear, reappear or are added to the sound, which adds to the flow and dynamics. As the instrumentation builds, some of them, particularly a droning and drawn-out twang, leans strongly towards the minor, giving that longing for the tonic extra force. Still, the major mode forces itself through with its dominance, pushing with an urgency that goes beyond sadness or longing, towards action instead, aided by the beat and

pace. "America" is a song that wants to cry, but cannot afford to, there is too much to do and say.

The first 4 bars are a solo drum track, to which vocals are added without any further backing to make up the first verse. The drums sound simpler than they actually are, but are also immediately different from a standard pop or rock rhythm. In a standard pop/rock rhythm, as in *Hey Ho* later in this chapter, one expects a deep sound on the 1 and 3, with a sharper, lighter one on 2 and 4. "America" has no emphasised 3 beat. Instead, it layers a 1/8 rhythm from 2-and all the way to 4-and, where 4 adds another light, sharp beat. In a rock classic, the 1/8 would typically be played on a hi-hat and run all the way through. The unemphasised 3 gives the rhythm a different groove, and the layered, lighter drum on the fast rhythm enhances this. It is not polyrhythmic, as heard in many African musics (Whiteley 2000, 525, ebook), since both rhythms are within the 4/4 system, but it hints at something different. The overlay of the 1/8 rhythm over the steadier 1-2-4 beats stand out, almost as if a different rhythm wants to break through but cannot, and is instead tempered and captured by the dominating style. These sonic themes of trying to break through but failing are a fundamental element in how the song speaks about the experiences of the victims of colonialism. This is enhanced by the timbre of the drum, which is not that of a standard drum-kit either. I do not know which kind of drum it is, but the way it sounds is distinct. Popular music is already rhythmically heavily influenced by the African American diasporic communities and their musics of the 20th century (jazz, blues, rock), and these styles have been appropriated by white musicians. This rhythm does not want to play that way, and instead diverts slightly but noticeably from this dominant mode. Thereby, the rhythmic structure forms the backbone of the tonal longing and the basis for the expression of Chapman's voice.

Chapman's vocals stand out over the rhythm. Her voice sounds almost naked, more so than on tracks where she actually sings a cappella[32] (ie. without any instrumental backing). This quality is accentuated by the melody of the verse veering towards the spoken, contrasting the backing-vocal enhanced choruses. Since the chord progression of verse and chorus is identical, this creates the main difference in how we experience chorus vs. verse. Whiteley's (ibid.) work on Chapman examines

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[32] Such as the haunting "Behind the Wall" from her self-titled first album (Chapman 1988).

several of the elements she is also using on "America": her deliberately limited range and almost impassive delivery, adding to the feeling of constraint already placed on the subdued rhythm, but also the breaking out of this limit. Here, it is particularly the word 'America', which is treated differently. It is a long and sustained word, particularly the 'me' syllable. The soft vibrato in Chapman's voice, which Whiteley (ibid., 552, ebook) identifies as Chapman's way of signaling love and longing, enhances the emotions in the song. However, the love in "America" is not for a person, but for a place or the idea of it, the America that is both the problem and subject of the song. The accentuation of the word implies that America could be different if it would stop trying to conquer America, stop perpetuating the patterns of colonialism and enslavement that the Europeans began in the 1500s. Furthermore, 'America' is sung softer than the verses are, accentuating the longing feeling with the sense that Chapman is physically farther away when addressing America. The complex emotions conveyed through the use of rhythm and voice underpins the vid's critical argument by making us feel Chapman's ideological standpoint in sounds as much as through understanding her words. The pulls in different directions gives an affective impact, it exemplifies the complexities of affect and emotions and the slippages between them, showing how the body/mind and emotion/affect pairs (Garde-Hansen & Gorton 2013) appear through music.

As the first verse ends, a rhythm guitar comes in and floating chords played by an accordion (or keyboard imitating one) takes up a melodic feel over the second verse. This verse continues with vocals over the instrumentation and then repeats the process when another instrument, perhaps a harmonica, is added and plays a short melodic flourish as the vocals end. In the verses, the phrase "conquering America" is repeated every third line, almost as a response, and grounding the idea that this is the core of the song. This invocation of call-and-response not only emphasises the subject of the song, but also draws on Black American music history, of which the call-and-response is a vital element (Whiteley 2000, 525). Anahid Kassabian (2013b) argues that when we experience a sound world, we experience a subjectivity and temporary identity. In the use of Chapman's song, drawing on its history of slavery and colonialism, this is used as a critical technique. beccatoria creates an audiovisual experience that, for a few minutes, communicates Chapman's use of Black American history along with the fictional story that parallels it in the visuals. The use of this particular song, with these characteristics, underpins the understanding of the

problems of colonialism and of the othering of a people that is conquered and enslaved. As David Brackett (2005, 79-80) shows, not just notions of genre, but certain musical elements can convey a sonic impression of constructed codes of diasporic Blackness. In the listening experience, this use of cultural codes of Blackness becomes a shorthand through which colonialism and its effects are explored.

Linking with this sounded/heard history of enslaved Africans continues in the chorus, which uses another musical element with strong Black American tradition, something which is in itself interesting given the history of Chapman's Blackness being called into dispute on grounds of the genre of her music (Koen 1990). In the lyrics, the chorus is written out as "Uh! America"; in reality, the "uh!" is almost a grunt, a rhythmic more than melodic element of the song. This syllable is sounded out by the backing group, the multiple voices audible, which gives it a call-and-response effect as well as a that of a shout or holler. This use of the grunt can be understood as what Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. (2002) refers to as "Signifyin(g)"; the revision and repetition of sonic elements or tropes reaching back into the past of Black American culture, to draw on the sonic history of slavery. Floyd, Jr. identifies grunts and shouts as some of the elements that are often Signifyin(g). To signify is a term Floyd Jr. adapts from Henry Louis Gates, who uses the spelling to differentiate its use from Standard English and instead denote Black American vernacular culture (ibid., 270). In Floyd, Jr.'s writing, this concept is used to talk about Black American music traditions by exploring the tradition of the ring shout. He identifies the dialogic idea as central in Black American music, and the contrasts between Chapman's solo voice and the group uttering the "uh" draws on this tradition, both as call-response and as a shout. Just as Eidsheim (2019) argues about race in voice, it can be argued that an audience hears this as Blackness, as the history of the African diaspora in the USA; this invocation is the sonic journey of colonialism that Chapman is bringing her listeners on. Chion (1994, 40) writes that music and image exist together, and this forms a mutual implication between them (Gorbman 1987, 15). The uses of these sonic elements, the rhythm, the call-and-response and the grunts, each signifyin(g) Black American music history are not just illustrating the images, they are co-creating the meaning of them. This brings the heard experience of Black American history into the understanding of the vid's narrative.

The way the vid uses these elements shows that it leans into this mutual implication and brings Earth's colonialist history in through the sound of the music. Where *Masters of War* used its lyrics very literally, this is not the case with *America* to the same degree. Though it does use some, as I showed in the examples earlier, it does not rely on them in the same way. Instead, the matches are often more symbolic, or more broadly co-creating a message with the song through shared ideology. The vid does, however, use musical literalisms, something which is possible because the song has more elements for beccatoria to use than "Masters of War" provided bironic with. By musical literalism, I mean moments where vid and music appear to be playing each other, where an element of the music coincides precisely with a visual element in a way that makes both stand out together, as lyrical literalisms do when they happen. Both are moments of synchresis, where one requires co-reading of lyrics and image and the other of music and image. (All three may also occur together, in which case it is both a lyrical and musical literalism.) In the song, the "uh!" is emphasised by the 4-beat immediately before it being enhanced with a sharp percussive sound. In the vid, this is replicated when the same beat is used for musical literalism several times. In this manner, the vid aids the song's Signifyin(g), by both calling attention to the "uh!" and to the rhythm of the song. *America* also uses other musical elements for synchresis, in particular the droning, twangy chord that appears several times towards the end of the song. This is used to create not just the image but the feeling of a slow, sliding movement, of the inertia inherent in movement of large and bulky spaceships, either as they slide over the ground when crashing or as they begin to take off.

There is a pleasure in such moments of musical literalism that I want to point out on top of the particularly significant use of rhythm in this vid. As Turk (2017) has argued, this pleasure is a factor in vidding. It can be linked to the idea of haptic audiovisual work that Laura Marks (quoted in Shaviro (2017, 78)) has developed, where what is seen is also felt, something Shaviro argues is a form of synaesthetic experience that "goes beyond sound and vision"(ibid.). Personally, I experience a tactile, deep satisfaction when these musical literalisms happen, analogous to Shaviro's description, and judging by how commenters often point out particularly satisfying matches in vids, I am not alone. In *America* this is especially true of the many movement-to-beat moments; the flying, jumping, grasping and punching visuals that go well with the drums and percussions in the song. What this kind of

pleasure affords is a feel for the music that is enhanced through the visuals, and vice versa. It brings the audience deeper into the work through engaging the body; it is affective, it allows the feels to nestle in the bodily responses. Here, vids show that they are both music and video works, and more than the sum of their parts. The way a vid makes the viewer feel is also related to details like musical literalism, making one more likely to react physically to the music by nodding along, tapping, rocking in a chair etc. On the surface, there might appear to be a contrast between these vidding and viewing pleasures and beccatoria's emotions of disappointment and her critique. However, the ways in which the vid draws the viewer in and engages them works to the advantage of the message by drawing attention to important musical elements and visuals alike, as well as inspiring rewatching. Crucially, all of this is about feelings.

In the opening paragraphs of this analysis, I mentioned that beccatoria has a lot of personal emotions invested in *Mass Effect*, and how *Andromeda* disappointed a trust that fans of the game franchise had built in it. These feelings, the longing for what could have been as well as the anger and disappointment at what is actually there, is ultimately what is expressed in the vid. It is feels, complicated intersections of love, investment, sadness, disappointment and anger. Feels that are communicated through musical codes and tone of voice, and which co-construct the message of the vid. Chapman's longing for a world that is not steeped in the lasting effects of colonialism is beccatoria's disappointment in a game that perpetuates those same structures and effects. *America* is about colonialism, but it is also about and of feels; feels so important that the vid was the natural consequence of them for beccatoria.

It is interesting that beccatoria had originally imagined using "America" to vid a critique of big blockbuster entertainment from the US, which is the subject of the next vid. This link allows for a parallel between the ideologies of BioWare and Hollywood. As Stahl (2009) points out, games are an effective and popular form of militainment, going so far as to be part of the recruitment efforts for the US armed forces. So while *Andromeda* is a sci-fi roleplaying game, not a military shooter, it still allows for the pleasure of killing "the other" as part of an invading force. beccatoria's critique of colonialism in *Andromeda* is also, through the use of Chapman's song especially, drawing on a presupposed critique of colonialism here on Earth. It is the

repeating patterns of colonialism that the next vid, Thuvia Ptarth's *Hey Ho,* concerns itself with when it examines superheroes as militainment.

5.3 Thuvia Ptarth's *Hey Ho*: Superhero militainment by Marvel

> I do think there is now a broader understanding that fannish love takes a lot of different forms, and for some of us it includes criticism (in both the sense of "analysis" and the sense of "negative comment").
>
> ...
>
> I think of vids as being a mix of essay and poetry. This vid is very much all the way over at the essay end of the continuum. Except for the bridge, which is poetry. - Thuvia Ptarth[33]

The last vid in this chapter is Thuvia Ptarth's *Hey Ho* from 2014, which takes us back to a present-day Earth in a world that, like that of *Stargate* in *Masters of War*, is similar to the one we live in, with one crucial difference. Instead of a device which allows for interstellar travel, the difference is in the existence of superheroes. Thuvia Ptarth herself sees the vid as a form of essay, as evidenced above. According to her, *Hey Ho* did not directly relate to a particularly active debate in fandom, but an issue she wanted to highlight as important and invite her audience to reflect on. The vid itself is different from the previous two. Firstly, it is a multi-source vid, and secondly it differs by not being about direct colonialism, but instead about media imperialism (or cultural imperialism) (Ampuja, Koivisto & Nordenstreng 2020; Boyd-Barrett 2020) understood as mass-media as nationalist militainment/propaganda. It is linked to the other two through shared military elements and because of the colonialist implications of military propaganda. The vid uses footage from a range of films in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). This term denotes a series of films produced by Marvel Entertainment, with a common narrative centering around the formation of one of Marvel's superhero teams, The Avengers. The films used are *The Avengers* (Whedon 2012), *Captain America: The First Avenger* (Johnston 2011), *The Incredible Hulk* (Leterrier 2008), *Iron Man* (Favreau 2008a), *Iron Man 2* (Favreau 2010), *Iron Man 3* (Black 2013) as well as the TV show *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013-2020). This selection constitutes most of what Marvel call their

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[33] Interview conducted via Google Hangouts on 25th August 2019

"phase one"[34] of the larger MCU strategy, though *Iron Man 3* is considered the first film in "phase two". Missing from the phase one films is *Thor* (Branagh 2011). This exclusion, explained by Thuvia Ptarth in a comment on the vid, is due to the film's lack of obvious military involvement. The overarching argument of the vid is an exploration of the ways in which the MCU is a part of the military-industrial-entertainment complex and the influences this might have on text and audience alike. As the MCU is one of the largest, in terms of profit, film franchises of the last decade[35], the impact of these films is sizeable in terms of audience numbers alone. The MCU also has a quantifiably large fandom in terms of fanworks[36], showing that the audience Thuvia Ptarth is addressing with her vid is also large.

5.3.1 So it goes...

Hey Ho is set to the song of the same name, written by Dave Carter and performed by Tracy Grammer. The version used in the vid is edited by Thuvia Ptarth and only has three verses and choruses, as opposed to the original four. Verse two in the vid is a mix of what was originally verses four (the first half) and two (the second half). The left-over parts have been discarded along with one chorus. In a follow-up email after our interview, Thuvia Ptarth explained that this edit was made to strengthen her narrative and make the lyrics serve the purpose of the vid better, as was also the case with *Masters of War*. Both these examples have in common that the songs have identical verses, making such editing easier, and both are so skillfully done that it took me reading the full lyrics to notice. From this limited sample, however, it is significant that these edits are made by the vidders to strengthen the narrative structure and their message, showing the attention to storytelling that goes into vidding. As Coppa (2011b) points out, what a vidder chooses to exclude is as significant as what she includes. Thuvia Ptarth's edits say something about where the emphasis of her critique lies, something I return to later.

"Hey Ho" is in f-minor, yet, like "America", it mostly uses major chords. The most commonly occurring chords are Eb-major (the parallel dominant) and Ab-major (the parallel tonic), leading to cadences in Ab-major. At the end of each half-

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[34] For a list of what each phase contains, see for example this list from Digital Spy (McKewan & Longridge 2020).

[35] As of February 2021, *Avengers: Endgame* (Russo & Russo 2019) is the world's highest ever grossing film according to boxofficemojo (Mojo 2021).

[36] As of early 2021, MCU is the fandom with the largest number of work on Archive of Our Own (toastystats 2021)

verse and half-chorus, the song lands on Bbsus2, a dissonance that demands resolution, which is not immediately found. Meanwhile, the opening of each verse and chorus is on f-minor, the tonic, where the ear rests, thereby resolving the dissonance. This provides a drive forward in the chord progression, like the drive of the war machine and assembly lines described in the song's lyrics. Where the previous two songs had the rest at the end of each verse, "Hey Ho" denies its listeners that, and instead pushes ahead. At the same time, the build-up of tension towards a minor chord that comes too late for the expected release is a drive towards something sombre. It is a song that is soft and sad, and, as a consequence, the critique the vid presents is grounded in this emotion. This makes *Hey Ho* fundamentally different from the previous two vids where the baseline affective register was more active.

As with "Masters of War", the song ambles on without any big changes in dynamics, though there is a bit more variation here through use of instrumentation, breaks and embellishments, and the melody is richer, more melodic and flowing. These details create the arc of the song the way building the music in "America" and Dylan's voice in "Masters of War" did. "Hey Ho" shares with "Masters of War" a certain lilting of the rhythm, and there is an audible link in the sound and feel between them, which shows their common genre. "Hey Ho" gives a more subdued impression, without the sarcastic bitterness of Bob Dylan's voice or the struggle in Tracy Chapman's. Tracy Grammer's voice is soft; she is a reporter, sharing a difficult truth.

The message of the song is an anti-war sentiment, but even more a critique of the military-industrial-entertainment complex. The first word in the song is 'TV' and the first lines have children asking for plastic guns to play with. The overall arc in the edited version of the song is that children are taught to play and glorify war and violence through the media; in the vid this media is specified as Marvel superheroes. Each iteration of the chorus has the same lyrics, which summarises the point of the song, speaking of "the merchant kings of war and woe" (see full lyrics in Appendix 1). As with *Masters of War*, *Hey Ho* is a vid that uses the lyrics literally and utilises the folk genre of simple music and powerful lyrics. However, as with *America*, *Hey Ho* also relies on musical literalism.

I want to expand on Kuhn's (2012) work on the rhetoric of remix, and visualise the tools of a vidder as a mixing desk of remix, to better account for the ways in which the three vids in this chapter use music in similar and different ways.

On this mixing desk, the interplay between sound, image and words can be emphasised at different levels at different times. Each vid has a base setting for the levels of emphasis on each channel, which shows how the vid overall uses its three (sometimes two) parts; from there it is adjusted to highlight a word, sound or clip. Where *Masters of War* had dialled its music back and its lyrics up, *America* used its music much more actively to create meaning. With *Hey Ho*, the lyrics are, again, central and set higher than in *America*, but the music is also more actively used than in *Masters of War* while not to the same degree of meaning-making as in *America*. So in terms of the base settings for the mix, *Hey Ho* sits between the other two. To further expand on this, I now consider how the vid progresses and draw out examples of the use of music and lyrics.

5.3.2 Exploring propaganda in three movements

While the music is relatively straightforward, the vid is visually dense owing to its multiple sources and visual styles. Thuvia Ptarth creates her argument by highlighting thematically similar clips as well as through lyrical literalism, which is employed both directly and with symbolic parallels through synchresis between music, lyrics and visuals. As I mentioned in the analysis of *America*, these moments are satisfying to watch as well as to make. Vivian Sobchack (2004) explores how we experience cinema because of our bodies; it can be extrapolated that other audiovisual media can do the same. The pleasure of the slotting or clicking together, the sensation of synchresis, is one of the ways vids communicate. As Ahmed (2014a) writes, affect works on and in relation to bodies. Synchresis and the bodily pleasure derived from it draws attention to a moment in a vid and can spark an understanding of a vid's overall meaning through this emphasis. In addition, this becomes more pronounced with multiple viewings of a vid when there is time to fully take in the details of it. The effect is one of a nod between vidder and audience; mutual recognition of the effort put into the creating and watching.

Watching also plays a part in the vid itself. From the opening, the argument is signalled by integrating screens within the vid, something that repeats several times throughout. In film, such calling attention to the apparatus of film points to a metatextual layer (McNelis & Boschi 2013), and the same is true in this vid. In addition, the sound of a film projector starting to roll has been edited into the opening of the song, matching the film starting to roll in the clip. By also editing the

sound to emphasise the medium, Thuvia Ptarth expands the metatextuality into the aural realm.
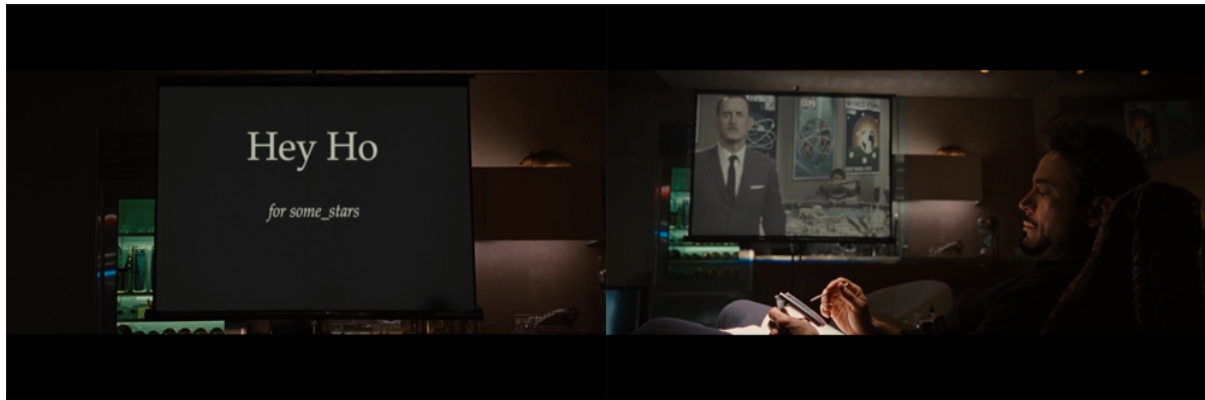
Fig. 7. The title card for *Hey Ho* projected onto a screen being watched by Tony Stark/Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) in shots from the opening seconds of the vid.

The first part of *Hey Ho*, comprising the first verse and chorus, uses only footage from the *Iron Man* films, which have the most diegetically visible link to the US military. Tony Stark aka Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) is an arms dealer for the US armed forces at the beginning of the film. Roger Stahl (2009) points out that the armored suit that Tony Stark creates was used as a way of marketing prototype exoskeletons by real world arms dealers as a consequence of the success of the first *Iron Man* film. Stahl (ibid., 46) points to the case of *Iron Man* as a prime example of the cooperation between the US armed forces and Hollywood, and states that "If the technofetish template for the Persian Gulf War was *Top Gun*, by 2008 the fantasy had morphed into the shape of *Iron Man*." He goes on to explain that the film used a US Air Force base for filming to the satisfaction of the military liaison for the film, who was pleased that the film made the Air Force look like "rock stars" (ibid.).

In addition, the film and its lead character are also examples of the capitalist ideology of the superhero genre as Dan Hassler-Forest writes (2012, 48): "...superhero figures Batman and Iron Man focuses on their cyborg-like incorporation of high-tech surveillance apparatus in their costumes, which transforms them into a particular fantasy of militarized agency". Hassler-Forest's points are further enforced by Tanner Mirrlees (2020), who argues that the US state apparatus is involved in media production which reflect US American strategic goals. This is the argument of *Hey Ho* as well.

Fig. 8. A shot inside a US military hangar, featuring Colonel James "Rhodey" Rhodes (Terrence Howard) and military personnel as extras.[37] Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.) meeting a character with a high rank in the US military, with an actual cargo plane in the background of the shot.

As can be seen from the above, *Iron Man* is militainment, a heroic portrait of surveillance technology, and good publicity for the US armed forces. When Thuvia Ptarth focuses her first verse on Iron Man, she is thereby drawing attention to these facts through the use of, mainly, the lyrics with the images. Her clip choice illustrates especially Stahl's point clearly by drawing attention to important points in her message via literalism. Examples from this part of the vid include "missiles made of gingerbread" matched with (Stark produced) missiles in flight. Another is "get brother one for twice the fun" to Iron Man/Tony Stark and War Machine/James Rhodes (Don Cheadle, who took over from Terrence Howard) both in their armor suits. The latter also provides one of the beautiful musical literalisms; the moment when each man closes his helmet, one at a time. This happens in perfect sync with both music and words, an instance of the synchretic pleasure I described above. Furthermore, this dual literalism emphasises the clip and the lyrics at once. The two men are as brothers to each other on the literal plane, but can also symbolise the children in the lyrics who want to play with guns. Furthermore, the two armoured characters are reproduced in toys, merchandise and publicity, especially in the case of Iron Man. This dual emphasis points out the complicated relationships between playing as/with superheroes and weapons, and the degree to which those two are the same. Meanwhile, the music's soft sadness comments on this sale of war and woe, as the lyrics call it, and draws the audience into an affective space that contrasts that of

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[37] The DVD extra materials explains the situation in some detail, including that the extras were actual US Air Force soldiers.

the source texts and thereby refocuses attention to the diegetic cost of action bravado and the non-diegetic cost of the warfare that the MCU glorifies.

In the instrumental transition to the second verse, the vid changes and broadens its focus to other parts of the MCU and thereby also expands its critique. By first setting up Iron Man/Tony Stark as both diegetic and extradiegetic link between military and superhero, Thuvia Ptarth gets her audience on board and is then able to expand her argument about the wider MCU as militainment. This section (second verse + chorus) mostly uses footage featuring Captain America and Hulk. The links between the clips of Steve Rogers/Captain America (Chris Evans) and Bruce Banner/The Hulk (Edward Norton) are not only their visual similarity, but also their connection in the MCU as super-soldier experiments. The affective register of the music here calls attention to the cost to the characters as well, who are experimented on in at times gruesome ways. One creative instance match in this section is "babes in bassinets" to Bruce Banner sitting in a large, cradle-shaped medical scanner, transitioning into Steve Rogers climbing into the cocoon-shaped device which transforms him into Captain America. Again, these matches enhance the connection between children, superheroes and war.
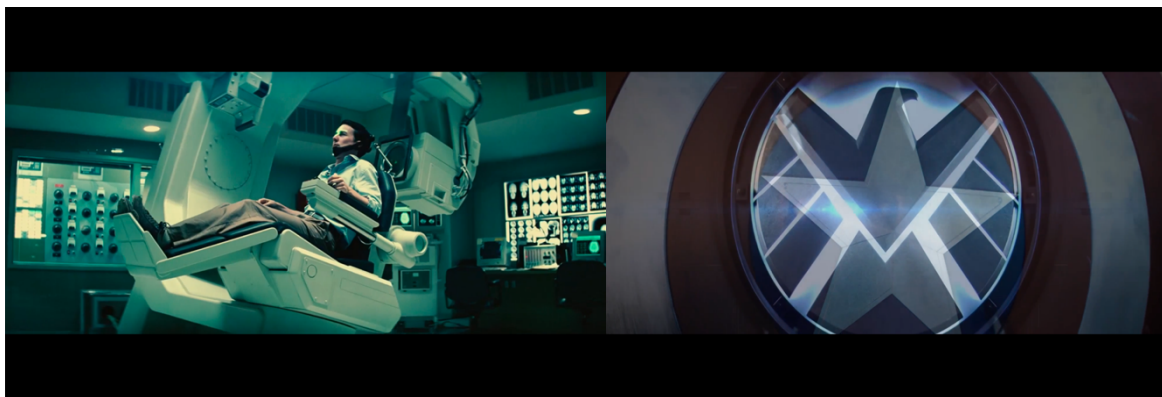
Fig. 9. Left: Bruce Banner (Edward Norton) in his "bassinet". Right: Layers of shields, connecting Captain America (Chris Evans) to the military organisation S.H.I.E.L.D.

The word "bayonets" is underlined by a snare drum in another use of satisfying synchresis, and is perhaps my personal favourite moment in the vid. It shows General Ross (William Hurt) blowing smoke from his cigar, as if stabbing the audience with it. This choice also hints at the cigar being more than a cigar in this shot, not least by virtue of its visual (phallic) similarity to a missile or bullet, complete with cloud of smoke, and the cigar's link to (white male) figures of power.

Ross symbolises the figures of power in warfare, and using this particular clip on a moment that is musically emphasised draws attention to him, to his status as powerful and corrupt antagonist, as well as his military rank.

General Ross is an antagonist in *The Incredible Hulk*, yet despite this, the US armed forces were also involved in the making of it. Thuvia Ptarth shows that the MCU's use of regular soldiers parallels what Stahl (2009) calls "spectacular war". This is a strategy which uses a "support the troops" narrative where individual soldiers are not complicit in any problematic or wrong actions; they are also victims of war. The soldiers in *The Incredible Hulk* are blameless victims of the Hulk's rage and Ross's machinations, while those fighting alongside Captain America are battling nazis in WWII and hardly reproachable. This exonerates the soldiers and by extension the military, who are only guilty of having a single bad leader in their ranks. To quote Stahl (ibid., 31): "Whereas propaganda addresses an audience that matters, the spectacle presumes an audience that does not. And whereas propaganda seeks to answer the question of *why we fight*, the spectacle loses itself in the fact *that we fight*." This encapsulates the standard superhero narrative; rather than focus on why a fight is happening, these films almost invariably dedicate about the last third of their runtimes to large, spectacular battles, justified by a simplistic idea of good vs. evil. They are spectacle more than propaganda, but they also function as publicity for the military. So despite the negative imagery associated with General Ross, the vid also points out this portrayal of regular soldiers, never as active enactors of war, always as its victims. This erases the complicated facets of war and turns them into a simple matter of fixing it by applying good American heroes to the problem. The vid shows us that not only do superheroes sell war, they sell America's war. Both Stahl (ibid.) and Payne (2016) engage with the concept of playing war, a theme *Hey Ho* also has. Payne (ibid., 205) argues that ludic war in video games allows those who play to find both pleasure as well as political satisfaction of taking up (imaginary) arms against enemies of the state. In the superhero narratives Thuvia Ptarth is critiquing, the ludic war happens through the superhero characters. Her critique culminates in a focus on the way superheroes are sold as toys towards the end of the vid.

However, before that there is an instrumental bridge, which provides a shift in mood. The lack of lyrics provides a chance to change the pace and focus on a different aspect of the source. Thuvia Ptarth uses this to expand on the role of

medical-technological experiments on humans in the MCU, following on from the supersoldier experiments of the previous verse. Her intention was to show that biological experimentation/physical alteration is a part of the militarisation in the MCU, analogous to biological engineering. She uses clips to follow blood, surgery and implantation of tracking devices, reminding the audience that in the MCU, these techniques are used by and on villains as well as heroes. It is an invocation of pain, which, as Ahmed (2014a) argues, is a powerful political force, through the visuals, complicated by the soundscape that accompanies it. Meanwhile, the music is devoid of its rhythm section and consists only of hummed voice with echoing effect applied over a soft sustained chord on keys and guitar while a guiro keeps a sense of stable rhythm. It is a beautiful but eerie soundscape, floating and detached from its foundation of bass and drums, adding to the unpleasant imagery. This is perhaps the vid's strongest affective section; the eeriness and unpleasant imagery enhance each other, give a sense of detachment and yet also of the costs of human suffering in the making of superhero bodies. This effect is what Thuvia Ptarth phrases as the section being "poetry", and how this contrasts the more essayist style of the rest of the vid. It is a striking contrast, and it is moving for this reason as well. Not despite, but rather because of its softness, it stands out, draws attention, and is affectively engaging. Affect that is complicated through the beauty and distance in the sound combined with the bodily horror of pain in the visuals. Pain is solitary but never private (ibid., 29), made public - as here - it is meant to invoke a response, it becomes political (ibid., 31-33), yet the music draws us away, shows us how the visuals are spectacle, and thereby the vid questions the use of (even fictional) suffering for entertainment.

The final section opens by returning to screens as the lyrics speak of "silver screen", reminding the audience that the media's role is also being questioned in the vid. The continuing use of literalism to draw attention to the MCU's politics is exemplified by the match of "foreign fiends" with The Mandarin (Ben Kingsley), whose Indian heritage and Chinese codename signify an enemy that is racially and nationally othered. As Hassler-Forest (2012) argues, Iron Man fights a war that is devoid of civilian casualties, while simultaneously playing off the trauma of the protagonist as a victim of terrorism. He is constructed as a sympathetic and relatable post-9/11 hero, who fights voiceless, darker-skinned antagonists whom The Mandarin here symbolises. *Hey Ho* thus reminds the audience that the racial politics of the MCU is equally problematic as its function as militainment, and of the

uncomfortable links between war and othering. It is always easier to kill someone who is not a part of a constructed "us", a construction the MCU is complicit in.

The final chorus shifts the attention to children in the visuals too. These children are all drawn from the MCU's diegesis, but they are also children who admire and play as/with superheroes and superhero merchandise. By placing this at the end of the vid, Thuvia Ptarth shows that by playing superheroes, these children are also engaging in play that is an extension of US military propaganda. As Gray (2010) has shown, toys and merchandise are part of the transmedia stories of popular culture, and superheroes franchises utilise this. The MCU has toy and merchandise ranges, some of which are clearly marketed to children. By using children from within the MCU diegesis, Thuvia Ptarth stays with the text and at the same time points outside of it, to the audience. Fans, the intended audience for the vid, are likely to own and buy merchandise, and support the MCU with money and time. Ending on this theme opens up the vid's critique to the fandom, and asks fans to question what it is they are buying when they invest in the fandom of Marvel superheroes. With her final clip, Thuvia Ptarth points the finger back at the company that is ultimately responsible for creating this militainment. This clip, an image of Marvel's recognisable title screen, is matched to the quick double-tapped chord that finishes the song and is the final word in the argument of the vid.
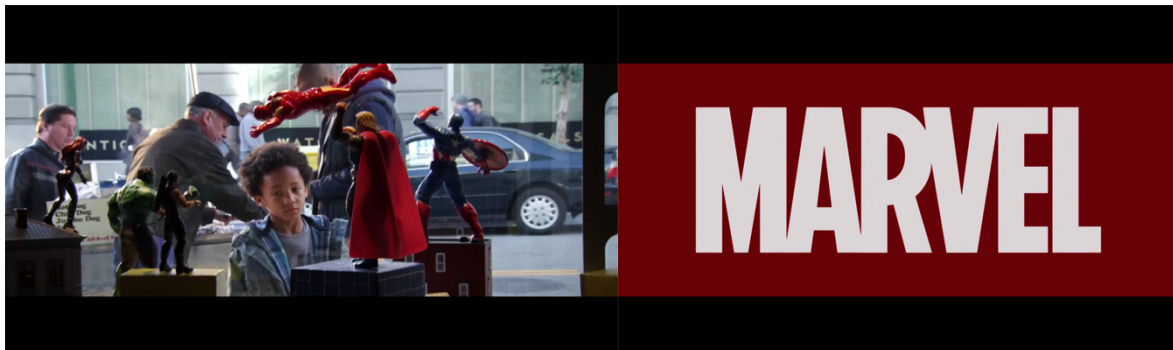
Fig. 10. Marvel sells an idealised war to children - in and outside its diegesis.

5.3.3 Chilling critique and pleasurable expertise

In the reception of *Hey Ho* it is notable that the vid is both well received and has sparked continuous engagement and reactions. As Thuvia Ptarth also points out in the first quote opening this analysis, fannish love can take the form of criticism of many kinds; in the case of the reception of *Hey Ho*, this understanding is implied within the fandom responses. The vid was posted on several platforms with

Dreamwidth, LiveJournal and AO3 providing most of the accessible commentary. While the bulk of the commentary is from the first months after the vid's release, as of July 2021 the latest reblog on tumblr was from April 2021 and the last comments on the journals from March 2021. The comments, aside from being broadly complimentary, range from short ones in the style of "I liked this" to very long, in-depth commentary, remarking on specific moments in the vid as well as on the overall argument. The fitting song choice is also praised, which Thuvia Ptarth passes on to some_stars, the vid's recipient, who chose the song.

From these comments, it is evident that the song is also considered important by the vid's audience. Most of the specific comments mention lyrics-to-clip matches, but there is also evidence of affective reactions on this vid. Words such as "gut-punch", "chilling" and "creepy" appear several times, where watchers share experiences of being hit hard by the vid's message. Significantly, some commenters use terms like "military-industrial-entertainment", "nationalist jingoist" and "propaganda" and praise the vid for making the MCU's politics visible. When several commenters use the term "chilling" about the vid, it becomes clear that the vid's affective register, expressed in the music, is also noticed by the audience; the eerie sadness inherent in Grammar's distanced commentary and the mood of the music aids this feeling. That this particular word repeats so often in comments that are more than one line is no coincidence; the eerie and disquieting aspects of the music is reflected in this feeling. Alongside, comments express pleasures of seeing a point well made, and praise the vid for its artistic merits. The commenters show that they receive the vid as intended, that this form of critique is legible through the vid.

The use of bodily metaphors to explain affective reactions brings back the writings of Sobchack (2004) and Ahmed (2014a); feels are physical and mental at once. When commenters use metaphors like "gut-punch", it is not a coincidence; there is a physical response to the feels engendered by the vid. Not only the unpleasant emotions are described in bodily, affective expressions. There are also instances of people writing "*flails*" - indicating a helpless, physical thrashing about in the throes of feels. According to Gretchen McCulloch (2019, 269), "the solitary asterisk had long been committed to other meanings, like *bold* and *narrates own actions in the third person*"; this latter use of the asterisks are what is happening in such comments. The comments using expressions like this indicate that the commenter is so overwhelmed or overcome that they cannot articulate properly as a

result of too many feels. This expression is collectively received and shared in the comments, showing the feels culture of being emotionally open in fan spaces, to share the feels (Stein 2015, 156-170). The *flailing* commenters express that they are dealing with a lot of emotions regarding the vid, but are unable to sort, define or express them in words. Instead they share that the impact has happened, that the feels are felt.

Conclusion: The sound and affect of critiquing colonialism

In this chapter I have analysed three vids which use different strategies to address aspects of colonialism in media. I showed the ways in which music is used to evoke feels and create meaning in vids where the lyrics otherwise do much of the work of explaining the argument of the vid. These three vids have similarities, despite the fact that they were created over a period of seven years and using clips from respectively TV, film and games. Not least the choice of North American folk music is noteworthy and points to deliberate strategies on the part of the vidders. These songs all communicate different aspects of the last 50 years of American (and European) expansionary politics. Origin and genre of music are part of how these vids communicate, and their similarities help illustrate the different tactics employed by the vidders to create their critical argument. The association between modern folk and protest movements is utilised to ground themes related to protest; anti-war sentiment, justice for underprivileged groups and the military-industrial complex.

Therefore, the choices of folk songs to talk about military colonialism in space, civilian colonialism in space and cultural imperialistic pro-military propaganda are not surprising. That does not mean it is less significant. Folk is meant to effect political change, but as Tiina Rosenberg (2013, 180) writes, adapting Linda Williams (1991), protest song is a "body genre"; something that provokes a corporeal response; there is affect in the genre. Employing the cultural connotations of the genre as well as the relevant lyrics shows the care vidders put into choosing their songs. This is also reflected when asking about their choices. For example beccatoria's explanation that she had been sitting on "America" for several years, waiting for an idea for it, and bironic's experience of hearing the song and instantly knowing what to vid with it.

The genre similarities are directly audible too. All three songs employ a mix of minor and major mode with an emphasis on the minor. Though they vary a lot in

complexity, each song has a sadness to it, which is used as part of the message, turning into, in turn, bitterness, struggle and chilling eeriness. These songs do not have strong harmonic resolutions, but instead waver back and forth and feel less like they are ending and more as if they simply choose to stop, and could have gone on arguing their point for much longer. What this effect of tonality and rhythm shows is that even in three vids which rely on the lyrics to communicate their message, the music plays an important part in giving the audience the kind of affective response the vidders are aiming for. With the different levels of melodic complexity, chord progression, dynamics, rhythm and tonality, the vidders each have different settings in their mixing desk, where at one end lies *Masters of War* with its heavy reliance on lyrics and at the other *America* with its use of Black American music traditions.

The use of voice is important too, the instrument that communicates the words and uses the melody. From Dylan's bitterness over Carter's soft clarity to Chapman's spoken-ness and use of call-response, the voices of the performers demand attention. Rosenberg (2013, 181) points out, using Barthes (1981), that we experience the voice, not the notes. Voice is what we most hear and relate to, which explains how lyrics come to stand in for music in both vid scholarship and in the comment tracks. Voice and words are immediate communicators, we hear/read them and grasp for their meaning in context, but music is much harder to interpret, though a hearing person experiences it with immediacy. When focused on decoding images and words, it is no wonder that the role of music is not always the first thing we think of or articulate; as Gorbman (1987) does, it is easy to think that music works on a less conscious level. Regardless of our level of conscious attention, music is heard and works in vids, not least on our affective responses, which informs how we understand the context of the images and words.

This is where feels take centre stage, both as individual experiences and collective bearer of cultural significance. Kassabian's (2013b, 113) notion of "distributed subjectivity" describes an experience of togetherness in the experience of audiovisual art. She writes that "particularly in moments of extravagant sensory experience", this feeling of sharing is experienced by audiences. While her audiences are in the same physical space, I would argue that the experience of sharing a vid, across time and place, is similar, particularly when engaging in comments about it where others are doing the same. Synchresis induced pleasures qualify as extravagant sensory experiences, drawing in the audiences to what is communicated

in the vids. When Stein (2015) writes that fandom is a feels culture of collective emotions, the distributed subjectivity is part of how those feels are experienced as shared through vids. When beccatoria vids because of her feelings, or when the commenters on *Hey Ho* share their emotional reactions, they are engaging in this sharing of distributed feelings, in the feels culture.

This chapter has laid some foundations for understanding what music does in vids, for how music contributes in vidders' creation of messages and in the audiences' reception of those messages. I have conceptualised this as a mixing desk of vidding, and focused on how synchresis emphasises moments in vids that guide interpretation and becomes a language that allows vidders to speak through their vids. I have also looked at how the connotations of music work in the reading of vids, including how voice and performer persona can play in, and how genre and history of music draw deep connections to an affective register, which vidders use to construct meaning. In the following chapters, I further develop the ways in which vids communicate affectively and also further expand on the concept of feels and how it functions in vidding. From the wider issue of colonialism, I move to one of the facets of the same issue, namely that of racism and representations of race, which is the focus of the three vids I am analysing in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Racial Discourse: Discussing race and representation through vids

The vids in chapter five used a wide lens to examine narratives of colonialism in their fan texts, and though they acknowledged issues of race in the process, their aim was not to address this directly. In chapter six, the vids take a closer, more personal, view on race and representation. This different emotional investment leads to different feels in/from the vids. The thematic link between the two chapters connects these six vids and their critiquing strategies. As with the previous chapter, the vids examined span a wide range in time, but this time they also differ in music genre, mode of critique and affective register. This allows for an expansion in the analysis of how vidders use music in their work.

I open by looking at *The Greatest* (2018b) by bironic (who also created *Masters of War*), a vid that sparks a lot of feels through the affective arc of its song. *The Greatest* is notable among my corpus in being a massively[38] multi-source vid with at least 100 sources. This vid, set to Sia's (2016) "The Greatest", aims to explore and celebrate "chromatic characters" (bironic 2018a) from sci-fi, fantasy and horror in the approximately 5 years leading up to the vid's creation. While doing so, the vid also crafts a narrative of resistance and perseverance in the face of oppression. Secondly, I analyse Luminosity's (2007) *Vogue* and its use of humour. It is a vid and critique of *300* (Snyder 2006) and uses Madonna's (1990) "Vogue" as its music source. This vid uses satire and recontextualisation of the visual source material. The last of the three, *Origin Stories* (2008) by GiandujaKiss, is created using visual material from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Angel* (1999-2004). The music is "Coffee" (2007) by Aesop Rock feat. John Darnielle. It focuses on the stories of characters of colour in the TV shows and addresses issues of representation of race by using feels to recenter the narrative around minor characters.

As can be seen from the above, the vids differ in music genre, but there are also similarities. There are two female-led pop songs, created 26 years apart, and all

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[38] In the way that MMOs - Massively Multiplayer Online games are "massive", that is with a large amount of what "multi" denotes. Here it is sources, in MMOs it is players.

three songs use rhythm very strongly, which was not the case for the folk songs of the previous chapter. This leads to different possibilities for the vidders in utilizing the rhythmic elements of the music. Coincidentally, the songs are quite close to one another in terms of beats per minute, and they also share links to Black American culture performed by white lead artists. In the case of "Vogue", through its inspiration from the chiefly US American ballroom scene in the 80s, dominated by Black and Latine[39] Americans, while Aesop Rock is working in a genre that is dominated by and originates in Black American culture. Finally, one of the co-writers and performers of "The Greatest" is Kendrick Lamar Duckworth, better known as Kendrick Lamar, a Black American rapper, songwriter and producer. These songs also share the use of a mix of singing and rapping/speaking, and shifts between vocal styles which are significant in the vids. As with the folk music in vids about colonialism, this similarity is coincidental on the part of my selection of the vids, however I do not think it is coincidental in terms of the sounds they bring to the vids, and the ways in which those sounds aid the communication of messages. This examination of connotations of music is one of the red threads in this chapter, which will show how fandom can discuss issues of race/racism and what is at stake in the culture of collective feels when this is attempted. The feels are especially strong with the first vid in this chapter, *The Greatest.*

6.1 bironic's *The Greatest*: Celebrate, Uplift, Critique

> She said, she wanted a survey of these badass characters of colour with this song. And I'm like, I really like the emotional peaks and troughs and the energy that grows and drops and grows again, and I think those could work well together. And obviously it was like a political and media and societal critique-y subject to take on, and then as I was making it, it became, I think, more a work of critique than I had initially expected. I thought it would be celebration. And it is celebration, but then there were more. -bironic

The first vid in this chapter is bironic's vid *The Greatest,* set to Sia's song of the same name, which presents a different kind of critical engagement than the vids I have discussed so far, because of the way it uses affect. This vid was created for a recipient who won bironic's vid in an auction, following the fandom tradition of charity

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[39] I have chosen to use the gender neutral term Latine here to reflect recent developments in Spanish language LGBT+ activism. These recent developments have led to this term being preferred to the alternative Latino/a and Latinx, because the former implies a gender binary and the latter is grammatically incongruent with Spanish.

auctioning (Jones 2012). The recipient gave bironic the following prompt: "a multi-fandom vid set to Sia's "The Greatest" reveling in the bad-ass wonderfulness of characters of color in SF/F/horror TV and movies of the last 3-5 years." (bironic 2018a) bironic spent around 18 months making the vid, and it represents considerable effort in time and labour. Her quote above shows some of her thoughts about the vid, its inception and development, and how she ultimately came to consider it. In the process, she and the vid not only argued something to the audience, but also to herself. *The Greatest* functions on a much larger scale than the previous vids, and is constructed with a different critical sensibility to any of the other vids in this project. Rather than critique failures, it celebrates characters of colour, while simultaneously pointing to their scarcity and constructing a narrative of overcoming adversity. bironic (ibid.) followed several selection criteria to make this a representation that did something particular. Amongst these were that the characters were underrepresented minorities in the countries that produced the source, would not be considered white in a US context, were not hidden by make-up or prosthetics and were from live-action sources. For my purposes of looking at music and affect, this vid is also an interesting example because of its structure and emotional and affective arc, which follows the song. As bironic's comments above show, this structure and how it rises and falls in intensity, was also central to bironic's concept of the video. In the quote, she draws this out at the same time as she is addressing the message of the vid, linking the music and its dual argument of celebration and critique.

As mentioned, *The Greatest* is a multi-source vid, containing material from around 100 different sources,[40] which makes it feel both dense, because of the effort in decoding the many clips (bironic has helpfully created a subtitle file which enables the audience to identify character and text while watching), and light; the sheer number of sources means there is no time to delve into the deeper meaning of any one text, especially not when viewing casually. Repeated viewing gives further context and is an experience that affords pleasure (Stevens 2020, 142). *The Greatest* is an example of what Stevens (ibid., 37) refers to as "intensified television", building on David Bordwell's (2002) idea of intensified continuity. In the case of *The Greatest,* the intensity is compounded by the amount of sources, the pace of editing

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[40] Depending on how you count different iterations of TV shows and film franchises it could be as many as 115. bironic (ibid.) sets the count at 105.

and that most sources appear only once, thereby making one clip stand in for an entire series or film. While "blink and you miss it" is true of all vids, in *The Greatest,* the scope for what one might miss is increased. At the same time, this density increases the rewatch pleasure mentioned above.

The source texts are all genre film and TV, with beautiful colours and high-definition clarity, an effect of the selection criteria as speculative fiction currently tends to have such production values. The crisply produced song matches this look very well; everything is smooth and slick on both the auditory and visual side. The editing is equally sharp, fitting beats and shifts with precision. The clips are structured along similar moments in the various texts and these moments are edited together to reflect the developments in the lyrics and the affective arcs of the music, creating the narrative in the process. By using this type of clip structuring, *The Greatest* follows a tradition of a type of multifandom vids, which structure themselves on tropes, actions and narrative coherence (Coppa, 2009a; Stevens 2020; Winters, 2012).

As mentioned, *The Greatest* was created as part of an act of fan activism (Bennett 2012; Jones, 2012), but this is not what makes it a work with critical reflectivity. It is a critical vid because of its theme and its narrative arc, though its creation in a particular political environment responding to the 2016 US election is not irrelevant to how it looks. On the surface, it is a vid with a celebratory sensibility, which could lead to it being read as a vid without a deep message, but what and how it celebrates reveals it as having more to say. I often refer to celebratory vids as saying that "this is great, let me show you", and *The Greatest* does this, but for a huge group of characters rather than for a text. The vid works through dismantling the divide between the concepts of feeling and reason (Ahmed 2014a). By making the audience feel for, with and about the characters in the vid, it also makes us think with and about them. How this is accomplished is what I turn to next.

6.1.1 I sing the body electric

On the small scale, *The Greatest* is constructed through clips which are linked together by emotional and stylistic similarities, such as a particular look, movement or visual element. On the larger scale, they are linked via their thematic tone, shifting with the music and lyrics. "The Greatest" is written by Sia, Greg Kurstin and Kendrick Lamar Duckworth and is a pop song with a dance inflected beat. The song

uses a simple 4-chord progression, 1, 5, b6, 4 (see appendix 1) for most of its length. It is similar to both *Hey Ho* and *America* in that it is in a minor key, c-minor, yet mostly uses parallel (major) chords, Ab-major, Eb-major and Bb-major, while retaining the minor feel. The progression of 1, 5, 6, 4 is common in popular music, to the degree that entire medleys and jokes are made over the fact that these 4 chords are the same in all music[41]. What is so effective about it in this song is the way the dynamics and structure functions and how the song builds affectively.

As mentioned above, the vid is structured along thematically similar clip sequences, but also along the different emotional and affective structures of the song, as bironic's introductory quote shows, these structures were important to her creative impulse and project. They are set by each element of the song, where the verses, choruses, bridges and B-sections all have their own affective register. Because of how this is used in the vid, I will go through the vid by these sections rather than chronologically (see appendix 1 for the structure as it occurs in the song, as well as chords and lyrics).

From the opening frame of *The Greatest*, the vid announces a purposefulness that betrays its seeming superficiality as a celebratory vid. The first shot is of the character L (Lakeith Stanfield) from *Death Note* (Wingard 2017); a Black man in a black hoodie, masked with a scarf covering the lower half of his face, he is standing on a podium, nudging a microphone in time with the beat. The act of tapping the microphone to the beat gives the impression of L creating the sound diegetically, making this an example of a musical literalism. In the clip, L gestures in a way that is typical of speakers about to begin, the test of the microphone, but instead of his voice, we hear the song. He becomes a stand-in for the song, for the voice of the people represented in the vid. At the same time, he is a figure who invokes contemporary protest movements and human rights activism, not least Black Lives Matter. By choosing this for the opening clip, bironic announces an intent to be political and to let the characters of colour speak.

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[41] See for example the article by Alan White (2014) for Buzzfeed.

Fig 11. The opening shot of *The Greatest:* L (Lakeith Stanfield) from *Death Note*.

In sync with L's introduction, the beats, especially a descant sound of a bell-like quality, guides the rapid shifts between sources. To begin with, the song has a layered beat, then vocals over these, and slowly it builds from there by adding more vocals and instruments and growing in intensity and volume. Halfway through the verse, the beat gets layered with another, creating a denser rhythm and, like *America*, with beats both on an off beat playing against each other, inviting movement. The line "I got stamina" appears repeatedly in the verses and is central to the song, something which is enhanced by the phrase having backing vocals from the first time it is sung. The verses have a melancholic sound due in large to Sia's intonation and the flow of the melody, signalling a sadness that is underlined through the chord progression. The affective register of the verses is calm, Sia's voice is soft, though its quality suggests something more. Her voice crackles and has vocal fry, suggesting vulnerability and hinting at struggle against an emotion that is not yet allowed to come through. For the listener, this means an expectation that something else and more is coming, and also invites one into the affective arc of the song.

 "I got stamina" functions as a call-response line or a form of rhythmic/punctuation as well as words. The call-response comes from a tradition of Black American music (Whiteley 2000, 525; Floyd, 2002), as I mentioned in chapter five, and adds meaning to a vid that is about centering characters of colour. Even

though two out of three of the songwriters are white, this particular musical sensibility comes through, a speaking from a tradition of the Black diaspora in the USA. Like in *America*, this sonic signifier is used to invoke the diaspora; it is not unique to this song, though the way the song is used means that this signifying is part of the way the vid can be understood. It is outside the scope of this thesis to delve into this, but it is not surprising that Black American music influences white music (Radano 2012). What is significant in *The Greatest* is that the call-response is there, and while it is at its most prominent with "I got stamina", there are other parts of the song that pick up on this idea, too, which I will return to. That the words are repeated in this manner makes them the focal point for the verses, as with the word "America" in *America*, and the concept of stamina is also central to the images in these sections. Further meaning is added to these words by the response being from a chorus, not a singular voice, signalling group identity and togetherness, drawing on the collective and dialogic nature of Black American music traditions (Floyd, 2002). At the same time, other words, such as "running", "eyes" and "love", are picked up and illustrated with clips that match those words. Thereby, bironic employs different kinds of lyrical and musical literalism to emphasise moments that guide the audience's understanding of the vid.

The consistency and progression in the expression of stamina in the clips is noteworthy. The first section shows stamina in struggles and fights, the second in feats of endurance, which introduces optimism, while the third focuses on mental stamina, evidenced in stance and facial expressions. Finally, there is a section of dance scenes, showing love and celebration. By looking at the verses alone, it is already possible to see the larger narrative of the vid, about overcoming adversity and surviving and loving in spite of it. This arc is also affective, moving through a range of emotions and affects and using the multiplicity of feels to make its overall argument. The argument is thus closely tied to the affective arc of the vid, especially as this vid does not have a singular story, instead using affect to imbue the audience with feels related to both different emotions and to a wider affective arc that replaces a clear narrative arc.

Fig. 12. Examples of "stamina": Lt. Roberta Warren (Kellita Smith) from *Z Nation* (2014-2018), Red Wheatus (Tony Shaloub) from *BrainDead* (2016), Captain Georgiou (Michelle Yeoh) from *Star Trek: Discovery* (2017—), and Lito Rodriguez (Miguel Ángel Silvestre) and Hernando (Alfonso Herrara) from *Sense8* (2015-2018).

The second repeated phrase is the B section of "don't give up". Again, the lyrics function as dialogue with "don't" being answered by "I won't". The affective register shifts as the drums drop back and Sia's voice pleads the words. Only in the last few syllables of the section is there a change where her voice rises, gains power and signals that something big is coming. In the visuals, "don't give up" is about sorrow and loss, but also about coming together to face it. The clips show scenes of encouragement through adversity, and are marked out by having two (or more) characters in each shot, showing a particular focus on interpersonal relations as crucial to resistance and encouragement. These are scenes of reaching out to one another, crying together, comforting, even holding a dead or dying loved one. The tone of the music in these pieces lends itself well to this. It is soft, contemplative, melancholy, and this is mirrored in the characters' faces. Narratively, these sections serve to show another kind of adversity the characters are working against. Struggle here is not physical or personal, it is collective and emotional, and the coupling of lyrics and images strengthen this point. These parts of the vid, then, serve to engage the audience's feels on a different level than the other parts, with their more action-

focused images and stronger drive in the music. "Don't give up" conveys feels by tugging on the heartstrings of the audience.
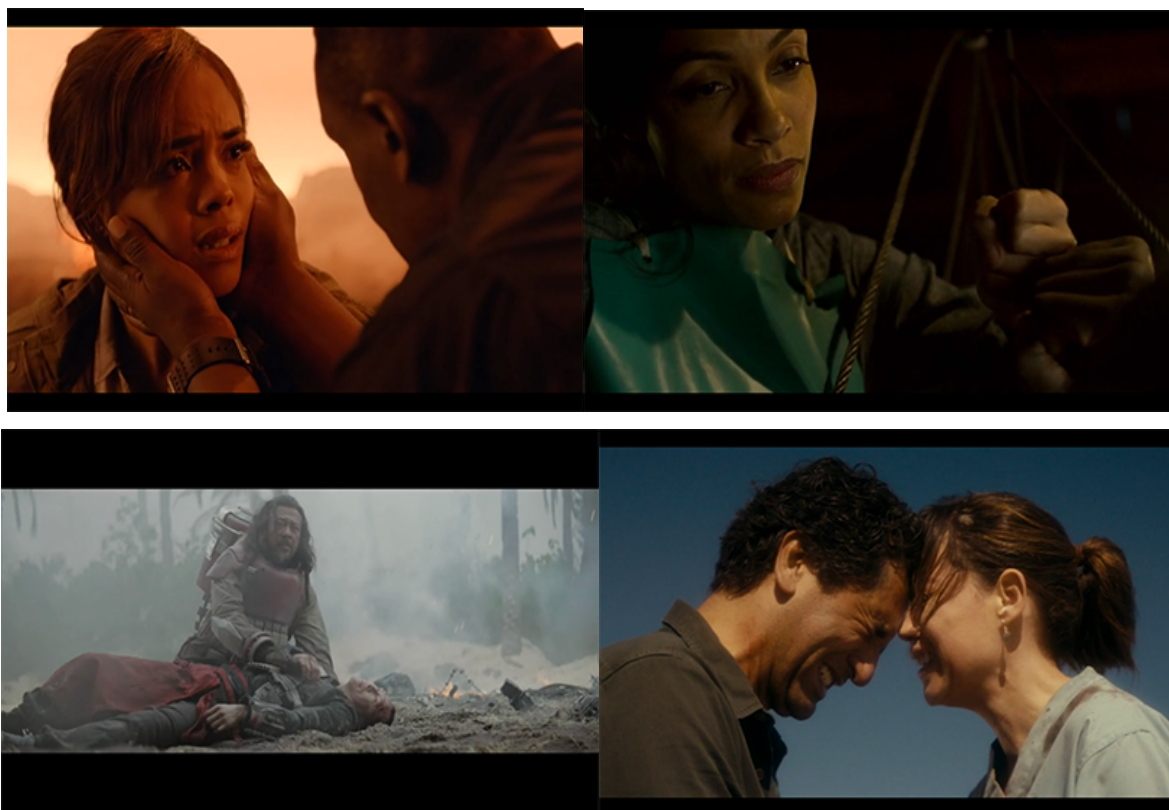
Fig. 13. Examples of "don't give up": M'gann M'orzz (Sharon Leal) & J'onn J'onzz (David Harewood) from *Supergirl* (2015-2021), Claire Temple (Rosario Dawson) & unseen character from *Luke Cage* (2016-2018), Travis Manama (Cliff Curtis) & Liza Ortiz (Elizabeth Rodriguez) from *Fear the Walking Dead* (2015—), Chirrut Îmwe (Donnie Yen) & Baze Malbus (Wen Jiang) from *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (Edwards 2016).

Joy and triumph comes with the chorus. When Sia's voice rises at the end of the B sections, it is to lead into the chorus; this is what the song builds towards, where softness and sadness give way to the power of the chorus. The beat shifts to a straight 4/4 pop-rock beat, grounding the rhythm in steady familiarity, while Sia uses the

Fig. 14. Examples of "the greatest": Valkyrie (Tessa Thompson) from *Thor: Ragnarok* (Waititi 2017), Mrs. Which (Oprah Winfrey) from *A Wrinkle in Time* (DuVernay 2018), East (Florence Kasumba) from *Emerald City* (2016-2017), Jason Mendoza (Manny Jacinto) from *The Good Place* (2016-2020), Quake (Chloe Bennet) from *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013), The Sulu Family (John Cho, uncredited actors) from *Star Trek: Beyond* (Lin 2016)

force of her voice to signal power and self-reliance. As with the other sections, this one has its repeated words, "the greatest", an affirmation that the I of the song now knows her own worth and strength. The contrast with the previous section enhances the impression of the chorus and makes it feel like a release. The emotions that Sia's voice have been holding back come through as power and exuberance; the voice rises from sadness and struggle to show overcoming and perseverance.

What is remarkable is the amount of different types of clips that match with this emotional note in the song. As can be seen from the stills above, aspects such as physical power, power poses, happiness, love and supernatural ability all are matched to this part of the song. A particularly effective - and affective - moment is when Quake (Chloe Bennett) from *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013) breaks out of her rock chrysalis, as seen bottom left on Fig. 14. This moment comes as the rapped verse (which I return to shortly) transitions through a B-section into the chorus. Sitting right on the opening of the chorus, it matches with the moment Sia's voice breaks into triumph from the subdued plea of the B-section. The explosion of fragments

around Quake fits the explosion in Sia's voice in a musical literalism. The release of pent-up emotion in her voice is paralleled in Quake's physical release from the chrysalis. This release into life and triumph is felt by the audience too. Even after having watched this vid more times than I can tell, it never fails to send chills down my spine.

Through the choruses, the type of greatness moves towards overcoming death itself; the clip described above signals the start of this section. Most of the next clips show people who are returned from (the brink of) death itself; overcoming death is the ultimate struggle in the narrative arc of the vid. bironic explained that she, during the making of the vid, felt increasingly frustrated at the treatment of so many of these characters, and that the build towards them not dying after all was an attempt at giving them justice. Placing this moment at the height of the song's emotional arc, where it feels the most triumphant, emphasises this sequence and its importance. Finally, as the song fades out, there is a series of smiling faces that draws the audience in and asks them to smile back, as if saying that we have been through this journey of the song together, now we must be friends. It invites the audience to stay with these characters and the feels that have been built for them by the vid.

Fig. 15. The final shot from *The Greatest*, Salim (Omid Abtahi) from *American Gods* (2017—).

Two stand-alone parts of the vid remains that are not covered by the above three sections: the rapped verse and the instrumental bridge. The verse has the same structure as the other verses, but is entirely rapped by Kendrick Lamar. This shift in vocal style makes a big difference. Lamar's words are spoken clearly and with a soft defiance that fits the affective register of the song. There is a pent-up feeling to his rap as well, which, though emotionally less sad and more defiant, strikes a similar affective chord as Sia's voice in her verses. This verse with its clearly spoken words, giving a different feel to the song, is used by bironic to change the use of the song and follow the lyrics more closely. The larger themes of the vid are kept, but in this section they are achieved through lyrical literalism and use of context of characters and sources.

A few examples of this are "The wisdom of the fallen" which show an elderly woman (uncredited), referred to as "ancient spirit" cradling a young woman, Kora (Alexis Lane), in a clip from *Cleverman* (2016-2017), a very literal take on both ancient wisdom and the fallen in one poignant instance. The context of the clip is that Kora and the spirit are the same. Kora has been summoned from the spirit realm and in this clip she is, through the titular Cleverman, returned to where she belongs, fulfilling her purpose and desire. Similarly, "Pay dues" illustrates a clip of Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan) from *Black Panther* (Coogler 2018), as he cries at the memory of his father's death, a scene where paying your dues to your ancestors is in play on several levels of the plot. This clip could also be seen as drawing on Jordan's past appearances in *The Wire* (2002-2008) and *Creed* (Coogler 2015), where his characters have similar responsibilities of parental legacies. "And the critics will test you" is a double-layered clip, showing Chris Washington (Daniel Kaluuya) from *Get Out* (Peele 2017). Not only is Chris a character met with insidious and ultimately life-threatening racism, the film itself was also hotly debated and critically acclaimed, adding meaning to the choice of matching it to this particular sentence. In this section, bironic shows her attention to the metatextual meaning of clips as well as their original, diegetic meaning and their meaning in the vid context.[42] This illustrates the density and intensified aspects of this particular vid, as I referred to in the opening of this analysis.

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[42] In a comment on the vid, bironic confirmed that the metatextual context was intentional.

Finally, I want to draw attention to the instrumental bridge. Here, the lack of lyrics affords more attention to the music. The melody, which is taken over by a clear, almost glass-like sound, is different from the one performed by Sia. It rings out in sharp clarity, otherworldly in contrast to the human voice. As seen in *Hey Ho*, a change in music sound can allow the vidder to introduce a change in perspective. In this case, the soundscape matches bironic's focus on the fantastical, especially sci-fi. The clips are all showing characters going beyond the mundane. From Michael Burnham (Sonequa Martin-Green) from *Star Trek: Discovery* (2017b) looking out into space to Meg (Storm Reid) from *A Wrinkle in Time* (2018) overcoming fear by stepping up into apparently thin air, we are shown beautiful and aspirational moments of achieving the impossible. The emotional note is one of wonder and of joy at being able to do and see so much. This is a very different kind of wonder from that in *America*, where it is a symptom of a colonial mindset; here the wonder does not come at anyone's expense, instead it is a joy at being able to do something fantastical. Emotionally, it is also a section that allows the audience to rest and experience this wonder themselves; there is one less factor to the synchresis with the absence of words to parse, and the focus in the images is on moments of calm and optimism. Given its focus on the music and the emotional note it strikes, the bridge stands out in the vid in a way that also draws attention to the function of music in vidding on a larger scale. With that in mind, I will now turn to look at how the vid was received with special attention to the feels it sparked and how they relate to music.

6.1.2 So many feels

Gorbman (1987, 15) writes that any music applied to a film will do something, while Chion (1994) argues that image and sound together create meaning; in *The Greatest*, the meaning is predicated on the feels, much as Kassabian (2002) argues that film music has affective impact and Gorbman (1987) that music has direct access to our emotions. bironic explained that, to her, music is almost everything for a vid. It is what the vid adds to the source text in the process of vidding, which to her is about conveying feelings. To quote from our interview: "[t]his song has a feeling and I want other people to have this feeling". The affective aspect of vidding has become gradually more important over time for bironic, as exemplified by the shift in emotional and affective intensity from *Masters of War* to *The Greatest*, and she uses the music to stick these emotions to the fan texts through vidding. The 'something'

music does in bironic's vidding is adding feels, and that is how music co-creates meaning, as Chion called it. With the emphasis of the chorus through the progression of the vid, the impression after watching the vid is an uplifting emotion overall, but not solely. This is not happiness, which, as Ahmed (2010)shows, is often invoked in regressive ways. The affect of *The Greatest* is transformative, because it is so complicated. It gives feels, not a singular emotion, and uses the shifting feelings in and the overall affective arc in the music to invoke the complexity of feels over any simple emotion. Therein lies its critique. In the case of *The Greatest,* the emotions in the song are transformed from their original meanings to ones mutually created with the visuals, thereby working to uplift characters of colour - and by extension their fans. It is the images and song together that does this work, the message is in the feels.

This intent to convey a feeling is a good starting point for looking at the reception of the vid. To do so, I have reviewed the comments on the two main posts for the vid, on Archive of Our Own and Dreamwidth. The vid was also posted to tumblr, but due to tumblr's interface as well as the transitory nature of tumblr accounts, it is nearly impossible to get any kind of overview of the reactions on that site. However, I followed as many reblogs as I could find to check for comments and tags, though acknowledge that this may not represent the full range of responses.

The initial impression of the reception of this vid is that it is remarkable in its overall positivity. I found no negative feedback on any site, only praise and positive remarks, ranging from the simple to the complex and detailed. A closer examination shows some prevailing feels related reactions to the vid, where the most common words are "amazing" and "beautiful", while the tumblr tags also provide statements of the vid being "badass" and more love for the characters and idea of the vid. Several commenters mention tearing up, and quite a few also state that they have already watched the vid multiple times, though the comments are dated within a few days of the vid's publication. The overwhelmed response reflects feels; it is the rush of complex emotions, of affect, too big and multifaceted to easily name as only one thing. A closer review reveals the nuances in the many emotions being expressed in the comments. On top of the iterations of being moved to tears, words such as "uplifting", "heart-rending", "happy-making", "moving" and "powerful" show up several times in different variations, including someone exclaiming that they vid gives them "ALL THE FEELS", where the capslock signals how overcome the

commenter is (McCulloch 2019). The feels as expressed on the posts signal the received affective tone and impact of the vid (Russo, 2017), and are described in terminology that leans towards positive interpretation of what feels means in this context. There is no anger, but "moving" and "happy" are not necessarily congruent either, though both are expressed through the song and reflected by the audience. The complexities of feeling things in response to something that is both sad, uplifting and moving shows the power of feels as a terminology to cover complex and deeply experienced affect.

Some moments are spoken of more than others, and for *The Greatest* also singled out for their feels. Of note are several mentions of the aforementioned sequence of characters being petrified ending with Quake breaking out of her chrysalis. Like I did, the audience's response signals that this moment is particularly affective/effective. Another such moment is a clip of Viago (Taika Waititi) from *What We Do in the Shadows* (Clement & Waititi 2014) dancing and screaming. This clip is part of a sequence with characters yelling or screaming in acts of defiance or triumph, and is the last clip in this section. It is a clip that is slightly surprising, as Viago in the clip is not portraying the same emotion as the others, instead he, as is the point of this mockumentary, looks silly and pretentious. The effect is a release of tension, allowing for a smile or laugh in the middle of overwhelming feels relating to the struggles of the other characters, and, for those who know the source, an added moment of remembering a funny scene. This clip, then, functions as an emotional release valve and makes the clip stand out. A break like this allows for a continuation of the affective impact of the vid by giving a moment of respite and contrast rather than getting overwrought.

The complexity of feels also helps us understand why it is that this vid sparks such strong reactions. The reasons lie in both the affective arc of the vid, provided by the music through its musical elements (Liljedahl, 2019), and through the choice of applying an underlying narrative arc for a large group of characters of colour. It indirectly addresses the lack of representation of people of colour by celebrating the characters that do exist, and speaks to a subculture which has, as a function of both society in general and fannish media choices, a problem with racism (Pande 2018). The vid celebrates racial diversity, and it allows everyone to cheer and feel for/with characters of colour. Thereby it expands who is part of the societal "we" (Ahmed 2014a), though directed specifically at fandom as a society, and it does it through the

fan culture of feels. Pande and Moitra (2017) call for such an expansion to do for people of colour what fandom has already tried to do for queer people, and this vid is attempting that. The underlying narrative of overcoming adversity and violence becomes a story of empowering, loving and celebrating characters of colour. Through this, the vid's audience celebrates and loves them as well. The sticky emotion of love (Ahmed 2014a), is transferred through labour of love, and is felt and mirrored by the vid's audience. This is an example of what Hills (2002) claims when writing that the affective aspects of fandom allows us to identify with "the other". This empathy is the most critical part of the vid; it is transformative not only in the sense that it is a transformative work, but it is a work which transforms how the audience looks at, identifies and feels with the characters in the vid.

This is not a vid that critiques the way those in chapter five did, and it differs from the other vids in this chapter too. Where vids like *Hey Ho* critique *with* love (for their fandom/s), *The Greatest*'s critique *is* love. However, where *Masters of War* was an entry into a fandom debate, *The Greatest* does not engage with racism in fandom itself. This vid is praised, not least for the feels it sparks, precisely because it presents a form of critical reflection that is based in fannish joy and love and does not risk being a fandom killjoy (Pande 2018, 13-17) by pointing out racism in fandom itself. bironic was concerned that she, as a white person vidding for another white person while using a song by a white artist (Sia), was speaking about and for something not in her experience. As Pande (ibid.) examines, Anglophone media fandom is always presumed white by default, and bironic's worry is not unwarranted. The dominance of whiteness is at risk of speaking over characters of colour even when attempting to do the opposite. Sia's whiteness complicates this issue. However, "The Greatest" is heavily influenced by Black American music traditions, and is co-composed by a Black American artist. The sound that is the result of these influences function as a signifier of diversity. Particularly the presence of Lamar's rap with its connection to Black American life and its tradition stemming from African music (Keyes 1996) goes a long way to establish this link, as do the call-response structures (Floyd, 2002) that run through the entire song. Both are aspects this vid shares with *Origin Stories*, which I analyse later in this chapter.

The feels also do this work. As I mentioned when introducing this vid, *The Greatest* is at first a celebration and then a critical reflection, this renders it a somewhat inoffensive critique. A work that uses joy and empathy as its affective

register is not likely to spark resentment in return. Someone who already cares for these characters will experience a sharing of those feelings, while someone who did not know them can still be swept up into the feels crafted in the vid. The number of characters involved also work to the vid's advantage. Someone who is an active anti-fan of some of the texts is unlikely to know or dislike all of them; this lessens any negative emotions about the inclusion of such anti-fan texts. Not least, the feels involved are the ones fans most often like to share, the squee and joy, and this vid is not pointing out problems with any of the texts directly, which again adds to its inoffensiveness. *The Greatest* fulfills some of the longing that Pande (2018) finds in fans of colour who long to see more characters of colour centered and celebrated in fanworks. This vid, in stating and following through its intent to be about characters of colour, is attempting this. However, it can also be seen as falling into the category of "duty fic" (ibid., 114), a work created out of a sense of having to do something to set right the imbalance of characters of colour to white characters. Again, the feels counter this argument by their intensity and focus; the vid aims to make the audience identify with and feel for the characters.

Therefore, the lack of debate about this vid is not so odd. It manages to speak about race through celebration and to avoid thorny issues by centering love and agency for characters who are rarely granted this in media and fandom alike. It bypasses the types of criticism that Anastasia Kanjere (2019) identifies in comments on opinion pieces. To use her terminology, it does not trigger white vulnerability by not actually showing the white side of the equation of race. Through its mere existence, the vid can thereby function to displace some of the anxiety about racism in fandom. That said, it is also a fundamentally anti-racist work. By centering the narratives often sidelined and ignored, *The Greatest* moves beyond duty fic, and attempts to show and share characters of colour,[43] as well as asking for more and better stories for and with them. *The Greatest* shows that feels can be transformative in their own way, and that feeling with and for characters can be an opening to solidarity. Thoughts of solidarity are far removed from the second vid in this chapter. Luminosity's *Vogue* does not employ feels to empathise with its characters; instead it uses a different affective register to create a satire of its source.

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[43] It is worth pointing out that awareness of marginalised identities is nothing new for bironic. On posting her vid *Starships!* (bironic 2012b) she points out that she tried hard to make sure it was "not all white dudes all the time".

6.2 Luminosity's Vogue: Satire and othering

> Something hits me emotionally that I want to say or do or argue about, and usually the music will point me to whatever it is. [...] The music, I came to this knowing a lot about music, it has to make my point, has to move me in some way, so it will move someone else. - Luminosity[44]

Where *The Greatest* argued within a fandom discourse and used feels as critical engagement, the next vid in this chapter is satirising its source text as a strategy for critique. *Vogue* by Luminosity is created from and about the film *300*. It is a single source vid, and the only vid in the corpus that has been created using only one film, and thus has the smallest amount of footage to draw from. During our interview, Luminosity explained that the idea for the vid came to her as she was watching the film in the cinema. It originated in a mix of the ludicrous over-the-top-ness of the film and that, as she said, "Frank Miller grinds my gears"[45]. This is, then, not a vid created out of love for the source, and therefore not expressing something through a lens of fandom, but instead using fan and vidding strategies to engender criticality through affect. Such affect, which can be understood as a form of offence, can easily coexist with fannish love for a text (Svegaard 2019), but this is not the case for *Vogue*, where the sentiment is closer to that of anti-fandom. So while Luminosity told me that she was amused by the film, she did not want to vid it out of love, but out of a desire to satirise. When I first encountered *Vogue*, this particular angle and direction of critique was made clear by Luminosity's summary for the vid, the succinct: "Bite me, Frank Miller", a response that certainly contains emotion. Her goal, as stated in our interview, was to show how the unremarked upon homoeroticism in the film was at odds with its explicit homophobia. The vid did not set out to speak to or about race and representation, in the way the other two vids in this chapter do. However, as I demonstrate, *Vogue* nonetheless does. It especially argues that the film uses homophobic and racist tropes together and conflates/combines them into a strategy of othering.

300 is an adaptation of a comic book of the same name, written and illustrated by Frank Miller (1998) with colouration by Lynn Varley. The story itself is a retelling of the historical events leading up to and during the battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, where a small Greek, chiefly Spartan, force met and held back a much

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[44] Interview conducted via Skype 12th April 2020.
[45] Miller is the author of the graphic novel *300* (Miller 1998), which the film *300* is adapted from.

larger Persian force for 7 days (condensed to 3 days in the film). The central character in both versions of *300* is the king of Sparta, Leonidas, who in the film is portrayed by Gerard Butler, and it is focused on the eponymous 300 Spartans, all but ignoring the other Greek forces also present. As is evident from this short summary alone, issues of race are present. Gerard Butler, who is Scottish, is paler than the average Greek, showing a colourism of whiteness. In fact, the Spartan cast is, overwhelmingly, comprised of white Northern European and US American actors. Colour effects - particularly tones of gold and sepia - saturate the film, evoking its origins as a graphic novel, and the aesthetics of the film obscures some of this paleness, but it is nonetheless clear to the viewer that these Greeks are (very) white men. The best example of this is perhaps not Leonidas, but Stelios (Michael Fassbender) with his long, blond locks and clear blue eyes, whose body the film (and vid) lingers on several times. Combining this source, a story focused on masculinity and gritty war nearly 2500 years ago, with an iconic, late 20th century pop song is perhaps not the obvious choice, but the juxtaposition of the two sources is part of how the vid functions. It is therefore necessary to also contextualise the song.

6.2.1 Doing Vogue

Luminosity's quote at the opening of this section centres emotion in music as part of the argument. For this reason, "Vogue" is an interesting choice precisely because it is not a song imbued with a lot of pathos. However, its contexts signals sexiness, coolness and dance, all of which are also present as auditive aspects of the music, enhanced by the apparent incongruence with the visual source. Therefore, looking closer at what "Vogue" can be, do and mean is necessary. It can be argued that "Vogue", Madonna's 1990 hit, is the most famous vid song in my corpus. It was a number one hit in several countries and had a David Fincher directed video, which featured a very diverse range of dancers, including some well-known names on the New York City Ballroom scene, most notably Jose and Luis Xtravaganza as choreographers (Gould & Zwaan 2016; Chatzipapatheodoridis 2017). It shone a spotlight on a particular part of primarily Black and Latine American queer culture. As Constantine Chatzipapatheodoridis (2017) argues, the impact of "Vogue" is still present and being renegotiated, and notions of appropriation is of ongoing interest to scholarly work on Madonna. The spotlight from Madonna's focus on the scene has not been wholeheartedly celebrated, and has led to continuing debates on it as an act

of allyship vs. appropriation (Savariano 2020; Brammer 2018). At the time of its release, at the height of the AIDS epidemic in North America and Europe, "Vogue" and its video was a powerful statement. The song's background of diversity and some measure of solidarity with the queer community is vital for a reading of Luminosity's *Vogue*. In her own words, the choice of "Vogue" was motivated by wanting to use an iconically gay song by a "gay icon". Furthermore, the vid premiered at VividCon's *Club Vivid* - a dance night with vids providing the music - and was therefore also intended for this context, adding another aspect related to dance.

"Vogue" is an up-beat pop tune (see appendix 1 for lyrics and chords) and is driven by a synth sound that is very much of its time. It evokes the sound of pop in the late 80s, to which 1990 arguably belongs as it is before the sound of the decade was dramatically shifted with the rise of grunge. The verses have a very simple chord progression, whereas the choruses are a repeated "round" of chords, which are densely stacked and change in quick succession, giving a rich and dynamic sound. The song has a strong bass line, which at times provides the majority of the music, creating a counterpoint to the melody. The verses are in Ab-major with a clear cadence with the dominant (V) in an augmented and extended form, Eb7sus4, as a strong dissonance leading back to Ab. The choruses centre ab-minor, and the chord progression "steps down" by half or full tone steps ending on a bV, eb-minor. This cadence on bV-I (minor dominant to tonic) is a softer one as the minor lacks the elevated 7th step that creates the strong lead back to ab. The verses have a clear cadence, creating dynamics, while the choruses have their step-by-step progression to do the same. There is a solid feel to this that erases any sense of instability between the major and minor keys, despite the song shifting between them from verse to chorus. While minor is often reduced to the 'sad' mode, it is a mistake to assign only one mood to it - just as major is not simply 'happy'; the context matters. In "Vogue" the dynamics and lyrics lead the understanding of the song, and the minor key adds emotional emphasis rather than change the mood. The rhythm and and cadences drive the impetus of the song and invites the dance that the song is about. What is most vital about the song in the vid is the song's aforementioned status as a gay anthem, and in addition that the lyrics speak about equality of race and gender. This point becomes clearer as I now turn to look at how the vid is structured and what it argues.

6.2.2 Vogueing across Thermopylae

Vogue shows the ways vids can function as remix/mash-up (Russo, 2017). It is a forced marriage of what Carl Plantinga (2019) calls *300*'s "fascist affect", expressed in ultra-stylised violence, and the queer pop aesthetics of "Vogue". The apparent mismatch is deliberate and creates the feel of the vid, which is based in humour and satire. This combined aestethetics is utilised from the opening of the vid. The first shot, over the soft, floating (sustained) Ab7sus4 chord, played on a quintessentially 'poppy' synthesizer, is a triptych, a three-way split of the screen (see fig. 16). This split screen brings to mind the structure of comic book panels, enhanced by the visual style from *300*. It also invokes music videos, showing that Penley's (1991) observations regarding the aesthetic inspiration from this format still holds true sixteen years later. Luminosity explained that she taught herself to use this technique in order to make this particular vid because she wanted to reflect the comic book visuals. In the final chapter, I look at another vid that uses comic book aesthetics as well in order to play on a comic book source, which shows that vidder inspirations from other media are not limited to moving images. These connections between media intensify as the initial scene shifts to three consecutive shots of a scantily clad young woman, writhing on the ground, then to another triptych, showing her rising

Fig. 16. Triptych of the very pale-skinned oracle (Kelly Craig) in the opening moments of *Vogue*.

up. Coupled with Madonna's music, her movements become dance, and the polished style guides the viewer to focus on the aesthetics of the vid rather than the original context of the clip. The context is a scene in which an oracle (Kelly Craig) is writhing as she foretells a future, while being sexually assaulted by her keepers/interpreters, the ephors. In the diegesis, the ephors are cast as degenerates and portrayed in ableist manners, linked to a superstitious past that Sparta has moved past.

This is one of the many contradictions in the film text, where what is reason vs. superstition, law vs. tradition/religion is, at best, confused and serving a Western/US American contemporary political agenda (Es 2011; Plantinga, 2019). Of the many such conflicts in the text, this is not one that Luminosity has directly emphasised in the vid, but this example shows how the visuals are reimagined through being set to music. Thereby, Luminosity communicates to the audience that this is not a vid that follows the text of *300*, but one that is telling a different story via the film's visuals. This recontextualisation is different from how the other vids so far have used their clips' context. *The Greatest* partly relied on clip contexts, and *America* at times also divorced clips from their original meaning, but both vids retained important connections to their sources. In contrast, *Vogue* uses clips against their original meaning. This is one such example. The oracle is beautiful, but where her movements and attire were titillating for the (presumed) male gaze in *300*, they are not placed in *Vogue* for that effect, and her victimhood is also gone. In *Vogue*, she is there to dance, on her own and of her own volition. All of this takes place before the song has even properly started. It is an intro sequence, and not a part of the main body and argument of the vid, yet it clearly sets the tone and agenda of the vid as well as establishes the dance theme. Not least, it shows an audience familiar with *300* that it is playing fast and loose with the text.

Once the lyrics appear with Madonna's spoken "Strike a pose", the vid also begins to show its focus on male homoeroticism. The two instances of "strike a pose" being spoken shows us a shot of Leonidas in full figure, naked, shown from the back, and of Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro), literally larger than life and adorned with piercings, straps and gold rings, also appearing to pose for us. In the academic literature about *300*, Xerxes has been described as a "drag queen" several times (Burton 2017). He is clearly not a drag queen; he is androgynous, beautiful and imposing. Paul Burton (ibid., 322) quotes Snyder as saying "what is more scary to a 20-year old boy than a

giant god-king who wants to have his way with you?". The quote is telling, both in what Snyder sees as the key demographic for his audience and what kind of anxieties he is trying to evoke through Xerxes. Xerxes is not in drag, nor is he effeminate in a traditional sense, but he is queer coded through his gender nonconformity and kink coded through his piercings and attire. He is threatening by his physical size, and Snyder's quote shows that he is intended to incur literal homophobia, the fear of the queer man. The film employs a sinister form of gender trouble,[46] to invoke Judith Butler (1990), to create unease and tension, and to pit the white, ostensibly straight, men's men of Sparta against the racialised and queered Persians. Xerxes racial coding is, then, as important as his gendered and queered presentation. As can be seen in fig. 17 and 19, Santoro's Xerxes is darker skinned than Butler's Leonidas. He is not, however, of

Fig. 17. Leonidas striking a pose and Xerxes doing the same.

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[46] It can be argued that *300* is not only homophobic but also transphobic in its use of gender non-conforming looks and behaviour as a villanous trait. However, I think this is giving Miller and Snyder too much credit. The conflation of homophobia and misogyny present here is just that - though a contemporary audience will likely also parse it as transphobic.

Persian heritage, nor from anywhere in the wider area surrounding modern-day Iran, he is from Brazil. Thus, in *300*, any colour of skin darker than Northern European white is marked as a uniform other, as is also seen in the case of the Persian messenger, played by Ghanese born Peter Mensah.

As the sung lyrics begin with "Look around", the vid shows its next level of recontextualisation, namely the use of humour as a tool for changing the meaning of the clips. The sentence is matched to a shot of a severed head spinning around (diegetically as a result of a decapitation). The head is, indeed, "looking around", but in a bizarre, morbid way. The juxtaposition of image, lyrics, and up-beat pop is funny because it is so surprising and odd. The mashup aesthetics (Lau 2014) of mismatch is at work, showing the vid to be a satire, surprising the audience into amusement.

Fig. 18. A triptych of two Spartan soldiers and the severed head of an unnamed character as it spins to the lyrics of "look around".

This oddity signals that this is a vid that functions through humour. Up until this point, it has not been completely clear where the vid is going, though the incongruous match of song and film is a clue that it is not taking the source seriously. The "look around" moment also signals a theme of looking. The idea that there is a fannish gaze is something I return to in the last chapter of this thesis, particularly concerning lim's *Marvel*, but for *Vogue*'s part, the looking is related to the posing and the context of the song. Through Madonna's words, *Vogue* invites the audience to look at the characters, enhancing the aesthetics that are already there in the visual source.

The reuse of material that Luminosity does with *Vogue*, leads to it having a narrative which, in reality, shares nothing but the raw film with *300*. This radically different story serves to subvert the film. If one should tell the story of *Vogue*, it is about King Leonidas leaving his home and his wife with a bunch of his mates to go dance and have sex with each other and the Persians. The homosociality of the Spartans is utilized for queering in the vid, as is the racist and homophobic treatment of the Persians. Thereby, *Vogue* can be placed within fandom's tradition for making the subtext explicit and visible (Penley 1991, 137; Jenkins 1992, 227-228); something Stevens (2020, 19) points out is foundational in slash vids. *Vogue* is not a slash vid as it is not dedicated to any particular constellation of characters; but it is explicating the homoerotic subtext in *300* and using it against the source itself. The otherness placed on the Persians, chiefly Xerxes, is used to mark out and focus on positive queer connotations. For the Spartans, their scantily clad, muscular, conventionally handsome bodies are put on display for all to enjoy. Meanwhile, the music is used to call attention to this visual focus and ask who all this semi-nudity is for if not for the other men that make up the vast majority of the cast. Likewise, the pierced Xerxes and his expressions of ecstasy at watching the battle scenes is turned into someone showing his pleasure at looking at sexy men; his pleasure is kept, but when placed in a new context, it changes its meaning. At the same time, the hyper-aesteticised and beautifully choreographed violence is used to conjure dance out of battle, replacing the jingoistic warfare with its racist overtones with the equal opportunity dance floor of Madonna's song. This story is a far cry from Miller and Snyder's *300*, and in fact closer to a Madonna stage show[47] than any other source element.

The fascist affect of *300,* that Plantinga observed, is subverted and altered with *Vogue*. As Plantinga notes, the mood of the film is heavily reliant on the soundtrack imparting a sense of danger and impending doom. The idea of the Spartans being under constant threat from the "other", ie. the Persians, is foundational to how the film works. When this sound is replaced with the cheerful

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[47] In fact, Madonna's entry at her half-time show at the Superbowl in 2012 appears to reference the vid. Madonna enters on a throne (in itself invoking *Cleopatra* (Mankiewicz 1963), drawn by men in Roman uniforms, about as undressed as the Spartans in *300*; the addition of crests on their helmets marking them as Roman rather than Greek. The performance uses a version of the song with added sounds of swords clanging, matching with choreography for this iteration of the show.
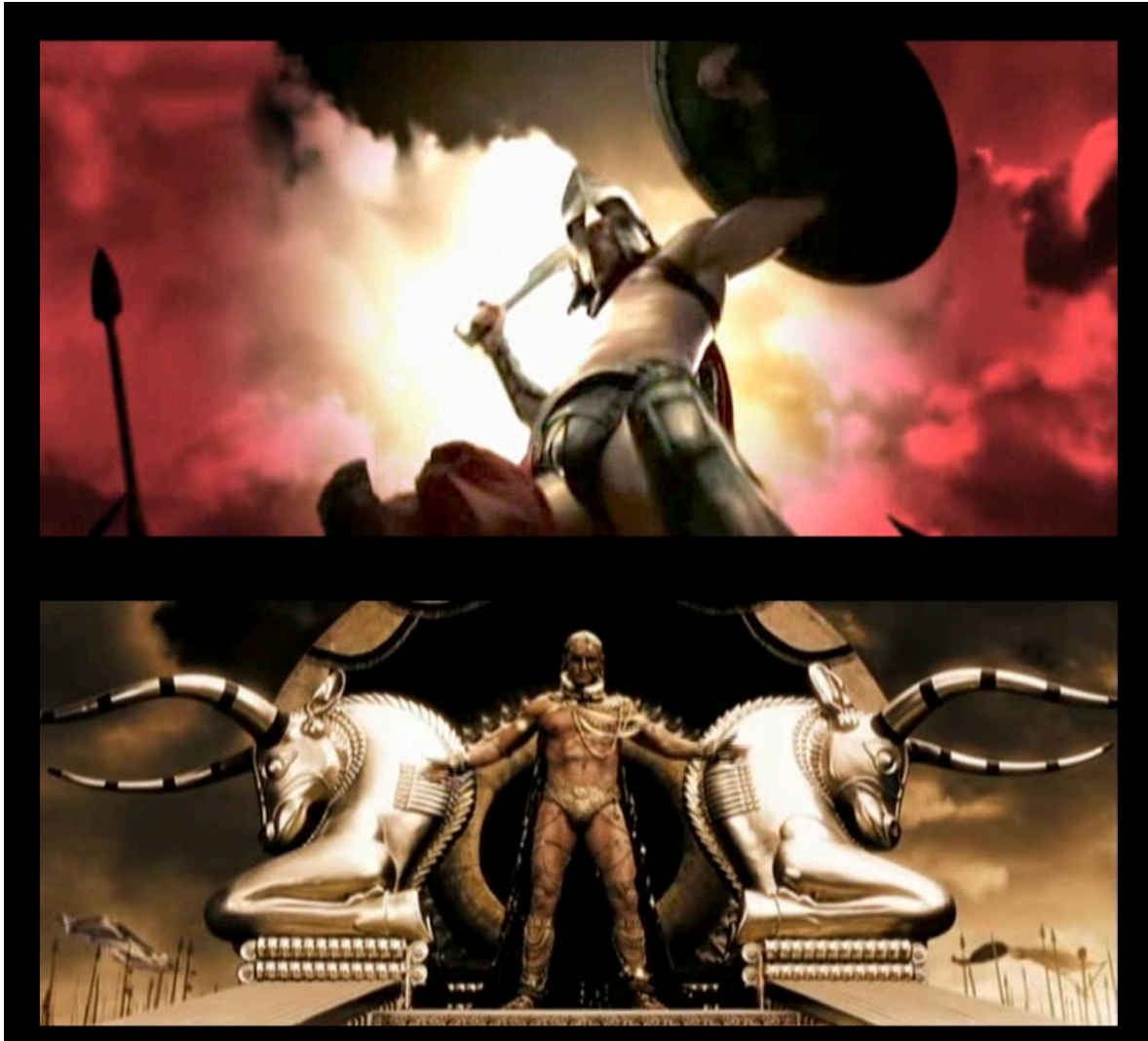
Fig. 19. Leonidas (Gerard Butler) and Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro) in parallel crotch focused shots.

pop of Madonna, the doom is no longer present, and with it the film's ideology is transformed. Mood is hard to quantify, and I am in agreement with Plantinga on that, but where he finds a fascist mood or affect at work in *300*, I see in *Vogue* a queer/ing mood or affect. Fandom's feels for queerness, it's queer norms (Fielding, 2020), is part of why this works particularly well in a vid. The fascism is thus completely subverted, and here lies the anti-racist message of *Vogue*. As with *The Greatest*, it is an invocation of American Blackness, that provides some of the anti-racism for *Vogue*. This comes through the context of ballroom culture, but perhaps also via the "rap", though it does not sound like most rap in hip-hop does. Madonna's spoken words are more invoking the concept of rap and its connotations of the Black diaspora than it actually is rap, lacking the verbal virtuosity that characterises that technique, which I return to in the analysis of *Origin Stories*. In the vid, the speak

functions more as voice-over, marking out individual faces in both pointed and amusing ways. *Vogue* speaks about race in *300* by making its queerness visible and celebratory rather than threatening and unspoken. Because the homophobic anxieties in *300* are intrinsically tied to its racial othering, Luminosity celebrates racial diversity by celebrating queerness. It is also notable that the spoken verse in *Vogue* is used analogously to how it functions in *The Greatest*.

Fig. 20. Disco aesthetics and male states of undress in *Vogue*. The tricoloured panels appear several times in the vid, as do other split-screen panels (see the description of the intro earlier) which also at times use colour effects. A single shot of a walking Leonidas in profile has a panel of light moving to the keyboard riff, bringing strobe lights to mind. In the bottom image, the men, who in the diegesis are working to pile up dead bodies into a defensive wall, are shown above waist while their movement patterns suggest hip thrusts.

Madonna's words are parallelled closer in the images, and her list of celebrity faces is matched to faces of characters in the film, casting them to amusing effect. All of these techniques makes Madonna's song central to how *Vogue* speaks.*Vogue* is about race by not being about race, unlike the vids that bracket it, but it is using othering as a lynchpin for it recontextualisation of *300*. A Persian in *300* is both darker skinned than a Spartan, and a sexuality/gender other, where the latter is treated as a function of the former, creating a dichotomy between white = heteronormative and racialised = queer/kinky. Thus, when *Vogue* satirises the queer othering and flips it on its head to instead make the Persians and Spartans equals on a dance floor rather than antagonists on a battlefield, it also equalises their racial identities. Thereby, *Vogue* is also critiquing the racial politics of its source film, and, as Madonna sings, "it makes no difference if you're black or white". To underline that message, Luminosity illustrates the words with a clip of people in a burka-like garment, thereby calling attention to *300*'s racism towards Muslim people in particular. Through a use of a style of dress that is connected to Islam, *300* deliberately conflates the Persian Empire with present-day Iran, never mind that *300* takes place roughly a thousand years before the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. In *Vogue*, however, it does not matter what these people's race or religion is, Madonna's words are taken as truth.

Familiarity with the reception of *300* as well as the status of Madonna's "Vogue" as a gay anthem enhances the experience of watching the vid. I have at times used *Vogue* as an example when teaching courses about fandom and fannish modes of critique. For younger people with no prior knowledge of the song and film, it is not necessarily easy to decode what *Vogue* is doing. An up-beat pop song and a commercially popular film may be understood as a celebration, especially for audiences more familiar with non-narrative videos from music videos, AMVs and similar genres. Given a few words of contextualisation, my young audience members had a different understanding of the vid, more in line with what Luminosity intended. The complete divorce of clips from their original context can explain some of this difficulty in reading, as can the way in which Luminosity has edited the vid to mimic dance video, disco aesthetics and gay pornography. However, the vid's reception at its time, which I turn to next, shows that it was well understood by wide audiences who were aware of the contexts.

<u>6.2.3 Viral Vogue</u>

At the time of its release, the vid was widely understood as it was intended and largely praised for poking fun of *300* as well as for its editing. *Vogue* stands out amongst my vid corpus also for its reception, which was unusually far-reaching. The vid continues to have an impact today, though its peak was a wide, viral, spread outside of fandom around its release. The virality led to Luminosity being featured in a New York Magazine article (Hill 2007), about which Luminosity remarked that the interviewer was surprised at her age and gender, clearly expecting someone younger and male. The interviewer must have wanted his audience to understand this, as he made sure to point out that most vidders are women. Hill's article provides a reference for the understanding of the vid, calling it a "hysterical riff on those hunky Spartans." *Vogue* has also been included in an exhibition of video work alongside five other vids at the Museum of Moving Image's (2013) *Cut Up*[48] exhibit, making it one of the few vids to be accepted by an art establishment as a work of art, something it shares with *Us* in the next chapter.

The vid's proximity to the film release likely plays into how this reception came to be, though it is hard to speculate about the nature of virality. It is a point of interest that this happened when it did, before viral spread was common. In 2007, YouTube was still in its early years and only starting to take off in what we now think of as viral videos (Burgess & Green 2013). It was the year the Queen sent her Christmas message there, and Chris Crocker did his tearful defense of Britney Spears, to give a few moments of context. According to Wikipedia's list of most viewed videos, with all the caveats that this brings, this was also the year when a toddler biting his brother's finger was one of the most viewed videos.[49] The other four were music related, two Linkin Park videos and two versions of the novelty song known in English as the "Gummy Bear Song". In contrast, the year after, the top videos are all professional music videos by well-known bands, lead (in number of views) by Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*. This demonstrates the rise of YouTube to where it is now, a main access points for music consumption (Jirsa & Korsgaard, 2019, 11-12). While the data cited here should be viewed with caution, this listing indicates the shift in YouTube use around this particular time. With a release in the

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[48] The museum catalogue is still online and shows the vids alongside other forms of "re-editing [of] popular media".
[49] The list can be found here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_most-viewed_YouTube_videos#By_year_of_release [accessed 21st July 2021]

spring of 2007, *Vogue* was placed in this environment of home videos going towards more and more professional and music related content. While not getting up near the top views, *Vogue*'s reception is so substantial, that it is necessary to treat it differently from that of the previous vids. It is impossible to correctly gauge how many views *Vogue* has had, as it has been removed from streaming sites more than once due to claims of copyright infringement. Its current iteration on YouTube is from 2009 and has nearly 10000 views as of July 2021. According to Luminosity, this is only a fraction of where the first upload of it stood at the time of its removal, where she places the count in the hundred thousands, according to the current YouTube post's comments.

In some ways, the understanding of *Vogue* as something with viral potential lies as an extension of what *The Greatest* has done. It begs the question why the most popular vids dealing with race, more or less explicitly/intentionally, are the ones that are the least direct in their critique. There is a pattern to this. Fandom does not want to talk about race, and when it does, especially when fans of colour do, the push-back and denial is substantial (Pande 2018); these conversations spark what Kanjere (2019) terms white vulnerability. As I pointed out previously, *The Greatest* bypasses this by being celebratory in its approach rather than offer direct criticism. *Vogue*, which predates the larger discussions about race and fandom, that Pande has identified, bypasses this by not directly being about race, and by being funny. It also helps that it critiques a source understood as having racist messages; *300* is not a text with a devoted following in the area of media fandom where the vid originates, as evidenced by it only having 81 works on AO3 as of spring 2021.[50] I mentioned early in my analysis that the vid shows its humour through its seeming mismatch of grim and dark visuals with an up-beat, cheery tune, but when dealing with its reception it is also worth noting that every time I have shown this, people laugh. It is a funny vid, and for this reason, it also somewhat sidesteps the feels-related reactions I have found with other vids. The emotions it evokes are primarily amusement, and these do not lead to the deep and overwhelming affect that 'feels' denote.

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[50] This number includes works relating to the sequel to *300*, and is an interesting collection in itself, with a large number of cross-overs involving multiple fan text. Some of these are likely driven by the star personas of some of the actors involved, such as my personal favourite the Stelios (300)/Tumnus (Narnia) fic, which is most likely connected to the actors Michael Fassbender and James McAvoy, whose chemistry in the *X-men* franchise has made them a popular pair.

However, the fun is still affect, and it still stems from the combination of this piece of music with these images. Luminosity is rightly proud of how funny *Vogue* is, and satire can be an avenue into critique, as evidenced by the tradition of political satire. It is also worth noting that the wider reception of *Vogue* also understands that there is a critical note to the vid. The *Cut Up*-exhibition placed it alongside political remix and satire (Stevens 2020, 76-77), and the previously mentioned profile on Luminosity also focused on this aspect. The satirical technique both marks *Vogue* as something with critical potential, and at the same time makes that critique less aggressive and more accessible on several levels; as something simply to laugh at and with, or something that has a deeper message about the constructions of race and sexuality embedded in its humour. Thereby, *Vogue* also becomes, like *The Greatest*, a form of critique that is inoffensive in the culture of fandom. These two examples also show that very different affects can be employed to similar goals; the critique is in the feels, but there is a difference in how that critique impacts the audience based on the kind of affect it is based on. Satire invites a knowing laugh, whilst the emotional connection in *The Greatest* invites empathy and transformation. This inoffensiveness connects the two first vids. The third and final vid, *Origin Stories* by Gianduja Kiss, changes this. Its critique is not softened by celebration or satire, but instead directly addresses race and representation in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

6.3 Gianduja Kiss' *Origin Stories*: Race and Black American representation in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

> [F]or most of my vids, it was really more like I'd just hear a song - the way you always find a song, i.e., there's a cd of a band you like, it plays on the radio, etc. - and the song itself inspired some emotion which I'd imagine pairing to some show [...] it's like, the song inspires some kind of emotion, which makes me think of - a character, a pairing, a theme - and then i try to match the images.
>
> ...
>
> Well, *Origin Stories* - like a lot of my vids - has a kind of specific narrative structure. Other people I suppose are more skilled at building a story, but for me it's easiest to pound the viewer with one kind of image and then pound the viewer with another kind of image as a way of getting the arc across, so that's what *Origin Stories* does - Gianduja Kiss[51]

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[51] Interview conducted via Google Hangouts chat on 20th April 2019.

The final vid in this chapter, *Origin Stories* by Gianduja Kiss, was created in 2008 and is a vid of and about *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (hereafter: *Buffy*) and *Angel.* It presents a more direct critique than the previous two vids in the chapter, and is exemplary of one way fandom debates racism, namely as something present in fan texts. Gianduja Kiss made the vid for Thuvia Ptarth, who also was part of the ideas process. Unlike bironics work on *The Greatest,* the anti-racist critique was Gianduja Kiss' intention from the start, and, as mentioned above, her narrative structure and the way she builds up her argument reflects this intention, not least in how she utilises the song's shifting vocal styles and moods. The emotions in the song were some she initially, on hearing the idea from Thuvia Ptarth, though would work very well for the argument they wanted to make. The vid responded to ongoing fandom debates in much the same way *Masters of War* did in the previous chapter and Counteragent's *Still Alive* did in Freund's (2010) reading of it. In my experience, the show has a touchstone status in media fandom as one of the texts many fans are aware of and have engaged with on some level, much like it has also sparked a lot of academic interest[52].

Origin Stories is set to the song "Coffee" by Aesop Rock feat. John Darnielle of The Mountain Goats, and is a hip-hop track off the 2007 album *None Shall Pass.* The track is multi-layered, with several instruments, including chorus in the background and a funky rhythm guitar. According to *Pitchfork* it is not a sound typical of the artist (Crock 2007). The vid was created as an act of fandom activism through a charity auction, which is an important part of the vid's creation, as it was a creative collaboration between Gianduja Kiss and its recipient, Thuvia Ptarth, both of whom have written LiveJournal posts about the vid. On her vid post, Gianduja Kiss has added this note: "Storyboard and editing by Gianduja Kiss. Commissioned and conceived by Thuvia Ptarth." (Gianduja_Kiss 2008b) acknowledging the dual creator status for the vid. There is a long history of vidders vidding collaboratively (Coppa, 2008a; Coppa, 2011b), which this vid then follows. In the lead-up to our interview, Gianduja Kiss also called attention to this collaborative effort and suggested I also ask Thuvia Ptarth about it, which I did during our later interview. That said, Gianduja Kiss is the one who did the actual labour of vidding and knows her own creative process for the vid.

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[52] The journal *Slayage* was created to be a home for *Buffy* scholarship, expanded to include *Angel* and later subtitled *Journal of Whedon Studies* to cover the entire ouvre of *Buffy* creator Joss Whedon.

The subject of the vid is the show's treatment of its characters of colour, and how the show privileges its white protagonists over these characters. According to Gianduja Kiss, this vid also speaks as part of an ongoing debate in the shows' fandom/s about representations of race and, to a lesser degree, of gender. As such, this vid reflects what Katherine E. Morrissey (2018, 58) points out when she writes that vids are "often part of conversations already in progress" in media fandoms. I have previously written about *Women's Work* by Luminosity and sisabet (2007) as another example of a vid which engaged in a debate in fandom, in that case about representation of women (Svegaard 2019). Given the way in which the vidders I am writing about are connected through fandoms, friendships, collaborations, fan exchanges etc., I do not believe it to be a coincidence that the years around 2005-2010 had a rise in critically reflexive vids. Fan fiction has its tropes and vogues, which appear in one fandom and travel to others (Coppa 2006; Stein & Busse 2009). It is not a stretch to suggest that similar mechanisms function within vidding, and that this half decade was high point for critical vidding.

There is existing scholarship on the subject of representation of race in *Buffy* and *Angel* (Alderman & Seidel-Arpaci 2003; Kirkland 2005; Middents 2005; Stratton 2005; Fuchs 2007). Jon Stratton (2005) in particular argues that vampirism stands in for race/the other in *Buffy,* and Ewan Kirkland (2005) demonstrates the show's whiteness to be pervasive and all-encompassing. He argues that the show is "resonant with whiteness" and that whiteness is expressed in the series through characters, iconography, cultural traditions and white anxieties (ibid., 26). Cynthia Fuchs's as well as Naomi Alderman and Annette Seidel-Arpaci's (2003) work explore racial stereotypes in the shows. *Origin Stories* can therefore be placed as part of a debate about race in the two shows within academia as well as fandom, where it argues the privileging of white characters and problematic treatment of characters of colour.

Origin Stories is also placed in a rich vidding tradition for both shows. The programme for the annual VividCon, which ran 2002-2018, is an illustration. By my tally of the con database, vividcon.info, there are 135 individual vids for *Buffy* that have been shown over the years, some more than once, and 73 for *Angel*, with 28 of these appearing on both lists as vids using both shows as source. Further to the point of VividCon being a place with a strong tradition of *Buffy* fandom, it is also where Luminosity premiered her vid album *Scooby Road* (2005), an album of *Buffy* vids set

to The Beatles' *Abbey Road* album. One of the repeating vids in VividCon's programming is, in fact, *Origin Stories,* which appears in a show from 2010 called *Race and Representation in Vidding*, as well as one from 2008 titled *Vids that Push the Envelope*. According to the VJs, the latter means "Dramatically new visual styles, political issues, social commentary, unusual source, real-person vids, dramatic AUs -- many recent vids challenge us to expand our concept of fannish vidding" (Shapiro, counteragent & Speranza 2008). The interest for *Buffy* in vidding, and for this particular vid as an exponent for criticality in vids, shows that the vidding community itself also has an interest in the format of reflexive and critical vids.

That the vid focuses on race is signalled in the original vid post, where the vid's summary is given as "It's Nikki Wood's fucking coat", a sentiment that also suggests the affects of anger or offence as a motivation for vidding (Svegaard 2019). As Ahmed (2014a, 172-173) writes, feminist anger is an affect with a long history. Nikki Wood (April Weeden/K.D. Aubert) is a Black American former Slayer (the role now inhabited by the show's white title character), who only appears in three episodes. In *Buffy*, her story is told chiefly by Spike (James Marsters), a white vampire antagonist turned tentative ally, as he regales Buffy with the story of how he killed Nikki in 1970s New York City, and by Robin Wood (D.B. Woodside), her now adult son. In the first of the two episodes, the audience sees Spike take his iconic black leather trenchcoat from Nikki's dead body after killing her, which explains the vid's summary. As Kirkland observes, previous slayers are all racialised, which foregrounds Buffy's whiteness, and as they have all died for Buffy to be the Slayer now, Wood and her coat stand in for these dead women. Spike is rarely seen without this trenchcoat, which is an integral part of the character's image, but it is stolen from a murdered Black woman. I return to this moment later, as its significance is such that the mention of it is enough to signal to the show's fans what the vid is about. Thuvia Ptarth (2008) explains in her post about the vid that the summary sentence was her initial idea, before she thought of the wider vid concept or found the song. She also mentions how the vid's title is intended to provoke thoughts and questions about whose stories are here and whose are not, showing an intentional focus on absences and erasures from the inception of the vid.

That there is more to the vid's narrative than Nikki Wood's story is signalled by the plural tense in the title, *Origin Stories*. It is even more so a vid about Robin Wood and his quest for justice for his mother, but also other Slayers of colour. Before

I go further into how the vid deals with these representations and erasures, I look at the song. This vid differs from the previous vids in how it uses its lyrics, and provides an example of another strategy for dealing with music focused on words when compared to the vids in chapter five. At the same time, the genre of hip-hop differs from the pop and folk of the previous vids and the use of music as a way to engage critically with the source is therefore also different.

6.3.1 Speaking of race

As mentioned above, "Coffee" is a hip-hop track, a genre often associated with (urban) Black American life (Shevy 2008; Jeffries 2014). Likewise, the vid is using the genre as a shorthand to help the audience change their point of identification from the white leads to the supporting Black and chromatic characters through the associations between Blackness and hip-hop (Kajikawa 2015). Brackett (2005) shows that genre conventions have provided a way of identifying artists and audiences to each other along lines of race in the USA; hip-hop and rap have been and still are coded Black. Furthermore, he argues (through Floyd, Jr. (Floyd, Samuel A. 1995) that this use of genre exists simultaneously with a cultural memory of what diasporic Black music is and was. Choosing a song in this genre therefore has the effect of privileging stories told by people of colour from the very start, giving the audience an auditive lens through which to understand what the vid is doing.

Hip-hop as a genre is in general focused on the rap (Keyes, 1996), and this song is no exception. There is a lot to parse, and at times the lyrics are hard to make out while listening, due to the fast-paced rap. As Jason Crock (2007) states in his review of *None Shall Pass*, Aesop Rock is known for "verbosity" and his lyrics are "harder to follow now", while Jonathan Keefe (2007) in *Slant* magazine remarks that "Aesop seems to regard the long-standing criticisms of his impenetrable lyrics as some kind of a dare". In other words, this is a lyrically dense album where seasoned reviewers also find the lyrics hard to follow. This in turn adds to the complexity of the vid and is part of why I have always found it difficult to understand on a detailed level. It took me several viewings to appreciate it, and I still notice something new each time I watch it.

The lyrics are complex (see Appendix 1), metaphorical and use symbolism, which the vid adds another layer to. It is not entirely clear to me what the meaning or

message of the track is,[53] but since the vid appears to use the lyrics in its own way, I have chosen not to focus on analysing the lyrics separately. The vid uses the lyrics in synchresis and to emphasise specific moments rather than draw on any message from the song as a whole, which is a marked shift from how the previous vids used their lyrics. There are moments of lyrics speaking with the images, and also stretches where the rap is instead used entirely musically and rhythmically. Compared with the use of folk in the previous chapter, the use of lyrics and rhythm in this vid is almost reversed. This is another song which foregrounds words, but the lyrics are not the main focus for interpreting the vid. Instead, the song is also transformed and takes on new messages and significances, but ones that are not readily found in the song on its own. The symbolic lyrics lend themselves well to being repurposed in this manner; rather than the straightforward messages of the folk music, Aesop Rock's complex lyrics allow for many possible interpretations and uses. This also means that, aside from the overall message of the vid, viewers may find significance in very different moments in the vid.

The fact that the lyrics are opaque means that it takes several listens/viewings to grasp both the song and the vid more fully. While this is not unusual for vids, especially those with a more complex message or narrative, it is particularly so for this vid, because of the lyrics. This duality in the use of lyrics means this vid is an especially interesting case with both less lyrical reliance and less melodic dynamics to aid the argument. To further examine how this particular use of lyrics functions, I now look at how the vid progresses, then move on to its use of music, drawing out examples from specific instances of synchresis.

6.3.2 Vidding racial discourse

Gianduja Kiss uses her clips with a high level of reliance on the context of them. Like in *Masters of War*, this means that source knowledge enhances the experience of the vid. The opening of the vid introduces the audience to the characters who are in focus in the first two thirds of the vid: Robin Wood in the canon present (early 2000s), an unnamed Chinese Slayer (Ming Qiu) at the time of the Boxer Rebellion (ca. 1900),

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[53] Common suggestions in comments on the song's music video point towards a critique of material/capitalist culture. This is backed up by the official music video's (Norton 2007) use of zombies, if one interprets this as pointing towards Romero's zombie films as they are commonly understood. For a discussion of the debate on Romero's zombies, see Stephen Harper (2002). The previously mentioned review in *Pitchfork* points out that a recurrent theme for Aesop Rock is paranoia (Crock 2007), which suggest an alternative or supplementary understanding of the track.

Nikki Wood in New York (1970s) and Kendra (Bianca Lawson), a Slayer originating in Jamaica, also in the present day.

Fig. 21. Clockwise from top left Robin Wood (D.B. Woodside), Chinese Slayer (Ming Qiu), Kendra (Bianca Lawson), Nikki Wood (April Weeden).

All four are introduced through showing them fight, an essential part of who they are as the show deals with fights against the supernatural with a heavy focus on hand-to-hand combat. Slayers, who are always women, are supernaturally strong and are trained to fulfil a role as protectors of humanity. A central premise is that there is only one Slayer at a time, and the show focuses on Buffy Summers (Sarah Michelle Gellar), the current incarnation of the power, who is a blonde, white woman.

As the verse starts, the vid uses the lyrics of "And the last shall be, first.." to link the four characters to the history of the Slayers by invoking the First Slayer (Sharon Ferguson), a prehistoric Black woman. Throughout, the vid returns to her as a parallel, drawing attention to this ultimate foremother of the Slayers, and to her position as a Black woman in what Fuchs (2007, 97) refers to as "a spectacular antediluvian desert". Fuchs also points to the racist connotations in the portrayal of the First Slayer:

> "at the same time that she represents the African roots of Buffy's Euro-American present, she also can be read as an ignorant (not to say racist) image of a primitive black character being bested by a white girl's "modern" know-how and training."
> (ibid., 98)

The First Slayer is portrayed as primitive; her face is painted, she is dressed in rags, and cannot speak. While the episode makes a quasi-scientific argument about human evolution, mapping this primitivity onto the body of a Black woman is an uneasy construction. Such unease occurs throughout the vid and is perhaps the cause of its central affective register - discomfort and offense.

Especially Kendra is linked to the First Slayer in the opening of the vid. This choice is thought provoking, especially for a fan of *Buffy*, who understands the context. Kendra dies fighting in the clip - the first becomes the last as well as vice versa. She is also sacrificed in the show in place of Buffy, the Black woman dies to allow the white to live. The biblical connotations in the lyrics are also invoked through these themes of self-sacrifice. *Origin Stories* goes on to parallel the First to the parade of potential[54] Slayers, a racially diverse group of women, which then turn into the specific Slayers the vid deals with. Thereby, the vid draws attention to the lineage of Slayers and specifically to the women of colour it is focused on - and here it also, for the first time, shows them all fighting the vampire Spike. As can be seen from simply analysing this opening section, this vid is a dense work, using layers of meaning through source context, vid structure, music genre and lyrics. In addition, as Gianduja Kiss says in the opening quote, she is deliberately using a technique of impressing specific kinds of images on the audience, thereby showing systems and pervasiveness in the source. For this reason, I will not attempt to retell the vid's arc, but rather draw out some key themes to illustrate what it is arguing.

Like the First Slayer, Spike recurs throughout the vid, consistently portrayed as a force for destruction. He kills the previous Slayers, and presents a problem for Robin Wood, who struggles to deal with having his mother's murderer around him. In contrast, Robin Wood is portrayed as a leader, granting him the narrative privilege the show denies him. Spike's role is further problematised by showing his murders of Slayers (of colour), his links to other vampires who kill, and as privileged by the show and its protagonists. The latter is chiefly through Buffy feeding Spike her blood.

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[54] The potentials are women who may become the next Slayer in the event of Buffy's death. Season 7 sees them collected by the main cast to form a Slayer trained force against evil.

Fig. 22. The First Slayer (Sarah Ferguson) as shown in *Origin Stories*

Buffy's story is an essential teenage story (ibid.), making her a kind of every-teen. If Buffy is every teen - the presumed main audience - then by making her complicit, the vid is able to extend that complicity to those who watch and cheer for her. The vid shows that Buffy breaks away from the idea of what a Slayer should do, kill all vampires, and instead enters into a symbiosis with Spike. Buffy values Spike over her foremothers, thus becoming a parallel to how fandom privileges Spike over the Slayers of colour. This is another moment of discomfort for fans, seeing the racist politics of the show pointed out so clearly.

Gianduja Kiss uses a brief instrumental bridge to pivot the story slightly, following the tendency from *Hey Ho* and *The Greatest*. She focuses on Nikki Wood's final fight against Spike and the taking of her coat after her death. As the lyrics move to T-A-K-E-N-O-P-R-I-S-O-N-E-R-S, she cuts to Robin Wood fighting Spike, trying to kill him in revenge for his mother's murder. Having watched the vid so far and been reminded of the cost of Spike's existence to Slayers, and to the Woods in particular, it is easy to sympathise with them over Spike. The vid switches the identification point from Spike to Nikki Wood, and thereby retells the story of her fight and the coat in a way that privileges her experiences over his - the Black woman

over the white British man (for more on Spikes Britishness, see Reichelt and Durham (2017)).

The final verse, which is sung rather than rapped - something I return to shortly - shifts the narrative significantly. It moves from *Buffy* to *Angel* and from the Woods to Dana (Navi Rawat/Jasmine DiAngelo), a Slayer activated in the mass-activation of the 7th season of *Buffy*. Dana is plagued by the memories of her foremothers, including Nikki Wood. She conflates memory with reality through her childhood trauma, and attempts to kill Spike as a result. The opening line of the verse "I crawled down // to the basement" shows Dana, walking down stairs into what appears to be a basement. This literalism signals that the last part of the vid aligns lyrics and visuals much closer than previously. Dana, too, is paralleled with the First Slayer, painting her face with blood to the lyrics "makeup". She also fights Spike and defeats him, but is subdued by the protagonists of *Angel* before she can kill him. The lead character, Angel (David Boreanaz), was a main character on *Buffy* for the first two seasons and irregularly recurring after that, and provides the main connection between the two shows. It is thereby the system of heroes in the wider Buffyverse[55], who sides with Spike over a traumatised woman of colour. The song ends on the act of taking down Dana, with the lyrics "this is what they make you take // the medication for", another literalism for the tranquillisers used on her.

The music ends abruptly here while the images continue for a few moments to jarring effect. Spike is shown walking away, unharmed and pulling on his coat. He is able to leave, while the women of the vid are dead or incapacitated. The vid ends by once more drawing attention to the coat as a symbol of Spike's privilege throughout the source texts. In order to address this privilege, Gianduja Kiss, with *Origin Stories,* employs music and its wider connotations as much as she does the context of the clips she uses. To further explore this aspect of the vid's argumentation, I now take a closer look at exactly how music functions in this vid.

6.3.3 Hip-hop vidding

The genre of hip-hop carries its own set of connotations which underpin the understanding of *Origin Stories*. As Simon Frith (1996, 86-91) argues, genres are

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[55] A colloquial term for the shared universe of the two TV shows, including their various transmedia products (comics, games etc.)
It is also in use in the academic study of Buffy, Angel and the oeuvre of Joss Whedon in general. In *Slayage*, it is used already in vol 1.3 (Fifarek 2001).

socially structured, and it is difficult to define what genre is. However, I will attempt to point to some of the ways in which notions of genre are important to *Origin Stories*. As Kyle Adams[56] (2015) writes, hip-hop is resistant to traditional musical analysis, which has its roots in European art music. I briefly do so anyway, because this track is a genre hybrid with its use of a full band, and especially Darnielle's verse at the end, which is not hip-hop. The song is in C#-major, with a lot of use of the sub-dominant F#-major and occasionally its parallel eb-minor. Eb-major appears as well, and functions as the dominant's dominant, while Bb-minor, the parallel tonic, is also consistently present. The use of tonic and subdominant as main chords is something De Clercq and Temperley (2011) show is common in contemporary popular music, and therefore not linked to hip-hop. It is not a complicated set of chords, and only a few are in use throughout the song while the rest provide variation. This multi-layered sound matches the symbolic layers of lyrics, and is densely produced around a strong rhythm section. The changes in instrumentation provides much of the variation and sense of dynamic shifts in the song.

The track opens with a sound that is vocal-like in quality, a twangy, mutated sound. It appears to be manipulated vocal sounds,[57] and feels like words that one ought to be able to decipher, but whose meaning continue to elude. The result is an instant capture of attention as the mind grasps at the sounds, trying to make sense of them. This vocal sound is repeated before the second chorus and again before the T-A-K-E-N-O-P-R-I-S-O-N-E-R-S, though in both instances it is now low in the mix. Interestingly, the voice-like sound is at a tonal level with Darnielle's voice when he sings on the final verse, almost as if foreshadowing this second set of vocals. They, like his song, add an unsettling feel to the whole track, not least because of the strange effect of them, and that they appear on their own, divorced from context and meaning. All the listener gets is a lack of understanding - until they are rescued by the appearance of Aesop Rock's rap. Thereby, the song sets the tone of unease from the start, drawing the audience in to this feeling.

Apart from Darnielle at the end of the track, the vocals are rapped by Aesop Rock, with the chorus having a more melodic feel to it than the verses. Rap is characterised, amongst other things, by the way in which the vocals are percussive

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[56] Adams also outlines a method for analysing hip-hop, which is outside the scope of this thesis to replicate or explain. Deeper analysis of rhythm and flow of rap can also be found in Kautny (2015).
[57] Thanks to Niccolo Granieri for his assistance in identifying the sound.

and provide flow and rhythm as much as meaning (Kautny 2015). By constructing a vid around rapped vocals with their rhythmic complexity, the vid mirrors the flow of the speech and rhymes, and the voice becomes even more of an instrument, conveying sounds as much as words. Oliver Kautny (ibid., 103) defines flow in rap:

> "The rhythmic delivery of MCing is called flow. I distinguish three different aspects of flow, all of which are discussed by rappers as well as rap fans. The first aspect describes the process of the rhythm's production, the air flowing out of the lungs, formed into a flow of sound. The second part of flow describes the musical result of the airflow synchronized to a musical arrangement called beat. A third aspect of the term flow reminds us – like the term groove – of the feel of music while perceiving it."

Gianduja Kiss utilises this triptych of flow. Her use of the rap is more akin to when vidders follow particular instruments or riffs rather than when they follow the melody of a song. Doing this retains the ethos of the music; rap is percussive and rhythmic far more than it is melodic. Using it like this in the vid is in keeping with the genre of music, just as focusing on political messages is with the genre of folk in chapter five. Therefore, this is a rap/hip-hop vid as much as it is a *Buffy* vid. The rap itself is skillful and melodic, bringing an energetic, warm feeling to the track, aided by the instrumentation, where this energy serves to engage the audience in the rapidly evolving narrative of the vid. Conversely, there are not a lot of shifts in dynamics on this track; no powerful rises in volume or intensity, no shouted calls to action or intimate moments of soft intonation. This stands in contrast to the pop songs earlier in this chapter, particularly the use of music in *The Greatest*.

However, the mood of the song changes when Darnielle's vocals enter at the end of the song, and the affective register of unease returns in force. The change shows that this is a vid in two parts; a statement and a restatement/conclusion. In this section, the mood shift with the entrance of melody and sung vocals, it becomes unsettling, cold and sad. This corresponds to the visual shift to focus on Dana. Her story, set apart by music as well as being focused on her alone, plays out as a reiteration of the points the rest of the vid has made. This verse functions as a re-stating of the vid's argument, but also shows that a vid with the same argument but another song would feel different.

Darnielle's vocals are melancholy, the melody has a longing to it that matches Dana's lack of connection to the world, and evokes sympathy for her plight. This verse is about isolation, fearing for one's life, and mentions vampires. Darnielle's

voice has a coolness to it and is produced to sound distant. These qualities reflect the themes and contrast with the heat in Aesop Rock's energetic rap, allowing for different feels. Where the rap is used for mood and as background music, the sung verse is used for literalism in its synchresis. Dan Stowell and Mark D. Plumbley (2008) demonstrate that there are technical and sound related differences between beatboxing and sung vocals. When compared with for example Sheila Whiteley's (2000) analysis of Tracy Chapman's vocal expression, this begins to open up why it is that sung lyrics invite a different engagement than rap. What the vid shows is that there is something about a singing voice that functions differently than a spoken or rapped voice; melody adds something important. As film music shows, all music contributes in audiovisual media, but it does not all contribute the same things. Melodic lines can be leitmotifs, can invite us to listen and engage differently, and they carry emotions alongside the other musical elements. In *Origin Stories*, the melody refocuses the narrative and shifts the perspective of the vid.

In our conversation, Gianduja Kiss touched on how the vid's last third stands out. She remarked that while this part would not make its point as strongly on its own, particularly the "racial aspects", as it does as a part of the whole, this part of the vid is a restating of the argument. She often vids with the third act of her vid in mind, using it as a structural focal point. In this case, the song plays to her artistic process very well, as the song invites a shift in its last third. The effect of this restatement along with a narrower focus means that the viewer is drawn in all over again. The clearer lyrics and the affective hooks in the melody and voice work to recenter the overall message of the vid. Because we have already been presented with the systemic nature of how characters of colour are treated in the shows, we are now ready to understand Dana's story as part of this, and understand how it functions as a conclusion by restating, condensing and closing the argument.

As mentioned above, the vid ends here, and the images continue for a few seconds after the end of the music. However, due to the unsettling feel of Darnielle's vocals and the abrupt stop, the images and music once more influence one another. In combination, the silence becomes ghostly, a sense that the words and sounds are hanging in the air after they are gone. This imparts a weight to the ending of the vid that is more impactful than it would have been had sound and image ceased at the same time. Gianduja Kiss's choice to emphasise not only the last section of the vid,

but the very last shots, is what becomes her final words in the conclusion of her argument.

6.3.4 Race discourse in fandom

The reception of *Origin Stories* is centered on LiveJournal, which, as I explained in the previous chapter, was the primary forum for media fandom at this time. As far as I can tell, the vid did not travel outside of LiveJournal, though it has subsequently been shared on AO3. It is hosted behind a password lock on Vimeo, meaning that one has to find one of the posts to view it. Its reception is limited in scope when compared to the first two vids in this chapter, but there are more detailed discussions in its comments than on the other two. In the comment track there are references to discussions taking place elsewhere in fandom, though not all of these discussions are discoverable at the present time as many links are dead due to accounts being closed. However, both Gianduja Kiss (2008a) and her recipient and creative partner, Thuvia Ptarth (2008), have posted extensive blogs about their thoughts and processes for creating the vid. The comment tracks on these posts provide additional discussions aside from the contextualisation happening in the posts themselves.

Most commenters who go into detail seem to be in agreement with the vid. It is referred to as "necessary" in terms of its critique and several people comment on the multiple layers of interpretation they draw from it. What is especially of interest to me is that there are several commenters who have limited prior knowledge of the show who still understand the vid and comment to that effect, proving it overall effective in its communication. This is particularly noteworthy because of the vid's reliance on clip context and suggests that there is something about vidding that enables communication of complex concepts even without detailed source knowledge. Some comments mention the song choice, several of which are impressed with the idea of vidding a rap song, and some compliment the use of rhythm in the editing. These comments show not just that rap in vids was unusual, but also that the music, when commented on, is reduced to rhythm - the strongest element of the song. Such comments lend weight to my argument that the rap functions more as instrumentation than as song in this vid.

Another notable point is that there is very little mention of emotional reactions in the comment section. Where emotions are mentioned, they appear pre-existing, showing how the vid speaks as part of a fandom debate, and thereby reflects

on existing feels rather than attempt to create new ones. This also follows the song choice and its limited affective range, especially in the first two thirds. It is a vid that invites thinking more than feeling. Limited affect is an effect of music choice too, just as *The Greatest*'s ability to spark many feels is. When lyrics are dense, hard to parse, and not used very literally, one cannot reduce the work of the music to the lyrics, as it was partly possible to do with the folk music vids. Here, the music is working on its own, despite there being a lack of melody. This suggests that the instruments, the tonality, dynamics and riffs are where the music makes meaning. Not least the context of the use of hip-hop is important. Just as folk music in the previous chapter coded for political content, hip-hop is a short-cut to talking about race, especially Black American experiences. However, the unease that runs through the music - and the vid - creating discomfort in the audience is also inspiring affect, and one it, as with many feels, can be hard to articulate, not least when white vulnerability is potentially sparked (Kanjere, 2019).

This brings me back to my initial notes in this analysis that the summary for the vid indicated a form of feminist anger. Ahmed (2014a, 172-174) argues that such anger is born out of and moved by pain and suffering, which finds its parallel in the telling of *Origin Stories*. In the vids' creators desire to reflect on this pain, there is also a reflection of this form of anger. *Origin Stories* reflects on the injustices of racism, and attempts to move the audience in turn, to let the audience understand and feel the injustice as a tool for critique. It is a creative anger, that "works to create a language with which to respond to that which one is against" (ibid., 176), and which calls other feminist fans to understand this injustice (ibid., 178).

Like *The Greatest, Origin Stories* works to center characters of colour. One commenter recounts how they longed to see Slayers of colour given narrative privilege and being moved to tears by seeing it in the vid. Likewise, this also leaves the vid somewhere between fulfilling longing and performing duty (Pande 2018), as I also discussed regarding *The Greatest*. There is an uneasiness present, a slippage between the critique of the source and the fact that the vid is also created in a culture of whiteness. Anglophone media's presumed whiteness (ibid.) is creating a problem, exacerbated by Aesop Rock's role as a white performer in/of Black culture, who, like Sia, speaks for the experience of people of colour. A more sympathetic reading suggests that it is Aesop Rock's whiteness which is being erased in favour of the voices of the vid's protagonists via the use of hip-hop's Blackness (Kajikawa 2015)

and the dialogic structure of hip-hop as signifyin(g) this Blackness (Floyd, 2002). This dialogic principle is strengthened in "Coffee" via the two parts of the song being in conversation with each other, thereby also linking stronger to the hearing of a constructed Blackness, regardless of who is actually performing. As with *Vogue*, there are questions around power and appropriation present in this, questions which are outside the scope of this dissertation, but merit further investigation.

Yet, as Anthony Kwame Harrison (2015) found, race does matter in hip-hop as a marked and important identifier. Thus, it is simplistic to say that Aesop Rock's whiteness does not matter. I, the (white) audience member, cannot *hear* that Aesop Rock is white without the immediate visual aid of a conventional music video or other images of the artist. The (problematically) presumed white fan audience might be theorised to be in the same position. This vid speaks *to* whiteness as much as (or more than) it speaks *from* whiteness. In this context, Aesop Rock's race is less relevant than mine; and, more crucially, less relevant than that of the cast of *Buffy*. When the vid centers the characters of colour and critiques white narrative privilege, it is using music as a tool, and relies on the audience to hear the shorthand of Blackness through hip-hop. Simultaneously, it relies on its audience to understand the discourse it is speaking in, and to bring feels regarding the characters to the vid as part of this discourse. Thereby, the vid functions to argue through both fan intellectual debates and collective feels. The unease and discomfort, that the fan audience experiences, is where the vid's critique partially sits; at the same time, its density and cerebral bent invites intellectual responses rather than emotional ones.

6.4 Conclusion: Black American Music and the Sound of (White?) Anti-Racism

This chapter has focused on three critical vids which speak about issues of race and representation in media through different strategies. In this chapter it becomes evident that preexisting ideas of what Black culture sounds like is a key to this critique being understood in a dominant white and anglophone culture. This shows that the context of sound is important in vids as much as that of image. I have also found that there are three more factors to add to the mixing desk of vidding, alongside settings for the three elements of the vid, music, lyrics and images. These more detailed settings are clip context, music context and intensity of feels.

Some vids, like *Origin Stories*, rely heavily on the audience understanding at least some of the context of the clips in their original setting, but also lean on context of music and sound. *Origin Stories* works because fans know it is Nikki Wood's coat and how Spike got it, and because they understand that hip-hop is coded Black, regardless of the performer's racial and ethnic identity. Harrison (ibid.) has explored how his own racial identity influenced how people in the hip-hop scene responded to and viewed him, showing the link between hip-hop and (American) Blackness from an auto-ethnographic angle. This context of sound is as vital as the visual context, though not equivalent to it. *The Greatest* provides an example for this.

This vid is far less reliant on the context of its clips; they are carefully chosen for expressions and parallels, for moments of joy and struggle and triumph, but at times they are also removed from their context to create the flow between scenes that makes the vid work as a multi-source narrative. As an example of this opposite, the cathartic moment in the vid where Quake breaks out of her chrysalis, is predated by a clip of Darwin (Edi Gathegi) from *X-Men: First Class* (Vaughn 2011) as he turns to stone. This is Darwin's death scene, not a moment of overcoming, but it is changed when followed by Quake breaking out of a visually very similar situation. The clip of Quake saves Darwin from his fate in the context of the vid; he is implicitly pulled along, into her spectacular moment of coming back to life, and the feels this produces in the audience encompass both characters. Those feels are predicated on and dialled up by the music, by the rising intensity and release of feels, while still using connotations of sound though to a lesser degree than *Origin Stories* did.

Vogue takes this full circle and entirely divorces the context of the clips from the visual source, yet relies on the context of Madonna's song to work. Its focus on the queer subtext of the film text is the immediate context, and on a larger scale in how it is a song that uses a tradition of dance which is Black and Latine as well as queer. The vid becomes about race as well as queerness because *300* conflates and is prejudiced against both, while "Vogue" evokes a culture which is both. Thereby, it relies more on music context than clip context, and simultaneously subverts the subject of feels by using humour as a way of engaging critically.

The focus on race in this chapter also reveals another level of problems with fan studies' over-focus on fans of US media products, despite the rising popularity of (East) Asian media, particularly from Japan, Korea and China. I am not ignorant of the hypocrisy inherent in me stating this while doing a large research project about

almost entirely US American media fandom. Yet, this bias is one to be aware of, at the very least. For this chapter, the view of race and racism also largely reflects a US American perspective on the issue, something which has naturally been strengthened through the increased Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 and beyond, centered in the USA and grounded in how racism functions there. There is a risk of overlooking racism if we expect it to be the same everywhere. Pande (2018) points out that fans are presumed white unless otherwise explicitly stated, and that this plays a part in the racism of/in fandom. As Anne Kustritz (2015) notes, we even make assumptions about Anglophone fandom, collapsing everyone into presumed nationalities of natively English speaking people, chiefly US American and British. This is something I, as a person from a non-Anglophone country, have noticed,[58] which is not to say this experience is equivalent to that of fans of colour.

These factors do, however, lead me to suggest that we as fan studies scholars may have gone too far in talking about "Western media fandom"; what we, including myself, actually appear to mean, is "Anglophone media fandom". The intellectual properties we are writing about in terms of their fandoms are, by and large, natively Anglophone. When they are not, this is marked out explicitly, so we can talk about Japanese Manga fandom, K-pop fandom, Nordic Noir fandom etc. We are working largely with English language fandoms, both in terms of IP, and in fandom spaces. The dominance of English compounds the effects of systemic racism for people of colour with English as a second language, playing a part in making fandom less welcoming and inclusive. This chapter has shown me that I must adopt the terminology of Anglophone media fandom, when this is in fact what I mean. I have also found a need to constantly reflect on the meaning of whiteness, including my own, in the writing of this chapter. What is clear to me, similarly to the importance of specifying Anglophone media fandom, is white fandom, presumed as well as visible.

With this in mind, the ways in which the three vids in this chapter talk about race also become more coherent. They are all made by people who reside in North America, who are white where their ethnicity has been disclosed, and working with music, which is created by white artists using Black American traditions. Two of them are also reflecting on media properties, which are created by white people and

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[58] As an aside, I have not engaged in media fandom in my native Danish online; Anglophone media fandom is my digital home. It would be enlightening to discover how more non-Anglophone fans experience the English domination of media fandom online and how native languages influence these experiences.

privilege their narratives, while actively trying to subvert this. They are thereby closely related, despite looking very different and using different techniques to engage in a critically reflective work about their texts. This plays a part in understanding how the vids in this chapter address issues of racial representation and racism - namely from the perspective of a fan culture that is dominated by whiteness. Here, the sounds of Blackness have a particular impact as a way of letting the other speak.

This leads me back to the title of this conclusion, because it appears that the sound of Blackness is what whiteness needs to be able to talk about race and racism. I am not sure what that means or where it leads, but it is worth pointing out. Is it a form of musical appropriation? If it is, who is doing the appropriating, given that the music artists are white? Vidding celebrates both music and visual media, and thus also the sounds that are used to create the art. As the vids did for their media properties, this chapter is also thinking through matters of Blackness, whiteness, and negotiating how to talk about racism as a white person. As *The Greatest* shows, feels is a way of showing and creating community with and empathy for characters of colour, and feels are something all fans have in common. Additionally, Black fans' and their feels matter. When what is being argued about is racism in spaces and texts that fans have their identities and feels tangled in, then it is not surprising that it is difficult to have these discussions, and that the vids in this chapter also struggle to do so. In the next chapter, I will narrow the focus on feels once more and look at vids that say something about fan experiences, and what music can tell us about what it feels like to be a fan.

Chapter Seven

Fandom Fanvids: Audiovisual Reflexivity

This final chapter of findings is a culmination of the lines of enquiry I have been following through the previous two chapters. I have examined how feels are expressed in/through vidding when dealing with critique of fan texts and how feels enable this critique. I shift my focus from vids that reflect on fan texts to fandom itself in order to draw out the personal aspects of critical vidding and the role of feels in this. By moving to vids talking about experiences of fandom as a culture and mode of engagement, the feels and vids get increasingly personal; this is about what fans themselves do, not what someone else does and fandom responds to. Tisha Turk (2010) argues that vidding and vid watching is a form of collective interpretation, something that she and Joshua Johnson (2012) also show is a skill and part of a communal practice of vidding/watching. The previous chapters have shown the different levels of clip context as part of this collective/communal aspect of vids and vidding. When fans use vids to reflect on the/ir fan experience, this aspect is both enhanced and contested as questions about what fandom is and who is included become explicit.

An argument about fandom is sometimes referred to as meta in fandom vernacular (Hofmann 2018), and these vids can be labelled as metavids (Freund, 2010). The term brings to mind metatext/uality, which is why I want to draw attention to this particular terminology. Vids such as the three in this chapter are of particular interest for several reasons, related to the term "meta". By their nature of explicit reflectivity, they are perhaps the most emblematic of the idea of the critically reflexive vid. These vids move beyond speaking about the texts they are constructed from. Instead, they rework fan texts to speak about how it feels to be a fan, and about fandom as a culture. Given the feels culture of fandom, feels are integral to how these vids speak; being a fan is to have feels and belong in a culture where feels are a cohesive. As such, metavids are doubly reflexive; they are reflecting on an experience of fandom, while using the already reflective technique of vidding to do so. This layering makes them more complex to make, but also harder to decode and thereby emblematic of the form of communication I am exploring. To be understood, such

vids must function as speech and communication in a way that is legible to their audience. The collective and communal sides to vidding/watching is at its most intensified with these vids, which also demonstrate that collective interpretation can be contentious as well.

Vids are an artform of and with feels, and using them to talk about the experience of fannishness and the self-as-fan, points towards fandom as being what Berlant (2008, viii) refers to as an "intimate public". According to Berlant, what constitutes an intimate public is "the expectation that the consumers of its particular stuff already share a worldview and emotional knowledge that they have derived from a broadly common historical experience" (ibid.). Fandom as an intimate public opens a discussion of what vids like those in this chapter do, how they are a part of constituting fandom as a culture that reflects on its own practices and conduct. This again brings me back to Stein's (Stein 2015) concept of fandom as a feels culture, and the emotional knowledge, to borrow Berlant's words from above, that is shared in and through fanworks. By creating and sharing works about the central experience of fandom itself, metavids show this culture of feels at its most clear and vulnerable, where it communicates in a way that shows the connections between feels and culture.

The fan experience is a wide and unspecific subject area. The vids in this chapter are consequently very different in their arguments, affective registers and aesthetics. The first, *Only a Lad* (2012b) by Laura Shapiro, is a vid about a fandom trope, which makes excuses for villainous male characters. *Only a Lad* picks up where *Origin Stories* left off with addressing the bad (white) men fandom loves and how the focus on them can be a problem. The second and third are both by lim. lim is the second of two vidders who have contributed two vids to the project, as I explained in chapter four. The first of these, the second in this chapter, is *Us* (lim 2007). *Us* is a vid about the experience of being a fan as fandom was on the cusp of becoming visible and mainstream. The third and final vid, *Marvel* (lim 2014), is about the fannish gaze, explored as it is directed at Marvel superheroes. It celebrates a fannish way of engaging with texts while also examining how the fannish gaze functions.

Musically, the vids are quite different. *Only a Lad* uses a song by Oingo Boingo, which is upbeat, humorous and heavily instrumented, and where lyrics and music are juxtaposed, while *Us* is set to a minimalist song by Regina Spektor, which

centers the expression of the singer's voice. Finally, *Marvel* uses an instrumental track, "Festivo" by Keiichi Suzuki, making it the only vid discussed in this dissertation with no lyrics at all. I begin by looking at *Only a Lad,* because it bridges the transition from talking about representation in fan texts to talking about how we as fans feel about the characters we do see represented.

7.1 Laura Shapiro's *Only a Lad*: How do you solve a problem like the woobie?

> Thor can deal, Buffy can deal, right? They're superheroes. They're going to be fine. It's all the other people who get killed or harmed, whatever, you know, those are the people I'm caring about, that the narrative spends no time caring about. And I want you to like, have a moment where you're like, wait, this shit is fucked up. So I really wanted to highlight that.
> ...
> But the most important thing after structure really for me is what's actually happening in the music. Because that is going to tell people how to, to feel, even more than the words do in my opinion. That's going to tell people what emotions to have. [...] I have been in the room where the vids play, and I have made people laugh and I have made people shiver and I have made people cry and I, I know that I can do that. And it's because of the song it's because of the music.- Laura Shapiro[59]

Laura Shapiro's *Only a Lad* from 2012 opens this chapter. It shares part of its focus with the previous vid, *Origin Stories*, discussed in chapter six, in the character Spike from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997) and bridges the shift from fan text focus to fan culture focus. This happens through the way it focuses on three fan favourite characters and critiques how fandom, not the source, often portrays them. *Only a Lad* thereby takes the first step from critiquing text to reflection on fandom by looking at how fandom uses and transforms texts in a particular way. Shapiro (2012a), like Gianduja Kiss, intended this vid to have a critical reflection from the start, and has labelled this vid as a meta vid in her announcement post to show this intention. Her use of the term shows that she sees the vids as reflecting and commenting on something. The use of the summary, as explained in the quote above, further underlines Shapiro's intentions by focusing attention on the exact kind of fandom interaction she is making an argument about. The quote sets up the vid by signalling its key points: There are bad men in fan texts, many fans love them, and

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[59] Interview conducted 10th November 2019 via Skype.

this leads to a trope known as 'the woobie', which aims to redeem these men. Via this vid, Shapiro thinks through her own thoughts and feelings on a character trope and invites her audience to do the same, which also led her to emphasise audible lyrics in the vid song. Shapiro's examining and circulation of feelings is feels culture in effect, though as I explain in the following, *Only a Lad* is about feels more than it inspires them.

The vid is constructed out of footage from four sources, *The X-Files* (1993-2018), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997), *Avengers* (2012) and *Thor* (2011). Two of these have been part of vids earlier in this thesis, namely *Buffy* and *The Avengers*, where the former was critiqued for its racial politics by Gianduja Kiss in *Origin Stories* and the latter critiqued for being a part of the military-industrial-entertainment complex by Thuvia Ptarth in *Hey Ho* (see chapter five). The *Thor* films were not included in *Hey Ho,* where they did not fit the vid's argument, but here they are important, as the character in focus from these films is Loki (Tom Hiddleston), a central character in *Thor* and the main antagonist in *The Avengers*. From *Buffy* the focus is on Spike (James Marsters), the character who was problematised and decentralised in *Origin Stories*, and from *The X-Files* the central character is Alex Krycek (Nicholas Lea). The repeated focus on these characters speak to some of the enduring fandom they enjoy, which is also, as she explained in our interview, why Laura Shapiro chose to focus on them as examples. To understand the argument Shapiro is making with this vid, I begin by giving an overview of its progression and story.

7.1.1 Three Lads Behaving Badly

Only a Lad uses the song of the same name by Oingo Boingo. The song was originally released in 1981 on the similarly titled album, but the version used in the vid is the live version from the 1988 album *Boingo Alive*. The vid is structured around the song's narrative, and dedicates a section to each character before intercutting them with each other. This both contrasts and fits with Oingo Boingo's song, which tells a story with different chapters, though these are about the same person, Johnny, who is the titular "lad" of the song. On the surface, the lyrics appear to excuse the criminal Johnny, but the use of clichés and sarcasm subverts this, supported by frontman Danny Elfman's delivery of the vocals. The central conceit of *Only a Lad* is that the three men from the three different fandoms are all Johnny. They are versions of the

same "lad", and fandom treat them the same as society treats Oingo Boingo's Johnny. The song has been edited to strengthen this three-part narrative structure (see Appendix 1 for lyrics and editing notes) as well as to further its argument. The first edit allows the three Johnnies to have a section each, while the second, which I return to, removes a final chorus in a way that aids the argument of the vid.

The vid opens by introducing the three characters in the order they are later explored in the vid, each with a dark shot which pans to reveal the character, Krycek, then Spike and finally Loki. The first two shots also pan in the same direction (mostly upwards), while the latter does not (panning left instead); the similarities help underline the central idea of these three as expressions of the same thing. Shapiro remarked in our interview that she created this build-up to ensure she had her audience on board. The song aids this structure by building up in a three-part sequence, so Krycek's score is a minimal one of guitar, bass and a single drum, a full drum set is added as Spike is introduced, and as the vid shifts to Loki, brass instruments duplicate the guitar riff. After introducing Loki, the brass section shifts to their own riff thus broadening the sound and scope of the song, and this signals an introduction to some of the crimes perpetrated by the characters. The vid doubles back as it does this. From the opening shot of Loki to the havoc his actions wreck, then to Spike's vampiric attacks, and finally to Krycek, whose actions we do not get to see yet. Instead, we see Krycek introduce himself as the verse starts with the lyrics "Johnny was bad". By using this particular match, Shapiro instantly tells us that Krycek is Johnny. This form of lyrical literalism where the lyrics are used to cast a character was also present with the match between Columbus and Ryder Sr. in *America* (see chapter four), but in *Only a Lad* it is used several times. This first instance of it is a key to understanding the vid.

Throughout *Only a Lad,* Shapiro is careful to focus on the characters' particular styles of villainy. For Krycek this is his work as a part of a government conspiracy/cover-up which includes killing and disappearing people. Shapiro also uses lyrics matches to cast leading characters Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) as teachers who have to give up teaching Johnny/Krycek. As can be seen already, this vid uses its lyrics quite substantially, but also relies on the audience's knowledge of vids as an art form (Turk & Johnson, 2012) to understand the casting of Mulder and Scully.

Fig. 23. Krycek introduces himself as "Johnny" in the vid

The shift from Krycek to Spike is done with a match of similarly flowing movements; Krycek stroking his hair becomes Spike's donning of Nikki Wood's coat, linking the two characters. As mentioned above, the vid focuses on Spike as villain/antagonist and as a vampire. It also takes the angle of showing his many young, female victims and underlines the link between vampiric attacks and sexual over- and undertones. This is accomplished through using scenes where Spike is also attracted to his victim/s, especially Buffy. Spike's portion of the song has been made longer by the addition of half a chorus, so he is given the same amount of time as the other two characters, who each have a verse. The casting technique is used here as well, most notably with a "lady" whose radio Johnny wants, where the radio becomes a metaphor for blood or rape, and the lady is projected onto a string of women rather than a specific one. In doing so, the vid also shows the systematic nature of Spike's acts. The vid exposes him as a character with a pattern of sexualised violence against women. His last victim in the section is his mother (Caroline Lagerfelt), which provides the opening for Shapiro to link to the third character, Loki.

Fig. 24. Spike (James Marsters) dons Nikki Wood's coat at the beginning of his section and kills his mother (Caroline Lagerfelt) at the end of it.

Loki's first clip is of his mother, Frigga (Rene Russo), who provides the link with Spike through the theme of mothers. In the clip, Frigga is attacked by the frost giant Laufey (Colm Feore) who is working for Loki. To underline the connection, the shot is immediately followed by one of Loki running to hug his mother, linking back to Spike's deadly embrace of his mother. The verse focusing on Loki again uses the lyrics to cast characters, as when the word "parents" is matched to Odin (Anthony Hopkins), Loki's father. When the lyrics speak of Johnny stealing a car, the match is to Loki flying over New York City in a chariot-like vehicle, and as the lyrics go on to speak about killing "the poor man", we see Loki's murder of Agent Coulson (Clark Gregg). As can be seen, Shapiro's use of synchresis run close to the lyrics throughout, constantly drawing attention to the story of Johnny and enforcing the link between lyrics and subjects. By doing that, Shapiro also makes us pay attention to the part of the lyrics that are more symbolically linked, such as the way she uses Johnny as a type of character rather than one person.

In the final section, Shapiro uses clips of all three men, intercutting clips with them to show their commonalities. This begins when she uses the bridge, as with several of the the previous vids, to shift focus. The bridge is an expansion of "society made them" lyrics, while the music is pared down to Danny Elfman and a backing vocalist singing in harmony, but no instrumental backing. This is a marked departure from what is otherwise an instrumentally packed song with the full Oingo Boingo band playing and makes this section stand out very clearly both sonically and in terms of lyrics comprehension. In the rest of the song, Elfman's fast-paced delivery can cause some words to be less remarked on by audiences, but that is not the case here, where the song is slower and he articulates clearly. In this section, we see hints

of the characters' backgrounds, exploring what made them, both contrasting with and parallelling the lyrics.
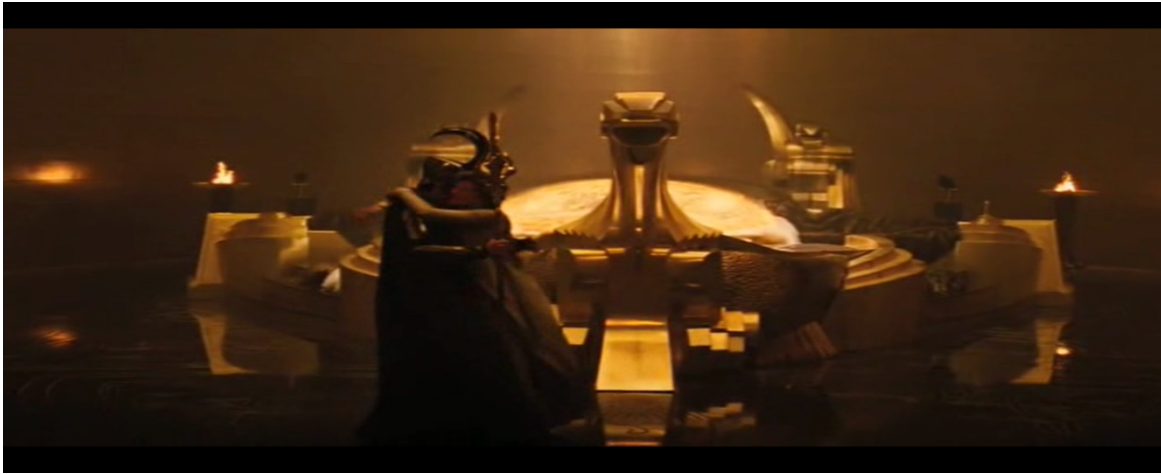
Fig. 25. Loki (Tom Hiddleston) and his mother Frigga (Renee Russo) embrace.

The vid moves from Odin bringing home a baby Loki over Spike's creator/girlfriend Drusilla (Juliet Landau) turning him into a vampire, to Krycek is nearly being blown up by a bomb. These events are formative to making the characters who they are, and are moments that fans can use to defend their actions much like the lyrics defend Johnny. In the last seconds, as the bridge transitions into the chorus, the lyrics say that "perhaps if we're nice, he'll go away". These lyrics are subverted in the vid, showing that we could make Johnny go away, by illustrating the words with a clip of Krycek locked up in a deep basement. In this moment, the vid works against the lyrics, but with the message of the song and the tone of Elfman's voice.

The last part of the vid uses some of the most unpleasant scenes of each character's actions, an increase in intensity that underlines the vid's argument. There is also a small, but significant, difference in this chorus' lyrics; a "yes" is called out, which indicates that Johnny is indeed "our responsibility". This word also pivots what "our" responsibility regarding Johnny is. The song dismisses the idea that Johnny is blameless because society made him, but it does not exonerate the society that allows Johnny to keep doing horrible things. How this functions as a reflection on fandom, not text, can be understood through the affective cues of the music, which I now discuss.

<u>7.1.2 That Oingo Boingo feeling</u>

"Only a Lad" is a song quite typical of Oingo Boingo and shows the band's influences from the New Wave and Ska scenes of the early 80s (Belsito & Davis 1983; Cargill 2014), as well as influences from wider styles, such as African polyrhythms that Elfman became fascinated with while travelling (Benson 2018). These influences contribute to Oingo Boingo's signature complex sound and use of a brass section. As Janet K. Halfyard writes (2004), Oingo Boingo took off from a background in a circus theatre troupe into a music only group, and retained influences from performance art as well as a collaborative approach to composing. Halfyard delineates Elfman's status as a self-taught composer and music literate, something he has later put to use creating film scores in quite differing styles. In Oingo Boingo, this was expressed through the band's experimentation with styles and sounds, which Elfman was a driving force in. Their subject matter often leaned towards the dark and satirical, and "Only a Lad" is a good example of their style in this aspect.

"Only a Lad" is upbeat and energetic; it is in Db-major without any particular embellishments or departures from that tonality, though it at times emphasises the parallel tonic, Bb-minor. The major mode and upbeat tempo does not give a sonic impression of villainy, but the dark and satirical lyrics lend themselves well to the vid's subject matter. The seeming mismatch between visuals and music is part of how the vid speaks, and is layered with the song's own mismatch of mood in lyrics and music. The mood of the music contrasts the visuals and provides a certain unease that is enhanced when the lyrics are brought to the front. These lyrics are used to enhance the message of the vid, the way that the vids in chapter five also did, particularly with the aforementioned casting of characters. This vid also uses musical literalisms to draw attention to its own commenting on humour and evil. An example is in the introduction of Loki, where a stinger in the song's tonic, Db-major, on bass and guitar is matched with debris falling to crush a hot dog cart. Stingers are a film music concept, which Gorbman (1987, 88) defines as "A musical *sforzando* used to illustrate sudden dramatic tension". It is a particular emphasised musical element that accompanies a physical element, to dramatic or comedic effect (ibid., 153; Neumeyer 2015, 61,). The use of a stinger on this crash makes the moment funny, not least because it is in major, not signalled as tragic but played for laughs, but it also gives cause for a double take in the audience, who are invited to wonder why it is fun to see people running for their lives. This synchresis emphasises the cost to the

regular people who are victims of film villains, emphasising the exact point that Shapiro spoke about at the opening of this analysis, and using the emotional tenor she knows is a/effective. Similar moments of using the music to emphasise death and destruction occurs throughout the vid, several times with use of the same stinger, and thus keeps reminding the audience that these characters are villains. The repeated stingers appears to say "he did this - and this - and that".

The lyrics also helps the audience understand; not only do they tell the story of Johnny's crimes, they also have his victims claiming his innocence in a twist of dark humour. The song is performing the same kind of juxtaposition that the vid is; it is setting something dark (lyrics) to something upbeat (music). By adding visuals, another layer of conflicting information is added and heightens the tension of the song. Elfman's voice as he performs the lyrics also contributes. His tone signals a certain distance to the material, which occasionally tips into sarcasm. The exception comes at the end where the called out, emphatic "yes" changes how we read the lyrics. The quality in Elfman's voice guides this understanding, as the "yes" sounds truly felt, not distanced, and shows that the lyrics' defence of Johnny is not genuine but parodic.

This tension is the main affect in this vid; something is off, wrong, in the workings of the music-lyrics-visuals combination. On a first look, the upbeat feel of the song can easily take over, there are other upbeat and fun vids that are about the pleasures of looking at action and destruction, such as *Marvel*, the last vid in this chapter. But the violence in *Only a Lad* is pervasive, at times personal and intimate, and grows increasingly unpleasant to watch. The more detail one notices - facial expressions, lyrics - the worse it gets. At the same time, the pace and drive of the song adds to a feeling of being unsettled. It is difficult to sit still to this song, and it is so fast that trying to follow the rhythm feels like nervous tapping of a foot or finger. Despite the major key and the upbeat mood in the music, the embodied feeling of the song is not one of joy, but instead an increasing tension. Out of this affect the critique becomes apparent.

By emphasising unease and the clashes between lyrics, music and image, Shapiro points to the problem with the way "society" deals with these characters. This is the last piece in her puzzle. Society is not matched with casting from the lyrics. This leaves a gap that is instead pointing outwards, to the audience, to fandom. It is fans who make excuses for Krycek, Spike and Loki, just as Oingo

Boingo's society does for Johnny. Fans find excuses in the lads' personal history, in their circumstances, in their experience or lack thereof, and gloss over the death, assaults, and destruction these men have caused in their respective worlds. It is no coincidence that these characters are all white men, as the pattern the three are used as an example of, is applied almost exclusively to them. The trope's link to a particular kind of man also explains the link to the titular lad. With a different focus, this could have been a vid about masculinity, but it is instead about fandom's relationship to this particular masculinity.

As mentioned, this relationship is expressed in the fandom trope of the 'woobie'. Through the three 'lads', Shapiro shows both how it functions and its pervasiveness. Judith Fathallah (2011, 5) defines woobie as "a joking fan term for an (excessively) tragic figure made repeatedly to suffer in canon and fanon", while Chelsea Fay Baumgartner (2019) connects the woobie trope with the problem of equating tragedy and disability. Jodi McAlister (2016, 6) expands the definition given by Fathallah to one more pertinent to the trope as it plays out in *Only a Lad*, namely that the woobie is "a fandom term for a character forced to suffer who is both pathetic and (often erotically) compelling." Anna Blackwell (2018, 64) writes that "In the lexicon of Internet culture, Loki's online afterlife represents the phenomenon of the 'woobie': a character who induces pity in his or her audience, sometimes despite their canonical morality." As can be seen, the term is expanded on and complicated within both fandom and academic writing over the years. The woobie, as he is perceived now, is tragic, pathetic and erotically compelling, regardless of or despite his morals. The repeated suffering the woobie goes through inspires feels related to the hurt/comfort narratives common in fanworks (Fathallah, 2011), as a way of redeeming or absolving him of his wrongdoings. Hurt/comfort, which Kustritz (2003) points out is foundational to slash fic, insists that there is a point to pain (Linn 2017). With the woobie, this can be connected to a Christian narrative of suffering for one's sins in order to be saved. In *Only a Lad* the lyrics parallels this narrative device and shows the trope to be a way out of the moral conundrum of finding a horrible person sexy.

However, the music does not support feels *for* the characters. *Only a Lad* is not engaging in hurt/comfort, neither emotion is present, nor does it show these characters as woobies. It analyses the pattern of fanworks which have this narrative rather than perpetuate it, and provides a counterpoint to the woobie trope by

insisting on showing the three as villains. More than any of the previous vids, this vid speaks to and about fandom, because it examines feels rather than create them. While vids are intended for fandom viewing, meta vids like *Only a Lad* are even more so with their reliance of not only knowledge of fan texts and vidding practice, but also fandom tropes and debates. Vids like *Masters of War* and *Origin Stories* were speaking as parts of fandom debates, while still understandable without this knowledge. It is doubtful that the nuance in *Only a Lad* would be legible in the same way, something I return to in more detail regarding the next vid. *Only a Lad*'s reception within fandom is therefore of even more interest as it addresses fan cultural practices.

7.1.3 Woobies on the web

Only a Lad was originally posted to both LiveJournal (now deleted) and Dreamwidth, where the post is still up. It is hosted on YouTube and has later been shared to Archive of Our Own. I have focused on the Dreamwidth post as it documents the initial reactions to the vid and how it was received at the time of its creation, while also looking to Archive of Our Own for additional commentary. The comments show that the argument of the vid is received by the commenters, even among people who mention not knowing all of the sources. Understanding fandom critique, particularly the collective interpretation in vids, is more vital. Though Shapiro explained that she chose the 'lads' to represent three large, sequential fandoms related to her personal fan history, they also stand in for many more characters, and if a fan audience grasps this, the central idea of the vid becomes legible.

A recurring point in the comments is an understanding that the music contributes to the vid being funny as well as critical. The contrasts between music, lyrics and images can account for this. If one watches the vid without music, it does not look fun, it becomes a sequence of clips of bad people doing horrible things. As with *Vogue* in the previous chapter, the use of humour as a way of inviting critical reflection is effective, but *Only a Lad* works in a double register through the use of the existing duality of the song. Where *Vogue* did a complete recontextualisation of *300*, *Only a Lad* is more direct. It uses clip context and humour as a way to examine fandom rather than satirise the source. Without its music, the humour, and

consequently part of the critique, is lost. The use of music and the lyrics both contribute, and so does the tone of Elfman's voice with its distanced wryness.

The way in which Shapiro uses her literalisms of music and lyrics to draw attention to key points are also noticed by the commenters. Several comments reflect how the vid uses synchresis like the casting and stingers to speak into shared fandom understanding of significance. One example of this is the clip of Spike's attempted rape of Buffy, an unpleasant scene of violence that is intensified with the awareness of the context. By drawing on such moments, the vid leans into its own metatextuality and fannishness; there are layers that those with good source knowledge get while those without may understand the broader idea yet miss nuance.

The most consistent affect this vid invokes appears to be humour, but some comments relate this simultaneously to anger. Through this sarcastic humour, tinged with anger, *Only a Lad* invites its audience to reflect with it, and think through the trope of the woobie, and through where feels regarding woobies can lead. As such, *Only a Lad* can be understood as an act of meta feels as well as meta fandom - it is a vid that makes its audience feel something about how fandom feels about woobies - and thereby it functions within feels culture. It is not as much an act of feminist anger, as was *Origin Stories*, but rather of feminist wonder (Ahmed 2014a, 178-183). *Only a Lad* is wondering why it is that fans love these men, how media keeps repeating this trope and fandom loves rather than questions it. The meta-layer extends here, too, as a reflection on both text and fandom reception at once. Vidding in this manner shows the centrality of emotions to feminist critique (ibid., 182) in praxis, applied through fan creativity. Furthermore, as Denise Riley (2005, 18) - quoted in Gorton (2007) - points out, an intense anger demonstrates lack of control; this vid is almost the opposite of this, it is controlled, argued and reflective in its affect.

An example can show how the vid appeals on these two meta planes. In the final moments of the vid, there is a clip from the end of *The Avengers* where the people of New York City are creating memorials to the victims of Loki's attack. The set-up is created as a call-back to how New Yorkers memorialised and searched for loved ones after the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001. Such a clip exemplifies the layers and registers the vid is working through with its use of vid context, source context, and real-world context, all to draw attention to the

complications of being fans of villains. It is placed over a sustained chord of twangy guitar, leaving the images to float on the reverberating, almost sneering, sound. That sound functions as a wordless uttering of derision, though its direction is ambiguous. The moment is one that shows the impact of villainy on the ordinary people in their respective worlds. In this last shot, Shapiro broadens the scope of the vid's charge against the characters - and against their fans. This is the ambiguity of the twangy guitar; is it calling out the characters or the fans who love them? Both understandings of that particular sound exist simultaneously and reinforce each other.

Fig. 26. Memorialisation in *The Avengers* as shown in *Only a Lad*.

The vid poses questions about the woobie trope, but does not answer them. From the comments, it can be seen that other fans are inspired to reflect on and with the vid, and thus also reflect on their own relationship with the trope. Feels are present through this reflection on them, which shows that in fandom, and therefore also vidding, the feels are always there, regardless of how they are addressed.

   In the next vid in this chapter, the theme is also fan emotions and reflections on them, but of a different kind. This time, the experience of being a fan and how that feels is being explored. The next vid uses a very different register to explore

these feelings when lim uses Regina Spektor to vid about her fandom experience at a particular time.

7.2 lim's *Us*: Reflections and Obfuscations

> [W]hat you can say in words is a very, very tiny sliver of what you can say in the whole synchretic synthesis of a vid. [...] if you make these kinds of very detailed verbal written things, and then it's always going to be a textually driven argument or story, that's all just about words. And then you will lose the music. You will lose the emotion, you will lose that, those deeper pre-verbal things, the things that you think before you've even really put them into words - lim[60]

Where *Only a Lad* was critically reflecting on a particular aspect of fandom practice, lim's *Us* looks at what it feels like to be a fan. As lim pointed out in our interview, it is a vid that also reflects the particular time when it was made, though she does not want to make public what she intended any of her vids to say, which is therefore not part of this analysis.[61] However, lim is, as the quote above shows, interested in the way music communicates on a different register than lyrics and the ways in which the elements of a vid speak with, through and alongside each other. The vid's reception, which I return to, shows, that it resonated with a lot of fans, though in different ways. *Us* is a documentation of a fan experience, which provides a touchstone for thinking about vids as personal statements and as expressions of feelings about fandom as community and place. The feels expressed through this vid are mirrored and shared like those in chapters five and six, showing that such sharing also happens with fandom self-reflections.

Busse and Lothian (2011, 142) write that, ""Us" may be the fan video that has been most shown and discussed in academic spaces, from classrooms to conferences to museums". *Us*, like *Vogue* in chapter six, is a vid with a large non-fannish spread and impact, not least in terms of its feature in an exhibition at the California Museum of Photography, and as part of a talk by Michael Wesch (2008) on *An anthropological introduction to YouTube*.[62] Lothian (2009) has done the most thorough analysis of the vid that I have found, a close reading which I agree with. It is also considered in the aforementioned work by Busse and Lothian (2011).

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[60] Interview conducted in person at lim's home in the UK on 31st August 2019.
[61] In addition, where the other quotes were taken from any part of the interviews, and may be general or more vid specific, lim's quotes are general in order to respect her restriction of topics included in this dissertation.
[62] The talk, given at the Library of Congress, is of course available on YouTube.

However, lim's work is situated within a set of fannish norms and communities and appeals to (non fan) academics, curators and other outsiders coincidentally (ibid., 143). Analyses have so far focused on one of lim's arguments in the vid, namely copyright, and less on what else the vid argues. Not least, feels and music in relation to *Us* has not been addressed in more than passing mentions. In this chapter, I attempt to address these gaps.

Us is another dense vid, where repeat viewings yield new details each time. This is in part due to the way the vid's visuals have been treated in post-production, literally obscuring large parts of the images (see fig. 27).

Fig. 27. Graphic effects in lim's *Us*, obscuring the images in a cross-hatched greyscale style. This enhances the vid's reliance on fan knowledge of clips.

It is a multi-fandom vid, using 34 sources (lim, No date given), most of which are from science-fiction genre texts, and all of which have been significant in fandom circles (Lothian, 2009) - save one which provides a clip of fan studies scholar Henry Jenkins ("Convergence Culture Consortium's Future of Entertainment Conference. Introductory Talk. 11-17-06"). *Us* uses Regina Spektor's song of the same name, and is characterised by the song's minimalism and clear lyrics, which contrast the partially obscured images. *Us* presents a complex, scholarly argument (Busse &

Lothian, 2011, 142). In fact, it makes not just one, but at least two, and shows how they are intertwined. Music and the emotions it expresses is a way into a deeper understanding of *Us*, its construction and linked argumentations. Therefore, I open with an overview of the vid and begin to illustrate how the music is used.

7.2.1 Vulnerability and Certainty

"Us" is a song with a minimalist arrangement, consisting primarily of Spektor's voice over a piano accompaniment, with its chords played broken up and staccato, giving a plucking sound. Strings appear as well for most of the song, providing a soft, legato (sustained) counter to the broken-up and jagged sounds of the piano. Spektor's expressive voice is the primary instrument. She employs both hard glottal stops as a way of creating breaks in the music and sustained notes of soft sounds, with a rich and varied sound as a result. The accompanying piano and strings seem to take their cue from her song style, as if they are each on either end of this spectrum of vocal expressions. The song is in a major key, Db-major, and only uses occasional minors, primarily Bb-minor and a couple of dissonant chords (Absus4 and Dmaj7) as variations from the major. This is not a song which inspires happiness, despite the major; its affective impact comes primarily through the expressions of Spektor's voice, which do not go in that direction. Instead, the major becomes a neutral ground on which Spektor can build her emotional voice work.

In the song's opening, the jumping piano accompaniment is supplemented by strings pitched above, duplicating the bass note, moving between Db and its 4th, Gb, a soft, satisfying tension and resolve. They disappear as Spektor's voice enters, leaving a gap where her voice then demands attention. Meanwhile, the opening moments introduce the visual style of the vid. lim's name appears in the greyscale, hatched graphic style that covers much of the visuals, followed by moving dots creating a pattern of growth and spreading, which hints towards one of the theses of the vid. Before Spektor begins to sing, we are also introduced to the first images; a large clock face and then a portal, half visible in colour through the greyscale of lim's graphic effects. We see *Star Trek*'s (1966) Captain Kirk (William Shatner) and Spock (Leonard Nimoy) look at each other and nod with resolve, then jump through the portal.

They land on Earth, in the show's time of production, rather than in their familiar future. They appear uncomfortable, and they are shown partially in their

original colour footage through the graphics, as if being seen by the people around them makes them more visible or vulnerable. Throughout the vid, lim uses colour, the lack of effects overlay, to draw attention to particular elements in the vid, a pure visual equivalent to using literalisms. Here, she calls attention to the visibility and vulnerability in the scene. At the same time, Spektor starts singing on a non sequitur of "They made a statue of us". This adds a symbolic literalism on top of the graphic effects' underlining of the themes in *Us*. Spektor's lyrics never resolve who "they" and "us" are, but in the vid, lim is clear about this. From the start, the direction of the gazes in the visuals suggest that 'we/us' align with Kirk and Spock as the first characters that stand in for fandom, and 'they' with the spectators. Spektor's voice adds an emotional aspect to the discomfort. The minimal backing makes her sound alone and exposed. Not frightened, but there is a nakedness and vulnerability to her voice that matches the way Kirk and Spock are displayed to the world. lim utilises a jagged editing style, that follows the feel of Spektor's voice and takes its rhythmical cues from the piano. This choice adds to the linking of music and image and allow both to enhance each other's affective cues, as her quote also suggests is something she is in general interested in doing. The vid returns to Kirk and Spock with the line "now tourists come and stare at us", using a clip from the same scene in *Star Trek*, where Spock turns away, uncomfortable, trying to hide his alienness by covering his pointed ears.

The context of the clip and knowledge of Spock's alienness is necessary to fully understand the vid; not least that *Star Trek* is considered one of the formative texts of modern media fandom, and Kirk/Spock ditto for slash pairings (Jenkins 1992; Jenkins 2006a). By opening with Kirk and Spock, one of the original slash pairs, *Us* suggests that (slash) fandom and visibility is an uncomfortable match, despite the resolve Kirk and Spock showed in jumping into visibility. Writing from 2021, it may be difficult to remember that fandom has not always been as visible and as mainstream as it is now[63] (Jenkins 1992; Hampton 2016). As someone who was active in media fandom when lim created this vid in 2007, I remember these debates. When lim made this vid, media fandom was not as visible, but things were starting to change. What fandom termed "the fourth wall" (Zubernis & Larsen 2012; Ballinger 2014), was starting to break down. In fan vernacular, the fourth wall refers to

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[63] To further underline this trend, sites like *The Daily Dot* and *The Mary Sue* have appeared (both founded 2011), focusing on fandom news and developments.

Fig. 27. Kirk (William Shatner) and Spock (Leonard Nimoy jump through the portal. Spock hides from the people staring at him.

mainstream knowledge and awareness of fandom, particularly when that knowledge reaches the people who are involved in making the fan text. When actors, directors, producers etc. become aware of, especially, fanworks, the fourth wall is broken. Historically, deliberately breaking the wall has been considered a transgression (Thomas 2017, 24-25), particularly around shipping and slash fandom. Since *Us*, the divide between fandom and production has been steadily eroding, partly due to social media (Ballinger, 2014), which is one factor that dates *Us* to a specific time in fandom history. *Us* can be understood as being about the early stages of this process that has now lead to the mainstreaming of fandom. The making visible of Kirk and Spock illustrates feelings about this process at that time. 'They' are those who are tourists in fandom, stare at 'us' the way people do at statues and at Kirk and Spock.

As the second verse begins, Spektor's voice is once more joined by the legato strings, now with their own countermelody, softening the feeling of the song. Spektor sounds less vulnerable and alone, the song less bare and naked. This is matched with lim expanding her argument, as if the music can now carry more weight. "They'll give us a talking to" is used to show Neo (Keanu Reeves) from *The Matrix* (Wachowski & Wachowski 1999). Neo is in an interrogation room, unable to speak as the effects of the matrix glues his lips together. Spektor moves towards hurt sarcasm when she adds "'cause they've got years of experience", not just in words but in tone. Her slight drawl on "years" loads the word with meaning, appearing to carry memories of being belittled and dismissed. These feelings are echoed in the way Neo is silenced by the agents of the Matrix, trying to quell dissent and rebellion. Through Spektor,

fandom/Neo gets a voice that expresses how it feels to be looked down upon and sought controlled by a powerful establishment.

As the chorus opens with "living in a den of thieves", lim introduces her second, parallel, argument, which is about fandom and copyright. The line above is the one that has been given the most attention from scholars, particularly in Lothian's (2009) analysis of the vid. It illustrates the awareness of and tension in fandom's precarious legal status. Copyright is, due to the use of existing materials, more at stake with vids than with other common fan productions, such as fic and art. lim uses literal pirate Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) from *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (Verbinsky 2003) alongside images of stacks of DVDs to signal modern media piracy and its dual relationship with fandom. Fans are consumers, but they also access and reuse media in ways that are legally challenged. It is therefore not surprising that this part of lim's argument has received most attention. *Us* also hints at the potential consequences of piracy by using a clip of Alex Krycek (Nicholas Lea) from *X-Files* (1993) being locked up. The fact that the same clip is used to suggest that Johnny can be put away in *Only a Lad* shows that fandom knowledge allows reuse of a clip to signal similar concepts within different arguments.

Us is still speaking about the fan experience as well. The line "rummaging for answers in the pages" is used to show images of research, to show the fan pleasure of analysing media for hints (Jenkins 2008; Gray 2010) and in creating meta. The vid also moves towards speaking of the experience of the slash fan. It is the word "contagious" that is used to reflect on slash, like Penley's (1991, 143-144) informant, who explained fandom as an infection. In this section of the vid, lim shows how slash pairs echo through different texts over time. She uses clips that many fans will recognise as formative to the pairing in question. The use of such iconic moments spark, as Lothian (2009) also points out, higher recognition in those with fan knowledge who are able to identify the clip through the overlay of grey hatchings. Like in *Only a Lad*, the reliance on clip knowledge signals to fans that *Us* is meant for them.

The copyright argument comes more to the front in the second verse, not least by virtue of Spektor's line about "our parts are slightly used", which in *Us* links to remix and transformative works. This is illustrated by Doctor Who uncovering multiple copies of the Mona Lisa, and by showing different iterations of Batman. Art

always copies itself, the vid points out, and so fandom's repurposing, remixing and reusing is no different. Batman staring up at the batsignal turned into a copyright logo is the crowning clip in this argument. This sequence asks why different iterations of Batman are legal when placed under that logo, but not when fans create without it.

Fig. 28. Doctor Who (Tom Baker) and Mona Lisa. Batman (Christian Bale) and the copyright signal.

However, the equivalence between the treatment of slash and copyright is underplayed in existing analyses of this vid. "We" are indeed living in a den of thieves, but the thieves use their spoils to create slash in ways that both reiterate and spread. Like the graphics in the opening appeared to grow and widen in patterns, so do fandom's ideas and reach. Both are related to the exposure in the beginning of the vid, the gaze from the outside "tourists", who judge and try to silence "us". As *Us* moves towards its finale, lim returns to the idea of reiteration, and thereby also the links between fan practices and media production. *Us* uses graphic matching of people in similar stances, as well as looks that appear to go from one source to another, to show the connections between and history of slash pairings. At times the link is characters played by the same actor - for example Willam Shatner's Captain Kirk from *Star Trek* and Denny Crane from *Boston Legal* (2004-2008). The importance of slash is dual in *Us*; it is an unsanctioned and sometimes controversial use of copyrighted material, and it is replicated within fandom in the form of tropes, patterns and remixing. Through tracking similarities and enhancing details with colouring, lim also shows the ways fans engage with texts. A fan might go from watching Shatner in *Star Trek* to watching him in *Boston Legal*, or might notice the

way a particular detail is important in fan reception of a character, like the Doctor's scarf.

The affective register in *Us* is exemplified by Spektor's singing of the word "living". It is sung in her high range, soft, precariously pitched where her voice seems to at once be about to run out of air and approaching the edge of its reach. Throughout the song, she vocally climbs the mountain that is mentioned in the very first lines of the song, and this particular word is her standing near the edge in the thin air. What lim in the opening quote referred to as something "deeper" and "pre-verbal" is evidenced in this vocal expression. There is much at stake in that word and those notes, underlined by Spektor's voice quivering with vulnerability. It stands in contrast to the lower, more grounded, "den of thieves", to which the melody descends immediately after. There is safety in that den, while the living itself is dangerous and
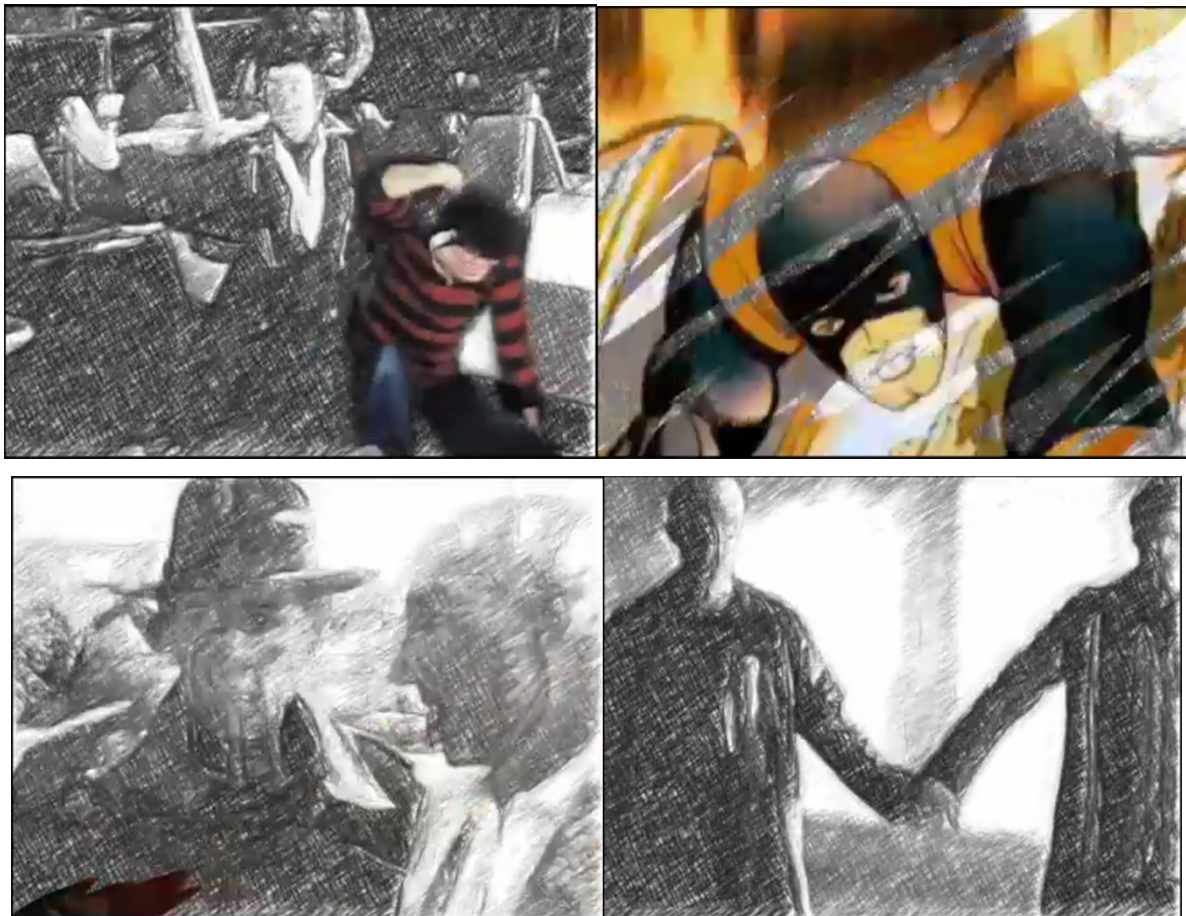
Fig. 29. Reiterations and contagions. Starsky and Hutch (David Soul and Paul Michael Glaser), Marvel comics, Marvel movies Magneto and Professor X (Ian McKellen and Patrick Stewart), to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s Spike and Angel (James Marsters and David Boreanaz).

always close to an edge. This precariousness, on the edge of falling or breaking, is the strongest feeling evoked in this vid, and it is key to its critical element. The critique of exposing fandom rests on how dangerous being outed felt to fans at the time (Bury 2005, 94-97).

The final section of the vid is a bridge, which originally led to a final chorus, but in lim's version instead leads to the outro. In the bridge, Spektor's voice is increasing in intensity, rising in pitch and becoming strained as she repeats "they made a statue of us". She approaches the breaking point from "living", but more frantically. In the vid, this is used to restate the argument. lim scrolls quickly through many of the clips she has already used at a heightened pace. This functions as reminder/restatement, and intensifies the pace and feel of the vid. The restatement is intercut with a clip of an avalanche, an image of something unstoppable and overwhelming, which contributes to the feeling that fandom itself is overwhelming or being overrun. The avalanche can be understood as a metaphor for fandom's presence and growth, for the overwhelming feels that rush through fans/fandom, or a creative impulse to act on these feelings. At the same time, it can be understood as the feeling of impending doom with the visibility coming rushing at the audience. The avalanche is fully visible (see fig. 30), not hidden behind crosshatched greys. The feeling of danger and the precarious perch of Spektor's voice is heightened by both sound and image in this section. By the final line of lyrics, "our noses have begun to rust", Spektor's voice reaches impossibly higher, yet does not break - it persists. The treble note rings out and rests, for a moment, while lim returns the vid to Captain Kirk in a rare moment of a clip being in full colour. The audience is able to rest as.

Fig. 30. Avalanche and Kirk (William Shatner)

Kirk gazes upwards, his expression conveying fear and uncertainty. By returning to Kirk, the stand-in for "us" at the opening, now fully exposed, lim ties her introduction and conclusion together and shows the dangers of and fear in exposing fandom.

In the outro we hear the piano, no longer jagged and jumpy, but calm, slowing down. The visuals show the image of a crowd from *V for Vendetta* (McTeigue 2005). They are all wearing V's mask and begin to remove these. The clip is from the film's final moments, portraying a public uprising that signals hope of change and freedom from oppression. People in the clip are unidentifiable due to the graphic effects, even as the masks fall. At the very last moment, a young girl, a recurring background character in the film, takes off her mask and we see her face clearly. In the silence after the piano chord dissipates, her face is then scrawled over again, this time in a different effect turning her into a marbled statue. This final statement is often interpreted (Lothian, 2009) as the girl standing in for fandom itself, in which case this clip signifies the ultimate exposure of fandom, and perhaps the multiplicity of fandom with the many other unmaskings. This interpretation rests on the concept of fandom's female majority, and the vid's theme of fandom being displayed visually. Commenters also suggest the girl can be understood as lim herself. The former view suggests that the vid is intended to speak to a universal fan experience, while the latter would be a personal, singular expression of being a fan.

Fig. 31. Masking and unmasking. A protestor with their mask in *V for Vendetta*, the young girl unmasked, and the same girl in the process of being turned into a statue.

The argument in *Us* is, like that of *Only a Lad*, made on both a cerebral and emotional level. It is an essay about exposing fandom, slash and copyright, but it is also an expression of a feeling of being a fan in the middle of these things. Where the dense visuals and layers speak to the cerebral, the audio speaks to and of the feels. Like the dual argument itself, the two levels of message in the vid are intertwined and

co-creating. In this manner, it is a vid that speaks through intimacy, not least as invoked by Spektor's vulnerable voice. It exemplifies Berlant's (2000, 1) words that "the inwardness of intimacy is met by a corresponding publicness", which Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013, 47) argue speaks particularly well to online displays of intimacy. The vid is public, meant for sharing and feeling with and from others, but it uses a deeply intimate and personal affective register to communicate, it is introspective (reflective) and shows both inner workings of fandom and the exposures also inherent in online (fan) life. These layerings also make it a vid that speaks to different people in different ways, which is what I look at next.

7.2.2 Statues of Us

As mentioned in the introduction to this analysis, *Us* is a vid with a wide spread and appeal. Its impact on fandom is evident on its YouTube page, but also in academic analyses of the vid. *Us* is archived at lim's personal website as well as on YouTube, from where it is embedded on Archive of Our Own. Of these, YouTube is the only one with any significant commentary, and also the oldest surviving post. lim's website does not support comments, and the upload to Archive of Our Own is much newer and has not had the same engagement. However, the vid appears to have sparked a lot of conversations at its time, some of which lim also mentioned in our interview, so I have searched for evidence of this. I began from the fandom wiki Fanlore, which has an entry for the vid, and links to discussions of it. From these discussions I found more and followed links where they were still active. These discussions took place in fandom spaces, primarily LiveJournal, and form a different kind of reception than that on YouTube, which is majority non-fans.

lim has made sure to keep the vid's YouTube presence by opposing YouTube's attempts to take it down, using the DMCA exemption that the Organisation for Transformative Works has ensured in US legal practice (Works 2015). This makes *Us* a relatively old vid in YouTube terms, posted when the site was only two years old. The YouTube post contains a cross-section of types of comments, showing differences between fannish and non-fannish commenters. Many non-fan commenters appear to see an unofficial music video and miss that there is a point to the way it is constructed. YouTube is, of course, full of videos where the point is the music (Vernallis 2013; Liikkanen & Salovaara 2015), where the images are there for it to function on the platform, so such assumptions are not necessarily surprising.

However, it is odd when a video with such visible post-production is seen this way and only commented on in terms of the song/singer.

The most consistent line of reactions to the vid is found in the comments that engage with lim's argument, particularly regarding copyright. Only one person appears to pick up on the slash argument, and that in a disparaging and homophobic way. It is perhaps not surprising that people engaged in YouTube commenting are interested in notions of copyright and remix, given the wide range of content on YouTube that infringes copyright in different ways. Several of these commenters indicate they have found the vid via the aforementioned talk by Michael Wesch. A few state they have knowledge of vids and/or of lim's previous work, but these are outliers. The YouTube post resides outside the ecosystem dominated by fandom, and this is evidenced in the comments. This shows that for *Us*, fandom context, an understanding of metafandom and fan texts, is necessary to grasp the feels also embedded in the vid alongside and as part of its critical engagement with copyright.

The LiveJournal discussions are quite different in scope and detail, with several posts that analyse, critique or respond to the vid. These posts have discussions in the comment tracks, some of which are far more numerous than the comments on YouTube, though only a handful of people are discussing with each other. The debates center around three themes: vidding as a genre and the boundaries around it; who is included in the understanding of "us"; and the history of slash and female dominated media fandom as it may be portrayed in the vid. The first theme shows that *Us* pushed the boundaries of how a vid was, at the time, considered to be supposed to look, a debate that is of interest, but outside the scope of this research. The second and third theme, however, speak to how the vid was perceived in fandom as arguing something about fandom itself. The discussions are detailed and engage with fandom history and the commenters' own fan histories alongside ideas of fandom's spread and increasing visibility, and it is clear that some fans had strong feelings about *Us*. *Us*, especially by force of its title, was perceived to speak about fandom at large, but also to set boundaries around fandom based on who knew its sources, where only those with knowledge were included in "us". These reactions show the way in which feels are relevant not only in the ways fans engage with texts, but also in the experience of fandom as community. As Ahmed (2014a) suggests, exclusion creates feelings of grief. This is feels culture in a different way. A culture made of feels, where fans have feelings invested in not only fan texts, but also

in the communities that are created from these investments. Consequently, some fans felt that the vid spoke perfectly to how they experienced fandom and its history, while others felt hurt by its perceived exclusion of their experiences. Thereby, *Us* confirms another feels aspect of fandom, the feels about (being in) fandom itself.

Though this vid inspires feels of many kinds, I have not seen comments pick up on the way music speaks to those feels. The points that the voice enhances, however, do get mentioned, particularly the sense of being exposed and vulnerable. Many comments circle back to how the vid shows fandom's exposure to "them". This aspect of the vid resonates within fandom in a way that is entirely absent in its non-fandom reception on YouTube. The connections between slash, visibility and vulnerability, which rests in the feels aspect of the vid, are legible to fans, but not to non-fans. Once more, this speaks to the central role feels play in fan culture. Fan commenters also notice lim's way of tracking fannish engagement with the texts, as I showed above with the example of William Shatner. Fan audiences understand the history lim is drawing on and the ways feels for a text are part of how fans experience and engage with fandoms. That this way of seeing is important in fandom is further evidenced by the final vid, also by lim, which is about fan pleasures and gaze.

7.3 lim's *Marvel*: Pleasures of Looking

> A song structures everything about the vid. [...] I think that music is so much more visceral than anything visual.
>
> ...
>
> [I]t's a bit like Peter and the Wolf,[64] characters have voices. And you can find those voices within music quite easily. - lim

The final vid I am analysing is concerned with ways of looking and being a/as fan, however on an entirely different register visually, aurally and affectively. This vid returns us to the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) in a way that is very different from both lim's previous vid, *Us,* and from the previous MCU vid, Thuvia Ptarth's *Hey Ho*, discussed in chapter five. Where *Us* reflected on the fan experience of a particular point in time, and *Hey Ho* concerned itself with the politics of the MCU, *Marvel* is about the feelings and feels of being a fan of a media property that is high in visual spectacle. In the analysis of *Hey Ho,* I argued that spectacle can serve as

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[64] Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* from 1936 is a symphony aimed at introducing orchestral music to children. It uses the instruments to personify each of the characters in the piece. For more, see Simon Morrison (2010)

propaganda. In the case of *Marvel*, the politics are not the subject of the vid, and the propaganda aspect of spectacle does not appear here. *Marvel* has an almost opposing way of engaging with the MCU; it is not about the source texts, but about being a fan of them, though also in this case, lim's intentions are not part of this consideration per her request. It is a vid about and of the fannish gaze (Morimoto, 2019) and its inversion of the media's gaze (Busse, 2009). The title of the vid itself is a play on the multiple meanings of the word "marvel"; to "marvel", to be "a marvel" and "Marvel" the production company and publishing house. In *Marvel* lim expresses how it feels to be in fandom, having a fannish gaze and using it to vid. I have included it for its reflection on this gaze, as well as for an editing style and music use which stands out and opens more avenues for considering how music works in vidding. *Marvel* is also notable in my corpus for being the only instrumental vid, i.e. a vid where the song does not have lyrics. This gives *Marvel* a different expression compared to the other vids. Hitherto, I have focused on the triple synchresis of music, lyrics and images, but in this vid, the lyrics are absent, placing more emphasis on the match of music and image. This also means it conveys its feels and reflection through music and image alone with no lyrics to guide interpretation, and, as lim states above, it is a use of music which is visceral and relies on the structure and shifts in melody and style to make its point. The technique of hearing "voices", as lim puts it, in the music, is very evident in this vid, enhanced through its lack of lyrics and via its use of visual effects. *Marvel* pushed at the visual style of vidding, just as *Us* had done before it, to a degree where lim's initial attempt, which had more effects, caused her computer to literally melt. To further analyse this, I begin by looking at the music's function and how it is instrumental in the coherence of the vid before moving on to consider its reception.

7.3.1 Music and Movement

As mentioned above, *Marvel* differs in my corpus by being an instrumental vid. Of the other vids I have analysed, *Marvel* is most akin to *Origin Stories* in its use of music, in that the latter uses its lyrics as an instrument. *Marvel* has no lyrics, but it does have percussive vocal sounds in some of its parts, consisting entirely of utterances of "heh" or "hey". The track, "Festivo" by Keiichi Suzuki, is fast, consisting of layers of percussive sounds, and gradually builds up instrumentation. Suzuki is known not only as a musician and songwriter/composer, but also as a producer and

as composer for film and game scores. "Festivo" is one of such compositions, from the film 座頭市 / *Zatôichi* (Kitano 2003).

Assigning a genre to "Festivo" is difficult, but I would describe it as influenced by dance styles like samba and funk. The track opens with about 3 seconds of drums, signalling its unusual instrumentation. It is a coincidence, albeit a fun one, that this corpus of vids has two songs which open like this, the other being "America" by Tracy Chapman, though the drums in "America" create an almost melodic sound, which "Festivo" does not initially have. The aforementioned vocal sounds are the first to be added to the opening drums, but from there various percussion instruments and samples are added and subtracted as the track builds. Amongst these are drums, triangle, clangs, bangs, metallic noises, clapping and sounds of tapping shoes. It invites movement and dance. At first, the percussion builds, but then cuts to a break, which is entirely tap dance sounds with a few embellishments, then it builds again over the tapping. It is not until the 2:05 mark (in a 3:41 long vid) that any significant melodic elements appear on the track, coinciding with the end of the tapping section. When they do, they enter in the form of brass winds, playing a short melodic riff, repeated several times. This theme is the first step in a build-up of layers of instrumental music on top of the percussion. A second brass wind theme takes over after a while, and the two are layered in the last part of the song, before it ends with a final build of repeated notes and releases its tension with a roll and clang. The track is complicated to describe and it makes little sense to assign a traditional functional harmonic to it as there are no chords,[65] though brass theme one is in B-major and theme two B-minor, where theme one is the dominant one. The feeling it gives the listener is one of exuberant energy, which is utilised by lim to say something about the feeling of being a fan. How this happens is where I turn next.

If any vid in my corpus were to be described as a continuous sequence of synchresis it would be *Marvel*. The level of sound to image matching is higher than in any of the other vids, and there are so many that it is impossible to begin to describe it. Throughout the vid, characters and objects move and are moved in time with elements of music, both in the foreground and background of images as well as

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[65] For an experiment, I ran the track through the Chordify site, which analyses the chord structures of music. It agreed with me regarding the B/b brass themes, but otherwise had a smattering of major chords based on the note the percussions were hitting. It does, however, agree that the track is in a major key.

soundscape. In the following I mention some of these, but I am unable to do the density and consistency of synchresis justice in the written medium. Instead I give an outline of the broader elements of the music and its use as a way for the vid to construct its message.

As mentioned above, the song begins with drums alone, which enter on a fast beat. Over this, lim has placed a mission statement for the vid in the form of large, embossed letters in the Marvel company font and style saying"Gaze", "Wonder" and "Marvel". In the last moment before the "hey" sounds begin, she shows a shot of Heimdall (Idris Elba) from the Thor movies, looking up at the camera/audience with an expression of awe/surprise/wonder - immediately followed by a shot of the Hulk (Mark Ruffalo) sporting a big grin, anticipating something fun and thereby foreshadowing the central themes of looking/seeing and pleasures of doing so. This opening is followed by a section of the vid where the "heh/hey" dominates, over continued drums, but also percussion, whistles and a "honk". These sounds are matched with introducing the main Avengers cast, focusing on Captain America (Chris Evans), Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) and Thor (Chris Hemsworth). The whistling sound, long and sustained, acts as a momentary break from the very rapidly shifting cuts, but also to, again, illustrate the concept of wonder through expressions on background characters' faces. As the calls start up again, Captain America and Iron Man are shown in clips where female characters kiss them. The clips are chosen for scenes where the women are taking the lead, signalling that the desire and gaze privileged in this vid is a female one.

Fig. 32. The word "gaze" in the Marvel style during the first frames of *Marvel.*

The concept of gaze in cinema and TV has a long history, but here I am approaching a particular kind of gaze (Mulvey 1989; Dixon 1995; Cooper 2000; Mulvey 2016).[66] Busse, Lothian & Reid (2008) have examined a fannish female gaze, where they use the term to signify the ways in which gaze plays into the creation and enjoyment of slash. This gaze is similar, but not entirely the same as that of *Marvel*, where the enjoyment of characters, particularly but not exclusively male characters is in focus. Writing about the *Yuri!!! On Ice* (YOI) (Clinkenbeard, Kubo & Yamamoto 2016) fandom, Lori Morimoto (2019, 143) states that "Indeed, rather than the object of a male gaze, women throughout YOI are the bearers of a specifically female fannish gaze, and men are there to look pretty, stay quiet, and fuel fantasies". *Marvel* uses a similar application of fannish gaze, and shows that despite the differences in perceived/intended audiences between YOI and MCU, the gaze brought by fans is similar. The men in the early seconds of Marvel are treated much the same by their diegetic partners and by the vid; they are there to look pretty and fuel fantasies. lim lets female characters stand in for the (presumed female) fan audience; it is similar to what Gianduja Kiss did with *Origin Stories*, where the inclusion of Buffy as an identification point was used to implicate the audience in condoning actions taken in/by the text, and to the standing-in done by the girl at the end of *Us*. In the case of *Marvel*, the identification is used to show who is expected to be looking and who the gaze is directed at.

In this section, the vid focuses on each of the three male characters mentioned above, each with their diegetic admirers showing appreciation. The men are displayed in ways that appeal to fannish enjoyments, showing competences and attractiveness (Captain America boxing, Thor showing his strength, Iron Man being charming) and their vulnerabilities (being hurt, being goofy, being defeated). The music appears to comment on them, calling to them with the "hey" sounds, almost a cat-call. Around 1:20 the vid shifts, corresponding to a change in the music. This is where the break with tap dance sounds is placed. From ca. 1:20 to 2:05 that is the predominant sound, only broken up occasionally. The shift in music style is used to pivot the gaze from men to women, but retains the same joy of looking at competent women, primarily Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) and Agent Carter (Hayley Atwell). These women need no comment from the music, but stand alone,

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[66] First published 1975.

underlining their power, instead the tapping in the music approaches Mickey Mousing, illustrating their speed and expertise. These sounds are so clearly of footsteps that the connection is made automatically when the women run and fight. The other sonic elements in the tapping section are used in synchresis with movements, which enforces the effect. This dense synchresis links music and images closer and enhances the effect of pace, rhythm, editing and movement. It is perhaps not surprising that this instrumental track is used in ways that parallels film music even more, with the elements of music used in close connection with the images (Kalinak 1992).

One example shows this relationship as it relates to lim's use of visual effects on her clips. As in *Us*, lim uses layers of post-production, but in Marvel she does so to call back to the comic book origins of the MCU. An example is Black Widow kicking an adversary off a ledge. When a break happens in the music during his fall, the vid stops the movement midair and the image is overlaid with the comic book effect. As the music starts up again, the movement continues again. Rather than a break or cut to black, which would allow the audience a moment of respite, the moment is layered

Fig. 33. The unnamed man (Jerzy Skolomowski) kicked off a ledge by Black Widow, with the comic book graphic effect layered on it.

with more visual information, keeping up the intensity of the vid. The use of comic book-like effects occur several times in the vid, both using this device of overlay, but also a use of panels, wipes and split screens, which I return to shortly.

When the tap passage ends, the brass section enters and marks the next part of the vid. In this part, we are back to looking at men, this time clearly as objects for sexual desire, which the music again comments on, as it did in the opening section. Music can be sexually loaded (Taylor 2012), and the brass band, which plays in a syncopated rhythm invoking funk, sex, sweat and dance (Brown 1994; Vincent 2014, 48, 53), is the illustration. As the brass band stays for the rest of its duration, so does a focus on desire, though it is a desire that shifts its object and mode. The first moments of the brass section underlines the shift and telling the audience what to look for. This is accomplished by focusing on Thor's shirtless body and on his diegetic girlfriend Jane Foster's (Natalie Portman) way of looking at him. In this middle section of the vid she is joined by others, mainly women, in giving appreciating and admiring looks at men's bodies. The pleasure quickly blurs and expands in scope, as the vid moves its focus to action. The transition is through explosions and fire, invoking both literal and figurative hotness.

At around the 2:30 mark, a secondary brass theme takes over, coinciding with an intensification in the use of split screen and wipes. Where this technique was used earlier in the vid, it was only for a few clips, while here it is almost constant, adding to the barrage on the audience's senses. The panels wipe each other off the screen and battle for dominance, aided by the characters who interact with them. It feels as if the audience is pushed and pulled through the rapidly shifting scenes along with the action. In the opening of this section, Iron Man is seen pushing a metal sheet through the air, in the vid acting as a panel divider, so he appears to be moving the panels on the screen, changing the vid's focus as he goes. This technique is somewhat similar to the use of split screen in Luminosity's *Vogue*. However, in *Vogue*, the screens were constant in size, and movement happened across panels differentiated by light, colour or a static line. In the case of *Marvel*, the panels are like those of comic books, they are boundaries that are not crossed or broken, though things can appear from or disappear outside the frame. The panels also vary in size and shape and play a direct part in the action, invoking how comic book graphics function (Saraceni 2003).

Finally, the vid moves on to an intense last section where the music is layered with both brass themes, drums and percussion as well as the re-joined "hey"-calls. The focus on action scenes further heightens the intensity of the vid, as does even more and faster syncretic elements. The effect is one of music and vid playing each other, like parts of the same orchestra, and it is impossible to tell who is musician, conductor or instrument. Cause and effect are lost to a complete meld of music and visuals. In the final seconds of the vid, Jane Foster appears again with a wide-eyed look of surprise and admiration, intercut with another set of three words in the Marvel embossed font, this time "OH", "MY", "GOD". Her recurrence reminds us of how she appeared early in the vid, and enforces her standing-in for fandom. The last clips in the vid is a shot of the entire Avengers team, with Thor knocking something out of screen with his hammer. This 'something' is revealed as lim's name, which is knocked into the final cut to black as the song stops - and the audience can breathe again.

As I have illustrated above, the frenetic pace and/of editing of *Marvel* is a key part of how it speaks, and is a major contribution of the music. With its assortment of noises, particularly heavy on percussion and brass, the music for *Marvel* has similarities with what William Whittington (2013, 65) identifies as having been characteristics of early film music. Whittington writes:

> "Sound for early animation often took an onomatopoeic approach, emphasizing bangs, zooms, and honks, which became the lexicon of sound for cartoons and animated shorts [...] Many of these sounds had musical qualities and effectively served to punctuate and complete the animation cycles associated with gestures and movement such as walking, running, or flying. Sonic payoffs were often comedic as well, undercutting our expectations of "reality" or presenting strategies of animalism and anthropomorphism."

lim's use of music in this vid is similar to what Whittington describes, and the play with the format of the comic book underscores this link between animation, comic, cartoon and contemporary live-action cinema. Particularly the matches that approach Mickey Mousing do this, but also comedic effects of objects being hit or crashing, as well as the teasing 'cat-calls' from the music. This use of sound also invokes comics style effects bubbles in the 1960's *Batman* (1966-1968) TV show (ie. "Pow!"), which itself mimicked comics. lim's visual use of the comic-effected break is also an equivalent of a glitch: an interruption of gaze that matches an interruption of sound (Benson-Allott 2013) . Sudden stand-stills, breaking off mid-movement as if

by error, then moving again when "catching up" with the sound as it starts mimics glitching. Caitlin Benson-Allott (ibid., 128) argues that a simulated glitch is something which can "make visible their ambivalent relationships to patriarchal, heterocentric video culture as they interrupt the gaze without alienating the spectator." When lim uses this effect at a point in the vid that is focused on female power, Benson-Allott's point about interrupting the expected heterocentric gaze can tell us why this effect is particularly impactful at this point in the vid.

The comics effect is a visual element meant to draw attention to how we look at the characters as well as to their origins in a different medium, of the layers of adaptation in a the line of comic to film to vid and their visibility across texts (Burke 2015; Jeffries 2017; Davis 2018). The visual links with comics are also present in lim's use of wipes, where panels are changed and moved. As I pointed out above, the use of wipes/panels increases as the vid progresses, and this adds to the visual load of the vid. Bordwell's (2002) concept of intensified continuity shows how films have become more visually extreme in their use of classic film techniques. He identifies several elements of this trend, some of which are quicker edits, more wipe-by cuts, more close-ups and more action movement. The wipes in *Marvel* work as a wipe-cuts, allowing changes in perspective to happen, but it is the editing pace that is the most notable aspect of heightened continuity in this vid. Stevens's (2020) argument that vids are intensified television shows the compounds of intensity at work in *Marvel.* It is intensified in both these aspects, which contributes to its frenetic feel.

Aside from these very notable visual effects, lim also works with rhythm/pace and instrumentation/layers of music. In the process she draws parallels or notes equivalences between different moods in the source films. The way "Festivo" sounds does not invite emotional introspection; the very sound of this vid moves focus away from what is going on inside the text and to what is happening on the surface. "Festivo" has instrumental progression in the music, but the driver is the rhythm and the ways in which sounds enter and depart from the soundscape, building towards a crescendo. All of these sound elements invite synchresis, and lim uses them instead of lyrics as a guide through the text, not least the calls and comments from the sound onto the visuals. Especially the brass instruments are teasing, whistling in appreciation. The sound of the theme is reminiscent of James Brown's "I feel good" in feel/mood. These sounds invoke pleasure in the fan gaze, and pleasure is the affective register on which the vid works.

A second effect of the multilayered sound is the way the mood of *Marvel* supersedes the mood of the scenes in their original context. Luminosity's *Vogue*, which also points to the pleasure of looking at men, does not use the clips' context at all. In the case of *Marvel*, the context is present, because this vid is working off audience knowledge of the fun and pleasure of watching the films. This context is not used for feels, though, and scenes that are dietetically fun or pleasing are treated as equivalent to those that are not.

As the vid progresses, this is expressed in how it conflates the pleasure of looking at people with the pleasure of looking at action. It does this by treating them as equally important in the progression of the vid, and by using the music to emphasise moments from all kinds of scenes. As I mentioned above, there is an abundance of syncretic matching in the vid, and these focus on any kind of visual moment that might give the little kick of pleasure at seeing the match - regardless of the context of the element used. Moments of struggle, injury and distress are mixed in with and equivalent to moments of joy, victory and love. The different emotions evoked by these moments are flattened into the overarching feels of the vid. When the vid returns to Jane Foster as a stand-in for fans, her expression of "OH MY GOD" signals a feeling of being impressed or overwhelmed. It is an utterance that brings to mind the "ALL THE FEELS" in *The Greatest*'s comments with its all-caps, and its placement at a point in the vid where the audience is in a sensory barrage from the vid. Even fan gaze pleasures are at times too much, overwhelming, the way feels are.

With these invocations of joy and pleasure, invoked through the universal female fan that Jane Foster stands in for, it is useful to look at the tension between critique and joy that is at play in the analysis of this vid. The joyously looking fan is perhaps the opposite of the "feminist killjoy" (Ahmed 2010; Ahmed 2014b). Joy can be understood as antithetical to a critical engagement, but it also shows us what we value (Ahmed 2010, 13) - and here it shows the value in fandom and the fannish gaze. This is not a feminist critique, as was *Only a Lad* or *Origin Stories*, but it is a feminist joy, an affect that centers something in the texts that fans engage with, with as well as against the grain of the text itself. With lim once more invoking the universal (female) fan at the end of her vid, it is helpful to examine the differences in the receptions of *Us* and *Marvel*.

x7.3.2 Marvel @ Fandom

Marvel is posted on YouTube and embedded from there to AO3 and to tumblr, as well as being hosted for download on lim's own website. To get as full a picture as possible, I have looked at engagement on all sites. As mentioned in chapter four, tracking engagement on tumblr presents difficulties. I have therefore focused on the comments that are immediately visible under lim's own post, which as of 2021 had just over 2000 notes encompassing likes, reblog and comments. I have used these comments as a snapshot of what happened in the first line of reblogging on tumblr. Of the different posts, YouTube has the most comments, and as with *Us*, these comments come from a mix of fans and non-fans. In line with the different audiences attracted to the platforms, there are more technical comments on YouTube and more affective ones on tumblr, which is fan-dominated.

The focus on the comments on all platforms is the editing, especially the visual effects, referred to as "comic style" and "panels" by different commenters. This is not surprising, as this level of post-production is not common in vids. There are also some mentions of music, from a couple of tumblr comments saying the vid made them dance in their chairs, to a YouTube commenter who hated the music so much they had to stop watching. One commenter notes that the music's minimalism allows the editing to shine, showing an awareness of the balance of music and image. A few comments - mostly in the tags on tumblr - comment on specific characters. Some lament the lack of one or more characters while others share the pleasure of looking at the displayed bodies. Pleasure is also the prevalent affective resonance. The feels experienced by the commenters are expressed as being physical, which matches the effect of the music. Comments range from the aforementioned appreciation of bodies over expressions of being attracted to the vid itself and to utterances of "I can't even" in some variation. When a fan "can't even", they are out of ability to "can", that is, unable to do anything as they are overwhelmed with feels or by an experience. This is therefore another way of expressing an inability to use words, much as "all the feels" might be. For a vid that is so much about looking as a fan, about fannish pleasure in text and bodies, it is not surprising that fellow fans respond with mirroring the vid's affective register. The vid is physical, as noted by the comments by people who were moved to dance, it is spectacular, and it affords pleasures for fans by being an intensified edit of things that are pleasurable to fans. By making people move with the motions in the vid and overwhelm them with sensory inputs, this vid shares and

inspires feels of joy and pleasure. It shows the bodily function of emotions, and that feels do work as affect, also when that affect is pleasurable, not gut-punching as several of the other vids have been. *Marvel* can show us that fans are literally moved and moving through feels.

7.4 Conclusion: Feels of Fandom

The vids in this chapter are examples of reflecting on fandom and the feels in/of fandom. Their affective registers are very different, and they argue equally different points, yet they all speak to the experiences of being a fan and the feels this engenders. The reflections on fandom that these vids express show that the reflective potential of vids goes beyond both the celebratory and the critical. It also shows that vids can argue about the inner life of the vidder as well as that of characters, and can argue about fan practices as well as media industry practices. *Only a Lad*'s critical view of a fandom trope was argued in a way that is equivalent to the earlier vids' arguments about issues in fan texts, turning the critique inwards to fandom itself. *Us* reflected on the state of fandom, slash, visibility and copyright through feelings of being exposed and vulnerable, which showed that vids can also reflect on the inner emotional state of the vidders as well as of characters. Finally, the exploration of pleasure in *Marvel* showed that feels are impactful in joyful ways as well as in the disappointment, anger and problematising that the previous vids had worked on. Vids can be utilised in the service of addressing fandom problems as well as fan texts, and therein lies a potential that can be realised in ways that are different from how other fanworks might work towards changing fandom. Practices such as racebending (Gilliland 2016; Fowler 2019) is not readily available to vidders, but vidding instead affords tools for analysing and arguing that fic does not have in equal measure.

Though they speak about different subjects through disparate musical and visual styles, these vids also show the power of synchresis and its versatility as a tool for calling attention to moments that further arguments. In *Marvel*, the pleasure of synchresis between images and sounds maps onto the viewing pleasure, which in itself displays the pleasures of being and seeing as a fan. *Marvel* leaves the audience breathless and overwhelmed whilst speaking about the pleasures in fandom; it is thereby a display of the effectiveness of synchresis as both a technique to argue with/through and to evoke affect. Its intensified continuity displays a different kind of feels than the rest of the vids, one that is centered in bodily reactions, physically

overwhelming in a way that shows that aspect of affect. Synchresis, increasing in pace and amount throughout the vid, creates this pleasure and is the primary guide for the audience through the vid's showcase of gaze, bodies and action.

In *Only a Lad* single words are drawn out and emphasised by the synchresis, as with several of the earlier vids, but also where the particular musical literalisms, most clearly expressed in stingers, is used to emphasise a dark humour that is a central part of the vid's reflection and critical argument. *Only a Lad* uses tone of vocals along with complex layers of meaning to make its point. The synchresis aids the understanding of the meaning of the lyrics, and allows the audience to understand the layers of sarcasm involved in both vid and song. In *Us*, the synchresis works by the dual emphasis of the visual elements that are visible and the words that denote them. The images are already enhanced visually, which then draws extra attention to the words and they in turn work on the images again in a circle of meaning-making.

Given how the vids in this chapter argue through feels, it is also enlightening to see how they do and do not influence the emotions of their audiences, as well as to what degree they tell us something about how fan feels work. In that respect, it is of note that while *Only a Lad* directly critiques a common fandom practice, it was a viewpoint that was reflected and shared by the audiences. Meanwhile, *Us*, which does not critique fandom, but instead reflects on the feeling of being a fan and the dangers in mainstreaming fandom, caused hurt feelings because of a perceived delimitation of who was included in its construction of fandom. For these two vids, the fact that they are as much, if not more, about feels as they spark feels, also speaks to the understanding that feels are what fans do. It reveals that those feels can be an element in the critical reflection on and of fandom, as they could with issues of racism and colonialism. How fans feel about something is, as *Only a Lad* shows, not neutral, and as *Us* shows, the feeling of belonging that fandom affords is as important as the feels about texts. Fandom as feels culture is sensitive, precisely because it rests on emotions, which are at times fragile and always personal. Finally, *Marvel* shows us that fandom is also made of the shared joy and pleasure of being in a culture of people who look at, understand and feel texts in similar ways, thereby underlining the strength that feels culture also possesses.

Conclusion: All the Feels?

Through my research I have found that music is a significant communicator of meaning and feels in vids, and that these feels are a central part of how vids become critical and reflexive. I have shown that while music in vids is, as has been previously argued by vidding scholars like Turk (2015), Russo (2017) and Coppa (2008a), a structuring device, it is also equally a narrative and meaning-making device. A vid is a gesamtkunstwerk where the constituent parts are enhanced by each other and work together to create the argument of the vid; it is more than the sum of its parts. The interviews and analyses I conducted show that vidders pay close attention to music choice. They assess songs for musical elements (Kalinak 1992) - lyrics, mood, cultural and historical connotations, emotional arcs, rhythm, instrumentation, and voice - and use all of these elements to construct a vid that functions as a speech act (Kuhn, 2012). Treadwell (2018) argues that vids are always destabilising because they are remixes; I do not agree that this is always the case, but it sometimes is. The way vidders use their art to critically reflect on political issues from colonialism over racism to the feelings of being a fan show that fanworks have the potential to be subversive, transformational and political. The critical potential of vids is realised through this analysis, and through influencing and sharing feels. Feeling with or for someone, fictional or not, can be a radical act, and vids have the potential to inspire this, but it must be cultivated to be present.

This cultivation, an imbuing with feels and meaning, happens in the meeting of the elements of a vid: music, lyrics and images. Vidders can share their feels and critical reflections by guiding the (fan) audience through the vid, through their own thoughts and feelings, and thereby create the speech act in the vid. On a macro level, vidders set a balance between these elements, granting more or less weight to each, where at one end lies bironic's use of lyrics and voice in *Masters of War* and at the other lim's use of instrumental music in *Marvel*. In the scale between them, connotations of aspects such as race or history are employed to further the arguments in the vids. Tonality, voice timbre and quality, pitch, rhythm, instrumentation; all contribute to the feeling of a piece of music, and all can be used in the vid creation process and employed to enhance or emphasise elements that guide the audience through the vid's argument. From the emotional surge in bironic's

The Greatest to the layered use of lyrics and vocals in Laura Shapiro's *Only a Lad*, each part of a vid can be dialled up or down to suit the message. As lim's *Us* shows, the ways vids can use synchresis to emphasise a word can be mirrored in visual effects, and as Gianduja Kiss proves with *Origin Stories*, even single words can convey a lot of meaning in combination with the connotations of the music and images. These elements constitute a mixing desk of tools for vidding, and the effect of them an audiovisual language of vids.

8.1 Vids and/as critical arguments

By going through a thematic division of the vids I worked with, I have shown some of the ways in which similarities and differences in vids can be used to argue both similar and different things. In chapter five, I examined the role of music in combination with vids where the lyrics were followed closely by the vidders, and the genre of folk was used to invoke a collective understanding of protest songs as being anti-war, anti-establishment and anti-military. I showed that the tone of Bob Dylan's voice and inflection (Marshall 2007; Rosenberg, 2013) along with his lilting folk melody was a central part of bironic's anti-colonial critique of *Stargate: Atlantis* in *Masters of War*. Voice was also important in beccatoria's critique of *Mass Effect: Andromeda* as a colonialist narrative (Mukherjee 2017) in her vid *America*, where Tracy Chapman's use of voice, call-and-response and rhythm invoked Black American music (Whiteley 2000) and provided an important key to understanding the vid's critique. In the final analysis, the use of a modern protest song was a way into the understanding of Thuvia Ptharth's critique of Marvel's Cinematic Universe as militainment (Stahl 2009) in *Hey Ho*. The vids also shared a commonality in their register of feels, longing for better things and using vocal distancing as well as tonality and rhythm to create these affective responses.

With chapter six, I turned to vids which critiqued representations of race. The three vids in this chapter all utilised sonic connections with Black American music to further their critique of racism in media, but did not share genre nor feels. The first vid, *The Greatest* by bironic, is a sweeping celebration of characters of colour. Additionally, through the use of music coded with Black American sonic tropes (Floyd, 2002) and by making its audience feel intensely for and with the characters, it criticised mainstream narrow and scarce representations of these same characters while avoiding sparking backlash against speaking about racism (Pande 2018). With

the second vid in that chapter, *Vogue* by Luminosity, I showed how Madonna's appropriation of queer people of colour's culture was used to create a satire on *300*'s racist and homophobic stereotypes. The vid recontextualised the film and turned it into an equal opportunity dance between sexy men of all races, and used its juxtaposition between visual source and music to create a satire that was legible even outside of fandom. The final vid, *Origin Stories* by Gianduja Kiss, used hip-hop to invoke modern, Black American subjectivities (Kautny 2015) in order to decenter whiteness in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Kirkland, 2005) and instead focus on the treatment of characters of colour in the show. It made visible the racial politics of the source, while using the contrast of emotions in two different voices and vocal styles to show the ways in which the vid's protagonists - as opposed to the show's - were treated unfairly.

Finally in chapter seven, I focused on vids reflecting on the experience of fandom. I used these vids as a way of examining the reflexive vid genre more deeply with vids that are dually reflexive, and like those in the previous chapter very different in style and affective register. I opened with Laura Shapiro's *Only a Lad*, which incorporated the satirical and spectacular music of Oingo Boingo (Gorbman 1987; Halfyard 2004) to share Shapiro's reflections on fandom's complicated relationship with villains (Fathallah, 2011). This cerebral vid spoke about feels by showing them to us, likening fandom to a satirised society in the song's lyrics, and made use of both humorous combinations of image and sound as well as vocal quality to critique fandom from the inside. Secondly, I looked at lim's vid *Us,* which functioned as a snapshot of a vidder's relationship to fandom's mainstreaming at the time of its making. This analysis showed how the vulnerability of Regina Spektor's voice and sonic nakedness of her song was used in combination with visual effects, which also played with layers of exposure, allowed lim to speak about her own feelings about fandom's visibility (Bury 2005; Ballinger, 2014). This vid's feels were deeply personal, yet understood by many as universal, to both praise and critique from fans who were emotionally impacted in disparate ways. Finally, I analysed lim's *Marvel*, which employed an instrumental track and a visual focus on movement, spectacle and pleasures of looking as a reflection on the fannish gaze (Mulvey 2016; Morimoto, 2019). It is a vid that literally moved its audience, and shared its feels through taking other fans along through a rush of fannish pleasure constructed out of frenetic music and editing.

8.2 Analysing Vids

The analytical method I constructed to be able to reach these results is one of the key innovations of this thesis. As I reached the end of the analyses, I found I used the method with more variation than I had initially envisioned. The method proved able to address different aspects of vidding and music by drawing on diverse elements of music theory and thereby account for the many different ways vidders use music. There is scope for a more detailed analysis of music in vidding than I have done here, one which goes further into each piece of music and draws on more musical elements. At the same time, it is also possible to take the most superficial part of this method and still enhance a vid analysis. Conversely, my mixed method of analysis and ethnography proved less flexible and more difficult to apply. I focused more on the analyses than the ethnography as the research progressed, precisely because the former method was yielding varied and interesting results.

While the interviews were an important basis for both analyses and reception study, I have not integrated them into the analyses as much as I had initially thought. The seven vidders who participated in this study are very different in their approaches to vidding, including how they conceptualise vidding, which aspects they emphasise and what they want to discuss. Their contributions are, however, a central part of the research process throughout. By interviewing them, I was able to take their thoughts and motivations into consideration as I analysed. This approach allowed me to consider their creative processes and choices in more detail as I worked, which added nuance and detail to my understanding of each vid. In addition, their contributions and voices were in dialogue with me and each other throughout, with the result that even though the direct contributions are less visible in the final product than I had initially envisioned, the impact of the vidders on the dissertation is vital. Each person added perspectives which influenced the work beyond the context for their own vid/s, especially in cementing the importance of music, of feels and of critical reflexivity. Every vidder in the study emphasised music and emotions, and each one did it in their own words and with different entry points for it. They all rely on music in vidding, despite very different creative processes, backgrounds and thoughts about what they want their vids to be and do, and their perspectives add depth and nuance to the analyses beyond their visible contributions in the final product.

A fundamental challenge of this kind of study is that when starting out, one does not know where the data will lead, and questions will arise through the analyses that the data does not give any answers to. If I were to reiterate the study now, I would omit some questions and add others, such as try to tease out more of the process of how music works as narrative force to each vidder and attempt to find out more about the role of feels as critical impetus. On the other hand, there is more to be done with the data I have from the interviews, questions that did not become central in this study, something I hope to do at a later date, amongst them work on vidders' relationships with copyright and on their personal attachments to the music they choose. When I conducted the interviews I had also not foreseen that questions of diversity and debates about race/racism in fandom would become as prominent and relevant as they did. There are therefore questions about demographics and diversity I would have asked had I embarked on the project now. To counter this, I instead sought out contemporary fan debates as well as new theoretical work in fan studies that addresses these subjects. I also began to think about how my own identity, particularly my whiteness, influences my work and how to account for this. This is something I am aiming to take with me into all future work.

Like the interviews, the audience comments play a comparatively smaller role in the work than I had envisioned, but also like the interviews, the commentary formed a basis for my larger scale thinking and process throughout the project. This comparative lack of comment emphasis is in large part due to the obstacle inherent in preserving anonymity, which made it impossible to do direct quotes. Analysing specific comments in depth, especially where they in turn engage reflectively with the vid and its message, would undoubtedly have deepened the understanding of how vids are received and communicate. Relying on summarised trends on a large scale is unfortunately less engaging and gives the impression of surface rather than depth. Despite this challenge and its drawbacks, I do not regret this methodological choice; preserving the privacy of fans who have not consented to be part of the study takes precedence. A different choice, such as having focus groups of fans watch the vids and speak directly to their reactions, would have deprived the study of its relationship with time and lost vital context of fan debates, platform development and vidding technology advances, which are important to understand how the vidders speak through their vids.

During the process of writing my thesis, I began to vid for myself. Firstly, this was an experiment to see if I could do it, acting on a desire I have had for years, but secondly, it was an attempt to see how this practice might inform my research. My first attempt was at humour, which I found very difficult, something Luminosity also observed about the making of *Vogue*. I attempted to change the idea of the vid and salvage it in that manner, which led to it being an obvious failure to communicate anything and I ultimately abandoned it, despite encouragement from, amongst others, lim, who suggested I just finish it and throw doubts and perfectionism aside. However, it showed me important things about the work and skill that goes into vidding, about how to do things like matching to rhythm and construct musical literalisms, not least the difficulty in doing so and the satisfaction in succeeding. I now believe this attempt failed because it was not influenced enough by my own feels regarding the text; I was doing an intellectual and technical exercise and the lack of feels imbued in the project turned it into something that only conveyed my trying for the sake of trying. What was missing was precisely the thing I have found to be so central in the analyses: the use of affective cues from the music, and the way these cues are in turn felt by the audience.

My second attempt went quite differently. I fell into a new fandom and found a genuine desire to vid it, to share my feelings about an aspect of the text in a way I have previously done through writing fic. This vid took me a long time to make as I felt my way ahead and stuck to vidding when I could feel what I was trying to say, and lim's words about the previous vid helped me in finishing this one. In my analyses, I found that there are many facets of music use in vidding and that these are all used in vids, providing a mixing desk of vidding music. A vidder can utilise different aspects of music to communicate, chiefly through affective impact, and this constitutes an audiovisual language of vids. Through this vid, I discovered a personal truth in this standpoint I was already reaching through analysis. I chose to vid an instrumental piece, slow and soft, and found that the way its melody was structured was what I vidded to. I used rhythm, but also the flow and, above all, emotions of the music. This thesis shows that the feels culture identified by Stein (2015) as a central principle for media fandom is at work in vidding. Through my vid, I was able to, like the vidders I interviewed, share feels through vidding and experience fellow fans responding to them. This also showed me that it would have been possible to take a practice-led approach to this research, which is something that can also be explored

in future work. I was not attempting to critically reflect on the text, but sharing a relatively simple feeling of appreciation of beauty. However, other fans' comments appreciating what I was trying to say demonstrated that the feels I had were shared by others. This strengthened my connection to a fandom I had, until then, not actively participated in on a creator level.

8.3 Vid studies going forward

In the first three chapters of this thesis, I outlined three fields of theory which have informed and guided my work. In them, I identified gaps, particularly around music in vids and the critical potential of sharing fan feels. My analyses have shown that the gap around music is significant to the understanding of vids. Most previous research (Coppa, 2008a; Stein 2015; Stevens 2020; Russo, 2017) only nods towards music, and it is reduced to beat/rhythm to guide editing, or to lyrics to guide interpretation, despite efforts to draw it into the analysis. While these two aspects are important to vids and vidding, they must not be allowed to stand alone. I have shown that more attention to music, particularly its affective and narrative elements, significantly adds to the understanding of vids. Drawing on film music research (Gorbman 1987; Kalinak 1992; Chion 1994; Kassabian 2002), I have identified lyrics reliance, clip context, synchresis, music history/context, artist connotations, vocal expression, tonality, rhythm, pace and mood as some of the elements involved in vidding, all of which vidders can rely on in different ways both in a vid's overall expression and in particular moments or elements of a vid. By bringing these musical elements into analyses of vids, vid studies can gain more nuance and depth.

One such nuance is the role of the feels. Music is, as I showed in chapter two and have further argued throughout, a bearer of affect, something which a vidder can use to stick emotions to and communicate them to the audience. Feels have a critical potential, and this way of thinking about vids can possibly be expanded to other forms of fanworks. With the long history of considering affect and fandom, as I showed in chapter three, as well as a focus on fandom and activism, as I showed in chapter one, it is surprising that fan studies have not brought these two together more than is the case.

Fan studies has scope for much more work that analyses affect in fan spaces, be it in textual analyses of fanworks, ethnographic work or a combination thereof. I especially hope to see work that takes up what I have discovered regarding the

political potential in feels in vidding and explores whether this potential also exists in other kinds of fanworks. There is also space for research into the influences of critical feels communicated through fanworks on wider fan cultures; this would be an expansion of Stein's (2015) concept of feels culture, which is one of the ways I understand my own work here. Within this, there is scope to explore feels as part of fandom's gift cycle and cultural economy as well. Likewise, the current research is centered around a particular vidding community (Coppa, 2009a; Turk, 2015; Svegaard 2019; Coppa, 2011b). As a consequence, there is a current lack of understanding of vids not in the English language, from other vidding cultures/communities than the one I have looked at here, as well as of details regarding use of diegetic sound, incorporation of words on screens and use of subtitling. Given my findings in chapter six, and in particular the work of Pande (2018), there is a need for fan studies to address the prevalent focus on white, anglophone fans and fandoms around anglophone media, which also, by and large, privileges white characters. As chapter six shows, there is potential in fanworks to address some of these issues, and current academic work (Rouse & Stanfill, 2021; De Kosnik & Carrington 2019; Hinck & Davisson, 2020) indicates that fan studies is moving in this direction as well, though much more research is needed to address this systemic issue in the field.

Last, but not least, I hope that this study can be a part in expanding the knowledge of and interest in vids and vidding as subjects of academic study. Vids are remarkable things, as evidenced by the many ways they can be described: as remix video, fanworks, art, visual fanfic, textual analysis and more. Even within fan studies, the knowledge of and consideration of vids is small, and fan studies is not the only field that could, and should, be paying attention to vids. With the rise of video as a medium, vids are uniquely placed to play a part in both fan culture and wider culture, especially when keeping in mind their potential for critical, analytical and affective engagements.

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A Wrinkle in Time [feature film] Directed by Ava DuVernay. Legend3D, Walt Disney Pictures, & Whitaker Entertainment, USA, 2018. 109 mins.

Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. [television programme] ABC Signature, Mutant Enemy, & Marvel Television, USA, 2013-2020.

Amadeus [feature film] Directed by Milos Forman. AMLF & The Saul Zaentz Company, USA, 1984. 160 mins.

American Gods [television programme] Canada Film Capital & Fremantle, USA, 2017—.

Angel [television programme] Mutant Enemy, Greenwolf, Kuzui Enterprises, Sandollar Television, & 20th Century Fox Television, USA, 1999-2004.

Avengers: Endgame [feature film] Directed by Anthony Russo & Joe Russo. Marvel Studios & Walt Disney Pictures, USA, 2019. 181 mins.

Batman [television programme] 20th Century Fox Television & Greenway Productions, 1966-1968.

BioWare (2007) *Mass Effect* [game, PC, Playstation 3, Xbox 360] Electronic Arts, USA

BioWare (2010a) *Mass Effect 2* [game, Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360] Electronic Arts, USA

BioWare (2012a) *Mass Effect 3* [game, Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Wii U] Electronic Arts, USA

BioWare (2017a) *Mass Effect: Andromeda* [game, Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, Xbox One] Electronic Arts, USA

Black Panther [feature film] Directed by Ryan Coogler. Marvel Studios & Walt Disney Pictures, USA, 2018. 134 mins.

Boston Legal [television programme] David E. Kelley Productions & 20th Century Fox Television, 2004-2008.

BrainDead [television programme] Scott Free Productions, King Size Productions, & CBS Television Studios, USA, 2016.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer [television programme] Mutant Enemy, Kuzui Enterprises, Sandollar Television, & 20th Century Fox Television, USA, 1997-2003.

Captain America: The First Avenger [feature film] Directed by Joe Johnston. Paramount Pictures, Marvel Entertainment, & Marvel Studios, USA, 2011. 124 mins.

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Cleopatra [feature film] Directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz. Twentieth Century Fox, MCL Films S.A., & Walwa Films S.A., USA, 1963. 192 mins.

Cleverman [television programme] Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Screen Australia, Screen NSW, Red Arrow Studios International, SundanceTV, Head Gear Films et al., Australia, 2016-2017.

Creed [feature film] Directed by Ryan Coogler. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Bros., New Line Cinema, & Chartoff-Winkler Productions, USA, 2015. 133 mins.

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Fear the Walking Dead [television programme] American Movie Classics, Circle of Confusion, Skybound Entertainment Valhalla Entertainment, Idiot Box Productions, & AMC Studios, USA, 2015—.

Firaxis Games (2010) *Civilization V* [game, Microsoft Windows, OSX, Linux] 2K Games & Aspyr, USA

Get Out [feature film] Directed by Jordan Peele. Universal Pictures, Blumhouse Productions, QC Entertainment, Monkeypaw Productions, & Dentsu Fuji Television Network, USA, 2017. 104 mins.

Grammer, Tracy (2005) "Hey Ho". Credit: Dave Carter. In: *Flowers of Avalon*. Signature Sounds.

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Iron Man 2 [feature film] Directed by Jon Favreau. Paramount Pictures, Marvel Entertainment, Marvel Studios, & Fairview Entertainment, USA, 2010. 124 mins.

Iron Man 3 [feature film] Directed by Shane Black. Marvel Studios, Paramount Pictures, DMG Entertainment, Illusion Entertainment, & Taurus Studios, USA, 2013. 130 mins.

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Luke Cage [television programme] ABC Television Studio, Disney-ABC Domestic Television, Marvel Entertainment, Marvel Television, Netflix, The Walt Disney Company et al., USA, 2016-2018.

Madonna (1990) "Vogue". In: *I'm Breathless*. Sire & Warner Bros.

Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl [feature film] Directed by Gore Verbinsky. Walt Disney Pictures & Jerry Bruckheimer Films, USA, 2003. 143 mins.

Pulp Fiction [feature film] Directed by Quentin Tarantino. Miramax, A Band Apart, & Jersey Films, USA, 1994. 154 mins.

Rock, Aesop (2007) "Coffee". Credit: John Darnielle. In: *None Shall Pass*. Definitive Jux.

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story [feature film] Directed by Gareth Edwards. Lucasfilm, Walt Disney Pictures, Allison Shearmur Productions, & Lionsgate, USA, 2016. 133 mins.

Sense8 [television programme] Anarchos Productions, Georgeville Television, Javelin Productions, Motion Picture Capital, Studio JMS, & Unpronounceable Productions, USA, 2015-2018.

Sia (2016) "The Greatest". Credit: Kendrick Lamar. In: *This Is Acting*. Monkey Puzzle & RCA.

Star Trek [television programme] Desilu Production, Norway Corporation, & Paramount Television, USA, 1966-1969.

Star Trek Beyond [feature film] Directed by Justin Lin. Paramount Pictures, Skydance Media, Alibaba Pictures, Huahua Media, Bad Robot, Sneaky Shark et al., USA, 2016. 122 mins.

Star Trek: Discovery [television programme] CBS Television Studios, Living Dead Guy Productions, Master Key Production, Roddenberry Entertainment, & Secret Hideout, 2017—.

Stargate [feature film] Directed by Roland Emmerich. Canal+, Centropolis Film Productions, & Carolco Pictures, USA, 1994. 116 mins.

Stargate SG-1 [television programme] Double Secret Productions, Gekko Film Corp., Kawoosh! Productions IX, Kawoosh! Productions VII, MGM Worldwide Television Productions, Sony Pictures Television et al., USA, 1997-2007.

Stargate: Atlantis [television programme] Acme Shark, MGM Television, Pegasus Productions, & Sony Pictures Television, USA, 2004-2009.

Strike a Pose [feature film] Directed by Ester Gould & Reijer Zwaan. CTM Docs, The Other Room, Serendipity films, Südwestrundfunk, ARTE, & NTR, Netherlands, 2016. 83 mins.

Supergirl [television programme] Berlanti Productions & Warner Bros. Television, USA, 2015-2021.

The Avengers [feature film] Directed by Joss Whedon. Marvel Studios & Paramount Pictures, USA, 2012. 143 mins.

The Feels [feature film] Directed by Jenée LaMarque. Provenance Pictures, USA, 2017. 90 mins.

The Good Place [television programme] Fremulon, 3 Arts Entertainment, & Universal Television, USA, 2016-2020.

The Incredible Hulk [feature film] Directed by Louis Leterrier. Universal Pictures, Marvel Enterprises, Marvel Studios, Valhalla Motion Pictures, & MVL Incredible Productions, USA, 2008. 112 mins.

The Matrix [feature film] Directed by Lana Wachowski & Lily Wachowski. Warner Bros., Village Roadshow Pictures, Groucho Film Partnership, Silver Pictures, & 3 Arts Entertainment, USA, 1999. 136 mins.

The Wire [television programme] Blown Deadline Productions & Home Box Office, USA, 2002-2008.

The X-Files [television programme] Ten Thirteen Productions, 20th Century Fox Television, & X-F Productions, 1993-2018.

Thor [feature film] Directed by Kenneth Branagh. Paramount Pictures, Marvel Entertainment, & Marvel Studios, USA, 2011. 115 mins.

Thor: Ragnarok [feature film] Directed by Taika Waititi. Walt Disney Pictures, Marvel Studios, & Government of Australia, USA, 2017. 130 mins.

Trainspotting [feature film] Directed by Danny Boyle. Channel Four Films, Figment Films, & The Noel Gay Motion Picture Company, United Kingdom, 1996. 93 mins.

Ubisoft (2012a) *Assassin's Creed III* [game, Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Wii U, PlayStation 4, Microsoft Windows, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch] Ubisoft Montreal, France

Ubisoft (2014) *Assassin's Creed: Freedom Cry* [game, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Wii U, PlayStation 4, Microsoft Windows, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch] Ubisoft Montreal, Ubisoft Milan, & Ubisoft Kyiv, France

V for Vendetta [feature film] Directed by James McTeigue. Warner Bros., Virtual Studios, Silver Pictures, Anarchos Productions, Warner Bros., Studio Babelsberg et al., USA, 2005. 132 mins.

What We Do in the Shadows [feature film] Directed by Jemaine Clement & Taika Waititi. Unison Films, Defender Films, Funny or Die, New Zealand Film Commission, & Resnick Interactive Development, USA, 2014. 86 mins.

X-Men: First Class [feature film] Directed by Matthew Vaughn. Twentieth Century Fox, Marvel Entertainment, Dune Entertainment, Bad Hat Harry Productions, Donners' Company, Ingenious Media et al., USA, 2011. 131 mins.

Z Nation [television programme] Go2 Digital Media & The Asylum, USA, 2014-2018.

座頭市 [feature film] Directed by Takeshi Kitano. Asahi National Broadcasting Company, Bandai Visual Company, DENTSU Music And Entertainment, Office Kitano, Saitô Entertainment, TV Asahi et al., Japan, 2003. 116 mins.

Vidography

America, vid by beccatoria, 2019. Posted at "VidUKon 2019 Premiere: America [Mass Effect: Andromeda]", Dreamwidth, 16th September 2019.

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Appendix 1

Lyrics and music

Masters of War by Bob Dylan

```
    dm                C  dm      C
Come, you masters of war,
    dm              C   dm          C
You that build the big guns
    dm                  C       dm  C
You that build the death planes,
    dm              C  dm            C
You that build all the bombs
    dm              C        dm      C
You that hide behind walls,
    Dm             C        dm       C
You that hide behind desks
    dm           C    em am
I just want you to know I can see through your
    dm           C    dm            C
masks
```

You that never done nothin', But build to destroy
You play with my world, Like it's your little toy
You put a gun in my hand, And you hide from my eyes
And you turn and run farther when the fast bullets fly

Like Judas of old you lie and deceive
A world war can be won, you want me to believe
But I see through your eyes and I see through your brain
Like I see through the water that runs down my drain

You that fasten all the triggers for the others to fire

Then you sit back and watch while the death count gets higher
You hide in your mansions while the young people's blood
Flows out of their bodies and gets buried in the mud

You've thrown the worst fear that can ever be hurled
Fear to bring children into the world
For threatening my baby, unborn and unnamed
You ain't worth the blood that runs in your veins

How much do I know to talk out of turn
You might say that I'm young, you might say I'm unlearned
But there's one thing I know, though I'm younger than you
Even Jesus would never forgive what you do

And I hope that you die and your death will come soon
I'll follow your casket through the pale afternoon
And I'll watch while you're lowered into your death-bed
Then I'll stand over your grave till I'm sure that you're dead

America by Tracy Chapman

Chord progression (harmonic function in brackets):

C#m (1, T) -> A (bVI, Sp) -> E (bIII, Tp) -> B (bVII,   Dp)

[Intro, 4 bars]

1. You were lost and got lucky
Came upon the shore
Found you were conquering America
You spoke of peace
But waged a war
While you were conquering America (8)

[Instrumental verse, guitar comes in] (8)

      c#m
2. There was land to take
   A
And people to kill
E   B
While you were conquering America
    c#m
You served yourself
A
Did God's will
E   B
While you were conquering America

[Instrumental verse, more instruments] 4

3. The ghost of Columbus
haunts this world

'Cause you're still conquering America

The meek won't survive

Or inherit the earth

'Cause you're still conquering America

[Enter a richer sound in lead-in]

    c#m   A

C1. Uh!   America

E   B

Uh!   America

c#m   A

Uh!   America

E   B

Uh! (8)

4. You found bodies to serve

Submit and degrade

While you were conquering America

Made us soldiers and junkies

Prisoners and slaves

While you were conquering America

C2. Uh! America

Uh! America

Uh! America

Uh!

[Instrumental verse, sound thinning out again]

5. You hands are at my throat

My back's against the wall

Because you're still conquering America

We're sick and tired

hungry and poor
'Cause you're still conquering America

[Instrumental verse, return of instruments + solos] (8)

6. You bomb the very ground [Enter tambourine]
That feeds your own babies
You're still conquering America
Your sons and your daughters
May never sing your praises
While you're conquering America

C3. Uh! America
Uh! America
Uh! America
Uh!

7. I see your eyes
seek a distant shore
While you're conquering America
Taking rockets to the moon
Trying to find a new world
And you're still conquering America

[Break w. Guitar in last bar]

C4. Uh! America
Uh! America
Uh! America
Uh!

8. The ghost of Columbus
haunts this world
'Cause you're still conquering America

You're still conquering America
You're still conquering America

[Instrumental 4 bars]

Uh!

Hey-Ho by Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer

These lyrics represent the song as it appears in the vid.

Chord progression
Verse, 8 bars:
f-minor, Eb-major, Ab-major, Bbsus2, f-minor, Eb-major,
Bbsus2, f-minor, Eb-major, Db-major, Ab-major, Eb-major, Bbsus2
Chorus, 8 bars:
f-minor, Ab-major, Eb-major, f-minor, Ab-major, Eb- major, Bbsus2,
a-minor, Ab-major, Eb-major, f-minor,
Ab-major, Eb-major, f-minor.

[Intro 2 bars]

```
      fm            eb
1. TV's on, the favorite son is
A                    Bbsus2
watchin' how the west was won
                      fm
daddy, please, a plastic gun
              Eb              Bbsus2
get brother one for twice the fun

fm            Eb
Little camo helmet-heads
Db                 Ab
makin' brave and playin dead
                   Eb
missiles made of gingerbread
                 Bbsus2
dollars on the dime
```

C1. Hey ho, so it goes, the point of sale, the puppet show

the merchant kings of war and woe have turned their hands to labor
sound out the trumpet noise, the cannons bark and jump for joy
someone's dread and darlin' boy has fallen on his saber

2. Bring your kids and coddled pets
bouncin' babes in bassinets
we'll play a game with tanks and jets
better yet – bayonets!

Action dolls with laser sights
robot planes that shoot at night
faster kid and get it right
we're rollin' down the line

C2. Hey ho, so it goes, the point of sale, the puppet show
the merchant kings of war and woe have turned their hands to labor
sound out the trumpet noise, the cannons bark and jump for joy
someone's dread and darlin' boy has fallen on his saber

[Instrumental chorus]

3. These days the spin machine
is always on the silver screen
secret plots and submarines
foreign fiends and magazines

Wave the flag, watch the news
tell us we can count on you
mom and dad are marchin' too
children, step in time

C3. Hey ho, so it goes, the point of sale, the puppet show
the merchant kings of war and woe have turned their hands to labor
sound out the trumpet noise, the cannons bark and jump for joy

someone's dread and darlin' boy has fallen on his saber

yeah, someone's dread and darlin' boy has fallen on his saber

The Greatest by Sia

[Verse 1]

C-minor   Ab

Uh-oh,   running out of breath, but I

  Eb   G

Oh, I, I got stamina

C-minor   Ab

Uh-oh, running now, I close my eyes

  Eb   G

Well, oh, I got stamina

C-minor   Ab

And uh-oh, I see another mountain to climb

  Eb   G

But I, I got stamina

C-minor   Ab

And uh-oh, I need another love to be mine

  Eb   G

Cause I, I got stamina

[B section 1]

     Ab   Eb

Don't give up; I won't give up

     Bb   C-minor

Don't give up, no no no

     Ab   Eb

Don't give up; I won't give up

     Bb   Ab

Don't give up, no no no

[Chorus 1]

     C-minor   Ab   Eb Bb

I'm free to be the greatest, I'm alive

     C-minor   Ab   Eb   Bb

I'm free to be the greatest here tonight, the greatest

```
        C-minor      Ab      Eb        Bb
```
The greatest, the greatest alive
```
          C-minor      Ab      Eb        Bb
```
The greatest, the greatest alive

[Verse 2]

Well, uh-oh, running out of breath, but I

Oh, I, I got stamina

Uh-oh, running now, I close my eyes

But, oh, I got stamina

And oh yeah, running to the waves below

But I, I got stamina

And oh yeah, I'm running and I'm just enough

And uh-oh, I got stamina

[B section 2]

Don't give up; I won't give up

Don't give up, no no no

Don't give up; I won't give up

Don't give up, no no no

[Chorus 2]

I'm free to be the greatest, I'm alive

I'm free to be the greatest here tonight, the greatest

The greatest, the greatest alive

The greatest, the greatest alive

[Bridge A 1]

Oh-oh, I got stamina

Oh-oh, I got stamina

Oh-oh, I got stamina

Oh-oh, I got stamina

[Bridge B]

Instrumental + 2 background "I've got stamina"

[B section 3]

Don't give up; I won't give up

Don't give up, no no no

Don't give up; I won't give up

Don't give up, no no no

[Chorus 3]

I'm free to be the greatest, I'm alive

I'm free to be the greatest here tonight, the greatest

The greatest, the greatest alive

The greatest, the greatest alive

[Bridge A 1]

Oh-oh, I got stamina

Oh-oh, I got stamina

Oh-oh, I got stamina

Oh-oh, I got stamina

[Rap Verse (3)]

Hey, I am the truth

Hey, I am the wisdom of the fallen; I'm the youth

Hey, I am the greatest; hey, this is the proof

Hey, I work hard, pray hard, pay dues, hey

I transform with pressure; I'm hands-on with effort

I fell twice before; my bounce back was special

Letdowns will get you, and the critics will test you

But the strong will survive; another scar may bless you, ah

[B section 4]

Don't give up (no no); I won't give up (no no)

Don't give up, no no no (nah)

Don't give up; I won't give up

Don't give up, no no no

[Chorus 4]
I'm free to be the greatest, I'm alive
I'm free to be the greatest here tonight, the greatest
The greatest, the greatest alive
(Don't give up, don't give up, don't give up, no no no)
The greatest, the greatest alive
(Don't give up, don't give up, don't give up, no no no)

[Outro]
The greatest, the greatest alive
(Don't give up, don't give up, don't give up; I got stamina)
The greatest, the greatest alive
(Don't give up, don't give up, don't give up; I got stamina)
The greatest, the greatest alive
(Don't give up, don't give up, don't give up; I got stamina)
The greatest, the greatest alive
(Don't give up, don't give up, don't give up; I got stamina)
The greatest, the greatest alive
(Don't give up, don't give up, don't give up; I got stamina)
The greatest, the greatest alive
(Don't give up, don't give up, don't give up; I got stamina)
The greatest, the greatest alive
(Don't give up, don't give up, don't give up; I got stamina)
The greatest, the greatest alive
(Don't give up, don't give up, don't give up; I got stamina)

Vogue by Madonna

Instrumental intro: Ab7sus4 - Dsus7 (only last bar)]

Intro
Ab5
What are you looking at?
Strike the pose
Strike the pose
Vogue Vogue Vogue
Vogue Vogue Vogue

Verse 1
Ab   N.C. (Bass line suggests Ab)
        Look around everywhere you turn is heartache
It's everywhere that you go... (look around)
You try everything you can to escape
The pain of life that you know (life that you know)

Verse 1.2
        Eb7sus4/Ab
When all else fails and you long to be

            Ab(add2)
Something better than you are today

Eb7sus4/Ab
        I know a place where you can get away
                Ab(add2)
It's called a dance floor and here's what it's for so

Chorus 1
abm7 Gbmaj7   Fb   ebm
Come on   Vogue

```
abm7  Gmaj7 Fb                ebm  abm7        Fb      ebm
                  Let your body      move to the music
abm7  Gmaj7 Fb              ebm
 Hey    hey hey
abm7  Gbmaj7       Fb        ebm
Come on                  Vogue
abm7  Gmaj7 Fb              ebm  abm7        Fb      ebm
               Let your body go with the flow
        abm7 Gmaj7      ebm7
You know you can do it
```

Verse 2

All you need is your own imagination

So use it that's what it's for (that's what it's for)

Go inside for your finest inspiration

Your dreams will open the door (open up the door)

Verse 2.2

It makes no difference if you're black or white

If your a boy or a girl

If the music's pumpin' it will give you new life

You're a superstar

Yes that's what you are you know it

Chorus 2

Come on Vogue (vogue)

Let your body groove to the music

Hey hey hey

Come on Vogue (vogue)

Let your body go with the flow

You know you can do it

Bridge

Ab7sus4

Beauty's where you find it

Not just where you bump and grind it

Soul is in the musical

That's where I feel so

Eb7sus4

      beautiful

Eb7

      Magical

Eb7sus4

      Life's a ball so

Eb7

Get up on the dance floor

Chorus 3

abm7 Gbmaj7   Fb   ebm

Come on   Vogue

abm7 Gmaj7 Fb   ebm abm7   Fb   ebm

          Let your body   move to the music

abm7 Gmaj7 Fb   ebm

 Hey   hey hey

abm7 Gbmaj7   Fb   ebm

Come on   Vogue

abm7 Gmaj7 Fb   ebm abm7   Fb   ebm

         Let your body go with the flow

     Abm7 Gmaj7   ebm7   Ab5

You know you can do it   do it

Eb5   N.C.

Vogue Vogue

Ab5   Eb5

Beauty's where you find it, move to the music

Vogue Vogue

Ab5   Eb5

Beauty's where you find it, go with the flow

B-section

N.C

Greta Garbo and Monroe

Dietrich and DiMaggio

Marlon Brando

Jimmy Dean

On the cover of a magazine

Grace Kelly, Harlow Jean

Picture of a beauty queen

Gene Kelly

Fred Astaire

Ginger Rogers dance on air

abm7   Gbmaj7   Fb   ebm

They   had   style they had grace

abm7   Gbmaj7   Fb   ebm

Rita Hayworth   gave good face

abm7 Gbmaj7 Fb   ebm

Lauren, Katherine, Lana too

abm7 Gbmaj7   Fb   ebm

Bette Davis we love you

abm7   Gbmaj7 Fb   ebm

Ladies with an attitude

abm7   Gbmaj7   Fb   ebm

Fellas that were in the mood, don't

abm7 Gbmaj7 Fb   ebm

Just stand there let's get to it

abm7   Gbmaj7 Fb   ebm

Strike the pose there's nothing to it

Outro (repentes the chords from the choruses)

Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue

Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue

Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue

Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue

O-o-o-h... you've got to

Let your body move to the music

O-o-o-h... you've got to do

Let your body go with the flow

abm7   Gbmaj7 Fb   ebm

Oooh ---

abm7   Gbmaj7 Fb   ebm abm7

           you've got to

N.C

Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue Vogue

Coffee by Aesop Rock

[Chorus: Aesop Rock]

We don't need no walkie-talkies, nope no walkie talkies

We don't need your coughing when offing the morning coffee

No, we don't need no walkie-talkies, nope no walkie-talkies

We just want our hermitry to stay and our coffee to go

[Verse 1: Aesop Rock]

And the last shall be

First to immerse in the pass out heat

Face in the mud where the moxie melt

'Till he woke up drowning in tchotchke hell

More in a cave with a torch on the wall

Than a window arrangement of porcelain dolls

On a brand new day, saw what he saw

Property owners who crawl to the mall

With a bad toupee and a face like he author the law

Pace like he mourning a loss

Right hand on a can of worms

Left full of gold he will trade for turf, I mean

That's ok, you got to answer to you at the end of the volatile day

But a model of mercy and might, no way

Marionette who will clap and obey

Dude, look, all that noise

Call that flight of the water boys

Meet and greet and they all slap five

Cheek to cheek when they colonize

And a grown-ass man shall abide as he wish

Walk that path with a dime and a stick

Walk that path with a diamond and wine

Walk that path to the firing line

Just walk, pay no mind

To the new recruit with the play-doh spine

Let's be friends from opposite ends
Wave to the kid don't hop on the fence
Play to the radius far and away
Orbit wide don't park in his space
One little martyr who talk in his face
Make one little Weathermen sharpen the blades

[Chorus: Aesop Rock]
We don't need no walkie-talkies, nope no walkie talkies
We don't need your coughing when offing the morning coffee
No, we don't need no walkie-talkies, nope no walkie-talkies
We just want our hermitry to stay and our coffee to go

[Verse 2: Aesop Rock]
And the last shall be
First to the curb with the mad cow meat
Face in the bars of a regular cell
When he woke up high in collectible hell
Boom town kid who was taught by the binge
That a man who expire with the most shit win
That's warpy American nonsense penned by the rich
Not a routine friend in a pinch
Still not used to the stench
How it throws off otherwise lucid events
In the case the afraid observe
I got a Pro-Keds box full of layman's terms, it goes
Hey, peace, pray for the plagued
Major relief and capacious rains
But just cuz I don't want to war with you
It don't mean go warm up the barbecue
I'm like pardon you, sawed off limit
My high noon is a quick little minute
I don't wanna spend it sitting with a critic
Who simply isn't going to ever really get it

This HQ is alive and alone

No driveway no sign of a home

No dial tone, no line for the phone

No world's tiniest violin song

And I might just lie to them all, lie in the morgue

With a deep breath hiding and bored

Fighting a smile, highly annoyed

When the timing is right I will rise and record

Call for the monster beats and Blockhead got

Animal drums like he's doctor teeth

It goes red light green light 1 2 3

One large coffee, fuck you, peace

[Bridge: Aesop Rock]

T-A-K-E-N-O-P-R-I-S-O-N-E-R-S

T-A-K-E-N-O-P-R-I-S-O-N-E-R-S

[Outro: John Darnielle]

I crawled down to the basement

When the weather got cold

Like a lost lamb returning to the fold

And when the outside world recedes from view

It's just a year's supply of make-up

And memories of you

1967 Colt 45, holding back the vampires

Keeping me alive

There's an envelope with some cash in it

Out by the front door

This is what they make you take the medication for

Only a Lad by Oingo Boingo

Intro: Db, Dbm and Bbm

[Verse 1]

Bbm   Db

Johnny was bad, even as a child everybody could tell

Bbm   Db Gb

Everyone said, "If you don't get straight, you'll surely go to hell"

                              Db

But Johnny didn't care

                      Bbm

He was an outlaw by the time that he was ten years old

Gb   Ab   Bbm

He didn't wanna do what he was told

Ab

Just a prankster

     Bbm

A juvenile gangster

Gb   Db

His teachers didn't understand, they kicked him out of school

Bbm   Gb   Gbm   Abm   Dbm

At a tender early age just because he didn't want to learn things

                              Ab   Bbm

Had other interests

He liked to burn things

[Chorus added in the vid]

Bbm   Gb

(Only a lad) You really can't blame him

 Bbm   Gb

(Only a lad) Society made him

Bbm   Gb   Ab

(Only a lad) He's our responsibility

        Db
Oh, oh, whoa whoa

The lady down the block
She had a radio that Johnny wanted, oh, so bad
So he took it the first chance he had
And then he shot her in the leg
But this is what she said:

[Chorus]
(He's only a lad) You really can't blame him
(Only a lad) Society made him
(Only a lad) He's our responsibility
Oh, oh, whoa whoa
(Only a lad) He really couldn't help it
(Only a lad) He didn't want to do it
(Only a lad) He's underprivileged and abused
Perhaps a little bit confused
Oh, oh, oh, oh whoa whoa whoa
Oh, whoa whoa whoa
Oh, whoa whoa whoa

[Some of an instrumental interlude has been edited out]

[Verse 2]
His parents gave up, they couldn't influence his attitude
Nobody could help, the little man had no gratitude
And when he stole the car
Nobody dreamed that he would try to take it so far
He didn't mean to hit the poor man
Who had to go and die
It made the judge cry

[Chorus]

(Only a lad) He really couldn't help it

(Only a lad) He didn't want to do it

(Only a lad) He's underprivileged and abused

Perhaps a little bit confused

Oh, oh, oh, oh whoa whoa

[Bridge]

It's not his fault that he can't behave

Society's made him go astray

Perhaps if we're nice, he'll go away

Perhaps he'll go away, he'll go away-ay

[Chorus]

(Only a lad) You really can't blame him

(Only a lad) Society made him

(Only a lad) Is he our responsibility? Yes!

[Last two lines moved from after a missing outro]

Oh, whoa whoa whoa

Oh, whoa whoa whoa, oh-oh

Us by Regina Spektor

[Verse 1]

```
Db              Gb              Db  Gb
    They made a statue of us
Db              Gb              Db  Gb
    And put it on a mountain top
Db              Gb              Db  Gb
    Now tourists come and stare at us
Db                      Gb
    Blow bubbles with their gum
Db                      Gb
    Take photographs of fun, have fun
Db              Gb              Db  Gb
```

[Verse2]

```
Db              Gb              Dmaj7   Gb
    They'll name a city after us
Db              Gb              Dmaj7   Gb
    And later say it's all our fault
Db                      Gb
    Then they'll give us a talking to
Dmaj7                   Gb
    Then they'll give us a talking to
Db              Gb                      Dmaj7   Gb
    'Cause they've got years of experience
```

[Chorus 1]

```
        Db      Gb              Bbm     Absus 4
We're liiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiving in a den of thieves
Db                      Gb              Bbm   Absus 4
Rummaging for answers in the pages
        Db      Gb              Bbm     Absus 4
We're liiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiving in a den of thieves
Db              Gb
```

```
     And it's contagious
Db              Ab
   And it's contagious
Db              Gb
   And it's contagious
Db              Ab  Db
   And it's contagious
```

[Verse 3]
We wear our scarves just like a noose
But not 'cause we want eternal sleep
And though our parts are slightly used
New ones are slave labor you can keep

[Chorus 2]
Living in a den of thieves
Rummaging for answers in the pages
We're living in a den of thieves
And it's contagious
And it's contagious
And it's contagious
And it's contagious

Bbm - Gb - Db - Ab7 (x4)
Db - Gb - Dbmaj7 - Gb (x2)

[Bridge]
```
Db              Gb          Dbmaj7
   They made a statue of us
              Gb          Db
They made a statue of us
              Gb              Dbmaj7
The tourists come and stare at us
                Gb              Db
```

The sculptor's marble sends regards
```
          Gb          Dbmaj7
```
They made a statue of us
```
          Gb          Db
```
They made a statue of us
```
          Gb              Dbmaj7   Gb
```
Our noses have begun to rust

[A final chorus has been edited out]

Appendix 2: Interviews

The following comprises of my interview guides as well as the interviews in transcription as well as notes taken during the interviews as a back-up measure in case a recording failed. Each interview is marked with date and mode (in person, online etc.)

Interview Guide

Opener: How did you get into vidding?

What is your favourite vid by someone else and by you - and why?

How did you get into vidding?

Things to cover in general:

What is your (current) technical set-up?

Do you have a typical process for vidding? (Do you start in a particular way, go through certain steps in a certain order or the like?)

How do you start a vid?

How long does it take for you to make a vid?

How do you choose your song?

What is the impact of song choice to you? How do you - in your own view - use the music?

Do you think of vidding as something that involves emotions for you and the watcher?

What do you think makes a vid a work of critique?

How do you make a vid critical?

Things to cover about the specific vid/s:

What did you intend for this vid to do?

How did you find this particular song?

Why this message/narrative?

How did you go about making this vid, especially communicating your message through the vid?

What is your favourite moment in/aspect of this vid? Why?

Are there any parts of the vid that did not work as you wanted? Why do you think that is?

What do you think of the reception of the vid? Did people "get it" in the way you wished? Were there unexpected reactions? How do you feel about that?

Questions re. distribution and reception

Where do you host and why? What about algorithms that can damage vids - do you do anything to mitigate that?

What about distribution on solid media vs. online?

How do you "advertise" a new vid?

What do you think about copyright? Is it something that you think about when you vid?

After:

Thank you, double-check how to cite/credit this vidder, open for additional comments if something occurs to you

Introductions, repeat of consent, recording etc.

Interview sample one, interview via Skype

S: *chuckles* Okay, it's not a big deal. So what got you started on vidding?

Interviewee A: Let's see. So, it was 10 years ago, this year is the 10th year since I posted my first vid.

S: Wow.

Interviewee A: I had been editing video - non-fan video for school and work projects. And then I started watching vids online and it looked fun, and I wasn't too intimidated by the technical aspect, because I'd done a little bit of it before. And then I was watching "House", and as I think happens to some vidders with their first vid, the thought of all the work I'd have to put into making that vid was finally overcome by the desire to make a specific vid and see it in the world, so I just went ahead and made it.

S: Oh, cool.

And you basically never looked back?

Interviewee A: I guess so! It's definitely gotten easier over time, but I feel like every time I make a vid there is some new technical challenge I have to overcome. It's just that every time you do it, the more confident you get that you'll figure it out.

And of course you build a community over time, so you have more people to ask.

[later in the interview]

S: Cool. So in your own view, how, what is the impact of song choice? How do you use the music?

Interviewee A: Well, I mean, I feel like song is kinda everything. There are, so suppose you're making a vid for a canon and you're sharing it with fans of that canon, everyone already knows the story. So what are you adding, what are you offering? It's the music. It's that source in conversation with that music. Or using that music to tell that story in a different way or to pull out an emotion of the source. I feel like - I don't know if I'm saying this right but - without the music in the vid, what is the vid?

S: Yeah. That makes sense to me, at least. Uhm, so do you think of vidding as something that is emotional?

Interviewee A: Absolutely. I think that's becoming more and more clear to me by the year. When I first started vidding, it was a matter of "oh, I need to make sure that every lyric in the song matches something I'm trying to say with the clips" and, like, the word matches are important, and it's the cleverness that matters or the making sense that matters, and more and more I'm just like "this song has a feeling and I want other people to have this feeling and like, you can just ignore the middle two verses"

(Both laugh.)

Interviewee A: I mean, again, ideally everything works together, but one of them is starting to take priority over the other. Like, the point of this vid is I want people to come away having cried, or I want people to come away feeling hopeful, or I want them to be happy. And usually I can tell if that's working while I'm drafting is if I'm feeling it myself.

Interview sample two, interview via text chat

[a little while into the interview]

S: On that note, though, what tech do you currently use for vidding?

Interviewee B: if i hadn't been as obsessed in those early months i'd never have bothered

S: :D Yay for fandom

Interviewee B: well, tbh, i haven't vidded in a while -

Interviewee B: which is the result of a lot of things, including big career change and loss of time, breakdown of my main computer, and also i'm something of a serial hobbyist so i move in and out of things

Interviewee B: but i was always about adobe premiere

S: *nod*

Interviewee B: which basically was, when i got started that was one of the better choices and once i learned it i wasn't going to try to learn something else

S: Makes sense. Incidentally, premiere is also what I'm trying to learn.

Interviewee B: i could never do even 10% of what the program was capable of, but i got enough basics down to express what i wanted to, usually

S: In the end, that's what counts, I think.

[later in the interview]

S: You mentioned that the song was what made you start the process? How would you find a song?

Interviewee B: for most of my vids, it was really more like i'd just hear a song - the way you always find a song, i.e., there's a cd of a band you like, it plays on the radio, etc - and the song itself inspired some emotion

Interviewee B: which i'd imagine pairing to some show

S: *nod*

Interviewee B: for a very few vids it would work that i knew i wanted to make a vid about xx and i looked for a song

Interviewee B: but usually it was the other way around

S: So with the song being the whole basis, how do you - in your own view - use the music when you vid?

Interviewee B: it's like, the song inspires some kind of emotion, which makes me think of - a character, a pairing, a theme - and then i try to match the images

S: *nod*

S: So for you vidding is about emotions?

Interviewee B: more like that's how it started, and how a lot of the more fannish vids play out

S: Ok

Interviewee B: the meta ones are more about making a point - i guess in those cases it's more like the song and the idea made me laugh

S: Cool.

Interviewee B: less invested personally in the story i was telling

S: That makes sense, yeah.

Appendix 3: Publications

Fans at Work: Offence as Motivation for Critical Vidding
Sebastian F. K. Svegaard

To be a fan is to have feelings for an object of fandom, and some fans, often referred to as transformative fans (see, for example, Petersen 2017; Stein 2010) express their fannish affect through creating works of art. Vids, a type of fanwork, are short, remix music videos made by fans in Western media fandom (Jenkins 1992), referred to as vidders. Vids look like music videos, but are a distinct genre. They draw their visual side chiefly from TV and film, and are not meant to promote a song or artist, but rather to present an argument (Coppa 2008) or tell a story with/about their visual source(s). A vid can be understood as a vidder's path through a text (Gray 2010), as a part of a historiography (Stevens 2015) and as a deconstruction of the media out of which they are made. Some vids, called critical vids, are explicitly intended to be critical of the media they are constructed from or speak to. As numerous blogs and niche media (such as *The Daily Dot* or *The Mary Sue*) show, critical fan commentary is hardly exclusive to vidding. However, the process of creating a remix of something in order to criticise it is perhaps particularly poignant and effective in making such a point. The act of cutting and remixing a work can be seen as deconstructive, and thus it is possible in general to consider vidding a critical art form.

In this chapter, I argue that, for fans, being critical of or offended by a text does not contradict loving it, that offence can be shared through fanworks, and that vids are particularly good at communicating feelings because of their multimedia format. Through producing and consuming fanworks, fans share feelings, meaning that offence can inspire not only creative production but stronger subcultural bonds. The emotive qualities of fandom have long been documented (see, for example, Grossberg 1992; Hills 2002). However, fan offence has not been much explored, although the idea of the offended fan is one that appears in public debates whenever fan reactions hit the mainstream media, for instance regarding the casting of actors against the racial identity found in the source text – as with the whitewashing of *Ghost in the Shell* (Sanders 2017) – or against expectations, as with John Boyega's black stormtrooper in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (Abrams 2015). In this

chapter, I am using offence as an umbrella term to denote the messy tangle of feelings of being let down by, angry at, hurt or offended by a text of which one is a fan. I am considering fan offence as a rupture in the unwritten and unspoken – but deeply felt – contract between fan and text, which is built on a foundation of trust and love. When the expectations within the fan-text relationship are not met, hurt is created and fans may vent these feelings.

In the following, I expand on the place of this kind of offence in the spectrum of fannish affect and, via an example, show how the feelings of being hurt, let down or offended by a text may appear in a vid, and how this may create ripples of emotional resonance within its immediate circle of reception in fandom. By 'resonance', I mean here the way in which engagement with screens can, as Susanna Paasonen (2013) writes, create tactile reactions in the viewer. I am, however, mostly speaking of sound – which is where the term 'resonate' originates – and how music can move us emotionally across place and time (Kassabian 2013; Ehrlmann 2014; Chion 1994). In order to do this, I conduct a textual analysis of the example vid, *Women's Work* (Luminosity & sisabet 2007), drawing on the three elements of the vid – music, image and lyrics – to show how the feelings of both offence and love for the source text are communicated in and around the vid. For the examination of the vid's reception and how feelings are transferred through the medium of vidding, I engage here in online ethnography. Because I am working with an 11-year-old vid – and also with 11-year-old online comments – I have not sought consent from everyone engaged in the debates, as I did from the vidders themselves. To do so would be impossible, since several commenting identities have been abandoned, deleted, or have no contact information. Instead, I have attempted to protect the identity of the people commenting by paraphrasing their words, rather than quoting them outright, and by not linking directly to the debates I am quoting from. Furthermore, all commenters are, like the vidders themselves, using fandom pseudonyms, which also offers some anonymity.

Fan affect as fan culture

Fandom's affective dimension is something that fan studies scholars, have been exploring to various degrees for a long time, from Bacon-Smith (1992) to Hills (2018). That fandom is, amongst other things, characterised by fans having feelings for and about the objects of their fandom is, then, not a surprise. Louisa Ellen Stein

(Stein 2015) refers to fandom as a 'feels culture' (Stein 2015, 156), and points out the dichotomy of feelings inherent in fandom's being intimate yet no longer private, and instead building what she refers to as an 'intimate collective' (ibid.). In this way, fandom can be viewed as a culture which is powered by feelings. Fandom can also be understood as functioning through a gift economy consisting of fanworks and comments/debates surrounding these works (Stanfill 2018; Coppa 2014). These gifts are also shared emotional engagements, something which becomes clear when thinking through Stein's concept of the 'feels culture'. Following this line of thinking, we can understand fanworks as expressions of emotional engagement, shared freely as gifts to the culture of feels in which they are created. The cycle of the gift economy is mirrored by a cycle of affect that comes with the engagement with the work. A fan creator is moved to work through affect, and pours it into her work, while her audience are moved to consume for the same reason and, as they consume, to experience emotions shared by the creator. They can 'share this back' in the feedback sections of a fanwork, debating with the creator and other fans and again sharing feelings. This allows us to see the fandom gift economy as an economy of feelings. Love is what we most commonly think of when considering fan engagement, perhaps especially with regard to creative fanworks, and, as Anna Wilson (2016) points out, this can lead us to understand fanfic as a form of reparative reading (Sedgwick 2003), which allows the fan creator and her audience both to experience personal healing and to promote social change. Wilson notes that fanfic, as interpretation, consists of a hermeneutics guided by feelings. As fan critique is also interpretation, this is also true of critical fan readings. Critical vids cannot be understood so easily as reparative readings, with their explicit aim to do what Sedgwick argues with: be critical. However, critical vids also aim to heal and to affect change, so neither are in opposition to reparative reading. Fans know a text intimately, meaning that they are uniquely placed to see and understand its failings and strengths alike. Fannish love and critique coexist, and fandom shows that it is possible to love a text which one also experiences as problematic. Precisely because fans love a text, they are moved to critique it, to want it to be better. This fits with Lauren Berlant's (2012) concept that the pleasure principle and the death wish are two sides of the same coin – to wish at the same time to preserve and to destroy an object is concurrent with what happens in critical fandom. It is not uncommon to see fans expressing love for a text in spite of its failings, in spite of being exasperated or even angered by it – something I have

come to think of as the act of critiquing with love. Love and critique constantly exist side by side, and form a mode of engagement in fandom, to the point that there is a guide to 'How to be a Fan of Problematic Things' (Rachael 2011). As the intended audience for a vid is fandom, a critical vid can open discussions within fandom about difficult topics.

The fact that fans are devoted and critical at the same time is often used to dismiss them, especially in the parts of fandom I am concerned with. Centred around LiveJournal (a blogging site), DreamWidth (a fan-run clone of LiveJournal) and Archive of Our Own (one of the largest archives for fanworks, run by The Organisation for Transformative Works), these parts of fandom (also found on the micro-blogging site tumblr), have a majority of women and/or LGBTIQA+ people as participants (centrumlumina 2013). Normatively, being emotional is coded as irrational and intimate (and feminine), while being critical is coded as rational and distanced (and masculine). (Sports fans, who are chiefly understood as normatively masculine males, tend to get a pass for the same behaviour. Few seem to find it remarkable that a fan still loves a team which loses, and at the same time voices vocal criticisms of this team.) Seeing media fans perform a mix of these two modes, essentially using emotions as critique, is remarkable. Fandom shows that the two modes are not necessarily in opposition, but can not only coexist but enhance each other when critiquing with love. Intimacy and love lead to intimate knowledge, which leads to a possibility of noticing flaws that a casual audience might not. Fans can then use this knowledge to create critical fanworks.

Fan offence

Fan affect is complex and messy, and thus it can be difficult to separate out one emotion from the rest. The 'feels' that Stein (2015) and Hills (2018) write about are unspecified. They are simply feelings: jumbled, overwhelming, and the (relatively recent) practice of expressing them as 'feels', rather than being more specific, makes sense for this very reason. Attempting to zoom in on any particular feeling is difficult, but can lead to new ways of considering fan motivation. First, however, it is necessary to address the idea of the offended fan as it currently often appears. Recently, offended fans have showed up in the context of fans addressing issues of representation, either demanding more diversity or protesting about adaptations that provide increased diversity. Such debates have spawned think pieces which

problematise fan critique as entitlement, as fans going too far, or as part of a supposed culture of seeking to be offended (see, for example, the debates previously mentioned about *Ghost in the Shell* and *Star Wars*). The offended fan is often produced as a spectre, an antagonist to the creators of texts, particularly noticeably with regard to Hollywood mainstream and other big, studio-driven productions where the power difference is huge. However, offence is a feeling like any other, and experiencing it is equally legitimate. It can also be a productive and constructive feeling, provoking thought and inspiring creation. This latter capacity is what is of most interest to me here.

A good deal of attention has been paid within fan studies to fans as critics and to fan activism. Lawrence Grossberg (1992) points out that fans' emotional investment is what creates fan empowerment and the possibility of resistance. So, following this line of thinking, the feeling of being offended is a way to resist as a fan. Loving the text is what makes one a fan, and being offended by it leads to critical fan love. Several scholars (Jenkins 2012; Brough and Shresthova 2012) have researched fans as activists, showing that fan affect can lead to such activities as charity, social justice efforts and attempts to rescue or change a beloved text. Fanworks can communicate many kinds of feelings: love, protest, critique, offence, and these can coexist within the same culture.

Women's Work: Offence in practice

At first glance, *Women's Work* (Luminosity & sisabet 2007) is a music video that shows a montage of moments centring on female characters from the American TV show *Supernatural* (Kripke 2005–), showing horror and violence towards women. The show focuses on two brothers solving supernatural mysteries and hunting down and disposing of supernatural beings, but the vid does not showcase them. Instead it shows women who are attacked, injured or killed in the show, with the overall effect of an audio-visual assault on its audience as this montage-like parade of violence happens on the screen. As is perhaps already clear, *Women's Work* is not a conventional music video, nor is it meant to celebrate the song playing along with these clips. It is a vid, and it is intended to speak to and about its visual source. The vid has an argument to make about the problematic treatment of women in the TV show. This is an example of a critical vid, a piece of transformative fanwork, which engages in the act of critiquing with love. Because vids use music to tell their story

and to argue their point, they are uniquely placed to engender emotional responses. Music is a carrier of emotions, which gives vids a particular strength in communicating in the feels culture of media fandom. Following the music in a vid, and how it cooperates with the visuals to tell its story, can show us how affect is performed and communicated in this medium.

All of the women in *Women's Work* are minor/ supporting characters, as there are no weekly recurring female characters in the show. It is noteworthy that *Women's Work* is not, as is common with vids, named for its song, but instead has a title that ambiguously reflects the argument within. It could refer to the work of the women in the vid, or to the work of the vidders and the fact that most people engaged in this section of media fandom are women, meaning that the vid is about, by and mainly for women. The vid summary is cited by some sources (Flummery 2007) as 'Our Bodies, Our Selves', pointing to the title again. It is as if the vidders are telling us that they are the women in the vid, or that these women stand for all women.

Music is an essential part of a vid, not just for the vidders but for the audience as well. Vidders like Here's Luck (2011) often mention that the choice of music is the first part of making a vid. The music and lyrics guide the editing and choice of clips, and the mood and tone of the music sets the mood of the vid itself. As film music shows, for example in the work of Anahid Kassabian (2013) and her analysis of *The Cell* (Singh 2000), the way music is read by audiences against and with moving images adds a whole interpretive layer, and one that is specifically intended to guide emotional responses. So not only is song choice a factor in production and aesthetics, but it creates half the message for the audience, and takes them on an emotional journey. Music seems capable of going straight to our feelings in order to make us labile and open, and to resonate emotionally within us, in harmony with what we hear (just think of how a song can brighten a day, or how we often adjust our gait to match a song we hear while walking). As Julie Levin Russo (2017) puts it in, expanding on the work of Turk (2015):

> Beyond offering interpretive cues, "music is the throughline of a vid...[and] thus a crucial factor in whether the audience experiences a vid as a coherent whole" (2015, 167). Song choice also carries, in large part, the affective tone and impact of the vid (in Internet vernacular, the "feels"). (Russo 2017, 1.9)

The opening of *Women's Work* gives the audience the initial idea of what this vid is about and what to expect. The first aural impression is a feeling of something dark

and unsettling. The harmonies have recurrent dissonance, and there is a screeching sound of guitar and a jagged rhythm. Visually, the stand-out images in this early part of the vid are of a small girl curling up in bed, then a pre-teen girl doing the same, both clearly terrified. The colour palette is blue-toned and dark, adding to the feeling of danger and in keeping with *Supernatural*'s horror aesthetics. The effect is to build a sense of fear or dread, which stays as the song's lyrics begin to come in. The singer's voice sounds almost depressed at first, starting with the non-sequitur of 'And the sky was made of amethyst'. The song is 'Violet' (Love and Erlandsson 1994) by Hole, fronted by Courtney Love. The lyrics as a whole give the impression of a sarcastic, angry parroting of the kind of things women constantly hear regarding sex and rape, about wanting and/or 'asking for it'. Love's normatively female-sounding voice helps the audience focus on women's experiences and construct the narrative from women's point of view throughout the vid. This first section already gives the audience a lot of emotional responses, chiefly related to fear for the women we are guided to identify with. Thus the vid sets up some key premises: it plays on horror, is about women, and the women are the points of identification. This first verse is dedicated to the victims of the 'monster of the week' (a type of episode where the plot solves a supernatural mystery/crime). As the song shifts upwards in intensity and aggression, it is matched by fast-paced cuts between scenes that quickly feel relentless in their violence. Love's voice yells 'you should learn how to say no', underscoring the intimate nature of the violence on screen and linking to victim blaming. In fact, in the moment these words are sung the matching scene looks like a rape. The clips show threats that make the viewer shrink away (such as an unforgettable close-up of the point of a knife millimetres from a widely staring eyeball), and scenes of women alone with the camera spying/prying and hinting at yet-to-be-discovered threats. We see women in the shower, swimming, in bedrooms and in situations that reference rape – being thrown to the floor, held down, forcibly undressed – much of it eroticised by the source. The entirety of the vid is almost overwhelming on an emotional level, and it communicates the offence the vidders were moved to create. We experience what they experienced when watching the show, and the audiovisual format of the vid makes the offending tropes abundantly clear. All this violence functions as plot in the show, and afterwards the women it happens to are no longer of any consequence to the story as people, but become a case for men to solve. We may be offended through sharing in the feelings

communicated by the vidders, or by the images themselves as the vid presents them to us, but the emotional impact comes through regardless.

The bridge leading into the chorus has lyrics telling us that 'when they get what they want, they never want it again', to a surprisingly soft, almost resigned part of the melody, different from the rest of the song. Who 'they' are is unsaid, although in the context of the vid it seems to point outwards towards anyone who is not the women on our screens. An undertone of anger rises through the verse to become the main feeling of the chorus, with its torn and jagged sound. By then, Love's voice has moved to an almost screaming anger, crying the words 'go on, take everything, take everything, I want you to', accompanied by an intense beat and more distorted guitars – a dense, noisy soundscape. The music signals anger, but also discomfort; it is not a sound to live in, it is a sound to speak and argue with, one of action. The 'everything' that is taken in the vid is the ultimate thing: life. In this section, lyrics and voice both accuse and make the viewer complicit in the actions on the visual side of the vid. The audience, and by extension the fans of the show, are part and parcel of what happens in it, through watching, supporting and loving it, regardless of what we may think of this type of plot device. We are part of the 'they' who take and take, along with the show's creators, producers etc. The vid invites us to feel anger and discomfort through the use of music, and enhances these feelings by pairing the music with uncomfortable and offensive images. We are led to share in this way another level of the vidders' offence .

In the second verse the focus is on women who are mothers, girlfriends, colleagues – recurring characters who are closer to the narrative centre of the show. This matches a shift of pronouns in the lyrics to 'I', adding to the sense of something increasingly personal or intimate. Additionally, this is a verse that has less of the opening softness of the first by virtue of the drums carrying through. The focus in the first part of the verse is on the mother of the two main characters and the girlfriend of one of them. These two are killed in the same way in the show, burning to death stuck to a ceiling, and the vid draws this out for the viewer in all its striking detail. There are other women in this verse, other ritual sacrifices, along with some who are abandoned by the main duo. The consequence of love, the vid seems to say, is to die or to be abandoned – if you are a woman. The men get to walk away, the worse for wear but still alive and in focus for the viewer. Significantly, the lyrics contain the words 'I want it again, but violent, more violence', sung in a voice which signals anger and

violence, which is what the vid delivers. When the aggressive chorus kicks in, the clips again become more action-filled, showing struggling women fighting for their lives. All of this is also sexualised, with nightgowns, skimpy costumes and writhing bodies on display, all at the site of conventionally attractive women's bodies. Here, the offence is the corruption of love, the sacrifice of women, so that men can be motivated to act or to show feelings. While the emotional tug of the music is the same, the way it is matched to images means we are understanding the different levels and layers of offensive material drawn from the visual source.

The final part, a coda, opens with a brief moment of softness, and is dedicated to female villains. At first it can feel like a moment of respite, simply due to the shift in the gender balance of the violence. Some of the women are perpetrators here, but the vid does not let the viewer forget that villains are also there to die, and brings this point home with a closing shot of a woman getting her neck broken with one horrible snap. Women can fight too, but only if they are evil, and only for a limited time. This examination of evil as the only way women can fight back is the final aspect of offence shared here by the vidders, and there is a definite shock factor in the ending of the vid. It has a final emotional punch before it fades to black, and a final impact of the felt offence is being shared with the audience. This finale communicates a sense of desperation, at first bordering on resignation, but with that last shot anger is punched through again.

As a whole, the vid is deeply disturbing. Cut off from their context and edited to focus on the issue the vidders are addressing, the clips give a strong impression of the violence in the TV show, literally to the exclusion of any other narrative. The focus on women's bodies as eroticised, even – or especially – when they are also sites of crimes, is emphasised through repetition, and if the vid is seen without any surrounding metatext or introduction it can cause offence in itself. However, one of the vidders mentions in her announcement post that she has a 'crazy, fierce, totally madlove for Supernatural', making this vid an example of critiquing with love. She also writes that: 'Just so it's clear and all – the vid could have been made using *anything* – seriously. Look around, this shit is *everywhere*' (sisabet 2007). Presumably the 'shit' sisabet refers to is the systematic sexual/ised violence against female characters and the lack of more nuanced female characters who are not victims, villains or various emotional motivation for the male characters. So *Women's Work* is an expression of offence communicated to an insider audience of

other fans by two women who are self-declared fans of the TV show they are criticising.

Sharing offence as subcultural practice

In the analysis above I point towards examples of communicated emotion, which all coalesce into the concept of fannish offence that I began this chapter with. My claim is that this offence is communicated through the vid and taken in by its audience, which I will now turn to. *Supernatural* had and has a large and active fandom, as evidenced by the number of fanworks (still) produced in its fandom (as per *Archive of Our Own*). The size and activity of the fandom is worth bearing in mind when engaging with the metatext and commentary surrounding the vid. The vid premiered at the vid convention VividCon in 2007 and was shared online afterwards. Posts by the two vidders on LiveJournal and DreamWidth announce the vid and have it embedded. These posts are where I have conducted the bulk of my reception analysis and where I quoted the vidders from. In addition, the fandom history wiki Fanlore has an entry for the vid that contains copies of commentary and links to sites where it was debated.

Despite the comment from sisabet above, stating that the vidders could have easily chosen another source with the same result, most of the commentary surrounding the vid hinges on *Supernatural* itself. The first, and most prolific, debates are from the time of the vid's release in 2007, although the last entry linked on Fanlore is from 2012, and the latest comment I found is from 2016, showing ongoing debates within fandom about both vid and show. While some discussions are now hard to find, several comments on the posts refer to raging debates elsewhere, and to anger and hate directed back at the vidders. Some of these comments mention that this anger relates to other fans' love for the show, leading one commenter to note that the vidders could have chosen another source, but that the fact that they chose this (very popular) one added to the impact of the vid. Fans may critique with love, but to experience critique levelled at something you love can hurt, and it is easy to react with dismissal, anger or offence. A comment from one of the vidders mentions that they have been accused of doing what the show does – eroticising violence towards women – by making it so blatantly obvious. This is reflected in one comment accusing the vid of having a 'medieval' view of women, showing tensions about when

and how something offensive can be debated and explored, and when and if such acts are themselves offensive.

There are also positive reactions; in fact, most of the comments I can find applaud the vid and its critique. Some commenters who were not already watching the show mention not wanting to do so after this, while some state that the vid has changed how they experience the show and made the eroticised violence more visible. In some instances, commenters mention not having been conscious of the systematic violence towards women in the show before watching the vid. The sharing of offence here is a mirroring; these commenters are offended with the vidders, not at them. By communicating their offence, the vidders have opened other fans' eyes to a problem they are passionate about. It is in these comments that the vid's potential for critique is most clearly seen.

Another fascinating point is the visceral reactions that commenters report feeling when first viewing the vid. Two go so far as to mention that they felt physically ill – and at the same time one of them says that this is their favourite *Supernatural* vid – while yet another mentions their love for vids which cause a physical response. Someone else reports shuddering when watching particular clips, and another that they have been shaken by the vid. Words like gut-punching and visceral come up several times, all pointing to bodily reactions from watching. Other words, in no particular order, are anger, disgust, horror, shock and emotional pain (several 'ow's and 'ouch'es). The bodily reasponses and the emotional impact of the vid are, as with other fan feelings, mixed and complex, but they can be understood as results of offence. This is how *Women's Work* communicates: by making the audience feel the discomfort and pain that the vidders feel when watching the TV show, showing us an example of the resonance described by Paasonen (2013). Through affect, it is possible to make sense of these varied reactions under one umbrella of offence, and to see them as productive. As a large number of comments express, the vid makes the viewers think and reflect, and at times fundamentally change how they view screen eroticisation of female suffering. Several of the comments also mention having to rewatch the vid to 'get it', that is, to reach a conclusion about the message of the vid. Others mention wanting to watch it again in order to fully receive the impact, showing that fan audiences are interested in the (loving) critique presented in the vid.

Conclusion

The comments show that within fandom itself the vid has sparked strong feelings and debates, and that its impact creates cognitive as well as physical and emotional responses. By understanding these emotions as expressions of shared offence, we can see the vid as a communicator of the feeling of being offended and of media criticism through this affective message. Using Stein, we can see this as circulating 'collective affect' (Stein 2013, 14), while acknowledging that this circulation of affect can have many, even contradictory, effects. For those of the vid's audience members who are in agreement with the critique, this offence is directed at the TV show, while for those who disagree it is directed back at the vid and at the vidders. In both cases, the offence sparks further discussion and is mirrored back and forth between the participants in the debate, providing an example of how affect is transmitted between people through online media. This affect is transmitted through a piece of creative media output, and perhaps especially through the emotive power of music. It is likely that showing a montage sans music would not have the same impact, demonstrating that the affective effect of music is something which demands attention and merits further investigation.

The example of *Women's Work* also shows how affect can be a bearer of culture and a social adhesive by transmitting feelings in an exchange between fan creators and audiences. Offended fans can use their emotions to produce responses, which in turn work to share and communicate these feelings within fandom's 'feels' culture. In the case of fans motivated by offence, we can see that love and offence are not necessarily in opposition, but can coexist and create a productive tension between themselves. Critical fandom demonstrates that the affective relations between fans and texts are complex, and that supposed contradictions can coexist. The fan motivation for creativity is not love alone, but can also be other emotions, even one as seemingly antithetical to love as offence, pointing to a more complex affective relationship between fan and text than the one commonly assumed.

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Toward an integration of musicological methods into fan video studies

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[0.1] Abstract—Methods are emerging regarding the analysis of fan videos and vidding. In an expansion of existing analytical methods, I add musical analysis to the repertoire. Assessing music on a deeper, more conscious level takes into account the affective contributions of music in vids, as well as how elements of music contribute to the structuring and creation of vids—for example, in how mood and tone of voice influence the emotional impact of a vid, and in how both rhythm and instrumentation are used by vidders in their creative process. This analytical method opens up a new and fruitful understanding of the art of vidding, the vids themselves, and the vids' creators.

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1. Introduction

[1.1] Vids are a relatively small area of studies within the field of fan studies, but they are also a growing one. As such, it is timely to take a look at the ways we study vids. I am particularly interested in looking at how fan studies has so far analyzed vids as texts, with the specific aim of extending such analyses by taking music into account. It is impossible to divorce music from the multimedia experience of watching a vid, especially given music's ability to affect an audience member's emotional response. Yet there is a gap (one I hope to begin to fill here) in the existing vid scholarship with regard to music—something other scholars have also been trying to address, notably Tisha Turk (2015) and Nina Treadwell (2018).

2. Vids

[2.1] Vids are short remix videos made by media fans. As Francesca Coppa (2008) has pointed out, vids present an argument and are a narrative art form distinct from commercial music videos and from other forms of remix video and fan-produced video content. Vids' boundaries are as blurry as any other genre divide, though it is possible to identify vids on the basis of generic conventions of aesthetics as well as creator position and intent. Drawing on the scholarship on fan vids, I here fuse existing analytical methods with methods drawn from research I have conducted on audiovisual music. The resulting method is a form of textual analysis that synthesizes tools from several different analytical modes. Of course, there is research into aspects of vids and vidding that do not rely on textual analysis, including work regarding vidding history, vid dissemination and reception, and sociological approaches to vidding culture. However, such topics are outside my scope here, where I focus strictly on an examination and expansion of textual analysis of vids.

[2.2] Textual analysis is itself a wide-ranging category that incorporates and uses a number of different approaches, and it is a common mode of analysis in fan studies. As Steve Bailey notes, textual analysis is an approach to fan works that is "particularly critical in providing a strong sense of the semiotic contours of the fan's symbolic world" (2005, 51). Further, Alan McKee (2007) argues that scholars must take fan works as seriously as we take any other text. Vids are fruitful to study at the textual level for several reasons. They are poststructural artworks; they literally deconstruct a text to examine, reconfigure, and analyze. The argument has even been made that vids contain elements of critique regardless of their actual narrative content (Lothian 2015). This deconstructive property, along with the fact that the vid can illustrate a fan's path through the text (Gray 2010), even directing the way the vidder herself reads and/or analyzes the text, makes textual analysis particularly productive as a method for vid analysis. If vids are understood as a form of analysis and/or directed reading, then applying textual analysis means using a method that is analogous to the way vids themselves work. We can thus read with the vid and the vidder, and try to follow the paths they signal to us (note 1).

[2.3] Especially in such a relatively small area of study as that of vids and vidding, it is not surprising that methods are still developing and emerging (Evans and Stasi 2014). While vids were mentioned at least as early as 1992 by both Camille Bacon-Smith and Henry Jenkins, a focus on vids as a research subject within fan studies

may likely be dated to 2008, with the publication of Francesca Coppa's foundational work in the area. Despite the relatively short time that vids have been the focus of specific scholarship, some methodological commonalities and trends have emerged.

[2.4] Among previously published vid research, several texts analyze vids on the basis of lyrics and image together, and most of these also mention music without going into detail about it. This lack likely reflects the backgrounds of the scholars performing the analysis. Present-day fan studies has contributors from many fields, though these fields' impact is not evenly distributed, with some fields better represented than others. Musicology, where I have my background, is one of the fan studies fields with a gap in the existing scholarship—one I hope to address here. Past analyses read image and lyrics together as they match up in the vids under discussion, a method that has yielded some rich and influential work. Lyrics can be understood as standing in for the music to a certain degree, as they are often an integral part of the music half of vids. However, more may be found in the music when we include the sound as well—something that becomes especially clear when we consider that there are vids that use music without lyrics. Such vids still communicate to their audiences, so music and images can be enough on their own for a vid to be successful as art and as communication. But it is time for the scholarly field of vidding to start looking more, and differently, at what music contributes to vids and to the process of vidding. As Turk notes, "Vids are not *about* music in the way commercial music videos are," but "the soundtrack to a vid is not simply background music; it is integral to vidders' creative process and central to vids' rhetorical and emotional effects on their audience" (2015, 164).

[2.5] Despite these similarities in method, the details in how the lyrics-and-images approach is used vary, not least because of the different research focuses. As Charlotte Stevens (2015) has pointed out, a small canon exists of vids that have been the subjects of academic research; some of these vids show up in multiple scholarly works. Yet the aims and details of this research differ even though the material may overlap. These previous studies have close readings of lyrics and images as a common factor. For instance, Louisa Ellen Stein (2010) deploys such a reading, describing parts of the two vids she is analyzing in terms of visual action matching the lyrics. From this, she interprets the vids and notes what she perceives they are accomplishing. Stein mentions that the music is a part of setting the mood for one of the vids she discusses, but she does not elaborate on how this specifically plays out in

the vid. However, music greatly affects audience members' readings of an audiovisual text, as well as their affective response to and immersion in such a text.

[2.6] Another close reading is that of Alexis Lothian (2015), who discusses one vid at length while drawing on a few others, providing brief examples of lyrics-and-images moments to show vidders' response to concerns about copyright. Lothian remarks on the dance beat of the song—and that the vid premiered at Club Vivid, a dance night at Vividcon, a vidding convention—to illustrate her point. Lothian's method of focusing on one vid with a strong argument, then using vids with similar points to expand on her analysis, is useful for working with vids' messages or narrative content. Because these vids have a narrative mode in common, Lothian shows that we can look at similar and contrasting ways of creating and framing any kind of argument communicated in vids, and how it is relevant to compare several vids when doing so.

[2.7] Coppa (2009) uses a different method to explore the path taken by vidders through the tropes of popular culture as explored in the vid "A Fannish Taxonomy of Hotness" by the Clucking Belles (2005). Coppa's analysis rests on an overview of what the vid is and does, with a wealth of examples drawn from particular clips in the vid. This method of giving the outline of a vid in a reading that is still close to the text but not quite as detail oriented is also one that appears in the analyses mentioned above. Coppa (2011) uses the same method elsewhere, though with shorter analyses of a selection of critical vids. Both articles have in common that they show the unique and vital role of women and feminism in vidding. Coppa's concern therefore crosses into fandom history and the role of women in that history. Sarah Fiona Winters (2012) uses a similar method to explore what two vids, "Closer," created by T. Jonesy and Killa (2004, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKaL_T1ud0o), and "On the Prowl," created by sisabet and sweetestdrain (2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M392_kRIxjA), say about fandom. She describes a particular way that these fans engage with and reflect on a text. Both articles still use lyrics-and-images-focused analytical tools, though they use them for a different purpose and by a different mode of reading than do Stein (2010) and Lothian (2015). The difference is mainly in the relative closeness of the reading versus expanding the view into wider vidding/fandom culture, practice, and history.

[2.8] This representative previous research makes it possible to draw a preliminary conclusion that textual analyses of vids have so far primarily focused on lyrics and images, with scholars using this method to address different aspects of vids, vidders,

and vid readings, as well as analyzing varying corpus sizes. These articles do indeed mention music in some capacity, albeit in passing, and recognize music's importance, but they do not further delve into the role of music. The strength of these close readings is their attention to detail, which can show a vid's excellence or a vidder's craft, and the way in which the elements of a vid come together to form a whole, which is more or different than the sum of its parts.

[2.9] To go beyond the lyrics-and-images focus of previous scholarship, we must expand our methods to include the nature of the music itself—that is, we need a musicological focus. An analysis of bironic's fan vid "The Greatest" (2018) provides a practical example (note 2). This multisource vid explores and celebrates characters of color in horror, science fiction, and fantasy over approximately the last decade of film and TV. With more than a hundred sources, the vid could easily have been confusing to view, but it is structured along thematically similar clips. Further, the clips are also structured so that the themes they examine correspond to the affective impact of the music.

Video 1. "The Greatest," multisource fan vid created by bironic for resolute (2018). One of the subtitle tracks lists each source as it plays.

[2.10] The vid's song, Sia's "The Greatest" (2016), has a melancholic note to it as well as moments of defiance, but it rises throughout to become triumphant before it fades out. bironic uses this to construct a vid that feels narratively whole: the visuals progress from fighting, to resistance, to love and kindness, and to triumphing over even death, before showing that happiness is possible in the end. bironic uses the different elements of the song to different effect—note, for example, the way bironic uses the soft B section, which focuses on the lyrics "don't give up," versus the way the vidder uses the (increasingly) powerful chorus with its central line, "I'm the greatest." The B section sounds soft, sad, and melancholic, in symmetry with the lyrics, and bironic uses this to illustrate sorrow and loss, but also to illustrate how people can come together to overcome them. These are scenes of reaching out to one another, crying together, comforting one another, even holding a dead or dying loved one. The tone of the music in these pieces lends itself well to this. It is soft, contemplative, and melancholy—moods mirrored by the characters' moods. In contrast, the chorus, which revolves around the words "the greatest," shows the many ways characters show greatness. The chorus adds power by following softer, melancholy sections and by contrasting with the subdued, then powerful, vocals, along with a shift from a

minor to a major chord as the transition happens, strengthening the shift from a feeling of longing to one of triumph. This, along with a rise in dynamics as well as in the amount of instrumentation used, creates an overall rising effect, implying strength and power while still maintaining the note of longing.

[2.11] The final chorus, which leads into the repeated "the greatest" that makes up the outro of the song, is especially strong. The effect of this final chorus is enhanced by its following a musically subdued rap, then kicking in with the full orchestration of the piece—something the vid echoes with a shot of Quake (Chloe Bennet) from *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013–) breaking out of her rock chrysalis as the chorus explodes after the subdued B section preceding it. It opens with a montage of triumph that rides on the rush of the music as the chorus begins. The combined effect is powerful in the way that a well-performed march can be a call to battle. Yet here we are called to celebrate—and also to fight for more of what we are seeing in the vid: characters of color triumphing.

[2.12] Although an impressive collection of characters and texts is included in the vid, it also illustrates the continuing disparity in casting in Western media in general by drawing attention to the many minor and one-off characters who are included. The vid also accomplishes this in part through music. By leading us to empathize with the characters, to feel their grief and joy, to be thrilled when we see scenes of triumph and overcoming obstacles, we celebrate them all, minor characters as well as leads, which also leads us to crave more of them—in turn revealing another message from the vid: that more characters of color are needed in popular culture. The vid affectively guides us via the use of music along with the images, and therein lies its power.

3. Audiovisual music

[3.1] This analysis of "The Greatest" is based on work done on audiovisual music, to which I now turn. Turk's (2015) work on integrating the understanding and analysis of music further into the study of vids is groundbreaking because it provides precedence for how to accomplish an expansion of vid analysis that more fully accounts for the role of music. Turk explains the centrality of song choice to vidders as part of the vidding process, referring to it as "generative" (2015, 165). She shows the importance of song to vidding choices, including editing and mood setting, and she shows how vidders are aware of and utilize musical structure and terminology.

Finally, Turk demonstrates that it is not only visuals that are transformed in the vid's remix but also music (note 3). The music takes on new meaning by being set to images that were previously unassociated with it. Turk's point about the transformation of the music feeds into her larger point, one crucially important to vidders, fan advocates, and legal scholars: the need for and appropriateness of copyright exemption for vidders. In the United States, such exemption hinges on the notion of transformation. The legal advocacy work done by the Organization for Transformative Works (https://www.transformativeworks.org/) is based on the premise that vids are visually transformative. But what about the auditory side? Because vidders usually use music without significantly altering it—as opposed to the obvious cutting and remixing of visuals—the fact that music is transformed by being part of a Gesamtkunstwerk is a vital point in arguing for fair use regarding vids. (The legal aspect of vids, vidding, and music is outside my scope and expertise here.)

[3.2] For the purpose of exploring methodology, the main point to be taken from Turk (2015) is that there is much to be gained for vid studies by looking toward musicology for added methods to include in our analytical toolbox. As Turk points out, although music is almost always mentioned in vid research, we can expand further into music analysis and gain much from it. Vidders are aware of the functions of music, and they use music in their creative process (Turk 2015). Indeed, in my experience, vidders speak of finding their song first, with it being the spark or idea— the generative aspect. Likewise, vidders agree that they cannot start work on a vid until they decide on a song. The song is vital for editing where beat and instrumentation are important, but it is vital also for the kind of emotional engagement that vidders wish to communicate. I turn now to a (necessarily brief) look at existing scholarship into audiovisual music, especially music that plays a part in furthering a narrative for an audience. The narrative and affective properties of audiovisual music have been studied more within film music scholarship than in related areas such as art video or music video studies, which might on the surface appear to be more applicable to vidding than film. (It seems that the musical gap in vid studies is also present in these areas.) I therefore draw on the methods of film music scholarship in what follows.

[3.3] Within musicology and film/television studies, diverging views exist on exactly how the audience experiences an audiovisual soundtrack, and what the roles of images and music are in relation to one another and as a whole. Claudia Gorbman

(1987) argues that music in film works because it is heard (as opposed to seen)—or rather, not quite heard—and notes that since Plato, music has been considered to have a more direct access to our emotions than any other art form. Her claim rests on a psychoanalytical approach as well as the idea that hearing is less immediate, or lazier, than sight, and thus easily slips into the background and into our subconscious. Kathryn Kalinak (1992) agrees, although without using the same theoretical framework. Instead, she bases her arguments in the history of acoustics and classic film music. Another key point is that music and image in a film have "mutual implication" in terms of narrative power, and that any music applied to film will "do something" (Gorbman 1987, 15). Kalinak (1992) also points to an affective link between what is seen and what is heard—an influence that goes both ways. She also speaks of a projection from the aural realm onto the visual field, and of the associative power of music to make us recall visual input—all of which Turk (2015) applies to vids. This mutual implication shows us that music influences how we read the images in a vid, and vice versa: we cannot fully understand one without the other. (This mutual implication further backs the case for vids' being transformative for their music source.)

[3.4] These two points are crucial to an understanding of what music does or contributes in vids. Mutuality is crucial to the reading of any vid. That music definitely does something is why song choice is vital to both the creation and reception of a vid. It may be viewed as something of a paradox that film music is sometimes referred to as unheard (indeed, Gorbman's 1987 book is titled *Unheard Melodies*) or considered to be music that is supposed to be unremarkable. Although I disagree in general with the assumption that audiovisual music is unheard or unremarkable, I paradoxically use this theory as a foundation when I want to listen more, and to listen with more intent, especially when considering music in vids, which is so vital to the vidding process and which is definitely intended to be heard, to the point that instrumental details and single words take on vital roles. If fan studies academics hear but do not consciously listen to what the music contributes, then are we truly hearing it?

[3.5] Vids have the power to make the audience react emotionally, and music must be part of how and why this happens. Yet discussing music and what it does is difficult. What we can do, however, is express our emotional responses, which often link, directly or indirectly, to music. Comments and feedback on fan vids do not always

make such links explicit, but commenters pointing out moments that were satisfying, or where sound and image synched up particularly well, are common, as are comments on how a vid makes someone feel—about the vid, the canon, the characters, or the wider subject matter. This ability to engage the audience emotionally is the central reason why we need to think more about music; music has strong affective properties, and that which is not consciously heard is still (subconsciously) influential. The methods used to study film music are therefore relevant to the study of fan vids because film music is explicitly meant to influence the audience's emotions and affective responses. Further, film music is created to further a narrative, which relates to the narrative and argumentative nature of vids (Coppa 2008). As fan works, vids are affective; they are created to share fan responses and feelings with other fans.

[3.6] Musical analysis can take many forms; it can study written music on its own, or it can address performance practice or study the sound. Some of these focus on what music does and how it is used (including emotional effects); others are more interested in the formal construction of music. The former can be said to be focused on the performative and affective aspects of music, whereas the latter is more concerned with music as an entity in and of itself, rather like the study of grammar or textual form. Both could be applied to vids, but my approach uses the former, more ethnographically informed mode of analysis. (If using the latter, it would isolate the music from the vid, thus defeating vids' very purpose—and mine with this article.) I also use this approach because the affective aspects of music are analyzed here, and fandom is, as Stein (2015) notes, a "feels" culture, where emotional responses and the sharing of them are central. Vids are intended to communicate emotions as part of their narrative.

[3.7] As noted above, previous scholarship on vids has focused on the lyrics-and-images moments of the texts being analyzed. I add to this a third element: music. On a formal level, most of the film music scholarship I use to construct my method focuses on sound, aided by some sheet music study as a form of written documentation of the sounds; the scholarship rarely delves into studying written music as a primary focus. As such, this music analysis is interested in what music does when heard and what it contributes in an audiovisual context. It is less interested in the formal aspects, such as tonality or melodic structure, outside the affective influences stemming from these. For example, the scholarship in film music

includes work dedicated to the meaning of particular types of music or instrumentation, such as the military inflections of a march, the heroics of horns, and the soft intensity of strings (Gorbman 1987; Kalinak 1992). However, I am more interested in considering music as a narrative and affective force in vids. Examples of this form of analysis applied to film can be found in, among others, the work of Claudia Gorbman (1987, 2006), Anahid Kassabian (2001, 2013), and Ronald Rodman (2006).

[3.8] Of these film music scholars, Kassabian (2013) is of particular interest because she is specifically interested in the affective aspect of music—not only within an audiovisual source but also in how we, as human beings living in an age where music is ever present, relate to music, including reflections on music as an identity marker. Music is often used by people within Western culture (a transcultural approach is beyond my remit here) to relate to one another, as evidenced by music preference being common on dating profiles, or as icebreakers and topics of small talk. Not much research currently exists that goes into why or how vidders select the music for their vids, although Turk (2015) touches on this, noting that vidders choose songs on the basis of personal taste and suitability for their project. Indeed, as Turk and Johnson (2012) show, reading vids within a particular fandom is based on a communal knowledge and understanding of text. The shared skill of vid watching includes reading and understanding the clips, with watchers noting the clips' original context, the lyrics, the music, and the new narrative being constructed, all at the same time. It is a specialized and demanding mode of reading, a literal "blink and you'll miss something." Of course, as they construct their own narrative or story, sometimes vids will use clips to signify something outside their original context—for example, repurposing a clip to illustrate something that never happened in the canonical text. Academic readings of vids are largely analogous to this fannish approach, meaning that vid scholars are directly building on fan practice and knowledge.

[3.9] There are particularly strong parallels between the use of preexisting music in film (a praxis sometimes colloquially, and datedly, termed a "needle drop"), especially popular music, that provides the soundtrack to the majority of vids and the use of music in vids (Duffett 2014). While the previously mentioned scholarship has primarily dealt with compositions created for a specific film, film music scholarship also exists on the use of preexisting music in film, some of which is collected in Phil

Powrie and Robynn Stilwell's aptly named edited volume, *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film* (2006). Its chapters explore this theme in various ways, especially Ronald Rodman's exploration of popular songs as leitmotifs and Vanessa Knights's work on the queerness of mismatched gender between the voice in a song and the perceived gender of the performer. Rodman likens the relationship with specific songs in certain films to the use of leitmotifs (originally popularized by Wagner in his operas), such as those used by John Williams. However, Rodman also notes that the ways popular songs signify a character are different than other forms of scoring. Style and associations with the songs play into the audience's perception of a character. His example is Vincent Vega (John Travolta) from *Pulp Fiction* (1994). He also shows how this can be true with an entire film, as per Iggy Pop and (especially) "Lust for Life" in *Trainspotting* (1996), a film that also uses different music styles for each of its characters in order to tell us something more about them. The way songs are linked to public perception of a character or film in Rodman's work has an analogy in vid watching, where repeated viewings of a vid can lead audiences (as per my own experience) to associate a song with a character or text.

[3.10] The key to vid analysis's being a simultaneous reading of both image and sound leads me directly to another key scholar. Michel Chion (1994) is interested in the ways music directly interacts with images. He claims that there is no soundtrack and film but rather that both must be considered as a whole. The same is true for vids: consider the moments when the audience member (and the vidder) feels that a particular match of image, sound, and lyrics is particularly well created. Chion uses the term "synchresis" to refer to the vertical coreading of sound and image (and, for fan vids, I would argue, lyrics) as they happen together. Chion poetically refers to it as "the forging of an immediate and necessary relationship between something one sees and something one hears" (1994, 5).

[3.11] To turn to my exemplar text, this forging perfectly encapsulates bironic's matching moments of rising, stretching wings, and exploding out of bonds to a rising musical moment in "The Greatest." Such a relationship can also be applied to moments where the image and the lyrics show the same thing, thereby expressing a literalism. In "The Greatest," such instances are clearly seen in the rapped section of the vid, where literal matches appear. The words "pay dues" aptly illustrate a clip of Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan) from the film *Black Panther* (2018) as he cries at the

memory of his father's death—a scene where paying your dues to your ancestors is in play in several levels of the plot. But the clip alludes to more than this text; it could also be seen as drawing on Jordan's past appearances in the TV serial *The Wire* (2002–8) and the film *Creed* (2015), where his characters have similar responsibilities to pay their dues and live up to paternal names and expectations. This clip therefore functions as both literal and symbolic literalism at once. Such matches make up much of how vids are created and read.

4. Audiovisual analysis

[4.1] What remains to be explored here is what this analytical approach actually does, and how it differs from and adds to existing methods. This may be illustrated by some exemplary moments that will show the importance of music in vid analysis.

[4.2] On the level of editing, vidders use rhythm as an editing tool (Coppa 2008; Turk 2015). However, instrumentation is used as well. Vidders will match visual movement to a riff, or they will make an effect or impactful moment match an auditory effect, such as the crash of a drum. This may extend to matching one instrument to another, often similar, instrument being played on screen (note 4), or even, though rarely, implying that drawn-out vocals are sung not by the song's vocalist but by someone in the vid. Shorter vocal matches may also occur, but these are harder to spot because of the quick pace of vid editing. Although these examples may not add to a deep understanding of the meaning or narrative of a vid, they are testament to the skill, technical knowledge, and creativity of the vidder, as well as to the level of detail that goes into the production of vids—not just the details in the visual editing but also the care that goes into the use of music. They may also serve as part of setting the mood for a vid, as such effects can be used humorously or seriously. There is a world of difference between signaling a character's proficiency with a musical instrument and lip-synching an "aaaaah" to someone who might in fact have been screaming or laughing in the clip's original context. Although such effects are rare in vidding, they are a particularly visually strong use of music and therefore worth emphasizing.

[4.3] As I note above, the mood or tone of a song profoundly influences the production and reception of a vid. Turk (2015), for example, shows how vidders consider the particular fit of a song to their vid idea. When watching a vid, mood and tone are important in understanding its narrative. For some vids, this may be more

significant than for others. In vids such as "Women's Work," by Luminosity and sisabet (2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4E7T5klLLM), the anger performed in the song, especially in the voice of singer Courtney Love (singing "Violet," 1994, as a member of the group Hole), is important: this vid is not a celebration of the moments of violence toward women presented in the vid but rather a critique of it, as well as a reflection of the anger felt by many fans toward such treatment of female characters. Likewise, it is hard to imagine a deeply felt shipping vid that does not use a song with a fitting emotional impact. In character study vids, the song acts as a window into the emotional inner life of the character, and the mood is as important to take into consideration as the lyrics. Is this a person who feels profound sadness, or is it someone who is essentially an optimist? The music will guide that understanding. Are we in the territory of melancholy singer-songwriters or upbeat dance music? This is not (just) about genre, though genre factors into it, but about tone of voice, style of singing, key, instrumentation, beat, production, orchestra size, presence of backing vocals—in other words, every detail of a piece of music. What I am here referring to as mood may also influence vidding down to small moments; dynamics and instrumentation also influence vidding production, and this is reflected in mood as well. When a song swells (when the dynamics increase), it is natural for the vid to rise in intensity too, and when it becomes quieter, the vid follows. The affective relationship between vid and audience here becomes particularly poignant. Songs that increase in intensity toward a climax, such as a power ballad or a hard rock anthem, do so in a similar manner, but with a different emotional impact: listening to Whitney Houston is not the same experience as listening to Rage against the Machine, even if the songs these two artists are known for rise in intensity in analogous ways. Even two recordings of the same orchestral piece can have different emotional impacts—not to mention what happens with cover versions of songs.

[4.4] The problem with analyzing music is that it is hard to quantify a mood or an emotional impact; we do not all experience a song the same way—although some basics will almost always be at the very least similar. For example, a romantic ballad may be joyful or melancholy to listeners based on their life experiences or current mood, but listeners will not be likely to understand the song as communicating anger. This links back to what Gorbman (1987), writing within the context of Western art music, explores regarding the universality of some musical experiences.

But differing readings of a text are hardly unheard of; certainly we are generally unused to considering music in this way, although we do it with literature and film all the time. Conflicting interpretations of other forms of art coexist within both the academy and the wider world, not necessarily easily or harmoniously, but we recognize that multiple readings are possibly, perhaps even simultaneously, valid. This must be true for music as well. When considering a vid, which can (and perhaps should) be understood as a Gesamtkunstwerk, it is not remarkable that interpretations may differ among the audience, and that the impact of the music can be part of this. In other words, although such differing interpretations should be taken into consideration, they do not invalidate the importance of music to understanding vids.

[4.5] Before finishing this brief rundown of how music analysis can add to vid analysis, I want to mention voice specifically. This topic deserves more exploration than I have been able to afford it so far because it is how the lyrics, one of the three parts of a vid, are communicated. Voice is a particularly interesting aspect of music, and in vidding, it plays a unique role. As Turk (2015) notes, the "I" in a song becomes the de facto "I" of the character in focus in a vid, and as Turk also points out, some vidders will choose a cover of a song to match the gender of the voice of their protagonist. This demonstrates the importance of point of view in a vid song as well as the importance of congruence in the portrayal of characters. However, sometimes the genders of the song's "I" and the vid's "I" do not match. Vanessa Knights (2006) explores what happens when song gender and performer gender do not match, and while she focuses on lip-syncing and sing-alongs in film, there are parallels to be made to vids. Knights refers to the effect of this as the song's being "transexuated," although I think a better term for the effect might be cross-voicing, as this is more a case of gender play (or trouble) and not about a shift in the performer's gender identity. What does it mean if Iron Man expresses his inner life through the voice of Regina Spector? Is this significantly different from when his voice is that of Steve Tyler? What does it mean if I know of more vids where he has a female voice than I know of vids where Captain America does? Gender is something that vidders take care to match between singer and character, so it begs a closer look when they do not do so. Which types of characters are cross-voiced, and how? Are there are any patterns pointing toward different masculinities and femininities being explored in the vids in question, while taking into account voices that defy gender stereotypes,

such as countertenors, and voices that belong to transgender or nonbinary artists? This topic deserves more analysis than I can provide here.

5. Conclusion

[5.1] Adding music to critical examinations of vids opens up a whole new dimension of analysis; it includes a vital aspect of vids and vidding that has been too little dealt with. Adding musicological methods adds another tool to the toolbox of fan studies scholars. Vid viewers all read differently, but discounting music would effectively be ignoring half of the vid. It is therefore doubly important to address the music and its characteristics apart from lyrics. It is past time for scholars of vids to make the subconscious conscious and the unheard heard.

6. Notes

1. bironic has kindly provided consent to the vid's being included in the wider research project of which this article is a part. Luminosity and sisabet's "Women's Work" has a blanket permission for study—something I ascertained as part of a previous publication (Svegaard 2019). I would like to thank all three vidders for their generosity—and their amazing vids.

2. Several vid scholars are also vidders themselves, and have spoken and written about this as part of their academic work. For example, Louisa Ellen Stein spoke about her vidding as part of her keynote address at the Fan Studies Network conference in 2017 at the University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom. I myself am working on my first vid. This scholar-creative overlap is not uncommon in fan studies as whole, where many scholars find themselves in both academic and fan groups at once (thus the term "acafan"), but it is worth mentioning here to acknowledge that vidding practice and research can go hand in hand.

3. Camille Bacon-Smith notices this as well, pointing out that "the artist deconstructs the text of both source products—video and audio—and reconstructs not only their forms but in many cases their messages" (1992, 176), when vids were referred to as songtapes, reflecting their medium at the time: VHS tapes. Copyright issues were far different at the time before online file sharing was widespread, so Bacon-Smith does not go into this part of the debate.

4. For whatever reason, I have seen this most often with violins, perhaps because of the pleasing visuals of a bow stroking strings, which illustrates the sound better than, for example, a piano key being struck.

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