

MAKING EUROPEAN CULT CINEMA: FAN PRODUCTION IN AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY

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PREFACE

Extracts from chapter two have been published in the chapter '*Sound and Vision*' *Radio Documentary, Fandom and New Participatory Cultures* (co-authored with Sam Coley) from the forthcoming book *The Music Documentary: Acid Rock to Electropop* (Halligan, Edgar, Fairclough-Issacs, 2013). This chapter is included in section B of the appendices.

A version of chapter six has been published in the chapter '*Slash Production*': *Objectifying the Serial 'Kiler' in Euro-Cult Cinema Fan Production* from the forthcoming book *Murders and Acquisitions: Representations of the Serial Killer in Popular Culture* (MacDonald, 2013). This chapter is included in section C of the appendices.

Extracts from chapter seven have been translated to Italian and published in the chapter '*Sharing All'Italiana* – *The Reproduction and Distribution of the Giallo on Torrent File-Sharing Websites* from the forthcoming book *The Piracy Effect* (Braga and Caruso, 2013). This chapter is included in section D of the appendices.

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ABSTRACT

Making European Cult Cinema: Fan Production in an Alternative Economy

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This study gives attention to the fan production surrounding European cult cinema, low budget exploitation films often in the horror genre, that engage a high level of cultural commitment and investment from its fans. It addresses wider issues of debate relating to why people are fans and whether they are anything more than obsessive in their consumption of media. The academic study of fandom is relatively a new area, the formative year being 1992 when studies such as Henry Jenkins' *Textual Poachers*, Lisa Lewis' *The Adoring Audience* and Camille Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women* approached fandom as a cultural activity. Studies such as these celebrate fandom and focus on fan production as a symbolic activity rather than an economic activity. Academics have only recently have academics recognised the commitment, time and effort that fans invest when producing artefacts.

I explore the ways European cult cinema fandom might be understood as an alternative economy of fan production by looking at how fans produce artefacts and commodities. It uses a method of data collection, which includes ethnographic observation and interviews, focused on public offline and online fan activities, and my own personal experiences as autoethnography. The collected data is interrogated using a theoretical framework that incorporates ideas from cultural studies and political economy: using the concept of an 'alternative economy' of European cult cinema fan production. The purpose being to interpret an object of fandom as a production of meaning, physical artefacts and commodities, therefore understanding fandom as both cultural and economic production.

I argue that, in this alternative economy, fans are 'creative' workers, using digital technologies to produce artefacts that are exchanged as gifts or commodities; this practice relating to repertoires of professionalism. I find that fans are not just producing artefacts and commodities relating to European cult cinema, but that through these processes they are culturally and economically making what has become known as European cult cinema.

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INTRODUCTION

This study gives attention to the fan production activities surrounding European cult cinema, low budget exploitation films often in the horror genre, that engage a high level of cultural commitment and investment from its fans. The majority of academic work has focused on European cult cinema as a fan object rather than questioning how the fan object emerged and has been made significant. To study European cult cinema fandom, particularly the production of texts and artefacts, I take a holistic approach that combines ideas from the disciplines of cultural studies and political economy to examine how fan production can be understood as an economic activity, or, as I term it, an alternative economy. This addresses the limitations of past studies of fan production, which have tended to celebrate fandom as a cultural activity rather than considering the time, effort and money fans invest in their production. Empirical data was sourced using a combination of data collection methods, merging observation and interviews of public offline and online fan activities, informed by my own personal experiences as a fan. I found that fans of European cult cinema are not only involved in a cultural activity of meaning creation, but that they also produce artefacts and commodities relating to their fandom, often with some economic benefit. I argue that it is through these cultural and economic processes that the fans I studied actively make what has become known as European cult cinema.

The idea for this study emerged from my own fandom of European cult cinema. In 1996 I read a review of a film named *Deep Red* (aka. *Profondo Rosso*, Dario Argento, 1975) in a 1994 issue of the British horror magazine *The Dark Side*. Being a teenage horror film fan, the violent representations of murder and the challenging ‘whodunnit’ aspect of film, described in the review, led me to seek the film out. The cover of the Redemption VHS tape, reprinted in the review also attracted me. The front cover used an enigmatic black and white image that seemed to show shards of glass

underneath the head of a woman; it was quite different to anything else that I had seen. On a shopping trip to Birmingham city centre, I found the tape for sale in a branch of the now defunct entertainment store *Tower Records* and, being under 18, I managed to persuade a parent to purchase the film for me. As soon as I returned home I watched the film. The style of the film, though the composition was compromised due to pan and scan cropping, was an assault on the senses. The strange settings, unusual architecture, progressive rock soundtrack, violent murders and odd narrative structure were unlike anything I had experienced before. But the most vivid aspect of the film was its ‘hook’ where Argento gives away the identify of the films murderer early on, though it is carefully hidden. At the end of the film, refusing to believe that I had missed this early give away, I immediately re-watched it. This marked the beginning of an obsession with Italian cult cinema, particularly a movement of 1970s Italian filmmaking known as the *giallo*, that continues to this current day. Being eager to view more *gialli*, I discovered a highly organised British fan community devoted to European cult cinema that produced and distributed fanzines, videos and other related artefacts through mail order, film fairs and, eventually, the internet, that had been in existence since the mid 1980s. Within this community of fan producers were a number of fan run enterprises that made money from selling fan produced texts, such as fanzines and lavishly produced books that focused on European cult cinema.

As I became a scholar, as well as a fan, of European cult cinema I noticed how this specific community of fans differed significantly to other popular fan communities that had been discussed and reported in academic literature. The academic study of fandom is relatively a new area, the formative year being 1992. According to Jensen (1992), academic studies prior to this date often pathologised fandom, viewing fans as “obsessed” individuals or being part of a “hysterical crowd” (9). In 1992 a number of studies emerged, such as Henry Jenkins’ (1992a) *Textual Poachers*, Lisa Lewis’ (1992) edited collection *The Adoring Audience* and Camille Bacon-Smith’s (1992) *Enterprising Women*. Studies such as these celebrated fandom and focused on fan

production being a symbolic activity rather than an economic activity. Fiske (1992) attempts to bridge the gap between these two terms, introducing his idea of fandom being a “shadow cultural economy” where fans use cultural capital rather than economic capital as a way to legitimise their fandom (30). Within this economy fans graduate from producing “semiotic meaning”, such as pleasures that derive from media texts they consume to “textual production” that is distributed amongst the fan community. For Fiske, fan produced texts are indicators of cultural capital. What Fiske seems keen to avoid, though, is any consideration of the conditions in which such texts are produced, because he regards them as being “non-for-profit” or loss-making, with no economic return on investment.

Only recently have academics recognised the commitment, time and effort that fans invest when producing artefacts. Jeroen de Kloet and Liesbet van Zoonen (2007) identify that the “political-economical context in which media texts are produced and consumed” is under-represented in fan studies (336). Eileen Meehan (2000) combined fan ethnography and political economy to demonstrate how fan activity is shaped by media conglomerates and their desire to commoditise what she refers to as “leisure time”, the time outside of work that fans use to engage in fan activity. From Meehan’s perspective it can be determined that fan activity, including the act of fan production, is a way that media companies take advantage of fans to encourage further consumption of long standing media texts. Meehan uses the example of *Star Trek* to demonstrate how media companies use fans as a way to increase their profits. Other studies, such as those by Simone Murray (2004), Alan McKee (2004) and Abigail De Kosnik (2012b), take a similar approach to Meehan (2000), conceptualising the fan as a worker whose practices are often exploited by the powerful. Here fandom goes beyond being a cultural activity alone, it is also an economic activity.

This study seeks to both contribute and further the debate surrounding fans as workers by exploring the ways European cult cinema fandom might be understood as an ‘alternative economy’ of fan

production. I use the term alternative economy to indicate how fan artefacts are produced and distributed. This idea builds on Colin Williams' (2006) research into what he terms the underground economy and hidden enterprise cultures. I identify an alternative economy of fan production as having three features: firstly, the advancement of digital technologies turning fans into workers; secondly, fan produced texts are instead artefacts that are exchanged as both gifts and commodities; and finally, rules and regulations, such as intellectual property laws, are commonly circumvented, manipulated and countered by fans.

My research seeks to explore a central question:

In what ways, and with what implications, can European cult cinema fandom be understood as an alternative economy of fan production?

To answer this question I looked at how fans produce artefacts and commodities, using a method of data collection that I refer to as 'combined ethnography'; an approach which addresses the limitations of previous ethnographic studies of fandom highlighted within the field. My approach to method includes ethnographic observation and interviews, focused on public offline and online fan activities, and my own personal fan experiences as autoethnography. I interrogated the data collected using a theoretical framework that incorporates ideas from cultural studies and political economy, using the concept of an 'alternative economy' of European cult cinema fan production to integrate these approaches. My purpose here was to interpret an object of fandom as simultaneously a production of meaning, physical artefacts and commodities, therefore understanding fandom as both cultural and economic production. I argue that, in this alternative economy, fans are 'creative' workers using digital technologies to produce artefacts that are exchanged as gifts or commodities, this practice relating to repertoires of professionalism. I find that fans are not just producing artefacts and commodities relating to European cult cinema, but I argue that through these processes they are culturally and economically making what has become known as European cult cinema.

The theoretical framework pertaining to the cultural and economic practices of European cult cinema fan production is considered in chapters one, two and three. Chapter one examines how the fan has been conceptualised in academia. I discuss how fan studies itself can be considered a fan construction, a product of the blurring of roles between fan and academic, or as I term it 'fancademia'. I suggest that this has led to fan studies celebrating fandom as a symbolic activity at the expense of it being studied as an economic activity. In chapter two I argue for a reconceptualisation of the fan by introducing ideas from political economy into traditional approaches of cultural studies. I discuss past studies that have attempted to merge the two approaches, and I define my concept of the alternative economy. Chapter three explores the definition of European cult cinema, the object of study for this thesis. I establish that European cult cinema is a fan-determined category and explore how academics have attempted to define and investigate this area of cult film.

In chapter four I discuss how I researched the alternative economy of fan production. I begin the chapter by outlining the advantages and also limitations of utilising an ethnographic approach to study fan cultures. I then introduce the combined ethnography model on which I based my study and show how this is rooted in a response to the limitations of studying fan cultures from an ethnographic approach, as indicated by Hills (2002) and Meehan (2000). I close the chapter by describing how I carried out my ethnography of the European cult cinema fan economy and how I responded to the ethical issues I encountered while conducting the research.

Chapter five gives context for the chapters concerned with my research findings that follow. Here I historicise the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, considering how it originated and developed in the United Kingdom. Drawing on data collected using the combined ethnography approach, including interviews conducted with those involved in the economy and the texts, and secondary literature, I suggest that a combination of the DIY ethos of punk, a plethora of

fanzines on horror cinema and the advent of VHS technology led to the forming of an economy centred around European cult cinema. I look at how three ‘fantrepreneurs’ set up their own businesses in this newly established market, which specialised in producing fan publications. This demonstrates how fan production can be understood as a economic activity.

Chapters six, seven and eight each discuss different forms of fan production that take place in the alternative economy. Chapter six considers how one of the fantrepreneurs discussed in chapter five responded to changes in the fan economy by diversifying his production, moving from producing fanzines to making films that are inspired by European cult cinema. Drawing on an interview conducted with the director of these films, Roman Nowicki, I offer an insight into how Nowiki identified a growing demand in the fan economy and produced films that were intended to meet this demand for new European cult cinema texts. I use the example of Nowiki’s first film, *Fantom Kiler* (1998), a crudely produced yet over stylised tribute to the *giallo* film, to argue that Nowiki’s films are an example of what I refer to as ‘slash production’: a form of fan production that focuses on serial murder and highly sexualised content. I suggest that Nowiki used the object of the serial killer in *Fantom Kiler*, the common antagonist found in many typical *gialli* narratives, purposely for fan pleasure and profit.

In chapter seven I argue that the file-sharing website *CineTorrent* acts as factory of fan production, where fan production is both encouraged and rewarded. I show how the structure, organisation and rules of *CineTorrent* have two primary objectives for its membership: to engage members in the archiving of cult film and to encourage user-generated content that is exclusive to the community. I demonstrate this by focusing on a particular area of the website named ‘The Giallo Project’ where fans of European cult cinema work collaboratively in order to make available films that remain commercially unreleased. I suggest that these activities are a response to current market conditions that have rendered further releases of *gialli* on DVD commercially unviable.

Chapter eight considers how fantreneurs are starting online enterprises, or as I describe them, 'informal enterprises', to distribute fan products as exchangeable commodities. I look at variety of informal enterprises, starting with those that use the traditional economic model of 'supply and demand' to produce and distribute their goods, and those who are using manufacturing-on-demand (MOD) services as a less riskier and more economically beneficial way to produce and distribute fan artefacts. I refer to this new economic model as 'demand and supply' and consider how it presents new opportunities for fan production in the alternative economy of European cult cinema.

The dissertation concludes that fans are not just producing artefacts related to European cult cinema, but are engaged in a greater activity where they are culturally and economically making what is known as European cult cinema. I suggest that the field of fan studies now needs to take into consideration how fans are involved in making fandoms, indicating that further research needs to be done in order to discover how other fandoms have been culturally and economically made.

CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTUALISING THE FAN

In the following three chapters I establish a theoretical framework for the cultural and economic practices of European cult cinema fan production that are discussed in this dissertation. The purpose of this first chapter is to consider how academic studies have conceptualised the fan. In chapter two, I attempt to re-conceptualise the fan by introducing ideas from political economy into traditional approaches of cultural studies. I describe how past academic work has attempted to merge the two approaches in order to study fandom as an economic activity and then introduce my concept of the alternative economy as a way to study fandom as both a cultural and economic activity. In chapter three, I explore the processes through which European cult cinema, the object of study for this dissertation, has been defined. I discuss how the term European cult cinema was a category created by fans and explore how academics have attempted to define and investigate this area of cult film. I close by showing how Italian cult film has a significant role within European cult cinema and that little attention has been given to exploring the fandom related to it. In this chapter, then, I start by showing how fan studies has been shaped by what I term ‘fancademia’, a product of the blurring of roles between fan and academic. I argue that this had pushed fan studies in a particular direction, with much of the existing work on fandom being the object of the authors’ fandom. This has led to what I describe as a celebration of fandom, which has focused on fan activity as a cultural process rather than an economic process.

1.1. Fancademia

Over the past six years I have attended a number of academic conferences, some specialist and some general, and have noticed a considerable amount of discussion to be from the perspective of a

fan rather than an academic. This was evidenced at a recent cult film conference where one specific paper I observed sought to justify how the presenter had come to tolerate a sequel to the *Friday the 13th* franchise that he had not previously enjoyed. Such observations highlight how the boundaries between the academic and fan have become increasingly blurred, creating what I term fancademia. I argue that this rise in fancademia privileges writing about the media text at the expense of thinking about the conditions in which these texts are produced or received, becoming an extension of the scholar's fandom. I also suggest that this privileging is encouraged by certain publishers, such as the American publishing house McFarland, who target fancademic works at fan audiences as well as the academic market.

The similarities and differences between the scholar and fan are an area of recent debate in academia, being concerned with how this "moral-dualism" might raise questions about author subjectivity and the integrity of academic work (Hills, 2002). According to Matt Hills (2002), the term "academic fan" was first mentioned in the work of Richard Burt (1998). Burt's view of the academic fan is rather negative and can be seen as further evidence of the "pathologising" of the fan in academia (Jensen, 1992). Simon Frith (1992) identifies the similarities between academic and fan, suggesting that both groups share a similar trait in that they intellectualise the media they consume. From this view, an academic's object of study will often relate to their fandom; their work is the product of their obsession. For scholars like Burt (1998) this presents a problem as it can undermine the quality of academic work, the author's fandom being an alibi that allows them to be less objective. When questioning Burt's (1998) views, Hills (2002) uses the work of Graham Doty (2000) to demonstrate how being open about one's fandom has relevance in academic work, providing that it does not break the boundaries of respectability by becoming too informal. In reviewing this problem, Hills (2002) uses the terms "scholar-fan" and "fan-scholar", the former being the academic who admits that they are a fan in their academic work and the latter being the fan who adopts an academic approach to writing about their fandom, although they may not be

academically trained. Hills believes that the two groups face similar problems, both being devalued by their communities. Scholar-fans are seen by other academics to not be legitimate scholars whilst fan-scholars are viewed by the fan community as being pompous and lacking authenticity. Conflict also exists between the two groups. Camille Bacon-Smith's (1992) research into the science fiction fan community reveals that fans mistrust academics, feeling they are being 'used' as research subjects. I encountered this mistrust first-hand when I commenced the research for this study; I discuss this at length in chapter four. In order to address this issue of trust, Henry Jenkins (1992a) stresses that it is important for the academic fan to be open about their fandom. This is the approach Jenkins chose when researching science fiction fandom, aligning himself with the fan community by regularly attending fan conventions and allowing fans to be involved in his research by reading drafts of his work.

The difficulty of merging the roles of academic and fan has been discussed by I.Q. Hunter (2000) in his study of the film *Showgirls* (Paul Verhoeven, 1995). Hunter positions his defence of enjoying the film, which is generally regarded as a 'bad' film, as a fan rather than an academic. This results in the occupying of a position that falls between the roles academic and fan, a position Hunter believes necessary to defend his appreciation of a cult text. As a self-identified fan who is an academic I find it necessary to occupy such a position in order to be able to thoroughly interrogate fan communities. The author's fandom is important in helping to gain trust and acceptance from the community, eradicating the problems Bacon-Smith (1992) discusses. A possible issue arising out of this combining of roles is that it can lead to academic work that is the product of the author's fandom. I argue that approaching a study as a fan can raise questions of subjectivity, but also fails to ask significant questions how about how texts are produced and received. From this view, Hills' (2002) roles of scholar-fan and fan-scholar are becoming further integrated, producing what I term fancademia.

Fancademia is evidenced in academic work that is based on the cult text. These publications are targeted at an academic audience, but also a fan audience. An example of this can be found in the wealth of publications that surround cult television texts. Typically these publications have been based on texts belonging to the science fiction or fantasy genre that have distinct fan followings, including *Doctor Who* (Tulloch and Alvarado, 1983; Booy, 2012), *Star Trek* (Geraghty et al, 2007; Greven, 2009) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Levine and Parks, 2008; Kirby-Diaz, 2009). More recently, studies of shows such as *Sex and the City* (Akass and McCabe, 2003), *The Sopranos* (Lavery, 2006), *Desperate Housewives* (McCabe and Akass, 2006) and *Crime Scene Investigation* (Allen, 2007) have taken advantage of the wide audience these popular television shows have. In addition to publications on television shows there is also work that focuses on the auteur status of directors such as Quentin Tarantino (Smith, 2005; Woods, 2005; Gallafent, 2006) Tim Burton (Smith, 2005), David Lynch (Todd, 2004) and Martin Scorsese (Grist, 1996) who have cult followings. All of these examples demonstrate how publishers encourage fancademic work that appeals to an academic and a fan audience as a way to encourage sales.

One specific academic publisher is McFarland and Company. Based in the United States, McFarland specialise in publishing books on a variety of academic and non-academic subjects, but are known for their publications focused on popular culture. Of interest here are the titles that they release, which are devoted to niche areas of cult film and television. For example, there are publications that focus on the character of Dracula in popular film (Browning and Picart, 2011), the 'sword and sandal' film genre (Cornelius, 2011) and general horror cinema (Derry, 2009).

However, a significant number of their publications are reference books that serve as catalogues of film rather than academic studies (Derry, 2001; Dendle, 2011). My own awareness of the publisher came from *Video Watchdog*, a magazine for cult film fans, which reviews McFarland books in each edition of the magazine. A publisher such as McFarland further highlights the 'fanning' of the academy that I discuss here. Their covers are garish, indicating their desire to appeal more to a fan

audience than an academic one. The British fan publishing house FAB Press is another example. Though not explicitly a publisher of academic work, FAB Press has produced academic titles, such as Harper and Mendik (2000). However, their publications are aimed mainly at a fan audience as objects of desire, using high quality paper stock, colour stills and having limited print runs. They also draw on scholarly conventions such as textual analysis and citation. Some of the authors are former contributors to British horror fanzines and magazines and focus on European cult cinema (Jones, 2004, 2012; Thrower, 2000). I discuss FAB Press' publications in more detail in chapter three and focus on the development of this fan enterprise in chapter five.

In her thesis on the scholar fan, Tanya Cochran (2009) indicates that the scholar-fan is a “fluid term” that is constantly reinvented by academia. The literature I discuss here supports Cochran's argument, showing how certain publishers, in pursuit of greater sales, have targeted the fan audience. The combining of fan scholarship, where the object of study is related to the author's fandom, and the market for books that focus on the fan object suggest the existence of fancademia. For the remainder of this chapter I discuss the development of fancademia and the role that this has played in conceptualising the fan. I suggest that this has pushed fan studies in a particular direction, where fandom has been celebrated in academic work as a cultural activity. Firstly, in order to show how fancademia has been constructed, I focus on how the fan has been defined in academic work.

1.2. Defining the fan

For Hills (2002), attempting to define fandom is “no easy task” (ix). The formative year of fan studies is evidently 1992, when the work of Lewis (1992), Jenkins (1992a) and Bacon-Smith (1992) was published. Prior to this, according to Joli Jensen (1992), studies of fandom were predominately from the field of psychology, where fans were viewed as being either part of a “hysterical crowd” or as the “obsessed individual” (9). Jensen sees this as as the ‘pathological view’ of fandom which

emerged from the negative representations of fans in the media, such as the hysterical female Beatles fan, the Elvis impersonator and individuals such as Mark David Chapman, who murdered his 'idol', John Lennon. This is a view repeatedly portrayed in film representations of fans. Eckhart Schmidt's *Der Fan* (1982), Ed Bianchi's *The Fan* (1981) and Tony Scott's *The Fan* (1996), for example, have all made use of mentally unhinged fan, whose obsession with a celebrity ultimately evolves into violence. It is unsurprising that this representation remains commonplace, considering that the term fan is derived from the word fanatic (Ross and Nightingale, 2003: 122). Cochran (2009) identifies that word 'fan' first appeared in America when sports writers sought to find a way to describe the activities of baseball fans in the late 19th century, the word being shortened from "fanatic" or "fancy" (48). Cochran notes the use of 'fancy' in 19th century England to "describe enthusiasts of boxing, among other hobbies and sports" (48). This shows the limiting nature of the term fan. If used in its literal sense it still carries these particular connotations of obsession and hysteria yet, as other studies I discuss in the chapter have shown and as I will demonstrate in this dissertation, fans are highly organised and motivated beings. Mathijis and Sexton (2011) see the emergence of fan studies in the early 1990s to be a response to this "demonisation" of fans in the media and also in academia (57).

The early 1990s saw the publication of studies that remain highly influential. However, prior to 1992, not all academic work viewed fandom in such a negative light, looking at fan activity as being evidence of a highly active audience (Tulloch and Alvarado, 1983; Bradley, 1985; Lamb and Veith, 1986). An important aspect of these three studies is that they were written by academics who were fans of science fiction centred texts, emphasising how fan studies was formed by fancademics. Like Hills (2002), my reading of Jenkins' (1992a) *Textual Poachers* an undergraduate media and cultural studies student proved to be a formative experience. The book raised my awareness and understanding of the practices that I engaged and still engage in, even though my fandom was not specifically related to science fiction. Jenkins, being aware that fandom was still entrenched with

negative connotations, shows that fans engage in forms of production, ranging from the production of meaning to the production of texts. For Jenkins, fans do not just reproduce features from their chosen interest but instead “manufacture” their own texts (45). Taking ideas from the work of Michel de Certeau (1984), Jenkins identifies that fans of television programmes ‘poach’ from them in order to create alternative media texts (24-27). I will explore this idea of poaching later in this chapter, suggesting that Jenkins’ use of this term does not fully address the role of poacher as being a law breaker.

Before the publishing of *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins (1992b) outlined his model of fandom in a chapter found in Lewis (1992). Here Jenkins proposes a model of fandom that operates on four different levels, my summaries of each level follow:

1. Fans adopt a distinctive mode of reception - fans have a more intensive, active and social mode of reception than other media consumers.
2. Fandom constitutes a particular interpretative community - fans engage in debate, offering differing perspectives and interpretations of media texts in newsletters, fanzines and fan clubs.
3. Fandom constitutes a particular art world - fans produce and distribute texts amongst the community.
4. Fandom constitutes an alternative social community - a non face-to-face community separate to the one they inhabit in the real world. These alternative communities are often populated by marginalised groups, giving them a space to talk about their unique interests.

(Jenkins, 1992b: 209-213)

While useful in helping to define fandom, Jenkins’ “precise” model implies that all fans operate on each of these levels, not addressing the complex nature of fan participation. For example, certain fans might not choose to engage in the alternative social community or participate in the interpretive community; some do not graduate beyond the first level, being devoted consumers of media. Bacon-Smith (1992) similarly identifies this multi-faceted nature of fandom from her ethnographic research into the science fiction fan community. For Bacon-Smith, fans use the term “fandom” as a way to “designate several different distinct levels of social organisations” (22). This becomes increasingly complex when Smith attempts to apply this to her object of study. Smith, sees the entire science fiction community as a fandom, yet the smaller factions within the

community, such as the *Star Wars* fan fiction community, she also identifies as a fandom. From this perspective, there are fandoms within fandoms, which Smith believes indicate “filtering levels of participation” and also “intensity” (23). To alleviate this complexity she uses the term “interest groups” as a way to help define the smaller fan communities she discusses. This again shows the difficulties one can encounter when attempting to define fandom.

In an attempt to address this issue, Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst (1998) present a continuum of fandom where fans have varying levels of participation. They see fandom as consisting of three specific groups: “fans, enthusiasts and cultists” (138-139). For Abercrombie and Longhurst, fans are followers of a particular media text they consume. They do not belong to any particular group and do not move beyond being a consumer that has a particular attachment to, perhaps, a television show, musician or film genre. Abercrombie and Longhurst, for example, identify fans as typically being young children because of their lack of “social organisation” (Hills, 2002: ix). Cultists are more active, having a higher level of attachment and interacting with other like-minded fans. Finally, there are the enthusiasts; the highest level of fan. The enthusiast will be part of the community that produces texts and attend fan conventions. At first, these different definitions appear to offer some value to solving the complexities of fandom, as identified by Jenkins (1992b) and Bacon-Smith (1992), but when applying them to a specific fan community their limitations become evident.

Sandvoss (2005) attempts to apply Abercrombie and Longhurst’s (1998) theory to his research on football fandom (Sandvoss, 2001). He found that not one identified themselves as a cultist, all using the term ‘fan’ as a way to describe themselves, despite having differing levels of engagement within the football fan community. He also notes that fans far outnumber enthusiasts who are extremely specialist in nature and therefore constitute only a small percentage of a community. As Sandvoss (2005) states, the problem is one of terminology, replacing the word fan with a series of

synonyms does nothing more than confuse and “is at odds with the use of this term [fan] in almost all of the other literature in the field” (Hills, 2002: ix). Abercrombie and Longhurst’s (1998) model of fans, cultists and enthusiasts is undoubtedly a complex and contradictory approach to understanding fandom theory. Interestingly, Abercrombie and Longhurst do not identify themselves as fans, instead being academics mapping the study of media audiences. This might explain their adoption of such a contradictory approach to fandom, not having the ‘insider knowledge’ possessed by fancademics.

Further discussion of fandom having levels of participation can be found in Fiske (1992). For Fiske, fans engage in three levels of fan productivity. Firstly, there is semiotic productivity, the most basic level of fan production where fans produce meaning from texts that they consume. Secondly, there is enunciative productivity, or verbal and non-verbal interaction. This can include discussions with other fans and also be found in dress, the wearing of items that signify fandom, such as the t-shirt of a band. Thirdly, is textual production, the texts produced by fans for other fans (37-42). This might include fanzines, fan art or fan fiction. The similarities to Abercrombie and Longhurst’s (1998) model are apparent. The semiotic producers could be the fans, who go no further than consuming the texts that they enjoy. The enunciative producers are the cultists who exhibit an almost religious like attachment by externalising their fandom through clothing and being part of fan networks. The textual producers are then the enthusiasts who engage in forms of fan production. Trying to establish fandom as a continuum therefore presents problems as fans are complex individuals who can occupy a variety of roles, making it difficult to segregate them into groups. My use of the term fan in this dissertation draws on Hills’ (2002) approach of integrating ‘cult fan’ with fan, as I agree that the “separation of terms have never been entirely convincing” (x). For me, the fan is *a specific member of the media audience that has a strong attachment to a media text, genre or personality who can occupy a number of different cultural and economic roles that allow them to express their fandom.*

From looking at how fandom has been defined in academic work, I have found that there is no clear definition. This had led academics to propose fandom as being a continuum where fans have differing levels of participation, each having their own complications. Much of the definitions I have discussed here predate the rise in internet access and therefore do not consider how the World Wide Web has “mainstreamed fandom” (Pullen, 2004: 56). In chapter two, I consider how more recent work on fandom has approached fan activity in the digital age to define my concept of the alternative economy. With the exception of Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), these definitions have been constructed by fancademics. Therefore, fancademics have had a significant role in shaping fan studies, privileging fandom as a cultural activity. I now move on to consider how and way fancademics have taken this particular direction.

1.3. From capitalists to resisters

To understand why fandom has been conceptualised as a cultural activity, attention needs to be given to the British cultural studies movement. From the 1960s onwards, cultural studies academics established that popular culture was worthy of academic attention and that media audiences were in active in their readings of media texts. Influenced by the ideas of Antonio Gramsci (1992), particularly his concept of hegemony, theorists such as Hall and Jefferson (1993) and Hebdige (1979), were interested in culture as a site of struggle and resistance. This approach can be seen as a reaction to ideas posited by The Frankfurt School and the work of Horkheimer and Adorno (1973), who viewed audiences as a homogenous mass that were ideologically deceived by the culture industry. Cultural studies endeavoured to resolve these tensions of capitalism discussed by what they described as The Frankfurt School and consider what happens culturally rather than economically. There have been a number of criticisms levelled at cultural studies for neglecting to consider the political economy of media and, particularly, the context of media production (Babe,

2009; Fenton, 2007). This had led to an open disagreement between the fields of political economy and cultural studies that is most evident in Garnham's (1995) attack on cultural studies and Grossberg's (1995) responding defence. It is not my intention to be drawn into this complex debate, in this dissertation I wish to highlight how combining ideas from cultural studies and political economy can be productive in helping to understand fan activity. Solely adopting a political economy approach to the study of fandom is problematic in that it can focus too much on the subjectification of the individual within a capitalist society. From this perspective, the individual is able to resist but only within the structures set by the dominant groups of society i.e. the Bourgeoisie. Here, resistance is an illusion. The concern of a critical political economy theorist, such as Garnham (1995), is that cultural studies goes too far in the other direction, seeing individuals as freely being able to resist. The approach that I adopt in this dissertation, which I outline in chapter two, attempts to bridge this gap between political economy and cultural studies, following theorists such as Meehan (2000) and Murray (2004) who have also attempted to synthesise these two fields to study fandom.

An early conceptualisation of fandom can be found in the work of Theodor Adorno (1990). Hills (2002) explains that Adorno's work is "regularly criticised and dispensed with in academic and academic-fan accounts of fan culture" (31). Although the ideas of Adorno, and his other colleagues from The Frankfurt School, now seem rather pessimistic, they continue to have resonance. Adorno (1990) suggests that popular music texts, are standardised, being structured and formulaic, and pseudo-individualised, the illusion of standardised texts being different. The fan of popular music is therefore deceived into believing that songs are different when they are ostensibly the same. For Adorno, the fan is part of the capitalist machine, manipulated into purchasing the same music. The ideas of Adorno have been contested by theorists in fans studies, most notably Jenkins (1992a), Hills (2002) and Anderton (2006). The most common criticism that fan studies scholars give to the work of The Frankfurt School is that the ideas are outdated, treating audiences as an easily deceived

mass. Jenkins (1992a) highlights this, suggesting that Adorno neglects to consider how the disintegration of “prized” cultural products through their overconsumption can create a particular meaning for the listener (51). Instead of losing their meaning and originality, their exchange value having greater significance than the use value, Jenkins believes that it is the use value that has the most importance for the active listener.

Hills (2002) questions Jenkins’ view of Adorno’s work. Referring to Adorno (1978), Hills sees the innocent child and their playing with mass produced toys as an example of emphasising use-value over exchange value. It is as the child gets older that their innocence is eroded and the exchange-value takes prominence. Hills notes that this example shares similarities with the de Certeauian (1984) approach that Jenkins (1992b) uses. Anderton (2006), questioning Adorno’s “homogenous” view of fandom, believes that Adorno ignores “internal differences” (such as race, gender and age), changes in the tastes of music audiences and does not recognise how music can “create freedom of choice” for its listeners (164). Despite these criticisms, the influence of Adorno’s work can be evidenced in those studies which have attempted to consider the political economy of fandom, such as the work of Meehan (2000) and Murray, (2004). The limitations of both these works, which will be studied in greater depth in chapter two, share similarities with the work in Adorno in that they see fans as being manipulated by owners of media. Even though fans have the capacity to produce, this is only possible through the structures allowed by controlling forces.

The work of Adorno (1990) demonstrates how fandom can be understood as an economic activity. I now propose that the rise of cultural studies in the 1960s and 1970s responded to this position by attempting to enrich The Frankfurt School approach to the study of popular culture. Rather than viewing audiences as being complicit in a capitalist system, scholars from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) were interested in how audiences opposed or *resisted* capitalism. This can be evidenced in the work produced by the CCCS that focuses on youth

subcultures. I find it odd that many of the classic studies on fandom fail to address work on subculture; it is something of the ‘elephant in room’ that fails to be fully appreciated for its significance. Many of the studies of subcultures, such as ‘teddy boys’ (Jefferson, 1993), ‘skinheads’ (Clarke, 1993a) and ‘mods’ (Hebdige, 1993), are concerned with fans of popular music who externalise their fandom through their dress, a form of “enunciative productivity” as according to Fiske (1992). For Clarke (1993b), this externalisation is also a form of resistance, indicating the class struggle of working class youths. Their dress, hairstyles and behaviour being a way for working class youths to occupy a space in a society in which they feel alienated. This notion of resistance emphasises the political nature of subcultural theory. CCCS theorists are interested in the cultural politics of the subcultural groups that they studied. However, CCCS scholar McRobbie (1997) questions why much of the research into the subculture of punk, such as the work of Hebdige (1979), had failed to address how punk was sold (192).

McRobbie (1997) discusses the significance the ‘rag market’ has for subcultures; a space where members of subcultures might purchase second-hand clothing for reappropriation, but could also sell second-hand, sometimes reappropriated, clothing. She refers to these individuals as “subcultural entrepreneurs”, members of subcultures who legitimately setup enterprises relating to their subculture. This is an idea that forms part of concept of the alternative economy that I discuss in chapter two. McRobbie suggests that this pursuit was not addressed by subcultural theorists of the period as it clashed with the idea of “creative defiance”, a key feature of subcultural production. Focusing on members of subcultures who attempted to make money out of their interests would therefore “undermine the ‘purity’ or ‘authenticity’ of the subculture” (192). From this, it would appear that many CCCS theorists chose to ignore this highly significant area of subcultures because it did not match their view of subcultures being resistant. The commodification of subcultural products devaluing their authenticity. Hebdige (1979) believes that once the products “which signify subculture are translated into commodities...by the small entrepreneurs and big fashion

interests who produce them on a mass scale, they became codified, made comprehensible, rendered at once public property and profitable merchandise” (96). Hence, the commodification of punk meant that it became part of the mainstream and its rich symbolism reduced to fashion.

This idea of resistance is one that is prevalent throughout the early stages of fan studies.

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) identify fan studies as being part of the “incorporation/resistance paradigm” of audience studies (15-28). Here audiences are involved in resisting the powerful through their use of media. Sandvoss (2005) identifies that there was a “dominant discourse of resistance” in studies of fandom that emerged in the late 1980s (11). Sandvoss sees this relating to the traditions of media and cultural studies research, such as those I discussed prior, where issues of power were related to media consumption. Of importance here is the work of Fiske (1989) who saw fan activity as form of resistance, “undermining dominant ideologies” (Mathijis and Sexton, 2011). For Sandvoss (2005), it is the ideas of Fiske that led to the field of fan studies following in this direction. I have argued so far in this chapter that it was the ideas of the CCCS, particularly their work on subcultures, that guided fan studies. Mathijis and Sexton (2011) note that studies of fandom focused on “micro-political acts: not large-scale radical activity, but small scale resistant behaviour” (57-58). This can be evidenced in slash fiction.

According to Henry Jenkins (1992a), slash fiction is a form of fan writing that “refers to the convention of employing a stroke or slash to signify a same-sex relationship between two characters and specifies a genre of fan stories positing homoerotic affairs between series protagonists” (186).

Well established examples of slash fiction are: the homoerotic relationship between Spock and Kirk from the *Star Trek* television series (Penley, 1992), Xena and Gabrielle in *Xena: Warrior Princess* (Caudill, 2003) and, more recently, the characters from Harry Potter have been the subject of many online slash writings (Willis, 2006). As can be seen from these examples, a large amount of academic enquiry has been devoted to homoerotic slash fiction. Slash fan fiction, whether it is

written or visual, offers alternative interpretations to storylines and relationships offered by script-writers and is often produced by female fans. Tulloch and Jenkins (1995) see slash fiction as a political act, a “powerful form of resistant reading” that also empowers female media audiences (264). Hills (2002) views the notion of resistance in fan studies being problematic. He believes that fans display both “anti-commercial ideologies and commodity completist practices” (28). Therefore, solely viewing fans as resistant is problematic. With this in mind, it is difficult to understand why there have been so few attempts to integrate ideas from political economy to the study of fandom. I have shown how the cultural studies approach, a response to the work of The Frankfurt School, infiltrated fan studies. Fancademics adopted this position to study fan cultures. I now argue that this led to what I term a ‘celebration of fandom’.

1.4. Fandom as a celebration

In the introduction to their edited collection on fandom, Gray et al (2007) identify the first generation of fan scholarship to be the “fandom is beautiful” period (1). During the formative period of fan studies, which I identified earlier in this chapter as the early 1990s, work focused on the practices of fans. These early studies, such as Bacon-Smith’s (1992) research into science-fiction, adopted an ethnographic approach to understand how a fan community operated. The resulting work had a “rhetorical purpose”, which was to move away from the pathological view of fandom (Gray et al, 2007: 3). For Gray et al this is problematic because it only focused on fans who have high levels of activity at the expense of studying those fans who are only active through their devoted consumption of media texts. In addition, I argue that these studies ‘celebrated fandom’ and would focus on the *results* of fan production rather looking at the *processes* of fan production. By looking at the processes of production in minute detail and thinking about fan products as not just being texts but also artefacts and, more importantly, commodities can we only

truly interrogate fan activity. I therefore contend that this celebration of fandom by fancademics further ignored fandom as being an economy. I will now be reviewing work from this period that focuses on fan production to illustrate how attention was given to the symbolic meaning of fandom rather than its economic meaning.

The most influential work in this area is Jenkins' (1992a) *Textual Poachers*. Jenkins has admitted that he adopted an intentionally celebratory approach towards the study of fandom (Jenkins cited in Hills, 2002). This was a response to the negative connotations fandom had in both the media and academia until this point. Jenkins adopted the ideas of Michel de Certeau (1984) to explain how fans "poach" from media texts to create their own productions. According to de Certeau, people are involved in everyday creativity where consumption is a form of "making do". Audiences engage in "tactics" which are responses to "strategies" that have been set by the powerful. By using tactics, audiences make do with what is available to them to create new things, whether it be products or just meanings. A popular example of making do would be the tactic of tearing jeans. We can take a pair of new jeans and, against their original purpose, can rip them, thusly creating a new meaning; in this case, a small-scale political act of resistance. de Certeau adds that the powerful can "incorporate" such acts of audience resistance as a way to control the tactics of audiences. Going back to the example of torn jeans, if you were to walk into any clothing store you will find torn jeans for sale as new.

For Jenkins, de Certeau's most useful concept is 'poaching'. de Certeau used the term poaching to explain how audiences reappropriate products within their own context. de Certeau (1988) used Michel Foucault as an example of a poacher: "hunting through the forests of history and through our present plains, Foucault traps strange things which he discovers in a past literature and uses these for disturbing our fragile present securities" (17). This critical observation of Foucault, emphasises how the process of reappropriation works. To illustrate how poaching works in relation

to fandom, Jenkins (1992a) uses examples of different forms of fan production: slash fiction, music videos and filking (fan written folk songs often inspired by the science fiction genre). These examples show how fans ‘poach’ from media texts to create their own cultural products. He concludes that there are five levels of fan activity, which modify the four levels of fan activity described in Jenkins (1992b) that I discussed earlier in this chapter:

1. Fandom involves a particular mode of reception
2. Fandom involves a particular set of critical and interpretive practices
3. Fandom constitutes a base for consumer activism.
4. Fandom possesses particular forms of cultural production, aesthetic traditions and practices
5. Fandom functions as an alternative social community.

(Jenkins, 1992a: 277-281)

For fans, consuming media is the start of a highly active process. In Jenkins’ second level, fans interpret media in different ways, suggesting that this leads towards the creation of a meta-text that goes far beyond what the original creators intended. In relation to the third level, fans are activists. Jenkins highlights the conflict that exists between fans and producers, using examples of how fans campaign to ensure that networks continue to broadcast shows that have small followings, the television show *Beauty and the Beast* being one such example. He also adds how fans, through their textual production, can draw the ire of producers by breaching intellectual property laws, a point only fleetingly discussed by Jenkins. Level four relates to how fans develop “alternative institutions of production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption” through their poaching of media texts (279). It is this idea of the alternative institution, or as I will refer to it the alternative economy, that I expand on in this dissertation. Finally, level five applies to how fans create a world that allows them to escape from the realities of everyday life. This final point highlights one of problems with Jenkins’ work in that it is too utopian; again indicative of how this early period of research celebrated fandom.

In another early study of fandom, John Fiske (1992) posits the existence of a “shadow cultural economy”, which is separate to the ‘mainstream’ cultural economy. In this shadow cultural economy, fans utilise their own systems of production and distribution, but draw on production

practices that exist in the mainstream cultural economy (30). Within the shadow cultural economy, fans graduate from producing “semiotic meaning”, such as pleasures derived they from media texts they consume, to “textual production”: fan produced texts that are distributed amongst community. For Fiske, fans who engage in textual production adopt production practices that are “often crafted with production values as high as any in the official culture” and, although there is an economic aspect to this production, it is a non-for-profit driven pursuit that often at the expense of the fan producer (39). He notes that the fan community frowns on fans that attempt to commodify their production. This is emphasised by other studies from this period (Jenkins, 1992a and 1992b; Bacon-Smith, 1992), reducing fandom to a mere celebration and ignoring the economics of fan production. As I demonstrate in coming chapters, particularly chapters five, six and eight, fan production can have economic benefit, some running enterprises directly relating to their fandom with support from the wider fan community.

In order to explain why fans engage in these different forms of production, Fiske draws on the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984), a scholar whose work on cultural capital has been regularly used as a theoretical framework to study fandom (Thornton, 1996; Brown, 1997; Dell; 1998; Jancovich, 2002). By adopting this approach, fandom can be understood as a cultural system in which economic capital is replaced by cultural capital, or, put more simply, fan knowledge. Therefore, within this cultural economy, there is a hierarchy in place where fan knowledge is a form of capital that indicates levels of activity and participation. The idea of fandom being an economy, as proposed by Fiske, resonates with what I am attempting to achieve in this dissertation. However, in Fiske’s shadow cultural economy, cultural capital is “good”, but economic capital is “bad”, (Hills, 2002: 63) This again reinforces fandom as a cultural activity, celebrating the manufacture of fan texts as cultural production rather than economic production. The context for Fiske’s study must also be acknowledged as it does not consider the advent of new media technologies and the opportunities they present for fan producers, this being a key feature of this dissertation. Though

Fiske's work was influential in applying the work of Bourdieu to the study of fandom, Hills (2002) believes that the work of Bourdieu acts as useful "metaphor" for the study of fandom, but, in turn, can present problems when analysing fandoms that do not fit Bourdieu's metaphor of the "economy of culture" (63).

Hills (2002) and Sandvoss (2005) move towards a consideration of fandom that is no longer from a wholly celebratory view. Hills (2002) saw prior work on fandom to be contradictory, but also limiting in their approaches, not taking into account fandoms that were not as active as the science-fiction community. I have highlighted some of Hills' criticisms of the classic studies of fandom at various points during this chapter. In his reconceptualisation of fandom, Hills addresses the psychology of fans (22). By adopting a psychological approach, this allows for a consideration of the performative nature of fandom, such as the way that fans impersonate their heroes, go on pilgrimages, visiting sites that are significant to them, and also how they adopt identities in online communities. Sandvoss' (2005) approach shares similarities with Hills (2002), also adopting a psychological approach to understand how fans interact with media texts. For Sandvoss, fandom is a mirror in which fans see reflected ideas that have a particular significance to them. From this perspective, fandom is very personal, each taking different meaning from the texts that they consume. According to Sandvoss, fans having strong attachments is not an idea that is able to be measured objectively (6). Whilst both of these studies are important for their introducing of new models for studying fandom and responding to the limits of early fan studies, both make little mention of fan production. Sandvoss (2005) is almost dismissive of fan produced texts, believing them to be "an art or craft form which has nothing to say but the false illusion of a meaningful world" (159).

I have now considered how early studies of fandom celebrated fan activity and focused on symbolic production rather than economic production. Such an approach suggests that fan production is a

phenomena that occurs out of fan passion; there is little consideration here of how fan texts are produced. As fan production has been labelled a “minority activity” that a select few participate in, later studies have moved away from this area, instead focusing on the psychology of the fan (Sandvoss, 2005: 29). I now conclude this chapter, suggesting that fan studies is a product of fancademia and that this has privileged the study of fandom as a cultural activity.

1.5. Conclusion - Fan studies as fan production?

In this chapter I have shown how the fan has been conceptualised in academic work. I began by introducing the term fancademia to indicate how the roles of academic and fan are becoming increasingly intertwined. I suggested that this has led to a proliferation of fancademic work where the object of study is related to the author’s fandom. This is actively encouraged by publishers who seek to maximise book sales by targeting fancademic publications to fan audiences. By exploring how academic work has defined fandom, I found that there is no obvious definition, highlighting the multi-faceted nature of fan activity. I also found that fancademics were primarily involved in constructing these definitions of fandom, having a key role in determining how fandom can be understood as a cultural activity. I then showed how this idea emerged from cultural studies, particularly the CCCS’ work on youth subcultures, which I considered an early example of fan studies. The CCCS approach reconsidered The Frankfurt School’s conceptualisation of popular culture, looking how audiences opposed capitalism rather than being controlled by it. Their idea of culture as a site of struggle and resistance carried through to early studies of fandom that purposely celebrated fan activity. This was a politically motivated decision that aimed to address how the fan had been pathologised in earlier studies of fandom. Treating fandom as economy would undermine the authenticity of the fan cultures that were researched, mainly those related to the science fiction community. For scholars of this period such as Bacon-Smith (1992), Jenkins (1992a) and Fiske (1992), fans who made money out their fandom would be ostracised by the larger community.

Subsequent studies, utilised the work of Bourdieu (1984) to show how fandom could be viewed as a hierarchy where knowledge is the main form of exchangeable capital (Thornton, 1996; Brown, 1997; Dell; 1998; Jancovich, 2002). More recent reconceptualisations have approached fandom as a performance, moving away from studying fan production (Hills, 2002; Sandvoss, 2005).

The fan has been conceptualised by fancademics; it is they who have constructed what we now refer to as fan studies. As Jenkins has admitted, this was done out of a necessity to challenge how fandom had been previously studied (Jenkins cited in Hills, 2002). To challenge this perception, fan studies had no other choice but to celebrate fandom in order for it to become a serious route of academic enquiry. Symbolic resistance was therefore the ideal choice of theoretical framework through which fandom could be recognised as a significant cultural activity. However, by adopting such an approach, this has taken fan studies in a direction that has neglected to thoroughly consider fandom as an economic activity. Much like how theorists have applied Bourdieu's (1984) work on distinction to demonstrate the existence of hierarchy and taste in fan communities, I argue that fan studies itself can be understood as an act of distinction. For example, the literature I have discussed in this chapter privileges the science fiction fan community over other fan communities. One only has to refer to the classic studies of fandom, which all focus on science fiction fandom (Jenkins, 1992a and Bacon-Smith 1992), and even later studies, such as Hills (2002), privilege science fiction over other fandoms. This is because the object of study *is* the author's fandom and becomes an indicator of cultural capital. Henry Jenkins, Matt Hills and Will Brooker have built their academic careers based on their fandom and I recognise that I too am presenting my fandom as the object of study for this dissertation, partly to address the lack of work that exists on other fandoms outside of science fiction. The danger in doing this is that it can lead to celebratory accounts and work that focuses on the fancademics own fandom. In chapter three, I show that work on European cult cinema is mainly the product of fancademia and how this has focused on the texts of European cult cinema rather than considering how European cult cinema fandom has been

produced. To move away from such celebratory accounts, there needs to be a reconceptualisation of fandom that enables its cultural and political economic role to be interrogated. In the following chapter, I introduce my concept of 'alternative economy' as a way to conceptualise fandom as both a cultural and an economic activity.

CHAPTER TWO

FAN PRODUCTION AS AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY

In the first chapter I focused on the way that fans have most often been studied. It is only relatively recently that academics have studied the level of commitment and effort that fans put into production of artefacts and commodities, but this area of research is still underdeveloped. I propose that a holistic approach is needed that integrates political economy and cultural studies in order to study the neglected area of “the economy as interrelated within political, social and cultural life” (Biltereyst and Meers, 2011: 415), and avoids the weaknesses of ‘celebratory’ and ‘fancademia’ studies discussed previously. However, Biltereyst and Meers (2011) in their comprehensive discussion of the political economy of audiences, identify that this approach has been rarely used to study audience activity. This is emphasised by Vincent Mosco (2009) who states that the “commodification” of audiences has received “some attention” from political economists following the ideas of audience labour posited by Dallas Smythe (1977). As I indicated in the last chapter, the separation between cultural studies and the critical political economy movement has been well documented (Garnham, 1995; Grossberg, 1995; Fenton, 2007; Babe, 2009). Perhaps this separation can be explained by the difficulties political economists have in seeing audiences as being active when academics in this field perceive that the agency of audience members is limited by the capitalist society they live in. In turn, cultural studies’ work on audience activity is limited when an economic approach is taken as academics feel that it is economic activity in a capitalist society that creates control. In this chapter, I argue that a synthesis of cultural and political economic approaches is necessary to study what I term the alternative economy of fan production.

2.1. Fandom as an economy

Eileen Meehan's (2000) work is particularly interesting in this context, combining fan ethnography and political economy to demonstrate how fan activity is shaped by media conglomerates and their desire to commodify what she refers to as "leisure time", the time outside of their paid work that fans use to engage in fan activity. From Meehan's perspective it can be determined that fan activity, including fan production, is a way that media companies can control fans, encouraging further consumption of long standing media texts. Meehan uses the example of the *Star Trek* franchise to demonstrate how fans are used as reliable consumers and that their leisure time becomes commodified. For Meehan, fans are used; their agency is limited by media companies and shaped in a specific direction.

In another key study that attempts to construct a political economy of fandom, Simone Murray (2004) seeks to demonstrate how intellectual property and developments in the media industry make early research into fan production, by theorists such as Jenkins (1992a) and Bacon-Smith (1992), problematic. Rather than fan production being about "semiotic resistance to corporate intellectual property ownership through appropriation and creative refashioning of media texts", Murray's interests lie in how media organisations are controlling, or "cultivating", the agency of fans (8). She uses two examples of how Hollywood film studies have engaged with fan communities. Firstly, Murray discusses the *Harry Potter* film franchise and how the studio Warner Brothers pursued legal action in an attempt to prevent *Harry Potter* fans from using references to the franchise in web addresses. This action resulted in conflict between the studio and the *Harry Potter* film community. Murray suggests that Warner Brothers' lack of understanding of the role that fans had in increasing the popularity of *Harry Potter* books through word of mouth discussion in internet fora and the potential action they might take in opposing the film adaptation resulted in a "mea culpa" (16). Warner Brothers now attempted to limit the damages that they caused to the

Harry Potter fan community by embracing them. In one such instance, they provided links to “registered”, non-commercial *Harry Potter* fan sites on the film’s official website (16). Murray contrasts this with the example of the *Lord of the Rings* movie franchise and how the film studio New Line Cinema intentionally sought to engage with the Tolkien fan-base as part of their expensive marketing campaign. New Line actively encouraged fans to reappropriate content, providing that it was non-commercial and not “hostile to the franchise” (19).

These case studies show how fan activity can be managed and become incorporated. Murray believes that fans are now seen as “non-salaried marketing collaborators” rather than “IP-flouting textual obsessives” to (21). However, Murray does not question the ethics of how media organisations such as Warner Brothers and, to a greater extent, New Line are using the labour of fans for free. As I will indicate later in this chapter, this question of free labour is a growing area of debate when examining communities of co-creation (Grimes, 2006; Tapscott and Williams, 2006), but also fandom (De Kosnik, 2012b). Both Meehan (2000) and Murray (2004) suggest that fan production is controlled by media organisations. Fans are therefore nothing more than promotional agents that are being used for capitalist good. This may be evident in such accounts of what I refer to as macro-fandoms, those that surround large media franchises, such as *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Trek*, but what about the communities that surround micro-fandoms, those related to more niche texts, such as European cult cinema fandom? If micro-fandoms, which have small followings, are not as aggressively controlled as macro-fandoms it implies that their participants either have, or are permitted, a greater level of agency. This is an idea I expand on in coming chapters where I show how a range of economic fan activity relating to a micro-fandom such as European cult cinema can exist.

Meehan (2000) and Murray (2004) are explicit in their intentions to offer a political economy of fandom. Many of the classic studies of fandom that I discussed in the previous chapters offer brief

discussions that enter the realm of political economy but are far too implicit. For example, both Jenkins (1992a) and Bacon-Smith (1992) show an awareness of copyright and how this affects fan producers. Jenkins (1992a) mentions how fans who engage in bootlegging are banished from the fan community because of their attempts to commodify fan production and Bacon-Smith (1992) notes how fan producers recognise that they break copyright laws and this makes them difficult groups for researchers to gain access to. Though there are other mentions of copyright in both studies, they do not go far beyond being just a recognised issue relating to fan production. Perhaps the most ambitious attempt to understand fandom as an economy can be found in the work of John Fiske (1992), whose work I discussed in detail in the previous chapter. For Fiske, fan produced texts are not commodities. The capital that is exchanged within this shadow cultural economy is purely cultural, with fan production being one of the highest indicators of cultural capital. Like Jenkins (1992a), Fiske sees fans who attempt to make money out of their fandom as being outsiders who do nothing more than disrupt the purity of non-for-profit fan production that has a greater authenticity to the community. Fiske, however, excludes fan artists from this accusation, seeing them as being accepted by the community for making money out of their wares. Looking at the literature that addresses specific fan production, such as work on fanzines (Duncombe, 1997), fan filmmaking (Young, 2008), filking (Jenkins, 1992b) and fan fiction (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Hellekson and Busse, 2006), authors demonstrate more of an interest in the produced object as opposed to questioning how the object is produced. These studies further emphasise how fan production has been viewed as a symbolic activity, an act of semiotic resistance, rather than an economic activity.

Alan McKee (2004) suggests that the approaches offered by studies such as Jenkins (1992a) create binary oppositions between fan production and media industry production, leading to fan production being constructed as a separate, informal industry:

“Fans do not have an industry - or if they do, it is a “mini-industry” or a “cottage industry”. Fan production is thus characterized (sic) in terms understood to be opposite to mainstream industrial production. For example, in this account, fans do not produce in order to make a profit; indeed fan production is characterized by “a distaste” toward making a profit.”

(McKee, 2004: 171)

McKee believes that this opposition has emerged from a history of cultural studies having problems with distinguishing between what work counts as production and consumption. For McKee, it is not possible to separate fan production and mainstream industrial production; they both work together. To demonstrate this, he uses the example of the *Doctor Who* franchise where fan producers, prior to the recent resurrection of the franchise by the BBC, have been instrumental in preserving the *Doctor Who* canon. Here fans have become the editors of commercial magazines and published authors. He also indicates that democratically produced fan material also plays a significant role in developing fandoms and therefore cannot be separated from mainstream production.

Hills (2002) offers a similar viewpoint when discussing how fans can move from “hobbyists” to “paid-experts” (40). I find McKee’s argument problematic, as there are different conditions in which fan texts are produced compared to mainstream media production. Fan producers’ disregard for copyright and the approach that they take towards production differs significantly to those in mainstream media; there is a greater autonomy. Still, this is helpful in understanding fandom as an economy, which sees fan produced texts as commodities rather than signs. An area of academic research that is currently addressing the economy of fandom is that related to anime fandom and specifically the act of fans producing subtitles (Leonard, 2005; Hatcher, 2005; Lee, 2010 and 2011; Denison, 2011), which I discuss later in this chapter. For these authors, fan subtitling, or fansubbing, has played an important role in the development of anime fandom in the United States. Initially, fansubbing indicated to owners of anime that there was existence of a market for anime, but, following the rise of file-sharing, fansubbing has moved from being a permitted activity by owners of anime to one that now threatens commercial releases of product.

Murray (2004) and Biltereyst and Meers (2011) both identify how Hills (2002) addresses the commodification of fandom. As I identified in chapter one, Hills recognises that fans display both “anti-commercial ideologies and commodity-completist practices” (28). Hills notes how cult fandoms resist “commodification and commercialisation” but at the same time are also dedicated consumers that purchase and collect fan related ephemera (28). He suggests that this contradiction needs to be attended to in studies of fandom rather than be ignored, as attention to just “one side of this contradiction inevitably falsifies the fan experience” (44). To address this issue Hills, returns to the work of Theodor Adorno (1978) to understand how fans are involved in processes of commodification. He uses Marx’s terms “use-value” (the actual usefulness of a particular text) and “exchange-value” (the commodification of a text) to demonstrate how fans use texts in their own particular ways, creating a specific use-value, and how in turn this can create a new exchange-value. Hills refers to the auction website *eBay* to show how certain items, which would be expected to have little exchange value, can suddenly have a high exchange-value because they have a certain use-value to fans. Though Hills discusses the “cultural and economic processes in which fan cultures are implicated” by using a brief case study of cult television, it is an idea that is not fully realised (35). Whilst Murray (2004) criticises Hills’ work for neglecting to consider how media ownership has affected the fan experience, Biltereyst and Meers (2011) believe that Hills’ work prompts more investigation from a political economy perspective in order to understand how fans are not just engaged in acts of resistance but also commodification.

So far in this chapter I have demonstrated that scholars, specifically Meehan (2000) and Murray (2004), have attempted to study the political economy of fandom. Though limited in their view of fan activity as being controlled and commodified by owners of media, they move away from the idea of fandom being purely a cultural process. I also showed how many of the classic fan studies have drawn on ideas from political economy but these have not been fully realised as they conflict

with the idea of fan production being a symbolic act of resistance. In order to address the limits of the studies discussed so far in this chapter, there needs to be a reconceptualisation of fandom that introduces ideas from political economy into traditional approaches of cultural studies. In what follows, I introduce my concept of the alternative economy as a way to interrogate fandom as both a cultural and economic activity.

2.2. *Defining the 'alternative economy'*

The intention of this thesis is to address how fandom can be understood as an alternative economy of artefact and commodity production. This involves examining the range of working roles that fans occupy as creatives and the way that these activities create an alternative economy. To demonstrate this I have undertaken research into the European cult cinema fan economy. In the previous section I identified that a number of fan studies have shown interest in the economics of fandom. However, very few build upon this interest, abandoning the idea to focus on the symbolic nature of fan production. Those studies which have attempted to merge a cultural approach with an economic approach, such as Meehan (2000) and Murray (2004), have focused only on macro-fandoms. I now outline the theoretical approach that I adopt in this thesis where I too synthesise a cultural studies approach with an economic approach to interrogate my empirical ethnographic research into European cult cinema fandom.

By adopting such an approach I am able to investigate the “social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption” of fan texts (Mosco, 2009: 2). To do this, I approach fandom as an economy instead of a community, there being fan economies that surround particular media texts, such as the popular *Star Trek*, *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars* franchises or, as I discuss here, European cult cinema. Like Fiske (1992), I suggest the fandom can be best understood as an economy but instead of it being a “shadow cultural

economy”, which is based on the exchange of cultural capital, I see it as a complex economy where fans are involved in the production, distribution and consumption of fan produced texts. From this perspective, fan produced texts are artefacts exchanged either as gifts or as commodities. Fans devote a significant amount of their time to the production of these texts that goes far beyond the time those employed in the mainstream industry would be able to afford. The advent of home computing has been an important enabler for fans to professionalise their production, using many of the production techniques and equipment that are used by media professionals. This breaking down of the boundaries between amateur and professional production has led to certain fan producers starting their own enterprises, both online and offline, as a way to commodify their fandom. Other fans see their production as a ‘public good’, a way to give back to their fandom and maintain the fan economy. Much of the production that I describe shows a disregard for copyright and other rules that govern the production and distribution of productions, such as regulations introduced by government bodies.

To describe these fan economies I use the term ‘alternative’, or, more specifically, ‘alternative economies’. I employ the term alternative not to indicate activism, a common connotation of alternative media, but instead as a way to differentiate fan industry from mainstream, formal industry. Chris Atton (2000), for instance, notes that not all alternative media is about activism or resistance. In his chapter on defining alternative media, Atton further adds that alternative media can also be understood as hybrid forms of media that have been produced using information technologies. Tim O’Sullivan (1994) sees alternative media as similar to independent media production, identifying that it has two key features, being democratic and also innovative (10). Atton (2000) and O’Sullivan (1994) both demonstrate that the term alternative media does not just refer to activist media and can be used to describe media production that operates alongside the formal cultural industries. As I indicated earlier, McKee (2004) is critical of the setting up of binary oppositions between fan industry and mainstream, believing this reduces fan industry to a separate

'other'. I would argue that it is difficult to escape this as fan industry operates in different ways, but at the same time, seeks to emulate the practices that are employed by the mainstream industry. For example, as I demonstrate in some of the case studies I refer to later in this dissertation, particularly chapters six, seven and eight, autonomy is an important feature of fan industry. Though there are factors that can affect fan production, such as laws, fan producers generally have greater degree of freedom as they are not bound by the conditions that govern mainstream production. Because of these differences, friction between the mainstream and alternative economies can emerge. The conflict between fans and producers is one that has been described in past studies of fandom (see Jenkins, 1992a; Tulloch and Jenkins, 1995).

The term alternative economy also reflects the nature in which texts are distributed as well as produced. Here I use alternative to indicate the existence of a parallel economy, or what is often known as the gray or grey market. Seth Lipner (1990) defines grey market goods as being "goods sold outside normal, authorised distribution channels" (1). He further adds that these goods are "trademarked" and are "sold without the permission of the trademark owner" (1). Lipner indicates that a grey market differs significantly from a black market, which deals in counterfeit goods, and that it constitutes a "vigorous industry", making it difficult to explore because of its mystery (3). I propose that much of the activities I discuss relating to European cult cinema fan production fall into this category, as their legal status is uncertain. Much of the fan production I discuss is sold without the permission of the trademark or copyright owner, but cannot be wholly be considered bootlegs or counterfeit items as they are reappropriations or adaptations. However, within the alternative economy I discuss, bootlegging does exist but is typically the exploitation of fan produced goods by other fans, as I demonstrate in chapter seven. Colin Williams (2006) uses the term underground economy when describing what he refers to as hidden enterprise culture. In his discussion of the underground economy he uses the term to encompass both black and grey markets, what he refers to as "off the books" business. Williams believes that the underground

economy has been all but ignored in accounts of enterprise culture, being viewed as improper or illegal, yet he notes that many enterprises started by being underground before becoming legitimate businesses. He further argues that, rather being viewed negatively, the underground economy needs to be recognised as having a significant role in economies and be appropriately harnessed.

Other theorists have recognised how an underground economy can help lead to innovation and other creative enterprise. When discussing creative enterprise development in Russia, Linda Moss (2007) recognises how informal networks, such as the underground economy, played an important role in developing new forms of creative enterprise. Also of relevance here is the work of Ramon Lobato (2012). Lobato's work considers "shadow economies of cinema", which are distinct to the legal mainstream networks of film distribution. Lobato used the terms "formal" and "informal" film economies to distinguish between the industries that operate within and outside of the law. As they operate outside of the law, informal film economies tend to be excluded from discussion in academic circles, much like how Williams (2006) notes how studies of entrepreneurship disregard the hidden entrepreneurs. Lobato believes that shadow economies of cinema play a key role in film distribution and work alongside formal economies. He uses a variety of examples including Nigerian 'Nollywood' cinema and how it progressed from pirate distribution to become a thriving film industry and also the example of the "straight-to-video" economy, which generates a considerable amount for the American film industry despite its content being deemed inferior product by critics. For Lobato, shadow economies play an important part in shaping the film experiences of audiences and compliment formal economies. However, one issue with Lobato's work is that he only considers the shadow economy of film distribution and not its production. This something I intend to address in this dissertation.

So far in this section I have defined my concept of the alternative economy. I have suggested that it operates in opposition to the mainstream but adopts similar approaches to production and can be

understood as a grey market that falls somewhere between informal and formal markets. Another reason for viewing it as a distinct economy, and one that will be discussed later in this chapter, is that it transgresses rules and regulations. I recognise this as one of the three key features of the alternative economy which are as follows:

1. Fans are creative workers - The blurring of boundaries between professional and amateur media production and distribution. This is an outcome of the availability of the internet, home computing and affordable digital production equipment.
2. Fan produced texts as exchangeable artefacts - The fan production of media texts for profit and non-for-profit purposes. These are exchanged amongst the economy as commodities, bartered goods or gifts.
3. Fans transgressing rules and regulations - Fans disregarding laws such as intellectual property and classification in order to produce and distribute texts, raising questions of morality and ethics.

For the remainder of this chapter I intend to unpack each of these three key features in order to further define my concept of the alternative economy.

2.3. Fans as creative workers

The starting point in considering fans as workers is the recent work of Henry Jenkins on what he terms ‘new participatory cultures’. In his 2006 publications, Jenkins considers how technology has transformed fan activity in the digital age. In *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers* (2006a), Jenkins moves away from the de Certeauian (1984) approach he used in *Textual Poachers* (1992a), now drawing on the ideas of French scholar Pierre Levy (1999). No longer seeing fan activity as a form of resistance, Jenkins uses Levy’s concept of “collective intelligence” to understand present day fan activity. Here fans work collectively to produce texts, share knowledge, ideas and approaches. He argues that such collaborative activities have come to fruition because of the proliferation of home computing software and internet access. Jenkins coins this new stage in fan activity the “new participatory culture” and identifies it as having three distinct trends:

1. New tools and technologies enabling consumers to archive, appropriate, annotate and recirculate media content.
2. A range of subcultures promote DIY media production, a discourse that shapes how consumers have deployed those technologies.
3. Economic trends favouring the horizontally integrated media conglomerates encourage the flow of images, ideas and narratives across multiple media channels and demand more active modes of spectatorship.

(Jenkins, 2006a: 136)

It is the first of these two trends that are of particular significance to this study. The increasing affordability of home computers and components, the open-source software movement and broadband internet access have been important developments, enabling fans to professionalise their production practices. In the analogue age, fans engaged in forms of fan production that would make use of materials that they had available to them. For example, fanzines producers and writers of fan fiction used the photocopier to publish their work (Atton, 2000: 28) and fansubbers would have to invest in equipment that cost approximately \$4000 (Leonard, 2005: 291). The rise in home computing has changed this. Many home computers come with basic audio, video and image editing software that allow their users to become producers of media. Other creative software, such as that used by media industry professionals, can either be purchased or can be downloaded from the internet officially or unofficially. This means that audiences now have access to software and hardware that is used by media professionals to create their own productions and reappropriations.

However, not everyone has the knowledge or skill required to participate in such forms of production. Unlike media professionals, they may not have gone through any formal education that has instructed them how to use such technology. This is where the second of Jenkins' trends is important, as there are numerous websites and online communities that are specifically devoted to promoting and encouraging amateur production. Any problem encountered while using media production software can be typed into a regular search engine such as *Google* and immediate advice can be obtained on how to use software and perform complex tasks. These instructional websites and online communities adopt a discourse that promotes and encourages DIY production, providing step-by-step tutorials, supporting videos that are available on *YouTube* and also offer

troubleshooting advice. As these online communities operate on a global level, users from all over the world are able to collaborate, drawing on an exhaustive network of advice. In the new participatory culture that Jenkins describes, fans now have the ability to use media technologies that give them the opportunity to not just produce media but to also recirculate it to a global audience. Jenkins does not explicitly refer to fans as creative workers, but one of the aspects of participatory cultures is that fans are able to use the same or similar software and hardware as media professionals. This blurring of the boundaries between amateur and professional media production is a key issue associated with convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006b).

Jenkins (2006b) sees convergence culture as the relationship between three concepts: media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence (2). It is the result of how the “power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways” (2). To illustrate this, Jenkins uses the example of how a high school student manipulated an image that placed *Sesame Street* character Bert in an image alongside Osama Bin Laden and published it on his website. The image was subsequently used in an Anti-American campaign by a publisher based in Bangladesh, being printed on t-shirts and posters. Footage broadcast by the American broadcaster CNN showed protestors displaying the image, angering *Sesame Street*'s producers who “threatened to take legal action” (2). For Jenkins, this chain of events shows how audiences have the power to produce content that can become incorporated by the mass media. This is just one instance of how convergence culture operates. He believes that all audience members are participants in convergence culture, but not all audiences share the same role; some may have greater levels of participation than others. Convergence culture is primarily concerned with how the use of digital technologies is empowering audience members and challenging the nature of mass media production. The World Wide Web, for example, can be used as a distribution network for fan produced ephemera. Before the rise of the internet distribution of fan produced texts would be confined to ‘underground’ networks such as mail order or fan conventions. Jenkins suggests that

the covert nature of distribution in this period meant that fan produced texts escaped the attentions of mass media producers.

In the words of Jenkins, the World Wide Web has “allowed folk culture to flourish”, leading to a “creative revolution” (136). What were once small, niche networks have become wide reaching and more apparent. The concept of convergence culture has also been of interest for other academics. Mark Deuze (2007) believes that convergence culture is not solely about technology and “technological process”, it also has a “cultural logic” where the boundaries between production and consumption and passive and active consumption become increasingly blurred (74). He also notes that the relationship between producers and consumers has changed as a result of digital technology. Mass media producers are encouraging audiences to interact with television programming by offering them channels to communicate for a range of different devices. This can be seen in the websites for popular television programmes and films that encourage discussion and debate as well as encouraging fan writing.

Within convergence culture, cultural production thrives. The proliferation of digital technology gives audiences the opportunity to be creators as well as consumers of media. The World Wide Web relies on user-generated content. The ethos of Tim Berners-Lee’s invention was to encourage users to populate the web with content and share information, what Alex Wright (2008) describes “a two-way authoring environment” (228). Technology provides users with a means to communicate in different ways. Some internet users maintain blogs, others upload content to the popular online video website *YouTube* and *Wikipedia* encourages readers to add to the in excess of three million articles devoted to numerous subjects. These are just some of the many ways in audience members become producers of content in the online environment. The personal computer provides a number of different possibilities for users to engage in forms of cultural production. Photographers can manipulate images in digital image editing software such as Adobe Photoshop, filmmakers can edit

their films and add special effects using video editing software and musicians can record and produce songs using audio engineering software. This software, or similar, is also being used by media professionals to produce media texts. Texts that are produced by consumers may mirror professionally produced texts; there will be very little difference between them. The only difference will be that they are produced outside of the institutions of media.

Traditionally, in the pre-digital age, amateur production has been seen as inferior to professionally produced media. Amateur produced media, therefore, has particular discourse attached to it, one of inequality and insignificance. However, as Langdon Winner (1986) suggests, the personal computer has become a “potent equaliser in modern society” (112). The term ‘amateur’ has very little meaning in the digital age. Though not all amateur produced media is of a ‘high standard’, Jenkins (2006b) recognises that not all amateur produced media is of a high quality, but neither is professionally produced media. He also suggests that amateur production can afford to be inventive and provocative as it does not have an economic appeal or is subject to institutional gatekeeping. Amateur production can contain a greater level of creativity and afford to be more experimental. According to Brooker (2002), this can lead to amateur producers becoming employed in the media industry, their amateur produced texts acting as “springboards” to a career as a media professional (175). An example of this is Joe Nussbaum, the director of *George Lucas in Love* (1999), signing a directorial deal with the Hollywood studio Dreamworks based on his homage to *Star Wars* director George Lucas. Convergence culture again illustrates how digital technologies have further blurred line between amateur and professional production, showing how fans can engage in media production that aspires to professional standards.

To further understand how fans can be considered as creative workers, I now focus on other ideas that explore the blending of amateur and professional media production. Marshall McLuhan (1964) considers how the computer would not only change production of media but also its consumption

until the roles were eventually combined. Alvin Toffler (1980) uses the concept of the “prosumer” to describe this integration between production and consumption that is discussed by McLuhan. Toffler’s adoption of this the term came from observing the rise in home pregnancy testing kits, predicting that the “prosumer economy” would be a key feature of the coming information society. He believed that in the future, the lines between producer and consumer would blur, as the standardisation of over produced products would eventually require differentiation. The consumer and producer would work together in order to provide differentiation, hence the two roles blending and combining. Don Tapscott and Anthony D Williams (2006) extend the term, using the word “prosumption” to describe the collaborative nature of production on websites such as *Wikipedia* where users can occupy both roles of consumer and producer. They also see prosumers as co-creators who work in partnership with producers to design and innovate products and to test them before they get released. In this process of user testing, it is the user who ultimately shapes the end product they will use, deciding which features work best.

Axel Bruns’ (2008) work on “produsage” is a further development of the ideas suggested by McLuhan and Toffler. According to Bruns, produsage is a collaborative process that involves “user-led” production (1). As indicated by the term, the produser combines the roles of producer and consumer, engaging in the act of produsage; an activity that is different to regular forms of content production. Bruns uses *Wikipedia* and *Second Life* as examples of produsage, online communities that rely on users to populate them with content. They also encourage further improvement, where users have the opportunity to develop and improve previously developed content, leading to a culture of ongoing development. Bruns suggests that this model of production improves upon typical industrial models of production, as the speed of development is far greater. He also believes that the lack of a traditional hierarchal infrastructure encourages collaborative activity and knowledge sharing.

Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller's (2004) study of "Pro-Am" culture is another idea that is concerned with how new technologies are changing the nature of creative work. For Leadbeater and Miller, Pro-Ams are "amateurs who work to professional standards" and have an impact on "politics and culture" and "economics and development" (12). They also note the importance of technology in Pro-Am culture and how it has been an enabling factor in developing the Pro-Am production. Examples, such as the Open Source movement, rap music and *The Sims* computer game modification community, are cited as being evidence for the rise in Pro-Am activity. Through interviews with those involved in Pro-Am pursuits, Leadbeater and Miller see the archetypal Pro-Am as a hobbyist who uses their leisure time to pursue their interest, but adopts a professional approach. Though their interest may be purely at an amateur level and is not their main money earning occupation, they will maintain professional standards. This may involve investing in specialist equipment, devoting a large amount of their free time and utilising specialist knowledge.

Interestingly, Leadbeater and Miller do not include fans in their definition of the Pro-Am. They group fans with "dabblers, devotees and spectators" and see the Pro-Am as "serious and committed amateurs and quasi-professionals" (23). The examples of the fan activities discussed in this dissertation suggest that this labelling has little value and therefore requires a reconsideration to include fan producers rather than see them as a separate group. The collaborative nature of Pro-Am activity is also discussed, highlighting how Pro-Am activity relies on networks in order to thrive. The internet is signalled as being a key factor in facilitating Pro-Am activity, providing specialist knowledge, allowing Pro-Ams to find likeminded folk involved in similar pursuits and is also a useful outlet for purchasing equipment. Leadbeater and Miller also consider the economic implications of Pro-Am activity and how it can lead to the development of new innovations. Pro-Am designed file-sharing technologies such as BitTorrent demonstrate the potential economic implications of Pro-Am production, which I discuss in chapter seven. Leadbeater and Miller suggest a need for an adjustment in government policy to allow Pro-Am production to thrive and

eventually become a key money making activity for the British economy. Like the approaches discussed previously, Leadbetter and Miller see that the relationship between producers and consumers as highly important in developing new ideas, the Pro-Ams being a source for these leading developments.

Though the terms prosumer, produser and Pro-Am are separated, it is easy to see the many similarities between each of them. They are each concerned with not just how amateur and professional production practices are merging but also with how such activities promote collaboration. Dave Hesmondhalgh (2010) questions the academic nature of many of these studies, particularly the work of Bruns (2008) and Tapscott and Williams (2008), which use what he terms “neologisms and buzzwords”, adopting an almost journalistic discourse. Whilst I would agree with Hesmondhalgh’s summation, I see these studies as prompts for further academic discussion, which draw on empirically verifiable research to consider how the nature of media production is evolving in the digital age. Notably absent from such discussions are fans. Tapscott and Williams (2008) and Leadbeater and Miller (2004) both reduce fans to hobbyists or devotees, bringing to mind the pathological view of fandom I discussed in chapter one. A key aspect of my thesis is how fans can be seen as workers who produce for both economic and non-economic purposes. Another criticism of these often hyperbolic studies is that they fail to take into account how user generated content involves a significant amount of unpaid labour (Hesmondhalgh, 2010). This labour can be exploited and economised by the powerful. Tiziana Terranova (2004) refers to this as “free labour” and is an “important, yet unacknowledged, source of value in advanced capitalist societies” (73). Terranova points out that free labour is not necessarily about exploitation, it can be pleasurable for those who engage in it, a sort of philanthropism: “the internet is always and simultaneously a gift economy and an advanced capitalist economy” (115). Hesmondhalgh (2012) believes Terranova’s ideas have been often crudely appropriated by academics that see usage of social media such as *Facebook* being exploitative (338).

Abigail De Kosnik (2012b) relates Terranova's concept of free labour to fan production, particularly that which is distributed on the internet. The purpose of De Kosnik's (2012b) study is to conceptualise fan activity as a form of work, not an economically valueless pursuit as suggested by previous studies of fandom. De Kosnik considers how fan labour has been used by media companies, an area also considered by Meehan (2000) and Murray (2004). She believes that fan activity if realised as a form of labour, particularly by fans themselves, could potentially lead to it becoming a money making activity. In my concept of the alternative economy I use the idea of free labour to show how fan producers devote significant time to their practice for no financial gain. However, in chapter seven, I show how in an alternative economy, the results of this labour can be exploited by other fans who take advantage of their unprotected free productions by selling them for profit. This is one instance of where fans are setting up companies, both online and offline, and commodifying their practice.

I now focus on these entrepreneurial aspects of fandom, the final way in which fans can be viewed as creative workers. The idea of fans being entrepreneurs, or as Zoltan Kacsuk (2011) refers to them, "fantrepreneurs", is a key aspect of the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. According to Hesmondhalgh (2012) there exists a "discourse of entrepreneurialism in the economy as a whole" (209). Entrepreneurs are desired for their innovations but also the wealth that they can bring to an economy. Hesmondhalgh sees part of the rise in enterprise being explained by the desires of creative workers who wish to "go it alone" and have greater autonomy in their occupation (210). Though underdeveloped in academia, the entrepreneurial aspect of fandom has not been entirely ignored. Jenkins (1992, 2006b), Brooker (2002) and Hills (2002) have indicated, albeit briefly, how fan knowledge and participation can prove useful when pursuing a career in the media industry. In his study of Manga fandom in Hungary, Kacsuk (2011) examines "the role of employees, freelance professionals and entrepreneurs coming from within fan cultures,

or fantreneurs” (20). Using the example of a Japanese Manga franchise called NARUTO, Kacsuk conducts qualitative research, interviewing those he considers “subcultural producers of Hungarian Manga fandom” (21). Kacsuk uses the term “fantreneur” as a way to demonstrate how fans of Japanese Manga in Hungary have successfully started media companies that are related to their fandom. He adds that these fan companies will adopt a more authentic and careful approach to the texts that they release, drawing on their fandom and own personal understanding of the community they are producing texts for.

Through his research, Kacsuk determines that fantreneurs are significant agents that help to develop fan markets and shape the way products enter the mainstream. He also discovers that fantreneurs have an important involvement in shaping discourses of “quality and authenticity” (30). He illustrates this by using the example of Manga translation in Hungary and how fans fought to ensure that the correct translations were produced that were faithful to the original sources. In this situation, fantreneurs not only play an important role in moving products from the alternative to the mainstream, they also add a level of trust. For the fan community, texts produced by the fantreneur will then have a greater level of care and attention; paying particular attention to the details that might be insignificant to the typical producers. Using Kacsuk’s example of Manga, this might include ensuring that the subtitles are ‘correct’, as according to the rules set by the Manga fan community. Kacsuk does not consider how the role of the fantreneur might also create jealousy or be a maligned figure amongst the fan community. The fantreneur, though clearly a fan of the products they produce, is not purely driven by their fandom; they also have to consider the financial viability of releasing such a product and whether there will be sufficient return for their investment. The decisions they make have to make sense economically, as there has to be a sufficient market in order for them to sustain a business. These decisions might not suit the fan community and therefore create conflict. This concept of the fantreneur is an extension of Angela McRobbie’s (1997) term the “subcultural entrepreneur”.

In McRobbie's (1997) work on fashion, she points out that previous studies on subcultures, such as Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson's (1993) classic study of British subcultures and Dick Hebdige's (1979) work on British punk subculture, neglected to discuss the entrepreneurial potential that subcultures presented for their participants. McRobbie suggests that the reason for this lack of attention can be explained by the punk style being considered form of "creative defiance". Therefore, viewing members of subcultures as entrepreneurs would "undermine the 'purity' or 'authenticity'" of the subculture (192). However, brief references to the entrepreneurial activities of subcultural participants can be found in the work of John Clarke (1993b). When looking at what he referred to as "commercial youth culture", Clarke discusses how young subcultural entrepreneurs are able to "anticipate trends" before commercial companies are able to recognise them (157). He recognises "small-scale record shops, recording companies, the boutiques and one or two-woman manufacturing companies" as new kinds of "commercial economic institutions" (157). The trends that these institutions are able to identify are then made widely marketable by what he refers to as "commercial diffusion" (158). This is when the subcultural style is commodified and incorporated into popular culture.

For McRobbie (1997), the beginning of subcultural entrepreneurship emerges from the counter-culture movement of the 1960s, particularly the 'hippy' subculture. It was this movement that helped to rejuvenate the street-market, which had become stigmatised with connotations of inferiority and poverty. The clothing tastes of the hippies and their desire to adopt wear styles of the past meant that the second-hand street market, or "rag market", as referred to by McRobbie, enjoyed a resurgence. The demand for subcultural fashion also led to the establishing of what she refers to as a "semi-entrepreneurial network", which consisted of "'alternative' shops and restaurants" (196-197). She also indicates that out of this network also emerged successful "hippy businesses" such as Richard Branson's Virgin Records, Harvey Goldsmith's Promotions and the

magazine *Time Out*. This demonstrates how some companies were able to crossover to the mainstream yet still maintain some of the values from the hippy subculture. These entrepreneurial activities helped to finance the subculture and allow it to operate. McRobbie also notes how the activities within this specific case study were gendered, mirroring roles that are typical in wider society; hence women having a particular involvement in fashion and men running record companies.

When discussing the punk movement, McRobbie believes that it was the “small-scale youth industries” that allowed it to grow in stature (198). Within these industries she includes fanzine publishing and graphic design and how these specific examples could be seen as launching pads for those who wanted to pursue a career as a professional music journalist or a designer. Again for McRobbie, it is the rag market that has particular significance to the punk subculture. The rag market is not only an outlet for selling second-hand or reappropriated clothes, it also provides an opportunity for establishing an enterprise. McRobbie makes mention of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme (EAS) of the 1980s, which, as I will demonstrate in chapter five of this dissertation, presented the unemployed with the opportunity to start their own business and receive financial support from the government. McRobbie sees the EAS as a way for the lower-middle class or young graduates to maintain some form of “artistic autonomy” and avoid working for a company that engages in mass production of cultural products (199). Whilst the success of the EAS is difficult to judge, it helped to foster a number of small enterprises that are still in operation today, such as the fan run companies I discuss in chapter five, and provided freedom for these entrepreneurs to pursue a career that they were passionate about. For McRobbie, the location that is clearly of great importance for the subcultural entrepreneur is the rag market. Whilst the rag market still exists, particularly in the major British cities, I would argue that it no longer has the significance that it once did, the internet now being space which presents enterprise opportunities for the fantrepneur. This will be demonstrated in chapter eight, where I examine a number of

different fan companies that have used the internet as a distribution platform to sell their produced artefacts.

In addition to Kacsuk (2011), McRobbie's (1997) work on subcultural production has influenced the work of a number of other academics, such as Paul Hodkinson (2002) and his study of goth subculture. Hodkinson states that his work is a response to McRobbie's call for more academic study into the entrepreneurial aspect of subcultures. Hodkinson's methodological approach shares some similarities with the approach I discuss in chapter four. By being involved in the goth subculture, Hodkinson is able to draw on his own experience of being a promoter as well as make use of contacts he has made during his involvement. In order to further understand subcultural production he interviews a number of people who run companies or are directly engaged in acts of production. Hodkinson's intention is to focus on the profitable aspects of cultural production and, more specifically, how members of subcultures move from making cultural production a hobby to making it their primary occupation. He notes how those who ran record, clothing or accessory shops were most likely to be able to make a "modest living", in some cases turn profits, from their involvement with the goth subculture (119). When focusing on clothing production, he indicates that those involved within this specific practice were able to make "comfortable, though not excessive, livings" (120).

Using the example of the Yorkshire based goth clothing shop Morgana, he discusses how they, like many other shops, had to adopt what he calls a "translocal" approach. Morgana had to find ways to attract clientele outside of their locality as outside of London there is "an insufficient number of goths in any one local area of Britain" to provide regular custom (120). To address this problem, shops such as Morgana would advertise in fanzines, have an online shopping website, sell through mail order and at goth events and festivals. Furthermore, shops that specialised in the selling of goth music, such as Nottingham's Nightbreed records, would operate on a global level, also relying

on their online website and fanzine advertising for promotion. When addressing the issue of ‘selling out’, Hodkinson justifies profit driven cultural production as a way of emphasising the “autonomy” of the subculture rather than undermining it (121). Therefore, the subculture presents its participants with an employment opportunity that enables them to engage in their fandom for their living rather than having to find a job outside of the subculture.

Hodkinson also points out that many involved in cultural production did not pursue it primarily as a profit making activity but did it as a secondary income, sharing similarities with the informal enterprises I discuss in chapter eight. One of Hodkinson’s interviewees admits that the profit gained from putting on a well-known goth event was a motivating factor. However, amongst Hodkinson’s interviewees, the main motivation for pursuing cultural production comes out of their passion for the subculture. This passion helps to offset the long hours and financial risks running a business presents. For many, the reward is being able to have a job that they love and to not have to change their lifestyle; it fits their lifestyle. Hodkinson also includes “perks” as another non-monetary reward for cultural production (124). These might include free CDs and free access to events. In addition to perks, the final reward for Hodkinson is “subcultural capital” (125). Here the reward for the participants is status in the subculture. Hodkinson concludes by suggesting that subcultural production demonstrates a high level of commitment to the subculture and, according to his interviewees, is a way to ensure that the subculture develops rather than remain stagnant. Though not explored in detail by Hodkinson, it is evident that a web presence is paramount to economically sustain many of the enterprises he discusses. Due to their niche clientele, physical shops are unable to survive on visiting custom only and therefore need to be ‘translocal’ in order to thrive. Having a website that is able to sell both nationally and internationally is crucial. It is this use of the internet to create online fan enterprises, or as I describe them, ‘informal enterprises’, that I explore in chapter eight. Having discussed how fans can be considered as creative workers, the first key

feature of the alternative economy. I now focus on the second key feature of the alternative economy: fan produced texts as exchangeable artefacts.

2.4 Fan produced texts as exchangeable artefacts

In chapter one, I discussed how much of the academic work on fandom approaches fan production as an act of symbolic production, or as I described it, a celebration of fandom (Jenkins, 1992a and 1992b; Bacon-Smith 1992; Fiske, 1992). Therefore, the idea of fan produced texts being commodities is one that has, until recently, been neglected. The fan who often makes money out their fandom has often been characterised as a pirate (Jenkins, 1992a; Leonard, 2005) or a character that is marginalised from the fan community because they do not share the same authentic values of others (Fiske, 1992). This suggests that fan production is an act of pleasure, a desire to give back to the fan community or a way of gaining status. Fiske (1992) suggests that textual production is a form of cultural capital, producers in fan communities being those that possess the most cultural capital as their fan activity goes beyond the act of mere consumption. More recently there has been a recognition of how fan produced texts are becoming commodified. Using the example of Japanese fan produced comic books known as *doujinshi*, Lawrence Lessig (2005) recognises how these have been distributed commercially by Japanese publishing companies (26). Also, De Kosnik (2009) notes how “both fan filmmakers and game modders have succeeded in transforming their fan works into commercial entities” (120). She indicates that much of this kind of fan activity is masculinised, whilst female fan production remains non-commercialised. De Kosnik is concerned with how the female fan fiction community might become ‘monetised’ and others will make money out of their labour. These examples, while useful, are concerned with how fan produced texts are made commodities when they are commercialised and enter the mainstream. In this dissertation I am more interested in how fan commodities do not enter the mainstream and remain part of the alternative economy.

In the alternative economy, fan produced texts are *exchangeable artefacts* and distributed as either *commodities* or *gifts*. Typically fan produced texts have been understood as gifts. According to Karen Hellekson (2009), fan produced texts are distributed as gifts out of “fear” that fan producers have for being sued for breaking intellectual property laws” (114), a view that has also been highlighted in the research of Bacon-Smith (1992). In addition to gifting being a form of perceived self-preservation, Hellekson (2009) also sees gifting as being instrumental in the forming of tight communities of trustworthy fans that share texts amongst each other without fear of recrimination. Graham Murdock (2011) also recognises how gifts are significant in the building of communities, enabling “social connections” (23). For Marcel Mauss (1967), the theorist recognised by Murdock (2011) for introducing the concept of the gift, this building of social networks is evidence that a gift is not free; it creates an obligation. Therefore the receiver of the gift has to reciprocate. Mauss sees this as being indicative of a capitalist economy, placing social obligations upon participants.

Recent work on the gift economy romanticises the concept and focuses on how digital technologies, particularly the internet, have allowed works to be duplicated and distributed free of charge (Barnbrook, 2005; Levine, 2001; Giesler, Mennicken and Pohlmann, 2001). According to Murdock (2011), digital gifting outside of the price system operates on “three basic levels”. On the most basic level there is the sharing of “self-produced or found material” on personal websites or other forms of social media. On the second level is “co-cooperation”, which is based around the mutual working to make domains more accessible, such as the tagging of photos on *Flickr*, and on the third level is “collaboration”, where the goal is to produce a “new cultural product” that is distributed for free (27). However, digital gifting that affects the price system has led to a “clash between the defenders of extended intellectual property rights and advocates of unrestricted sharing” (26). Jonathan Sterne (2012) highlights the problems of drawing on the idea of the gift economy to describe file-sharing, noting that services such as *Napster* did not just intend to enable the free

sharing of music, they also intended to make money out of it as well (213). When discussing the relationship between gifts and commodities, Lewis Hyde (2007) sees that when art, that carries the gift of creativity, is sold, it turns into a commodity and the social aspect of the gift is removed. From this perspective, once a gift becomes a commodity, it loses authenticity, its original intentions of sharing being taken away. As I demonstrate in chapter seven, when a fan text intended for distribution as a gift is sold without the author's knowing this can create divisions amongst the fan economy. Therefore, one of the potential drawbacks of distributing fan produced texts as gifts is that they can be exploited by others for economic gain.

There exists little literature that discusses fan produced texts as commodities. The only literature I have found that makes mention of this little considered idea is that which focuses on fanzines. While I discuss fanzines in greater detail in chapter five, my interest here is concerned with how academics have described them as commodities. Both Stephen Burt (1999) and Chris Atton (2000) recognise that fanzines rely primarily on the barter system of exchange. Patrick Welch and Gerry Welch (2009) define the barter system as a "system in which goods are exchanged for each other rather than money" (204). Though fanzines have cover prices that have been set by the producer, Atton (2000) notes that this exchange value is "only one method of payment". Like the work I have reviewed on gifts, Atton sees the uses of the barter system as having a "gift relationship" (59). This is because fanzines are sold at low prices, and in some cases for free, and also have a social purpose, creating a relationship between the reader and producer. For Atton, even if a fanzine is purchased at cost by the reader, elements of gift exchange still exist as the item is the product of fan labour and "a sign of [the producers] individuality" (60). This creates a sense of obligation for the reader, who might wish to engage in promotion of the fanzine through word of mouth, be understanding of their infrequent publication schedule or contribute to the fanzine by writing a letter for publication or work to be included in a future issue. Again, much of the focus of academic

work on fanzines, like that on other fan produced texts, romanticises their altruistic nature, not being a money making endeavour, but one relating to the producer's enthusiasm.

My research into the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production has revealed that fanzines were initially sold at low cover prices and also bartered, evidently not being profit driven. However, a second wave of fanzine production from 1990 onwards sought to make money. As the quality of production increased, moving from cut and paste photocopies to computer designed printed product, the exchange value increased. In an alternative economy, although fan produced texts are exchanged for money they still occupy elements of gift exchange. As these are products of fan labour, other fans will purchase them out of loyalty as well as for their use value.

I have now established that fan produced texts can be considered as exchangeable commodities and gifts, though in some situations they might be exchanged for free they can carry an obligation which requires the receiver to reciprocate in some form. One instance of this might be bartering where to receive the text for 'free' the receiver has to trade something in return. Therefore, it can be determined that in the alternative economy of fan production nothing is actually given for free, relationships and networks are created that lead to the establishing of reciprocity. I have also established that fan produced texts exchanged as gifts are open to exploitation from others who are able to sell them at a cost. Though this practice is frowned upon by other fans, it highlights how others can exploit fan labour. It also raises questions about morality, with fan production potentially transgressing intellectual property laws. This is the final key feature of the alternative economy that I now discuss.

2.5. Fans transgressing rules and regulations

A commonality between studies of fan production is that they all address issues of copyright, though some do this more explicitly than others. As I highlighted earlier in this chapter, both

Jenkins (1992a) and Bacon-Smith (1992) recognise that the issue of intellectual property is a factor that all fan producers have to face when they are producing texts. When talking about fan production prior to the advent of the internet, Jenkins (2006b) believes that fan producers escaped prosecution because it was a small-scale, underground activity. As fans began to utilise digital technology and use online platforms as a way to distribute and sell their products, this has raised the profile of their activities, giving them access to a potentially global audience. In relation with the growing file-sharing movement, where fans of films, music, video games and now books are distributing copyrighted material amongst one another, the issue of intellectual property has become one of much contention and of academic debate. As I will demonstrate here, much of the recent academic debate on intellectual property has questioned the nature of copyright law and its value in the digital age. As advancements in digital technologies have allowed for greater interactivity with texts, copyright law has not been amended to reflect this. For academics such as Siva Vaidhyanathan (2001) and Lawrence Lessig (2005 and 2008), copyright law needs to be updated so that user creativity is no longer constrained. A number of fan studies have examined the relationship between fans and producers. For example, Jenkins (1992a) sees their relationship as conflicted because of the ways they are at opposition. Producers seek to control fan production, limiting unauthorised use of trademarked names or copyrighted characters, while fans tend to ignore such stipulations and pursue the manufacture of texts regardless. This behaviour led Tulloch and Jenkins (1995) to term fans as a “powerless elite” because of the lack of power they have in influencing the content of the media texts that they are fans of. Therefore, fans produce their own interpretations to satisfy their needs. In the digital age, this on-going conflict between fans and official producers continues, though the nature of the relationship has become increasingly complex.

An example of this complex relationship between fans and producers is illustrated by Sean Leonard’s (2005) research into anime fandom. Fans played a key role in the development of anime

fandom in the United States. Their recirculation of anime, which included producing English fan subtitles, allowed Japanese owners to realise that there was a market for such products. Because of this, the owners of the properties chose to ignore this fan activity, seeing their practices as important in indicating which anime would be the most profitable to release. According to Leonard, US copyright law allows for three non-legal actions that a copyright holder can follow when their works are used by others. Firstly, there is “uninformed ignorance”, where the rights holder has no awareness of the use of their property. Secondly, “deliberate or strategic ignorance” is where the rights holders are aware of their use of their property but allow it to continue as it may work to their advantage. Thirdly, with “dismissive ignorance” the rights holder will ignore the use of their property as it “would only waste company time” (287-288). Leonard argues that the Japanese property owners of anime strategically ignored the fan activity because it was to their economic advantage. Here, the transgression of intellectual property by fans was not actively opposed by owners. Both Leonard (2005) and Lee (2010) identify that there exists a mutual, but ultimately informal, relationship between fans of anime and the owners of anime. When official commercial releases of anime have occurred, fan producers have taken their products out of circulation to respect the intentions of the owners. In doing this they will not hinder the potential profits by continuing to circulate fan subtitled anime as gifts amongst the anime fan community.

Lee (2010) argues that in the digital age this relationship has changed. For Lee, the advent of the internet has globalised the anime fan community and, as file-sharing technologies have emerged, owners are now threatened by powers that fans have to recirculate fan subtitled anime online. Lee believes that the ethics that once existed, where the interests of owners would be respected, have changed once the internet globalised the anime fan community . Where fan production was once used to the economic advantage of property owners it is now seen to be of the reverse. According to Lee, anime owners have used cease and desist orders to disrupt the activities of fansubbers. This example highlights the complex relationship that exists between fan producers, owners of property and

copyright law. The work of Murray (2004), discussed earlier in this chapter, has also recognised this curious relationship, looking at how major companies have now decided to make use of fan labour rather than directly oppose it. From this view, the power of fan activity can be harnessed and fans can be used as free promoters. Murray recognises how Warner Brothers' attempt to legally challenge *Harry Potter* fans for their unauthorised use of copyrighted characters backfired as they realised that the fan audience could spread negative publicity about the film.

Inevitably, when discussing an issue such as intellectual property, there is the need to “engage with basic moral questions of justice, equality and the public good” (Golding and Murdock, 2000: 14). In order to thrive, fan production needs to transgress intellectual property laws, yet these laws are in place to ensure that there is an “economic incentive” to guarantee future creative production (Throsby, 2011: 199). David Throsby (2011) recognises how copyright affects the supply and demand relationship. For producers (suppliers), copyright has two important purposes, to earn a living from works that already exist and to act as an “incentive” for future production. For consumers (demanders), copyright means that they can purchase the work to access it and “assures them access to a new range of work over time” (201). Without new texts being produced, fans would not have content to consume and to reappropriate. Therefore, the issue of copyright can present a difficult moral dilemma for fans, creative workers, owners of content and also to scholars. Dave Laing (2003) indicates that copyright once met the needs of the creative worker, but the accelerated development of the mass media from the 1920 onwards and how works were distributed meant that other parties would inevitably become involved. This has raised questions about the inequality of copyright, serving the interests of owners of property, such as media conglomerates, rather than the creator (Bettig, 1996). In addition to this, reappropriation and recirculation of media content by audiences using digital technologies has raised further questions about the value of copyright in the digital age.

Vaidhyanathan (2001) and Lessig (2005, 2008) both share the view that copyright law has become outdated and now needs to be reconsidered in order for audience creativity to truly thrive. Lessig (2005) believes that copyright is used by companies to control culture. Lessig describes current society as a “permissions culture” where those who wish to reappropriate have to gain permission from the property owner. In a permissions culture true innovation cannot exist because laws prevent the use of unauthorised content. Lessig contrasts this with a “free culture” where creators are able to determine what can be done with their creation and are responsible for the control of their intellectual property rather than powerful companies. Lessig refers to the example of the open source software movement, which has openly encouraged others to modify and develop software. He champions the Creative Commons, a non-for-profit organisation that provides creators with a license that permits what others are able to do with their creations. This ranges from allowing others to fully reappropriate content through to preventing any further adaptation of work. Lessig (2008) considers how society needs to embrace “rewrite culture”, where people engage in the remixing of media texts rather than remain a “read only” culture which seeks to discourage creativity.

Lessig uses an example of user creativity on *YouTube* to show how outdated copyright law has become. A mother who recorded a short video of her young son dancing to the Prince song *Let's Go Crazy* uploaded it to *YouTube* so that she could share it with other family members. Universal, the owners of the song, had the video removed from *YouTube* for it breaching copyright and also threatened the mother with legal action. A series of court cases followed, the video being determined to be an example of ‘fair use’ rather than an attempt to breach copyright. The mother also sued Universal for legal costs. This example is evidence of how copyright can limit user creativity, even if it is something as insignificant as a child dancing to badly reproduced audio. Jenkins (2006a) believes that audience production often breaks copyright law because they lack a clear understanding of it. It should be recognised that studies such Vaidhyanathan (2001) and

Lessig (2005, 2008) have a political motive, both being admitted advocates of a relaxing of copyright law. The political nature of academic work on copyright is also highlighted by Peter Tschmuck (2010). In a comprehensive literature review that focuses on the impact of file-sharing on the music industry, Tschmuck identifies that academic work on the subject is negative and contradictory, a significant number not drawing on empirically verifiable evidence and being based on argument alone. In contrast to this, Ramon Lobato (2012) draws on extensive research to demonstrate how film piracy is not as negative as it is perceived to be by media companies. Referring to the Brazilian film *Tropa de Elite* (2007), Lobato acknowledges how the film became the highest earning film ever in Brazil despite it being shared on file-sharing websites before its official cinema release. What emerges from the literature that focus on copyright is that there are a series of discourses in play that seek to either support or oppose copyright. From Tschmuck's (2010) research, it would seem that objective studies using verifiable evidence to support arguments are in the minority.

I have shown how fan production has been both accepted and opposed by the owners of intellectual property. I suggested that the transgressing of intellectual property laws is common in fan production, raising questions about its legal status . The case studies that I draw on in the coming chapters of this dissertation all have instances where fans are in engaged in legally questionable activities, some examples, such as the online file-sharing community I discuss in chapter eight, are more apparent than others. Discussing the economic benefits of fan production raises questions about the morality of such an activity. Whilst it is not my intention to judge whether such practices are appropriate or not, not wanting to be part of the for or against debate on copyright, I do intend to show how micro-fan economies, such as the one relating to European cult cinema, have a culture of economic production partly because of their small size. In comparison to the macro-fan economies that have been discussed in academic work, European cult cinema has little official commercial activities. Fans make up for this by making the products that are not commercially available,

whether it be magazines, books, t-shirts, films or fan produced DVDs. It could be argued that the reason why such activities go unnoticed is that the small scale of market means that there is little interest for property owners to oppose such marginal activities, what could be argued as “dismissive ignorance”, as described by Leonard (2005). Therefore, in order for an alternative economy to exist, fan transgression of rules and regulations has to happen. I should add that intellectual property is not the only rule or regulation than might be breached by fan producers. In chapter six, I show how a producer of fan films contravenes British law by making and distributing films that are unclassified by the British Board of Film Classification, a law that limits the UK from having a thriving amateur film making culture.

2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have offered a reconceptualisation fandom, establishing how fandom can be understood as a cultural and an economic activity. I identified that previous fan studies have made mention of the economic aspect of fandom but it has not been fully realised. I referred to three studies which have attempted to construct a political economy of fandom (Meehan, 2000; Murray, 2004 and De Kosnik, 2012b). These examples have all questioned the nature of fan labour and how it is being used by the powerful, raising questions about how fans are controlled and, in some respects, exploited by media organisations. I then defined my concept of the alternative economy, seeing it is an economy of fandom that it is separate to mainstream economy of media production, but at the same time emulates professional media practice. I argued that this economy operates as a grey, or underground, economy where legality and illegality are blurred. I established that an alternative economy of fan production has three key features. The first feature being that fans are now creative workers that engage in differing forms of practice. To illustrate this I drew on literature relating to the blurring of boundaries of amateur and professional production. I suggested that this, coupled with the rise in digital technologies, shows how fans are now able to engage in

forms of media production that can compete with commercially produced texts, presenting opportunities for enterprise and fantrepneurship. Secondly, in the alternative economy, fan produced texts are artefacts that are either exchanged as gifts, commodities or a hybridised form of both. Finally, by producing artefacts, fans inevitably transgress rules and regulations, this being the final feature of the alternative economy. I noted how the conflicting relationship between fans and owners of media property has continued into the digital age and where they might have once found common ground, the use of internet as a distribution platform has disrupted this. Having established a way to reconceptualise the fan by introducing my concept of the alternative economy, I now move on to explore how European cult cinema, the object of study for this dissertation, has been defined..

CHAPTER THREE

DEFINING EUROPEAN CULT CINEMA

In the past two chapters I have considered how the fan has been conceptualised in academic work and have suggested how fandom might be reconceptualised to interrogate the cultural and political economic roles of fans. In this chapter I explore the process of defining European cult cinema; the object of study for this dissertation. I show that the meaning of European cult cinema was constructed by fans and has been further enhanced by fancademic study. This has led to European cult cinema being studied as a fan object, the majority of fancademic work textually analysing European cult film, without investigating or problematising either the fandom that surrounds it or the process through which the fan object was delineated, named and made meaningful. While I recognise my own status as a fan of European cult cinema, I want to argue that this is an advantageous position if utilised consciously and reflexively as I study the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. I begin this chapter by identifying some of the discourses that surround the nomination of European cult cinema, briefly outlining its genesis. Secondly, I discuss how these processes of definition can be understood, particularly through a recognition of the privileged role that Italian cult cinema is assigned within the domain of European cult cinema. Finally, I introduce and offer my working definition of the *giallo*, a cycle or movement of Italian cult cinema which much of the fan activity I discuss in this dissertation surrounds.

3.1. Trash or cult?

According to many of the people I interviewed as part of my research into the alternative economy of European cult cinema fandom, attempting to identify the origin of the term European cult cinema is difficult. There exists a variety of terms to describe what I term here as European cult cinema.

The words Eurotrash, European trash, Euro-cult and Eurocult are often used interchangeably to describe European cult films produced in Western Europe from the late 1940s onwards (Allmer et al, 2012; Mathijis and Mendik, 2004). I first encountered the term ‘European trash’ from reading the American fanzine *European Trash Cinema*, which, as I discuss in chapter five, was one of the earliest fan publications to focus exclusively on European cult cinema. Here, the use of the word trash is affectionate; a way to describe a type of cinema that is “either explicitly rejected or simply ignored by legitimate film culture” (Sconce, 1995: 372). An early academic use of the word trash can be found in Kael (1968), whose discussion of the film *Wild in the Streets* (1968) proposes that young film audiences prefer trash films rather art films because they “connect with their lives in an immediate even if a grossly frivolous way” (103). Jeffrey Sconce (1995), the theorist most commonly associated with bringing the use of the word trash into the academy, uses the word trash to describe what he terms “paracinema”. For Sconce, paracinema does not just refer to cinema that falls outside of the mainstream, it is also a “particular reading protocol” for cult film audiences whose “explicit manifesto...is to valorize [sic] all forms of cinematic ‘trash’” (372). Therefore, paracinema is therefore a fluid category that incorporates an assortment of different film genres that are in opposition to the mainstream. Sconce also recognises the subcultural aspect of paracinema, noting the important role that fanzines have in helping to raise awareness of film genres that are excluded from mainstream discussion. I suggest that the terms trash and paracinema are part of an academic discourse that seeks to legitimise the study of cult cinema. In my discussion of fancademia in chapter one, I highlighted how fans and academics are in conflict. I now argue that this conflict can be evidenced through the discourses that fancademics and fans have used to term European cult cinema.

For fans, the word trash is problematic. As the academic use of the term has increased, it has now been rejected by many fans because of its derogative, disrespectful connotations. Recent evidence of this rejection can be found in the many fan blogs and message board responses to the release of

European cult film *Suspiria* (Dario Argento, 1977) on DVD and Blu-Ray by the British independent DVD label CineExcess¹. Fans objected to the use of the subtitle “taking trash seriously” found on the front cover, believing it to be, as described by one fan, “borderline offensive”². Such reactions appear to be a response to the labelling of their fan object as trash. As CineExcess is a label run by academics who study cult film, this reaction can be seen as a rejection of an academic discourse. Raiford Guins’ (2005) work on the releasing of Italian horror films on the DVD format is useful here in highlighting the existence of fan discourses that surround Italian horror films. He believes that there were different fan discourses surrounding Italian horror films during the VHS era than in the post-VHS era; the era of DVD, 1997 onwards. During the VHS era, he identifies the dominant fan discourse being that of “gore object”. This would be because of the inferior video quality, graphic cover art and English dubbing of most VHS releases, taking attention away from the ‘artistic’ qualities of the film and emphasising the more gorier and excessive elements of the text. He also points out how writings about the films in fanzines, such as Chas Balun's *Deep Red* and the long running horror magazine *Fangoria*, would champion their excesses. Yet, in the DVD age, Guins believes the dominant discourse has become that of “art object”. Now films are often restored from original camera negatives and presented on DVD in their original theatrical aspect ratio, are often in their native Italian language with English subtitles, use poster art on front covers and contain contextual extra material that discusses their production history. As the films have been presented in this manner, the fan discourses circulated in fanzines, magazines and online fora tend to treat the films as art cinema rather than trash. This demonstrates the existence of opposing fancademic and fan discourses relating to European cult cinema. A curious feature of this opposition is that both groups are attempting to legitimise the value of their fan object within their domain. Fancademics use the academic discourse of trash to justify the value of studying cult film while fans employ the word ‘cult’ as a way to give their fan object greater validity.

¹ Evidence of this criticism can be found at: <http://www.landofwhimsy.com/archives/2010/01/suspiria-the-good-the-bad-and-the-downright-ugly> and also <http://www.dvdactive.com/reviews/dvd/suspiria.html>

² Quote from: <http://www.landofwhimsy.com/archives/2010/01/suspiria-the-good-the-bad-and-the-downright-ugly>

I find that I now only encounter the word Eurotrash in academic publications, such as Mathijis and Mendik (2004). In the fan community, Eurotrash has now been replaced by the term ‘Euro-cult’, also referred to as ‘Eurocult’ or, as I use in this dissertation, ‘European cult’. As a fan, my awareness of the term Euro-cult first came in the late 1990s, where online film fora such as the *Mobius Home Video Forum*³ and *DVD Maniacs*⁴ would have specific sub-fora devoted to Euro-cult, indicating the place of European cult film in wider cult film fandom. From this evidence, it would appear that fans have adopted the term ‘cult’, a term commonly used in academic circles, as an attempt to legitimise the form of cinema that they are passionate about and to enhance its cultural value. To understand the significance of the use of the word cult, its use in academic work needs to be briefly explored. Attempting to define cult and identify what constitutes a cult film has been recognised as problematic (Mathijis and Sexton, 2011). Hills (2002) believes that there can be “no final or absolute classification on the media cult” as cult texts tend to have specific similarities to one another (131). Mathijis and Sexton (2011) identify that the word cult can be approached from two main frameworks: the religious, where one exercises a belief, and the sociological, which sees religious attachment as a form of institutionalisation (1). According to Mathijis and Sexton, the use of cult in film cultures occurred in the 1970s and was applied to films with followings that would engage in “ritualistic” behaviour (3). They refer to the *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975) as an example of this, where fans of the film regularly attend repeat screenings, imitate the dress of characters in the film and recite lines, engaging in acts that signify worship (Siegel, 1980; Austin, 1981). For Harper and Mendik (2000) cult film has a certain affect on its audience that goes beyond being an attachment, instead becoming “a ritualistic form of near obsession” that includes having an intimate knowledge of the film. This obsession is almost sexual, with the audience having an “orgasmic” reaction to a specific film (7). Kawin (1991) believes that there are two types of cult film: the inadvertent and the programmatic (18). The former not

³ www.mhvf.net

⁴ DVD Maniacs is now rebranded as AV Maniacs: <http://www.avmaniacs.com/forums/>

intended to reach cult status, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, for example, but the latter being specifically designed to appeal a fan audience, the films of Quentin Tarantino being a possible example here, his use of intertextual references providing a source of pleasure for the fan audience.

Though the term cult can have connotations that are as equally derogative as trash, the fan movement from European *trash* to European *cult* cinema reflects not only its distinct and active fan following, but also the inadvertent construction of a category of film. I use Kawin's term "inadvertent" to indicate that European cult cinema, as a category, was not intended to exist by its original producers; it is a term created by fans rather than industry to describe an economic category that was produced by fans. Similarly, cult television shows such as *Star Trek* and the early *Doctor Who* were created for a general audience, their begetting fandoms were also inadvertent. This demonstrates that fans have the ability to manufacture cult followings through their cultural and economic production. In chapter five, I historicise the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, showing how fans, through their textual production, inadvertently produced European cult cinema. So far in this chapter I have identified the fancademic and fan discourses that surround European cult cinema. I have demonstrated that the terms 'trash' and 'cult' were used by each group as a way to legitimise the object of European cult cinema within their own domain. The fan produced category of European cult cinema is therefore an inadvertent construction of cult film that has emerged through fan production. I now consider how European cult cinema has been defined, highlighting the significant role that Italian cult cinema has within wider European cult cinema fandom.

3.2. *What is European cult cinema?*

As evidenced in chapter one, much of the literature on fandom has focused on the science fiction fan community, particularly the fandoms relating to *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who* and the *Star Wars*

franchise (Tulloch and Alvarado, 1983; Jenkins, 1992a; Bacon-Smith, 1992; Tulloch and Jenkins, 1995). More recent work has given attention to the fandoms that surround other macro-fandoms, such as *Harry Potter* (Brown, S., 2007; Schwabach, 2009), *Lost* (Gray and Mittell, 2007; Mittell, 2009), *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer* (Bloustien, 2002; Kirby-Diaz, 2009) and *Glee* (Wood and Baughman, 2012). Both Booth (2012) and Hills (2005) recognise the lack of research into horror fandom, suggesting that it is an under-represented area of academic study⁵. This is also evident of European cult cinema fandom. In their edited collection on European horror cinema, Allmer et al (2012) note how much of the academic work on European horror has focused on specific national horror cinemas or directors associated with it. They see European horror cinema as a “little explored field” (2). For Allmer et al, works expansively covering European cult cinema tend to be works of fan-scholarship, such as Tohill and Tombs (1995). I demonstrate this shortly, showing how existing studies of European cult cinema have mainly been the product of fancademia, being either the work of scholar fans or fan scholars. Therefore, attention has been placed on the fan object rather than considering its consumption, or, more specifically, its fandom. Earlier in this chapter I established that European cult cinema was defined by fans as a way to categorise a particular fan following. Therefore, finding an accepted overall definition is difficult. As a fan of European cult cinema, I understand it as low-budget exploitation movies originating from Europe, particularly Italy, Spain, Germany, France and the United Kingdom, from 1945 onwards.

Two academic studies indicate the significance of the date 1945 (Allmer et al, 2012; Mathijis and Mendik, 2004). For Allmer et al (2012), 1945 corresponds with the end of World War II and marked “demographic and political shifts” and “the establishment of new democratic structures and oppressive regimes” in Europe (3). They believe that this context influenced the production of horror films that began to respond to the “historical trauma of World War II” (3). Mathijis and Mendik (2004) suggest that the lack of academic attention awarded to European cult cinema, or as

⁵ See Booth (2012) page 70 and Hills (2002) page 2.

they refer to it 'alternative Europe', can be explained by it being difficult to define. They believe that European cult cinema cannot be simply defined by production strategies, ideological perspectives, language, genre or countries (2). These distinctions account for what they see as a "negative definition" of European film, it having a clear difference to other cinemas and being often deemed unworthy of study by academics (3). This is where they introduce the term "alternative" to set it aside from "accepted" European film, such as the works of Jean Cocteau or Werner Herzog (3). Much like the work of Sconce (1995) that I discussed earlier, the purpose of Mathijis and Mendik (2004) is to challenge pre-conceived ideas about film and justify the value of scholarly interrogating exploitation and underground cinema. For Mathijis and Mendik (2004), European cult cinema is exploitation and underground film originating from Europe 1945 onwards.

Interestingly, this edited collection contains a combination of academic articles on different European cult films and directors, but also contains interviews with directors and reports of film festivals. This content is indicative of fancademic work, merging scholarship with fandom.

The works I have discussed so far have been edited collections containing chapters that focus on different aspects of European cult film. Danny Shipka (2011) is arguably the only study to primarily focus on the European cult cinema phenomenon. I recognise Shipka's work as evidence of fancademia as it offers a subjective, highly celebratory account of European cult cinema.

However, Shipka's position as a fan of European cult cinema further helps in attempting to define it. Shipka's study focuses on three main European countries: Italy, Spain and France. He gives no explicit reason for adopting such a focus, justifying his exclusion of British cult cinema because it is too closely linked with American film, their industries being "interchangeable" (10). Allmer et al (2012) have noted that in many studies of European cult cinema, Britain often is excluded, which is surprising given the fandom that surrounds British Hammer horror cinema (Hutchings, 2004: 92).

Unlike Allmer et al (2012) and Mathijis and Mendik (2004), Shipka (2011) chooses the period between 1960 and 1980 as being the most significant for European cult cinema production. His

explanation for focusing on this period is that it was one of “great social change”, particularly in how attitudes towards censorship were becoming relaxed in countries such as Spain and Italy. For Shipka, the “turbulence” of this period is therefore reflected in the cult films that were made in Europe (7). Shipka’s study then offers a historical discussion of the development of cult film in Italy, Spain and France. This again highlights one of the limitations of fanacademic work; they tend to shy away from considering the consumption context of the fan object, instead authors focus on the object of their fandom.

To address this absence, I focus on the alternative economy of European cult cinema that developed in both the United States and in Britain from the 1980s onwards. As a fan of European cult cinema, I have observed that the majority of fan activity is specifically related to Italian cult cinema. Though the cinemas of Britain, France and Spain have distinct fan followings, all of the fan production I discuss in this dissertation is based on Italian cult cinema and particularly a movement known as the *giallo*. Italian cult cinema is therefore the privileged object of focus for fans of European cult cinema. In chapter five I suggest that this privileging of Italian cult cinema can be traced to the ‘video nasties’ moral panic of the 1980s, where many of the films labelled as video nasties by the popular press were Italian productions. Their subsequent underground status making them desirable objects for fans. Peter Hutchings (2012), the only academic I have found who recognises the entrepreneurial activity related to Italian horror cinema, shares this view. He notes how early fan production was an act of “resistance”, such as the “grimy” fanzines and bootleg videos that were distributed as a response to the video nasties moral panic. He then identifies how this oppositional fan activity has been replaced with “handsomely” produced books and special edition DVD and Blu-Ray releases (18-19). Hutchings’ discussion of this economy of Italian horror fandom goes little beyond acknowledging its existence, the purpose of this study is to extend on these ideas. Having identified Italian cult cinema as being a privileged object within European cult cinema fandom, I now move on to outline what I mean when I use the term Italian cult cinema.

For Newman (1988) and Shipka (2011), Italian cult cinema films were predominately imitations of popular American films. Newman (1988) believes that Italy “make the best, most lively, most audacious rip-offs in the world” (187) while Shipka (2011) notes how “the Italian horror and exploitation film industry” was “born out of duplication of U.S./British themes in the ‘50s” (14). Italian cult cinema can therefore be understood as an exploitation cinema that sought to take advantage of popular American genres and sub-genres to generate money. To further understand this, attention needs to be directed to the post-war Italian cinema industry. According to Chris Wagstaff (1995), the cinema industry in post-war Italy was second only to the construction industry as an economic force. In the 1960s, Gunsberg (2005) recognises how more Italian films were produced than American films, outproducing Hollywood at “a rate of 300 per annum” (6). Having only one state controlled television channel, Italy, from the 1950s to the mid 1970s, was renowned for its street culture. With films not being screened on television, audiences would have to visit cinemas to watch films. Gunsberg (2005) points out that cinema attendance in Italy went from being mainly a bourgeois pursuit to one that was accessible to all of the Italian public, mainly because of the low cost of cinema tickets. This is reflected in the existence of cinemas that would screen certain films for particular classes of cinema audiences. The “prima visione”, would specialise in the screening of bourgeois art cinema in primarily urban locations and the films that would now be categorised as Italian cult cinema, such as the *Spaghetti Western*, would be shown at the rural “terza visione” cinemas (Gunsberg, 2005: 11). The terza visione accounting for “70 per cent” of cinema receipts in the early 1970s (Aprà and Carabba, 1976: 71).

By 1965, there were 11,616 cinema across Italy; six times more than the United Kingdom, who, at the same time, had 1,995 (Gunsberg, 2005: 9). As there were a large number of cinemas, films were needed to satisfy audience demand. One approach was for Italian studios to make imitations of successful American films. In addition to being screened in Italy, these films could also be exported

to America and other countries as a way to increase returns, Gunsberg (2005) identifying that Italy became primarily an exporter of genre cinema by the late 1960s (Gunsberg, 2005: 4). According to Shipka (2011), Italian filmmakers would “copy particular genre styles from established studios, apply their own distinct styles, and profit” (14). Once a genre became exhausted, their popularity waning, studios would move to another. These popular genres, or, as I term them, cycles, make all fall under the category of Italian cult cinema. Later in this chapter, when discussing the *giallo* cycle, I outline why I use this term instead of genre, partly to reflect their short livedness and unique identifiable styles. The first popular cycle found in Italian cult cinema is the *peplum* (Gunsberg, 2005; Cornelius; 2011). The *pepla*, plural of *peplum*, were sword and sandal films inspired by bible stories and Greek mythology, the most popular being the *Hercules* series of films that starred the American actor Steve Reeves. Once the *peplum* was exhausted, it was replaced with the *Spaghetti Western*, or, as it is known in Italy, *Western all’italiana*. Of all Italian cult cinema it is the *Spaghetti Western* that has received the most academic attention (Frayling, 1998; Fridlund, 2006). Shipka (2011) argues that following the demise of the *Spaghetti Western*, Italian film cycles did not reach the same level of popularity, but, despite this, they were still purchased internationally to screen in American cinemas (Shipka, 2011).

At the end of the 1960s, Italian cult cinema became increasingly sexualised and violent. Emerging in the late 1960s was the *giallo*, which I discuss at length shortly, and the *poliziotteschi* (or *poliziesco*) (Barry, 2004; Celli and Cottino-Jones, 2007). These were Italian crime films inspired by American films such as *Dirty Harry* (Don Siegel, 1971), *The French Connection* (William Friedkin, 1971) and *Death Wish* (Michael Winner, 1974). Other examples of short lived Italian cult cinema cycles are nunsplotation (Nakahara, 2004), Naziploitation (Koven, 2004), zombie films (Slater, 2002), cannibal films (Brottman, 1997; Slater, 2002; Fenton, 2011) and the little explored Italian jungle action films of the 1980s (Cook and Zuzelo, 2009). Bondanella (2003) notes that these Italian cycles “gathered a certain cult following among film-buffs in the English speaking

world” (419). But, because of their low budget origins and often sensationalistic subject matter, Italian cult cinema is often ignored in academic studies of the Italian film industry or is relegated to a brief mention (Bondanella, 2003; Wood; 2005)⁶. Much of the academic work related to Italian film focuses instead on the work of Fellini, Antonioni and the Italian neo-realist film movement (Shiel, 2006). Koven (2006) argues that this absence can be explained by middle-class bias inherent in the study of Italian film (vii). Much of the work on Italian cult cinema that I have discussed here is fancademic; either the product of scholar-fans or fan-scholars, aiming to make up for the lack of recognised academic work on the subject. One particular Italian cult cycle that has been the object of much fancademic work is the *giallo*. As the majority of fan activity I discuss in this dissertation is focused on the *giallo*, I now consider how the *giallo* has been discussed, particularly in fancademia, and provide my definition.

3.3. The ‘*giallo*’

Like much of the work on Italian cult cinema, academic work that focuses specifically on the *giallo* film is predominately fancademic, tending to focus more on directors or auteurs associated with the cycle, such as Dario Argento (McDonagh, 1991; Gallant, 2000; Jones, 2004), Lucio Fulci (Thrower, 2000) and Mario Bava (Howarth, 2002; Lucas, 2007). The majority of these works, with the exception of McDonagh (1991) and Lucas (2007), originate from the British fan publishing house FAB Press. In chapter one I discussed FAB Press as being a publisher of fancademic work and, in chapter five, I consider how this fan enterprise was established. FAB Press is a specialist publisher that first published fanzines, but now only produces lavish books that often give attention to Italian cult cinema and European cult cinema. At the time of writing, there is currently only one English speaking academic work that wholly focuses on the *giallo* (Koven, 2006). Mikel J. Koven (2006)

⁶ Interestingly, Bondanella’s most recent publication *A History of Italian Cinema* (2009), increases its coverage of Italian cult cinema. Bondanella (2009) now gives an entire chapter on Italian horror cinema as opposed to Bondanella (2003), which gives Italian cult a brief mention.

defines and contextualises the term, studying the *giallo* from a vernacular perspective. I argue that this is a problematic approach as it only considers the significance that the *giallo* has for what he terms a ‘vernacular audience’: lowbrow Italian audiences who are only interested in the lurid content of the films. It does not take into consideration the meaning that *giallo* has for audiences outside of Italy. Other references to the *giallo* in academia have placed it within the realm of either Italian horror cinema (Hunt, 2000; Willis; 2005) or Italian film noir (Wood, 2007).

The remaining amount of work on the *giallo* draws on a textual analytical approach, with a number of theorists using psychoanalysis to deconstruct the text. Such an approach was used by Maitland McDonagh (1991), the first English language theorist to analyse the films of Dario Argento. Xavier Mendik (1996, 1998, 2000, 2001) similarly uses psychoanalytical approaches to understand the significance of the *giallo*. He too has focused on the films of Argento, building on the work of McDonagh. Another theorist who focuses on the work of Argento is Raiford Guins (1996). Like much of the work in this area, Guins adopts a fancademic approach, identifying that Argento’s storylines are entrenched in Freudian theory and that his camera has a masculine gaze that seeks to punish viewers for being complicit in watching representations of murder. Other works from the film studies tradition to refer to films from the *giallo* canon or auteurs associated with the *giallo* are Clover (1992), Jancovich (2002), Wood (2005, 2007), Forshaw (2006), Bertellini (2004), Dyer and Vincendeau (1992) Nowell-Smith (1996) and Hutchings (2004). The one work to discuss *giallo* fandom is Hutchings (2003), who looks at the cult surrounding director Dario Argento. In a short chapter, he explores how fan writings on Argento have endeavoured to legitimise and “elevate his cultural status” (138). Outside of this study, other work has failed to question the fandom that surrounds the *giallo*. I again return to my discussion on fancademia in chapter one to explain this absence. As fancademic work often places the fan text as the object of study, the work becomes a product of the author’s fandom. It is not my intention to undermine the academic quality of such work, but to highlight how it can often celebrate the fan object rather than question its production

and consumption. By using a holistic approach, which I outlined in chapter two, the intention of this study is to interrogate the fan production that surrounds European cult cinema, but more specifically, the *giallo*.

This dissertation is not intended to be a study of the *giallo*, it is the fan practices relating to the *giallo* that is the primary focus. Despite this, a brief, but by no means exhaustive, definition still needs to be provided as it is a term that not all readers may be familiar with. Also, the fan practices I discuss relating to the *giallo* require an understanding of it. The *giallo* film was based on pulp crime novels that were popular in Italy during the Second World War. They were often Italian translations of English books, authored by Agatha Christie, Edgar Wallace and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, published by a Milan-based company, Mondadori. These novels had distinctive yellow front covers, hence the Italian term *giallo* which translates into English as ‘yellow’. Their popularity would influence a number of Italian filmmakers and scriptwriters. Though there is a certain amount of conjecture as to what is the first *giallo*, many, such as Adrian Luther Smith (1999), consider it to be Mario Bava’s *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* (*La ragazza che sapeva troppo*, 1963):

“Although there had been a number of Italian murder mysteries, Bava’s *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* is generally regarded as the first thriller which typifies the term *giallo* as it uses plot elements from the popular crime novels with yellow covers and combines these with touches of horror.”

(Luther Smith, 1999: 45)

Inspired by the Agatha Christie novel *The ABC Murders*, *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* tells of a young woman who travels to Italy to visit her sick Aunt. While there, she witnesses a murder that is committed by a serial killer and discovers that he is murdering his victims in alphabetical order. The Italian police do not believe her, as the body of the murdered woman cannot be found. This film introduced a number of conventions that have been employed in the narratives of many *gialli* that followed its release: a foreigner who becomes a witness to a murder; the amateur sleuth; serial murder; incompetent Italian police and a complex narrative structure. For many fans it is these generic elements that come to mind when attempting to define the *giallo*.

The *giallo* has a different significance for Italian film audiences. Gary Needham (2003) suggests that the Italian understanding of genre is different to the British and American interpretation of genre. Italians use the word ‘filone’, which can refer to both a genre and a cycle of films. For example, in Italy, the label of *giallo* is a literary term applied to the genre of thriller novels. To label this particular kind of cinema, an Italian would use the term *Thrilling All’Italiana* or *Sexy Thrilling* (Bruschini and Piselli, 2010). Outside of Italy, from my experience as a *giallo* fan, many view the *giallo* as a distinct sub-genre belonging to the category of horror film. I would argue that this interpretation is rather problematic as many of the films labelled as *gialli* by non-Italians fall outside of the ‘typical’ conventions. For example, though murder is a key ingredient of all *gialli*, serial murder is not common to all *gialli*. There are a number of films labelled as *gialli* that focus on embezzlement, such as *The Sweet Body of Deborah (Il dolce corpo di Deborah)*, Romolo Guerrieri, 1968), *Dirty Pictures (Il posto ideale per uccidere)*, Umberto Lenzi, 1971) and *Paranoia* (Umberto Lenzi, 1970), and others that are concerned with a woman’s descent into madness, *Footprints (Le orme)*, Luigi Bazzoni, 1975) and *The Perfume of the Lady in Black (Il profumo della signora in nero)*, Francesco Barilli, 1974). Therefore, attempting to apply the concept of genre to the *giallo* is problematic, sharing similarities with debates surrounding film noir (Silver, 1999). With this in mind, when I refer to the *giallo* in this dissertation, I understand it as a cycle or a movement of film that has an identifiable style as opposed to a cohesive film genre that is defined, in part, by a particular set of narrative and character elements.

3.4. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to explore the processes through which European cult cinema has been defined, finding that it has been constructed by fans and fancademics. I began by discussing how European cult cinema is a fan constructed term. I identified the academic and fancademic discourses surrounding European cult cinema and how these have attempted to valorise

European cult cinema within their specific domains. Fancademics have used the term Eurotrash, referring to Sconce's (1995) adoption of the word trash, as a way to validate the study of European cult cinema as paracinema. The fan construction of European cult cinema, also often referred to as Euro-cult, can be understood as a response to the use of the word 'trash', I used the example of the *Suspiria* Blu-Ray release to demonstrate how fans oppose this term. I suggested that fans use the word 'cult' instead of 'trash' to give greater credibility to their fandom. I then explored how European cult cinema has been defined, particularly focusing on fancademic work. From this I determined that European cult cinema can be understood as cult, or exploitation, films that were produced in Western Europe following World War Two. I identified the privileged role that Italian cult cinema has within the domain of European cult cinema, discussing how Italian cult cinema was a product of the thriving Italian cinema industry of the 1950s to the 1970s. To satisfy public demand for film, Italian producers would imitate popular American genres and sub-genres. Italian cult cinema is therefore categorised by short lived cycles, such as the *Spaghetti Western* and the *peplum*. I closed the chapter by focusing on what such specific cycle, the *giallo*, which the majority of fan activity I discuss in this dissertation centres around. I showed how much of the academic work on the *giallo* is fancademic and offered my definition of the term, describing it as a cycle. Throughout this chapter I have shown how the study of European cult cinema has been dominated by fancademic work. This had led to numerous celebratory accounts of European cult cinema that privilege the text. Few academics have actually questioned the significance of European cult cinema fandom, Hutchings' (2003, 2012) work being the exemption. This dissertation offers a deeper interrogation into European cult cinema fandom, the theoretical approach I use seeks to move away from offering yet another celebratory account. Having now introduced the theoretical framework for this dissertation, in the coming chapter I discuss how I researched the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production using my 'combined ethnography' approach.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCHING THE ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY OF FAN PRODUCTION

This chapter builds upon the theoretical framework I established in the previous three chapters to outline how I approached research that would address the limitations of previous studies of fandom that I discussed in these earlier chapters. Specifically, I discuss how I researched the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, introducing a method of data collection that I refer to as ‘combined ethnography’ as a way to investigate how fans produce artefacts and commodities. This has been developed to avoid celebratory accounts of fandom, as highlighted in the first chapter. At the heart of this approach is the desire to extend ideas of fandom most often assumed in studies of European cult cinema, as discussed in the previous chapter, and to move beyond a narrow focus on the texts of European cult cinema to a more rounded sense of cult consumption, interrogating the collected data using my concept of the alternative economy.

As I outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, the leading research question for this thesis is:

In what ways, and with what implications, can European cult cinema fandom be understood as an alternative economy of fan production?

From this I have identified a number of sub-questions which structured my research. These sub-questions are as follows:

- How was the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production established and how did it develop?
- In what ways can fans of European cult cinema be viewed as creative workers?
- In what ways does European cult cinema have an economic benefit?
- How does the textual production of fans European cult cinema transgress intellectual property laws and other policies?
- In what ways do fans of European cult cinema use digital technologies to produce and distribute texts?

As I have indicated, to answer these questions I utilised a ‘combined ethnography’ method. Such an approach includes ethnographic observation and interviews, focused on public offline and online fan activities, and my own personal fan experiences as autoethnography. In this chapter, I argue that such an approach is necessary to fully consider fan production as a cultural and economic activity. As I found in chapter one, studies of fandom have often adopted an ethnographic approach to investigate fan communities, the work of Jenkins (1992a) and Camille Bacon-Smith (1992) being specific examples. More recent studies of fan cultures have been critical of such an approach, questioning the role that the ethnographer occupies within the culture that they investigate (Meehan, 2000; Hills, 2002). Whilst I agree that an ethnographer must maintain critical distance, for researching certain fandoms, as Junker (1960) indicates, it can be helpful for the ethnographer to be a participant as well as an observer. The researcher being an acknowledged fan can help in gaining access to the more covert aspects of the culture they are studying and can help to build trust; a necessity when researching an activity such as fan production that is often morally questionable. The main difficulty with such an approach is that the ‘fan ethnographer’ must avoid “going native”, and maintain a critical distance (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 87). I begin the chapter by showing how past studies of fandom have used ethnography and the difficulties that this has presented. I then introduce and describe the combined ethnography model, demonstrating how it is a response to the limitations of studying past fan ethnographies and indicating why it has value in researching fan production. Following this, I outline how I used the model to research the alternative economy of European cult cinema fandom. I end the chapter by discussing the ethical issues I encountered while conducting the research.

4.1. A (fan) ethnographic approach

Early studies of fandom utilised the method of ethnography to interrogate fan communities. In chapter one I explained how these early studies of fandom had a underlying political motive,

reacting against the pathologisation of fandom that were typical in both academic and media representations of the fan (Jensen, 1992). Bacon-Smith (1992) admits that she set out to counter the view of fan studies being “frivolous” and needed support from her peers to encourage her to continue her study (x). Jenkins (1996) also acknowledges that in *Textual Poachers* (1992a) he intentionally “chose to tell a story that accented the positive rather than the negative” and that it was “tactically necessary at that point” (274). With this information in mind, this brings into question the objectivity of both works. Such a tactic was necessary at the time to indicate that serious academic investigations of fan culture were both necessary and valid, yet, when reviewing them now, their thickness of description and interpretation must be questioned. I am not seeking to undermine these classic studies, instead intending to highlight how their political motivations need to be realised when approaching them. Because of both Bacon-Smith and Jenkins being self acknowledged fans they should therefore be approached as “fan ethnographies” (Hills, 2002). By understanding them as fan ethnographies, the potential bias and merging of the fan and scholar can immediately be recognised and understood. Focusing on these two early studies and how other theorists have responded to them, I now discuss the limitations of using fan ethnography to research fan cultures.

Bacon-Smith’s (1992) fan ethnography focuses on the “native habitats” of the science fiction fan community (299). She identifies homes and hotels where conventions are held as the spaces for “face-to-face” contact and also letters, phone calls and fanzines, which rely on an asynchronous discourse of communication (299). When studying the community, Bacon-Smith chooses an overt approach, identifying herself as a researcher by externally wearing a tape recorder and often wearing a name tag that identified her as an “intergalactic ethnographer”; indicating her identity as both a scholar and a fan (300). In addition to participant observation, Bacon-Smith conducts interviews. She distinguishes between group interviews and one-on-one interviews, believing the

former to be a better first option in helping to build relationships and uncover information. As many of the participants Bacon-Smith spoke to were involved in legally contentious activities, they were given the option to be acknowledged anonymously. In turn, some of the artefacts that she discusses are also anonymised to protect the producers. Safeguarding the identities of participants is a key ethical issue I encountered in my own research. When having to safeguard participants the ethnographer also has to recognise that they are concealing information that can prevent them from going into depth or being able to provide any supporting evidence. How I recognised this and responded to it is discussed later in the chapter.

Jenkins (1992a) uses what he terms as “newer ethnography” to study the science fiction fan community. This approach moves on from outsider ethnographies, those conducted by non-fans, that can lack a closeness and appear “disinterested” in the culture that they describe, and experiments with the position the ethnographer adopts (4). Jenkins recognises that there exists no “privileged” position for the ethnographer, whether they choose to be an acknowledged participant or outsider, there are advantages and disadvantages (4). Rather than identifying himself as an ethnographer as Bacon-Smith (1992) did, Jenkins (1992a) instead is open in indicating that he is both a fan and an academic. He adopts this position as he believes that “participation is often as important as observation” (4). Jenkins recognises that this carries risks, raising questions of critical distance, but also points out that these risks are no different to those encountered when taking a distanced approach. He sees distanced approaches to the study of fan cultures as lacking an investment that can often result in the ethnographer projecting their anxieties and fears onto the culture they study, resulting in negative portrayals of fandom in academia. Jenkins also highlights how this leads to fans having a mistrust of academics, regardless of whether they identify as fans. Therefore, the gaining of trust is a difficulty that all ethnographers face. I experienced this first

hand in my research. I attended a convention and interviewed fans involved in cosplay⁷ as part of a separate research project into fandom. When approaching these fans to be recorded on video, for the ones whose faces were not hidden by masks, there was an instant reluctance to be filmed, believing that the footage might be used to ridicule them. The gaining of trust is a very difficult time consuming process that I faced when producing research for this thesis and is discussed later in this chapter.

I have previously identified Meehan's (2000) work as being one of the few academic studies to share elements of the approach that I adopt in this thesis. Meehan also combines ethnography and political economy to study the activity of fans, seeing fandom as a labour activity that is shaped by media conglomerates. Meehan is critical of fan ethnographies, such as those conducted by Jenkins (1992a) and Bacon-Smith (1992), viewing them as "optimistic" for how they see fans as having "power over media messages delivered by commercial media" (71). She contrasts this approach with political economy, where the view of this fan activity would be reversed; it is not the fans that have power, it is an illusion constructed by media ownership. So far I have looked at how Bacon-Smith (1992) identified herself as an ethnographer rather than a fan and how Jenkins (1992a) adopted the position of a fan who was also an ethnographer. Meehan (2000) describes these approaches as being examples of "emic" ethnographies, which can be understood as 'inside the group' ethnographies (73). Meehan recognises how emic ethnographies, such as those by Tulloch and Alvarado (1983) and Jenkins (1992a) have been deemed to "guarantee accuracy and objectivity" because they draw on insider knowledge. She disagrees with such an approach as they ignore important aspects of the fan experience that are covered up because "emic ethnographers share the taboos of the group under study" and are unable to confront them (75). For Meehan (2000), this explains why there has been an absence of academic enquiry into the political economy

⁷ According to de Zwart (2013) cosplay refers to "dressing up and acting as a character from manga, anime or a digital game" (171).

of fandom; fandom as an economic activity being a “taboo” for fans. Therefore, an issue such as “leisure time” and how it is shaped by the “dominant ideology” becomes ignored.

Meehan proposes a move towards “etic” ethnographies, which require the ethnographer to be an outsider, to truly ‘make strange’ the phenomenon of fandom. I argue that such an approach is unproductive and, by using the combined ethnography approach I propose here, it is possible for the emic ethnographer to confront issues relating to political economy. Meehan’s argument does have validity, highlighting that fan ethnographies have neglected to explore the political economy of fandom. However, as I discussed in chapter one, this is one of the problems arising from fancademia, where fandom has been celebrated as a cultural activity. Meehan’s approach is also problematic in that it presents fans as oppressed figures as opposed to the resistant creatives discussed by fan theorists. By introducing ideas from cultural studies and combining them with ideas from political economy, as I discussed in chapter two, I show that there is room for a reconceptualisation of the fan that fits between these two extremes. To do this, the researcher has to be an insider, as the bond of trust is integral when considering fandom as an alternative economy. I focus on this important matter later in the chapter when I discuss the advantages being a fan can have in exploring fan practices that transgress rules and regulations.

Hills (2002) also identifies some of the limitations when adopting an ethnographic approach to study fan cultures, believing that it can have a “potentially reductive approach” (66). For Hills, an ethnographic approach to studying fan cultures focuses too much on the justification of fan knowledge at the expense of considering *why* fans are fans. Hills sees the work of both Bacon-Smith (1992) and Jenkins (1992a) as being important, but ultimately offering “one-sided” views of fandom (70). Hills (2002) notes how Jenkins criticises Bacon-Smith for constructing a negative view of fandom (see Tulloch and Jenkins, 1995: 203) whilst, Bacon-Smith (1992) criticises Jenkins

for his overly positive view of fandom (282). This further highlights the political motivation of fan ethnography that I discussed earlier in this chapter. Hills (2002) is especially critical of Bacon-Smith's (1992) study. For Hills, Bacon-Smith's use of "traditional ethnography", in contrast with Jenkins' (1992a) looser use of ethnography, led to her constructing a narrative that is more akin to those found in detective fiction novels (Hills, 2002: 68-70). Hills believes that this limits her account of fandom, being distracted by the minutiae of the science fiction fan community at the expense of being able to truly grasp the significance of her findings; another problem prompted by the use of ethnography. In the writing of ethnographies, ethnographers can draw on "narrative conventions from popular fiction" (70). Hills believes that this can lead to characterisations of fandom that lack a complexity, using Bacon-Smith's (1992) detective style narrative and Jenkins' (1992a) celebratory narrative to evidence this.

Jenkins' (1992a) and Bacon-Smith's (1992) work is of great importance to the field of fan studies, but Hills' (2002) observation that they offer a very much "one-sided" perspective of the fan cultures they study is convincing. In response to these limitations of traditional ethnography, Hills suggests that a more suitable approach is autoethnography. He determines that autoethnography presents a number of advantages over traditional ethnography as it allows for greater reflexivity, the study of multiple fandoms rather than just one and to interrogate fan knowledge rather than justification. Hills (2002) also indicates that autoethnography is especially useful for mapping how one's fandom emerges and grows over time (81). To demonstrate this, he produces charts that detail his own fan attachments, how they inter-relate and also how they have developed. While this particular approach to autoethnography has little relevance to this study, it does reveal the value an autoethnographic approach can have to interrogate fandom on a deeper level. Like Hills, I share the view that autoethnography can offer a more personal insight into fan practices, but argue that just using this approach on its own is far too limiting for understanding how fan cultures operate. From

looking at these four studies it can be determined that they all exhibit weakness in their chosen methodologies. This suggests the need for a new approach to the ethnographic study of fan cultures that allows for the consideration of the cultural and economic processes involved in fan production. Whilst not all of the weaknesses I have identified, such as questions of critical distance, can be fully addressed, I argue that the researcher has to recognise these issues and find ways to be as impartial as possible; these are the limitations of using any research methodology. I now outline my model of 'combined ethnography', seeing it as a possible solution to the limitations of using fan ethnography that I have so far discussed.

4.2. A new model for fan ethnography: the 'combined ethnography'

To take advantage of the usefulness of each approach discussed above without having to accept their inherent limitations, I combined different forms of ethnography to study the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. This idea to merge forms of ethnography comes out of the work of Christine Hine. Hine's (2009) keynote presentation at the *Transforming Audiences 2* conference, highlighted the limitations of virtual ethnography, an approach used to study online cultures, by combining it with regular ethnography in order to consider both online and offline consumption of media. Hine used the example of her consumption of the long running British television show *The Antiques Roadshow* to demonstrate how it moves beyond both physical and virtual worlds. Her presentation demonstrated to me one of the limitations of virtual ethnography. In certain situations, it is not possible to separate the online and offline contexts of consumption as they interrelate. When I observed Hine's presentation I was in the early stages of conducting research for this study. I saw how such an approach would be helpful to research the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, as their offline and online contexts also interrelate. Hine (2000) suggests studying both contexts allows for an exploration of how

meaning is made across multiple field sites. This approach has been recognised by a number of academics as having value in seeing how offline and online consumption relate and, more pertinently, how the online domain cannot be separated from our everyday lives (Ruhleder, 2000; Wittel, 2000; Sade-Beck, 2004). Hine (2008) sees that the move “between different sites and forms of data can also enable different analytical approaches to be deployed” (266). This indicates the fluidity of such an approach, allowing for the inclusion of other methods that might further help to understand the site being studied.

An example of such a combined approach can be found in Constable’s (2003) study on mail order brides. Here Constable incorporates virtual ethnography with traditional ethnography to study an industry that has physical and virtual sites. Whilst having a different object of study, I share some parallels with Constable’s work, both studying how people participate in an economy. This is not explicitly within the scope of Constable’s study, but it does show how a similar ‘grey’ economy that operates between online and offline worlds can be studied. Constable’s findings show that both the online and offline worlds intersected and that this enabled relationships, particularly those over a long distance, to be developed. I chose to adapt this combined approach to research the online and offline contexts of the alternative economy of European cult cinema. However, I also included autoethnography as part of this combined approach. This addresses Hills’ (2002) suggestion that autoethnography is essential in helping to fully understand fan knowledge, as I discussed earlier. By combining approaches from autoethnography, ethnography and virtual ethnography I was able to explore public offline and online fan activities, and my own personal fan experiences. The combined ethnography model is illustrated in figure 4.1.

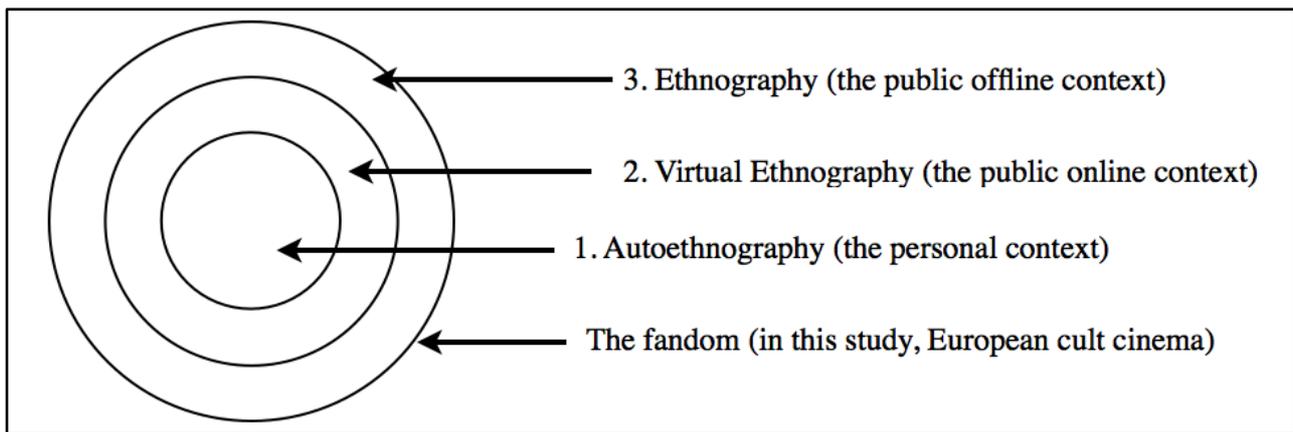


Figure 4.1: The combined ethnography model

The combining of methodologies, or as it is known “triangulation”, has been recognised as a way to “gain a more accurate or truthful picture of the social world” (Saukko, 2003: 23). According to Saukko, it has been traditionally used to see whether the findings from each method “corroborate” each other (23). The purpose for my combining of these three approaches to ethnography emerged out the limitations of previous fan ethnographies discussed earlier. I do not propose that this model solves the issue of critical distance, instead it can generate data which can be compared, related and also contrasted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the fan culture being studied. The model, illustrated above, indicates how each form of ethnography relates. To use this model, it is integral that the researcher is a fan of the culture that they are studying, therefore, this model must be recognised as an extension to the method fan ethnography used by Jenkins (1992a) and Bacon-Smith (1992). The overall circle in the figure 4.1 represents the fandom being studied, in this case, European cult cinema fandom. Starting in the centre of the economy is the personal context, which uses autoethnography. Here, I reflect on my own role in the European cult cinema fan economy, drawing on my own knowledge and practices as a fan. Moving to the circle surrounding the centre is the public online context, where I used virtual ethnography to see how the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production operates in the public online space. As part of this, I observed message board discussion, websites and conducted interviews. Encompassing the online and personal context is the public offline context. On this third and final level I used ethnography to

study the physical spaces of the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. This included participant observation at conventions, such as *Memorabilia*, the *Frightfest* film festival and the *CineExcess* academic conference. I also conducted interviews either by phone, face-to-face or in person, and collected fan produced texts. The data gained from my combined ethnography provided me with empirical evidence that could be interrogated using the theoretical framework introduced in chapter two. Before discussing how I used the model to research the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, I now focus on what each level of a combined ethnography entails to better understand how the model works.

When I first embarked on researching the public offline context of European cult cinema fandom, an early challenge I faced was understanding what constitutes a successful ethnography. This complexity can be evidenced when attempting to seek a workable definition of the approach. Dick Hobbs (2006) refers to ethnography as an “extremely broad church” (102) whilst Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007) identify that it is the “complex history” of ethnography which makes it hard to come up with a single definition (2). This is further compounded when referring to research methods literature for instruction. Many books neglect referring to ethnography altogether or reduce its mention to a scant few pages whilst others replace ethnography with ‘participant observation’ (Hansen et al, 1998; May, 2006). I understand ethnography as an umbrella term incorporating a number of sub-methodologies that the researcher can draw on. This is emphasised by Hobbs (2006) who sees ethnography as the “product of a cocktail of methodologies” (101). He includes the following methods which can be used as elements of ethnography: participant observation, interviews, conversational analysis, discourse analysis, documentary analysis, film and photography and life histories. In addition to the above list, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) also include the collecting of documents and artefacts, textual analysis and the collation of “whatever data available” that helps the researcher to further

understand their object of study (3). This provides the ethnographer with a variety of tools that they can draw on, allowing them to interrogate their chosen culture in greater depth.

It is commonly acknowledged that the roots of ethnography are found in anthropology, where researchers would spend a period of time in a foreign culture in order to understand its rituals, customs and how it operated (Walsh, 2004). Whilst ethnography still draws on “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), as employed by anthropologists, its modern usage has been influenced by the Chicago School (who talked about participation observation) and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Dick Hebdige (1979) notes that the Chicago School presented a more “scientific” approach to ethnography in their studies of “deviant groups” (443). One such example of this would be Frederick Thrasher's (1927) detailed research into the street gangs of Chicago. This would influence scholars at the CCCS who studied British youth cultures, or, as they described them, subcultures, that were recognised as being deviant because of their resistance of hegemonic values (Hall and Jefferson, 1993). Theorists from the CCCS conducted ethnographies of subcultures such as ‘teddy boys’ (Jefferson, 1993), ‘skinheads’ (Clarke, 1993a), ‘mods’ (Hebdige, 1993) and punks (Hebdige, 1979). In chapter two, when discussing studies of subculture and relationship to fandom, I indicated how there have been criticisms of studies, such as Hebdige’s (1979) ethnography of the punk subculture, by Angela McRobbie (1997) for choosing to ignore important aspects of subcultures as they did not meet their political agenda. This highlights the subjective nature of ethnography, an important ethical issue that the researcher must confront.

In addition to the approaches to ethnography that I have outlined above, there other adaptations of ethnography. I now focus on two of these which I used as part of my combined ethnography.

Autoethnography (also referred to as auto-ethnography) is defined as “a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context” (Reed-Danahay, 2006: 15). According to Reed-Danahay

(1997), the method of autoethnography emerged out of postmodern concerns, particularly the “changing concept of both the self and society in the late twentieth century” (2). From this view, the role of the objective observer is problematic in ethnography; autoethnography allows for a greater authenticity, drawing on insider knowledge rather than outsider knowledge. Reed-Danahay (2006) identifies that it has a “dual sense”, referring to either “the ethnographic study of one’s own group(s) or to autobiographical reflections that include ethnographic observations and analysis” (15). My use of autoethnography focused more on the former, drawing on my own fan knowledge and role that I occupy within the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. One of the difficulties faced when adopting an autoethnographic approach is that of critical distance. Unlike ethnography, which requires the researcher to distance themselves from the culture they are writing about, autoethnography requires a critical closeness where the researcher treats their everyday activities as ‘strange’. Because of this, Reed-Danahay (2006) recognises how such an approach can be “challenging” (15). In my approach, I combined ethnography, to understand the practices of others, along with autoethnography, to critically understand my involvement, as a way to address their limitations. This allows for deeper interrogation. In addition to autoethnography, I also drew on a more recent adaptation of ethnography that takes into account the online environment, virtual ethnography.

In a chapter on online fandom, Kirsten Pullen (2004) believes that that the web has “mainstreamed fandom” (56). As fan activity dominates the World Wide Web it lends itself as an ideal domain for research. David Bell (2001) emphasises this point, acknowledging how the Web’s easy accessibility to researchers makes it an “attractive site for fieldwork” (195). Much of the activity in the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production occurs online and therefore needed to be taken into consideration. The ethnographic study of online spaces has been referred to as a number of different terms. Robert Kozinets (1997), in his study of online fans of the television

show *The X-Files*, describes it as “netnography”, which is used interchangeably with “online ethnography”. Perhaps the most well known term is virtual ethnography, coined by Christine Hine (2000) to describe the growing amount of academic research into the World Wide Web. Like attempting to define ethnography, the ‘father’ of virtual ethnography, defining virtual ethnography is an equally difficult proposition. Christine Hine (2000) sees virtual ethnography as being adaptive and flexible according to the virtual space that is being studied. As with traditional ethnography, the researcher can draw on a range of approaches that can enable them to better understand the online site that they studying. This might include participant observation, interviewing and collecting documentation, such as images, video or other multimedia content located online. As with the other variants of ethnography I have discussed, virtual ethnography requires the researcher to consider the role they occupy.

Bell (2001) believes that the researcher needs to be aware of the impact they may have on the community being studied. Therefore, when researching a website or online community, the researcher should announce their presence and make the group being studied aware that are being used as research subjects. Otherwise, as with the adopting of a covert approach when conducting an offline ethnography, researching online spaces without permission raises a number of important ethical questions. In chapter seven, I discuss how I encountered such difficulties when researching the online BitTorrent community *CineTorrent*. Combining virtual ethnography with ethnography and autoethnography addresses the limitations of ethnographies of fandom discussed by Eileen Meehan (2000) and Matt Hills (2002). It also gives the researcher access to all of the spaces in which fan activity exists: the public online and offline context and the personal. Having outlined how the combined ethnography works, I now discuss how I used the model to research the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production.

4.3. Using the combined ethnography model

Before I could conduct research into the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan I first had to gain access. Research methods literature has highlighted the importance of the position that the ethnographer takes during the fieldwork process. Junker (1960), for example, identifies that there are four potential roles that the ethnographer might adopt:

1. Complete participant – the ethnographer is fully involved, yet covertly, in the process.
2. Complete observer – the ethnographer does not engage in social interaction and simply observes.
3. Participant as observer – the participants are aware that they are being studied and the observer is actively involved in the process.
4. Observer as participant – again the participants are aware that they are being studied but the observer is not fully involved in the process; they simply observe.

Within each of these possible positions there are potential issues. Walsh (2004) suggests that the danger with positions one and three is that the researcher can “go native” and become fully involved within the field they are studying, raising questions of critical distance. These positions also distinguish between overt research, where the researcher announces their presence, or covert research, where the researcher chooses to observe without permission. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), whilst acknowledging the importance of researcher announcing their intentions, they recognise that there are occasions where complete transparency might be problematic and may ultimately impact upon the nature of the culture being observed. Walsh (2004) refers to Holdaway’s (1982) research of the police force and Chambliss’ (1975) work on organised crime as examples of ethnographies that had no other option but to conduct their research covertly.

Being a fan of European cult cinema enabled me to gain access to other fans and to discuss activities that are morally questionable. The role I adopted fell somewhere between Junker's (1960) categories of complete participant and participant as observer, though in one particular instance, my virtual ethnography of the BitTorrent file-sharing community *CineTorrent* was covertly done, as I was unable to gain permission from the gatekeepers of the website. For my undergraduate dissertation, produced in 2005, I conducted research into the online European cult cinema fan community. I encountered the difficulties academics can face when they are studying fan communities. Though I was a member of the online message board I was researching and had announced my intentions, one particular member was rather hostile, questioning me for attempting to "wrangle" a thesis from such a subject. This was interesting in itself, as it raised questions about how the members of the message board valued their fandom and were keen to preserve it by disassociating it from academic study. Despite this, it still highlights that conducting research within one's own fandom can be daunting and not as simplistic as it might initially seem. Walsh (2004) notes that "patience and diplomacy" are both important when conducting ethnographic research as those involved in the community being studied may already have preconceived notions about the ethnographer (231). I found that being a fan who just engages in message board conversations would not be sufficient to provide access to all required areas. When requesting email interviews with fan producers, I would receive no response and, upon encountering them at the *Memorabilia* fan convention and requesting their permission for an interview, I would often be greeted with a firm "no" or be ignored. To get access to the people I needed to speak to, I realised that I had to reconsider my role as a fan. Increasing my fan activity and visibility would make people more aware of who I was and gaining their trust. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) highlight the building of trust between researcher and participants as a fundamental aspect of ethnography, but one that can take considerable time (75).

To increase my participation I moved from being a fan who only posted on message boards to become a fan producer. I noticed how certain members of an online community were producing fan made DVDs. These fan DVDs would make Italian DVD releases or television broadcasts of *gialli* or *poliziotteschi*, that had no English audio or subtitles, accessible for an anglophone audience, an activity I discuss in greater detail in chapter seven. Drawing on skills that were both self-taught and acquired from my University education, I became heavily involved in producing fan DVDs. My engagement in this pursuit was not to just gain access or trust; it was out of my passion for European cult cinema that I became a fan producer. I began to post details of my productions on online message boards and my own personal blog⁸. This demonstrated that I was not just an academic researcher of European cult cinema fandom, but also an active fan. Producing fan artefacts gave me access to offline and online trading networks that I did not know existed, engaging with fans from different parts of the world. When I now approached potential interviewees I was able to give them my website as evidence of my credentials and to create trust. Also, participating in a morally questionable activity such as fan DVD production would be an indicator that I was not a ‘spy’ or someone attempting to exploit. I now found that the people who had rejected interview requests in the past now accepted them. The fan artefacts I had produced could also be used as a form of currency. I would use them as ice breakers or even as gifts to show my appreciation for their involvement in my research. Often, once the bond had been made, the interviewees became “sponsors” either placing me in contact with other potential interviewees or allowing me to use their name when contacting others (Walsh, 2004: 231).

When researching the public offline context I relied on three methods of ethnographic data collection. The first was participant observation, observing fan activity in a certain field. I identified three main fieldwork sites: the twice yearly *Memorabilia* event held at Birmingham’s

⁸ My blog can be found at: www.olivercarter.co.uk

National Exhibition Centre, the *CineExcess* academic conference and London's *Frightfest* film festival. I have been attending the Birmingham *Memorabilia* event since the middle of the 1990s and am aware of the small presence that European cult cinema fandom has at these events. Research was conducted on the 3 March 2010, engaging with the owner of a fan enterprise I refer to as Dark Publications who regularly trades at the event. An interview was conducted with the owner, who I name Tomas to protect his identity. The interview was recorded on an *iPhone* and transcribed. The *CineExcess* conference is held yearly at a London cinema. The conference is based around fan scholarship and merges fan convention with conference. Stars and directors of European cult cinema are regular guests, films are screened, academic papers are presented and publications are sold. I attended the 2011 conference, presenting a conference paper on *CineTorrent*, adapted from chapter seven of this dissertation. In addition to participant observation, I was able to conduct an interview with Harvey Fenton, director of the fan enterprise FAB Press and Tristan Thompson, a fanzine producer. These interviews were conducted on 28 May 2011 at the Odeon Covent Garden cinema and recorded on an *iPhone* for later transcription. The data gained from these two events was used to construct chapter five. On Saturday 25 August I attended a screening of *Eurocrime* (Mike Malloy, 2012), a crowdfunded documentary on *poliziotteschi* films. At this event I was able to engage with many members of the *LL&L* online forum⁹ in an offline environment who helped to fund the documentary. Discussion of this documentary can be found in chapter eight.

In addition to the three interviews I conducted as part of my participant observation at these sites, a further eighteen interviews were conducted, giving a total of twenty-one. The interviews were conducted with a range of fan producers based in the United Kingdom, Germany and in the United States. Three of these were conducted face to face, again recorded with an *iPhone* and transcribed,

⁹ I have abbreviated the name of the forum to protect the identities of its users.

two were conducted via phone and recorded with permission of the interviewees for later transcription whilst the remaining were conducted through email. For the telephone interviews I used a semi-structured format, as described by Bloch (2004). The length of these interviews ran far longer than I had intended, making the content gathered difficult to manage. When contacting potential interviewees through email I offered them the choice of either a face-to-face, telephone or email interview. The majority chose to be interviewed through email, a format that I was not too keen on using. Though Bill Gillham (2005) states that email interviews can “yield good quality data”, I found the use of a structured approach to be quite limiting, being unable to get the interviewee to elaborate on any interesting points (108). Gillham is also aware that email interviews, although time saving and requiring no transcription, can produce less detailed and often colloquial responses.

When planning email interviews, I constructed a set of questions, always less than ten, so that the response would not be too onerous for the interviewee. These questions were based on my knowledge of the interviewee and their role within the alternative economy. Despite my concerns about the quality of data gained from email interviews the responses were always useful. If I required further detail I would email back and ask them for elaboration. All interviewees were given informed consent and assured that the content would be anonymised should they so wish. All but five interviewees requested to be anonymised and to not have transcriptions of the interviews made available. I provide a small selected sample of interview material in section A of the appendices. In addition to participant observation and interviews I also collected artefacts, in particular fan produced texts, such as DVDs, t-shirts, fanzines and fan produced books. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) see artefact collection as key element of ethnography and that “material artefacts” are often ignored during the ethnographic process (133). I found the collection of fanzines to be of particular use when attempting to map the development of the alternative

economy of European cult cinema fan production. Purchasing artefacts from interviewees who were fan producers was also a sign of my gratitude for their time, but also essential in being able to analyse the result of their production. I include illustrations of these artefacts in each of the coming chapters.

To study the online fan enterprises discussed in chapter eight and *CineTorrent*, the BitTorrent file-sharing community discussed in chapter seven, I used virtual ethnography. As I have already established, it is not clear what constitutes a typical virtual ethnography, Hine (2000) points out that it can be adapted to the online space that is being studied. My virtual ethnography consisted mainly of participant observation, examining the organisation and structure of the different websites. For example, when researching *CineTorrent*, the structure, design and businesslike organisation of the site is fundamental to it being understood as an alternative economy of fan production. In addition, I also carried out interviews with the proprietors of the three online enterprises studied and one member of the file-sharing community. These were conducted through email, using the approach outlined earlier. Manufacturing-on-demand (MOD) websites such as *Lulu*¹⁰ and *Spreadshirt*¹¹ were observed as part of the virtual ethnography to understand how they were used by two specific fans as publishing/printing platforms. The crowd funding website *Kickstarter*¹² was also studied to see how it was used by Mike Malloy, the producer of the *Eurocrime* documentary, to garner fan support. The majority of the virtual ethnography was carried out over the period of a year from mid 2011 to mid 2012. Observing these field sites over an extended period of time allowed me to see how they evolved and would also provide enough data to draw on for the writing up process.

¹⁰ www.lulu.com

¹¹ www.spreadshirt.com

¹² www.kickstarter.com

Elements of autoethnography can be found in all of the following chapters. The choice of interviewees and objects of study has been very much based on my personal fan knowledge and involvement in European cult cinema fandom. In chapter five, I draw on my involvement as fan of European cult cinema to historicise its development. This also gave me access to the fan producer known as Roman Nowicki, who, until my interview with him, denied that he produced the *Fantom Kiler* films. I discuss Nowicki's production in chapters five and six. Chapter seven's virtual ethnography of *CineTorrent* also contains elements of autoethnography, me being a member of the file-sharing community. Here I draw on my use of *CineTorrent* and also my knowledge as a fan DVD producer to realise the practices of its membership. To further understand how the website *Spreadshirt* can be used to setup a online T-Shirt store, I created my own. I again used autoethnography to detail this process in chapter eight. Other aspects of autoethnography can be found in chapter eight, particularly when reflecting on how I used *Kickstarter* to contribute to the *Eurocrime* documentary.

My approach to autoethnography was based on the writing of my experiences as a fan but also on what Bochner and Ellis (1992) refer to as "epiphanies" (37). Ellis et al (2011) define this as "remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life" (6). Epiphanies helped to 'fill in the gaps' between information gained from interviews and participant observation, drawing on my fan knowledge when necessary. Ellis et al (2011) note that the contrasting of personal information drawn from autoethnography can be related to data collected from other research, such as that gained from the virtual ethnography and ethnography that I conducted. This again shows the importance on using personal fan knowledge gained from autoethnography. Not only did my own participation given me access to the sites and participants that were the main objects of study for this thesis, it also added a greater depth and context to the data gained from other fieldwork. This demonstrates how the combined ethnography approach can

be beneficial in interrogating fan cultures. While conducting the research I encountered a number of difficult ethical issues relating to my use of the combined ethnography model. I now move on to discuss how these issues affected my research, highlighting some of the limitations of using the combined ethnography model.

4.4. Limitations and Ethical considerations

According to James Anderson (2012), “ethnography carries a heavy ethical burden” (352). Whilst I found the combined ethnography approach extremely useful to explore the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, I encountered many ethical issues which both questioned the nature of my research and my role as a researcher. I have already established the tendentious nature of fan production. In chapter two, when describing my concept of the alternative economy, I identified that the transgression of intellectual property laws is inevitable and unavoidable for fan producers. Manufacturing texts that use the likenesses of characters, copyrighted or trademarked names is problematic, potentially contravening intellectual property laws. Identifying myself as a fan producer and researcher presented me with a difficult ethical dilemma. By admitting that I engage in such production, which transgresses intellectual property laws, even if I do not seek to make any money out of the practice, does this make me a criminal? Does having membership to an online file-sharing community open me to potential prosecution? Does admitting it here make me culpable in such activities and should I even be admitting this? These are all legitimate questions I have had to address. I have determined that without this involvement, I would have been unable to research the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. In addition to my own involvement, I have interviewed other fan producers engaged in the manufacture and distribution of texts that could be considered both morally dubious.

For example, the 'slash production' of Roman Nowicki that I discuss in chapter six, is sold in the UK online without a BBFC certificate. Additionally, the sexually violent content of these films would render classification pointless as they would most likely be refused a certificate. My position on researching and presenting such content is shared with that of Jones and Mowlabocus (2009), who believe that such content is worthy of academic study, despite recent legislation found in the 2007 Criminal Justice and Immigration Act. Jones and Mowlabocus call for research into the production of such texts, as academic coverage of such a subject is currently limited. I have also discussed my situation with academics who have testified in court cases that are related to pornography and the 2007 Criminal Justice and Immigration Act. Their view was that the fantastical element of Nowicki's productions would render them exempt from prosecution. Other interviewees have admitted involvement in piracy, selling copies of films for profit, whilst others sell films that are uncertified by the BBFC. Whilst these activities are not specific to the European cult cinema fandom, they could still result in arrest and potential prosecution. Ethnographies of difficult cultures are commonplace. For example, Dick Hobbs (1988), in his research into the traders of London's East End, confesses that he engaged in what could be considered criminal activities: "I was willing to skirt the boundaries of criminality on several occasions, and I considered it crucial to be willingly involved in 'normal' business transactions, legal or otherwise" (7). Hobbs' research has many similarities with my own as we both studied entrepreneurialism in what is termed the "underground economy" (Williams, 2006). Williams' (2006) own research into the underground economy reveals that there area has received little academic study because of its morally questionable nature.

I chose to follow the path taken by Hobbs' (1988) and Williams' (2006), avoiding self-censorship as much as possible in order to report on what is a neglected area of fan studies. In doing this, I ensured that I protected the identities of my participants. In his research into British fanzine

culture, Shaun Kimber (2000) protected the identity of his participants by using pseudonyms taken from the names of directors associated with horror cinema. I also chose to use this approach, but instead choosing names associated with Italian cult film directors and actors. The participants referred to by their actual names gave consent. When mentioning fan enterprises involved in grey activities I have also changed the name of the companies and, at their request, the names of some publications. Name changes are indicated in specific chapters. As part of protecting the identities of my participants, I have chosen not to include full transcripts of my interviews as many feature personal information and discuss legally questionable activities. However, as I mentioned earlier, a selected sample of interview material can be found in section A of the appendices. Informed consent was sought from each participant, evidence of this is available in recordings and email documentation. Like Jenkins (1992a), I made an attempt to maintain relationships with my subjects, for example, I sent draft chapters for Nowicki, Tomas and Fenton to read to ensure that they were happy with my representation of the interview content.

The majority of research was conducted overtly in order to avoid any potential “deception” of my subjects (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 57). As I have already indicated above, informed consent was sought and I clearly outlined the purpose of the interview. However, when conducting my virtual ethnography of *CineTorrent*, I had no other choice but to adopt a covert approach. The decision of the researcher to adopt an overt or covert approach has been long debated not just by virtual ethnographers but also traditional ethnographers. Roger Homan (1991) sees the adoption of a covert approach when conducting ethnographic research as an unjustifiable position that has a number of negative consequences, which can ultimately undermine how academic researchers are trusted. When researching sensitive or potentially dangerous cultures, such as football hooligans (Sudgen, 2002) or gangs (Walsh, 2005), academics have chosen to adopt a covert approach to protect themselves and their participants. Researching a site such as *CineTorrent*, where members

share material that is copyrighted, presented me with an ethical dilemma. Not only is there a need to safeguard the participants but there is also a need to protect my identity as I have to be active on the site in order to study it; making me complicit in the activities that take place there. The abuse of the online domain by virtual ethnographers has become an area of much discussion (Sharf, 1999). There are a number of examples of virtual ethnographers who have chosen a covert approach and decided to 'lurk' on internet fora. One such instance of this can be found in Teela Sanders' (2005) study of the online sex work community. Being aware of the sensitive nature of her study Sanders made the decision to lurk in order to protect the identities of the participants she was researching. The space that Sanders studied was one of public access, not membership exclusive like *CineTorrent*. As none of her subjects would be easily identifiable, due to their use of pseudonyms, Sanders determined that they would be protected from potential harm, according to the guidelines offered by Marx (1998).

In addition to following Sanders' (2005) approach I also attempted to take Reid's (1996) advice to request the permission of the website's managers to use the site as an object of study. The request I sent to the administrator was not answered. Despite this initial setback, I made the decision to continue to use the site as my object of study, in keeping with the advice sought from research methods literature. I have taken a number of measures to protect the website and its membership. I have renamed the site *CineTorrent* in order to detract attention from its actual name and I also decided to change the names of specific members that I refer to, again using pseudonyms taken from European cult cinema. There are instances where I reproduce text taken directly from the site and refer to examples taken from the site but provide no supporting evidence. This is part of the safeguarding process that I have followed to protect the identity of the website.

The final ethical issue I wish to discuss here is one that has recurred throughout this chapter, the issue of critical distance. Earlier, I identified my role as ethnographer falling somewhere between the positions of “complete observer” and “participant as observer” (Junker, 1960). Matthews and Ross (2010) prefer to think of these roles as “points on a continuum” as opposed to “separate positions” (258). I chose to identify myself as fan ethnographer, a position that has received criticism from academics, including myself, for ignoring important issues associated with fan cultures. The work of Meehan (2000), for example, suggests the need for etic, outsider ethnography, rather than emic, insider ethnography, for greater critical distance. Previously in this chapter I criticised this position, believing that emic ethnography has value in the study of fan cultures, giving the fan ethnographer access to aspects that outsiders might not be able to gain. The main issue that faces the fan ethnographer is that of objectivity. I am aware that this dissertation is not an all encompassing study work of the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, but instead an overview of some of the different fan production activities relating to Italian cult cinema. Constraints have meant that case studies have had to be excluded and not all fan enterprises are discussed.

I share Patrick McNeill and Steve Chapman’s (2005) view on what they term the “postmodern perspective” of ethnography (116). From this perspective, McNeill and Chapman see that “ethnography should not be concerned with the pursuit of some universal truth because at best, accounts of social reality can only be relative, partial, partisan and selective truths” (116). While drafting this dissertation I have found myself suppressing information because of ethical concerns about the fan practices I discuss. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) refer to this as “self-censorship” (222). In redrafting I have sought to prevent doing this as much as I possibly can, but by changing the names of participants and fan enterprises, I am inevitably engaging in a form of self-censorship that is necessary to protect my participants. Another key element of fan

ethnography, which is highlighted by Jenkins (1992a), is that the fan ethnographer should attempt to involve participants in the process as much as they can in order to avoid exploiting them. He accuses past ethnographies and other studies of fans of exploitation, an issue that is commonly associated with the method of ethnography (Anderson, 2012: 372). Where possible I have maintained contact with participants, sending them drafts of work and expressed my gratitude for their participation by purchasing artefacts they have produced. Despite this continued engagement with my participants, I have maintained the critical distance required of a researcher to write up the data collected as objectively as possible, utilising the theoretical framework established in the previous chapters. My intention for devising the combined ethnography approach I have outlined in this chapter was out of a need for critical distance and to engage in as much depth as I possibly could with the my object of study. Such an approach is not without its limitations, as can be seen in the following chapter, I will have unavoidably missed out aspects that some readers may deem to be of importance. As Scott VanderStoep and Deidre Johnson (2008) recognise “there is no one perfect research methodology” (28). Consequently, the fan ethnographer must acknowledge this and aim to be as open and objective as possible, maintaining a critical distance.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed how I researched the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production using a method data collection that I refer to as ‘combined ethnography’. My reason for adopting this approach came out of recognising the limits of past fan ethnographies. I suggested that Jenkins’ (1992a) and Bacon-Smith’s (1992) studies were both problematic in that they had an underlying political motive to move away from the pathologising of fan activity. Whilst I recognise this was necessary at that particular time, the critical distance of such studies must be questioned. I argued that Meehan’s (2000) merging of etic ethnography with political economy as a solution to

subjective, emic ethnographies of fandom was also problematic in that it disregarded the potential value fan ethnographies can have if done appropriately. Being a fan and a researcher can provide access and help to gain trust. I also argued that Hills' (2002) solution of autoethnography was equally problematic as it offers a limited view of fandom. To address these limitations and to avoid the celebratory accounts of fancademic work that I have discussed in previous chapters, I introduced my combined ethnography approach, which includes traditional ethnography, virtual ethnography and autoethnography. This idea of combining methodologies being influenced by the work of Christine Hine (2009). I have suggested that this approach is particularly useful for researching the cultural and economic role of fandom. However, to use the model, the researcher must be a fan of the culture they are studying. This has value when researching an activity such as fan production, which can often transgress rules and regulations. Being a fan can help to gain trust and give access to areas of fandoms that non-fans might find difficult to access. It can, however, carry a heavy ethical dilemma for the researcher, being complicit in the activities that they discuss. I deemed this necessary to research the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, referring to other classic ethnographies of 'grey' activities, such as Hobbs (1988), for support. Identifying as a fan can also be problematic for the researcher, ensuring they maintain a critical distance when collecting data but also when writing up their research. Despite these limitations, I present the combined methodology model as an effective way to deeply interrogate fandom as a cultural and economic process. In the following chapter, I draw on data collected using the combined ethnography approach to historicise the development of the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production.

CHAPTER FIVE

HISTORICISING THE ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY OF EUROPEAN CULT CINEMA FAN PRODUCTION

This chapter considers how European cult cinema was first culturally and economically ‘made’ by historicising the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, giving context for the chapters that follow. This historicising is based on the data gained from the combined ethnography model, which I described in the previous chapter. My employment of this method is a response to the limits of past ethnographic studies of fandom, such as Jenkins (1992a) and Bacon-Smith (1992) and incorporates approaches suggested by Meehan (2000) and Hills (2002) to avoid constructing a celebratory account of fan activity. The data collected is interrogated using my concept of the ‘alternative economy’, which I outlined in chapter two. This concept integrates ideas from cultural studies and political economy in order to question the cultural and political economic role of fandom. Through historicising the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production I demonstrate how it originated and developed in the United Kingdom. I suggest that a combination of the DIY ethos of punk, a culture of fanzine production and the advent of VHS technology led to the forming of an alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. I look at how three ‘fantrepreneurs’ set up their own businesses in this newly established market, which specialised in producing fan publications, demonstrating how fan production can be understood as both a cultural and economic activity.

5.1. The fanzines

To give context for the emergence of European cult cinema fan production, the culture of fanzine production needs to be explored. To do this, I draw on secondary work that discusses fanzines and interviews conducted with fanzine producers. I show how punk fanzines and horror fanzines

published in America were influential to European cult cinema fantreprenuers, demonstrating how the production of fan publications can be understood as an economic activity. The term fanzine, also referred to commonly as ‘zines’, can be defined as a fan produced magazine; an amateur produced publication that is produced for dissemination amongst a fan network. Stephen Duncombe (1997) believes that the definition of the term zine is more problematic than it seems, and, to truly understand the term, one must have access to a variety of fanzines and decide for themselves (1). This difficulty in conveying the make-up of a typical fanzine can be explained by the differing forms they take and the content they tend to feature. Phil Stoneman (2001), for example, highlights differences between the terms ‘fanzine’ and ‘zine’, suggesting that the former will be primarily written by fans of a specific media form whilst the latter will contain more “general content” (5). Mike Gunderloy (1988), a former fanzine producer who published a guide on zine publishing, identified two different formats of zines: genzines and perzines (8). A genzine (*general zine*) imitates a professionally produced magazine, sharing many of the same conventions, such as having multiple contributors, correspondence pages, an editorial, features, advertisements and reviews. A perzine (*personal zine*) differs by being the work of a sole person and offering a personal account of their lives and activities.

In the mid to late 1990s, as home computing became more affordable and accessible, another category was introduced: the prozine. The prozine is an evolution of the genzine, where the professional magazine is imitated, not just in terms of content but also in appearance. The prozine will have colour printing, use high quality paper and aim to resemble a magazine purchased from a local newsagents or supermarket. Shaun Kimber (1998), when discussing British horror fanzines, identifies that prozines not only differ in appearance but also in content, having “more intellectualised and thematic approaches to the [horror] genre” (98). Taking the example of horror prozines, these publications adopted a quasi academic discourse that engaged in textual/contextual

analyses of horror films rather than adopting the informal adolescent discourse often found in the photocopied cut and paste fanzines of the 1980s. However, Steve Green, fanzine producer and former fanzine reviewer for the British horror magazine *The Dark Side*, views terms such as ‘genzine’ and ‘prozine’ as redundant, instead preferring the label of “small press publications” as it reflects their nature to compete with professional publications¹³. For Green, using terms such as genzine and prozine does nothing more than to further segregate the amateur press from the professional press when there is a clear intention on the part of fans to compete with professional publications. For the purposes of this chapter and the remainder of this dissertation, I use the term ‘fanzine’ to apply to the black and white, cut and pasted, self-published fan produced magazines that were common in the 1970s through to the mid 1990s and the term ‘small press publication’ (SPP) to refer to the digitally, self produced magazines of the 1990s onwards. I use ‘fan publications’ as an umbrella term, to include both fanzines and SPPs. My reasoning for adopting these terms has come out of discussions that I have had with producers of fan publications, such as Steve Green.

According to Michelle Rau (1994), the first fanzines were devoted to the science fiction genre. She identifies the first fanzine as being *The Comet*, which emerged in the 1930s. Like most fanzines, the intention of the *The Comet* was to draw attention to a genre that was overlooked by the mainstream because of its low cultural value when compared to the typical canons of literature. In addition to validating an ignored genre, Chris Atton (2000) suggests that prior to the internet fanzines also served as virtual communities. Through fanzines, fans would be able to communicate with others and keep up to date with developments in the fan community (54). He also indicates the political nature of fanzines. This would include punk fanzines, with their “overtones of politics, animal rights, anarchy and other social movements”, but also British horror film fanzines

¹³ Interview conducted with Steve Green on 16 June 2011.

(Gunderloy, 1988: 89). Kimber (1998) identifies that British horror film fanzines adopted an anti-censorship discourse, such as the SPP *Censored?*, responding to the strict censorship laws related to film and video in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s. For Atton (2000) it was the emergence of punk that led to an increase in fanzine production in the 1980s (10). The reason for this increase can be explained by the “punk ethic”, which is explained by Stoneman (2001):

“anyone could do things themselves, regardless of a lack of any 'professionalism' or recognised training, as long as they had the enthusiasm to get things done. This ethic was far reaching, ranging from suggesting that anyone could get a band together to inferring that enthusiasm was the only necessary prerequisite for the production of a publication (25).”

In addition to the production of music and fanzines, the punk movement resulted in “impromptu clubs, small, independent record labels and record stores” being established (Triggs, 2006: 70).

Despite not having the tools of a professional publisher or having significant capital, this do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos showed that anyone could use whatever tools available to produce a fanzine. Stoneman also highlights the significance of the photocopier. Having access to photocopying, either for free at their place of work or by paying to access a photocopier, a fanzine could be inexpensively published. In a de Certeauian (1984) sense, they would “make do” with whatever tools and technology they had access to in order to produce their own cultural products. Teal Triggs (2006) notes the democratic nature of punk fanzines, particularly through their written style, which makes them accessible to their readers and further emphasises their “anyone can do it” philosophy (81). In addition, Triggs discusses how the language found in punk fanzines such as *Sniffin' Glue*, visual and written, was a “language of resistance” (73). By using invective, words that were not commonly found in mainstream publications and design techniques, such as cut and pasted lettering in the style of a ransom note, the punk fanzines carried the message of anarchy. The influence of punk fanzines has been discussed by Richard Haynes (1995), suggesting that their style led to imitations being produced around the world (23). These imitations did not just cover music but also

covered film, particularly film that was not given coverage by the mainstream press.

Early horror film fanzines did not originate from Britain but the United States. David Sanjek (2000) identifies Forrest J Ackerman's publication *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, first published in 1958, and Calvin Beck's *Castle of Frankenstein*, first published 1962, as early examples of publications devoted purely to horror cinema. Sanjek labels these as "prozines", but I argue that these were magazines, being published by independent publishing houses and having commercial distribution (316). Perhaps the most well known, and longest running, horror film magazine is the US publication *Fangoria*. The title, incorporating the words 'fan' and 'gore' (excessive violence/blood letting), has been in print since 1979, focusing on American horror cinema, particularly that from the 'stalk and slash' serial murderer sub-genre. In the early 1980s, a number of fanzines were published that gave attention to films that were not commonly discussed in publications such as *Fangoria*. It is not my intention, neither would it be possible, to offer a history of horror film fanzines. Because of the underground nature of these publications, their small print runs and short lifespans, providing a complete history would be quite the undertaking and worthy of a separate study. Instead I will be discussing fanzines that were identified by my interviewees as being significant or influential to them as producers of fanzines.

The fanzine most frequently referred to by my interviewees was *The Gore Gazette*. Produced by Rick Sullivan, *The Gore Gazette* was a long running US fanzine, first published in 1981 and existing for 14 years; a long existence for a horror film fanzine. From looking at early copies of the fanzine, it started life as a double-sided, single-page newsletter, later issues having multiple pages. It was intended to be published bi-weekly; this was highly ambitious for an amateur publication

originally distributed for free. Looking at the first issue, illustrated in figure 5.1, the design is basic. Being a newsletter, it had a masthead and typed text, which offered reviews of exploitation films being screened in New York and New Jersey cinemas. *The Gore Gazette* covered films that were not widely discussed in other publications and became a resource for the horror film fan who wanted to discover other films they might enjoy. This fanzine influenced to Roman Nowicki who started the European cult focused fan enterprise the United Kingdom, who I discuss later in this chapter.

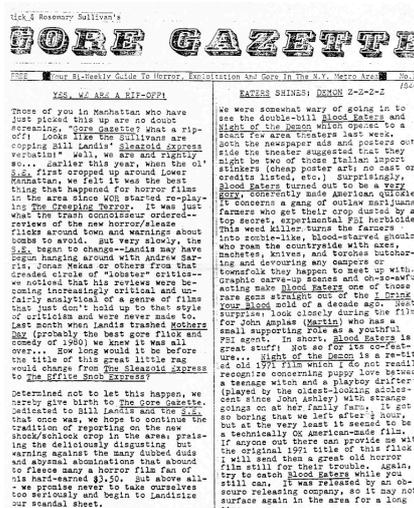


Figure 5.1: First issue of *The Gore Gazette*

When considering the content of horror film fanzines, Sanjek (2000) identifies that they adopt a confrontational, oppositional tone that distinguishes them from mainstream publications. Sanjek notes how fanzines were the first to give attention to marginal filmmakers and little known exploitation films rather than focus on slasher film sequels or television series. This shares similarities with the resistance to the mainstream that was found in the punk fanzines of the 1970s. In addition to the oppositional language, Sanjek also highlights the sarcastic, arrogant and jocular tone that fanzine writers would adopt, a signifier of the people who produced the fanzines: namely, young men. The final feature of horror film fanzines that Sanjek discusses is how they adopt the role of “archivist” (320). Using the example of what was most likely the first fanzine purely devoted to Italian cult cinema, William Connolly’s *Spaghetti Cinema*, Sanjek believes that Connolly

acted as an “a capable archivist of Italian commercial film” by giving exposure to then little heard of Italian cycles such as the *giallo*, *peplum* and the *Spaghetti Western* (319). He also sees fanzines such as *Spaghetti Cinema*, as being instrumental in bringing attention to work of Italian directors such as Mario Bava, Riccardo Freda and Dario Argento. *Spaghetti Cinema* was first published in 1984 and, unlike other fanzines discussed here, it continues to be published on an irregular basis. I find it surprising, considering its status as the longest running fanzine devoted to Italian cult cinema, that it is little discussed by fans who tend to identify Craig Ledbetter’s later published *European Trash Cinema* as the publication which first introduced, and also furthered, their interest in Italian cult cinema.

Ledbetter¹⁴ became interested in Italian cult cinema through US television in the 1960s, where he was exposed to the Italian *peplum* and thusly “the seeds were sown” for his fandom. His fan interest was furthered in the 1980s through the advent of the home video recorder, which revealed to him the “ world of Eurotrash”. Ledbetter recalls the “tons of fanzines” that were available in the early 1980s. This saturation of amateur publications can be explained by the “ease of desktop publishing”. He was an avid reader of fanzines, indicating Richard Green’s *Confessions of a Trash Fiend* as being particularly influential. However, Ledbetter identified that many of these fanzines focused on films screened at cinemas rather than those that were available on the new home video format VHS. Before *European Trash Cinema*, Ledbetter produced the fanzine *Hi-Tech Terror*, to address this. Forty issues of *Hi-Tech Terror* were published. In one issue, Ledbetter caused a “stir in fanzine circles”, by stating that he would draw attention to films that were ignored by other publications, instead focusing on the “superlative work [film production] taking place over seas” at the expense of “American junk” (Ledbetter cited in Sanjek, 2000: 316). This mission statement led

¹⁴ Email interview conducted with Craig Ledbetter on 7 June 2011.

to *Hi-Tech Terror* becoming *European Trash Cinema*, realising that he was only really interested in European cult cinema.



Figure 5.2: The evolution of *European Trash Cinema*

Like *The Gore Gazette*, *European Trash Cinema*, or as it was referred to by its readership, *ETC*, was first published as a typed newsletter in 1988, containing reviews of films. Ledbetter saw it as a “simple photocopied publication” that was distributed through subscription only as “no one in their right mind would have distributed it another way”. He relied on reviews in other fanzines as a way to promote *ETC*. After twelve issues, Ledbetter found the newsletter format rather limiting, wanting to publish more than just reviews. Because of the attention he was getting in Europe from readers and the material they were sending him for inclusion in *ETC*, he “owed” his readership “a better looking publication”. He also discovered there were other contributors willing to have their work included in *ETC*, one of these contributors, Tim Lucas, would go on to publish the magazine *Video Watchdog*. The second volume now a multipage fanzine that contained interviews and news in addition to the usual reviews.

Ledbetter became more ambitious, looking into options for expanding his distribution as a way to

increase his readership and gain more subscriptions. The distribution agencies Capital, Diamond and Desert Moon were used to make *ETC* available at newsagents and specialist shops. *ETC* now had colour front and back covers, higher quality paper and better design but the content remained the same. The evolution of *ETC* from fanzine to SPP is illustrated in figure 5.2. As the quality of the magazine increased so did the production costs; “astronomically”, according to Ledbetter. These production costs were fronted by Ledbetter. The most subscriptions *ETC* had was “in the region of 200”, but these “never came close to paying the costs of producing the magazine”. Using distributors was to be a regretful experience: “they screwed me over when it came to returns and payment”. These problems were not encountered when he self-published the magazine. He “literally lost his ass” because of publishing *ETC*, losing a significant amount of money from the pursuit. Though not forthcoming with figures of exact losses, he did provide one example of how much money it cost to publish one issue of *ETC*. Ledbetter published a number of special editions that would be dedicated to specific European cult auteurs or film movements. One issue, devoted to the Italian director Ricardo Freda, had a print run of 1000 copies but sold only 25. Ledbetter lost over \$2000 on that one issue.

After this disheartening and costly experience, in 1998 he published only one more issue of *ETC*. Suffering from the considerable loss on the previous issue, this final issue would not be as lavish as the others. He went back to black and white front and back covers and used lower quality paper to reduce production costs. After this experience, Ledbetter never felt the need to resurrect *ETC* despite old issues commanding high prices on *eBay* and specialist book shops, both online and offline¹⁵. However, *ETC* lives on through a website that Ledbetter continues to maintain¹⁶. This

¹⁵ At the time of writing, an issue of *European Trash Cinema* was being sold on *eBay* for \$39.99 (£26.64), considerably than its original cover price of \$6.00.

¹⁶ <http://www.eurotrashcinema.com/>

website does not feature any reviews or original content, instead being used to sell bootlegs of rare European cult cinema on DVD, formerly on VHS, taken from his own personal collection. Copies are priced at \$10 per film and discounts are available for multiple purchases. With the cheap production costs involved in selling bootlegs it can be assumed that Ledbetter makes more money selling these than he did producing *ETC*.

The US fanzines discussed so far made their way to Britain, exposing film fans to titles they had not heard of. In the same way that British punk fanzines were imitated, the American cult film fanzines were imitated by British film fans. Ledbetter informed me that a “mantra” existed for publishers of fanzines in the United States: the fanzine producer would cover their production costs and nothing more. Despite this, the example of *ETC* shows an attempt to professionalise fan activity with some economic benefit. The notion of fanzine publishing being a money making activity is neglected in the academic studies of fandom I have encountered. Duncombe (1997) indicates that most fanzines go a step further than being non-for-profit, they often make a considerable loss for their publishers. He also suggests that making money out of producing a fanzine is something that would be frowned upon by the fan community; an indication of the producer “selling out” (16). As I discussed in chapter two, Atton (2000) indicates that fanzines were mainly exchanged through bartering, the cover price having little significance. I challenge these perceptions of fan production being a wholly cultural activity, using Kacsuk’s (2011) concept of the fantrepeneur to show how British fans attempted to make careers out of their fandom. These British fans would be influenced by US fanzine producers, such as Ledbetter and Sullivan, but also by the advent of a new technology: the home video recorder.

5.2. *The significance of VHS*

So far in this chapter I have examined the culture of fanzine production, an area that was recognised as being important by my interviewees in forming the alternative economy of European cult cinema fandom. I now focus on a second area that was indicated by interviewees as being important to developing European cult cinema fandom in the UK: the emergence of home video. I am not the first to identify the link between European cult cinema fandom and the early VHS market. In a chapter on European horror, Peter Hutchings (2012) recognises the category of “Eurohorror” to be a video-based concept (16). He identifies the impact of video as having three key features:

1. Films that were not once available, either because of censorship or lack of distribution, being released.
2. State regulation, and the video nasties moral panic which led to the formation of the Video Recordings Act of 1984.
3. Fan cultures emerging around the collecting of banned films.

It is better to understand Hutchings’ three features as a continuum that indicates how European cult cinema fandom developed in Britain. I use this continuum as the structure for what follows, as these three key events were often described by my British interviewees. To understand why VHS would be so significant to fans of European cult cinema there needs to be an understanding of how the ownership and control of home video technology in the UK created a market for cult film product.

The first domestic video cassette recorders (VCRs) were released in the UK in 1977. The new medium proved to be very popular, enjoying such an accelerated level of adoption that by 1983 almost “six million video machines had found their way into homes across Britain” (Kerekes and Slater, 2000: 7). Initially, four VCR formats were available: JVC’s VHS, Sony’s Betamax, Video 2000 and CED, an early inception of the niche laserdisc format. Despite being considered

technologically inferior to Sony's Betamax format¹⁷, VHS emerged as the victor of the format war in the mid 1980s. According to Kerekes and Slater (2000), this was because VHS had the support of companies, such as Thorn EMI, who owned a number of TV and video rental chains that sold their own branded VHS recorder (Kerekes and Slater, 2000: 384). According to Brewster, Fenton and Morris (2005), this growth led to what is now referred to as an “explosion or revolution”, with an estimated 4500 video titles being available for rent on the various video formats by the end of 1979 (4). The speed in which home video became popular caught retailers, film studios and, most notably, the regulatory bodies by surprise.

Initially, home video was of great concern to major Hollywood studios, believing that it would eventually lead to a reduction in cinema attendance. Therefore, they did not choose to release films on video, preferring to only screen films at cinemas or allow them to be broadcast on television. The popularity of home video meant that there was a high demand for content. Brewster, Fenton and Morris point out that the early video industry in the UK was “pioneered by young start-up companies run by entrepreneurs in the true Thatcherite spirit, who immediately understood the power of this emerging technology” (4). These entrepreneurs sought to take advantage of the new technology, setting up small video labels to supply the British public with videos to played on their newly purchased machines. As no mainstream releases were available, due to the aforementioned concerns of major studios, these small labels would purchase the rights to cheap films that they could release on VHS. These films would be “low-budget”, often in the “horror and exploitation” genres and would originate from all over the world (Brewster, Fenton and Morris, 2005: 4). Because of their obscurity, many of these films did not receive theatrical exhibition, therefore not being classified by the then British Board of Film Censors¹⁸.

¹⁷ Betamax had 290 lines of horizontal resolution compared to VHS' 250.

¹⁸ The BBFC changed their name from the British Board of Film Censors to the British Board of Film Classification in 1984.

British film Labels such as Hokushin, Vipco, World of Video 2000, Replay and GO Video were among many others that released obscure European horror films, pornography, Eastern Kung-Fu films and American exploitation films. Competition amongst these labels led to them producing “lurid trade advertisements” in trade magazines to attract the attention of video store owners who would be looking for content to purchase and make available for rental in their stores (Wingrove and Morris, 2009: 11). This competitive environment meant that the labels would attempt to eclipse one another by making the advertisements increasingly graphic. Perhaps the most iconic examples from this period would be Go Video’s covers for Italian cult films *Cannibal Holocaust* (Ruggero Deodato, 1980), the cover art featuring a cannibal eating entrails, or the cover for ‘Nazisploitation’ film *S.S Experiment Camp* (Sergio Garrone, 1976), having a naked woman tied to a wooden pole hanging upside down against a background of concentration camp and an S.S Officer (see figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3: Front covers of Go Video releases of *Cannibal Holocaust* and *SS Experiment Camp*

In addition to drawing the attention of video store owners in trade magazines, the physical video tapes complete with graphic artwork would also stand out on the shelves of rental stores, attracting renters. This marketing gimmick shares many parallels with American horror comic books (Barker, 1984a) and the pulp true crime magazines of the 1950s (Wingrove and Morris, 2009). Being a new

technology, video was not subject to regulation and, unlike cinema, did not require certification. With many of these owners looking to make money in an increasingly competitive environment, they would ignore the “adults only” guidelines provided on some of the box covers of tapes and rent to people of all ages. After a series of complaints about the graphic nature of video advertisements from members of the British Video Association, an organisation setup to support the growing video industry, and members from the public, the Advertising Standards Agency ordered that magazine editors be more considerate when choosing their advertisements (Kerekes and Slater, 2000). The adverts that received the complaints were for the aforementioned titles, *Cannibal Holocaust* and *S.S Experiment Camp*. This was the beginning of the video nasties moral panic of the 1980s.

I do not intend to offer a complete summary of the video nasties moral panic, other studies, such as Kerekes and Slater (2000), Barker (1984b), Martin (1997), Wingrove and Morris (2009), Brewster, Fenton and Morris (2005) and Egan (2007), provide more exhaustive insights into the furore that surrounded video during this period. However, the key elements of the panic are of importance to this chapter as they helped to draw attention to European cult cinema and, particularly, Italian cult cinema. After the complaints against the trade advertisements, Kerekes and Slater (2000) see the next stage of the moral panic being the involvement of the National Viewers and Listeners Association (NVALA), an organisation started by former school teacher Mary Whitehouse. The NVALA and their campaigning to return to traditional Christian values first targeted television in the 1960s. Their attention was drawn to violent video in the early 1980s, focusing on how it could potentially corrupt youths and eventually decay the morals of society. According to Kerekes and Slater (2000), Whitehouse coined the term ‘video nasty’, which was quickly utilised by the British tabloid press. *The Sunday Times* was the first paper to address video violence in 1982 and then *The Daily Mail*, alongside the NVALA, regularly campaigned against video violence. Against the backdrop of Thatcherism, which included the Falklands War, high unemployment and numerous

strikes, the campaigners used violent video as tool to illustrate the decline of British society and erosion of traditional family values.

Following *The Daily Mail's* initial story on video nasties, the Obscene Publications Squad began raiding the offices of video labels, confiscating copies of the films that were identified as 'video nasties' by the popular press that could possibly be deemed obscene. Subsequently, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) issued a list of titles that would become known as the 'video nasties'. This list was intended to be used by the video industry as a guideline for what films needed to be removed from distribution and from video rental shops in order to prevent further raids. A number of distributors and owners of rental shops found themselves fined or, in some cases, imprisoned, for continuing to distribute the films. Facing re-election, Margaret Thatcher used the video nasties moral panic as part of the Conservative party's re-election campaign. Thatcher stated that she would introduce legislation to ensure that video would be regulated and controlled in the UK. In 1984, the Conservative government were re-elected and the Video Recordings Act was introduced. This act ensured that all videos that were to be released in the UK had to be classified by the British Board Film Classification, the designated regulatory authority, in order to deem them fit for release.

For horror film fans in the UK, the list of video nasties generated by the DPP became a shopping list of extreme and violent films. Kate Egan (2007) argues that the term video nasties is treated as a genre by British fans of cult horror who seek to collect and own the films. She also highlights how the practices of these fans are heavily masculinised, their forbidden and underground nature being an indicator of this. From this perspective, the collecting and ownership of video nasties can be understood as a form of rebellion. Egan's work also includes the examination of British horror fanzines and how the video nasties are a key element of these publications, highlighting their

containing significance to the fan community. This has also been highlighted by Kimber (1998, 2000) and Sanjek (2000). The original VHS tapes of the video nasties are now treated as antiques, commanding high prices through trading networks and the online auction site *eBay*. However, what is of interest to this chapter is how the video nasties panic gave exposure to European cult cinema in Britain. Out of the final 39 titles officially identified by the DPP, 16 of the films originated from Italy and looking at earlier DPP list from 1984, which contained 64 titles, reveal that 22 originated from Italy¹⁹. From this, I am able to determine that European cult cinema, specifically Italian cult cinema, had a significant relationship to the video nasties and this led to the formation of a fan community appreciating and collecting European cult films. To further their knowledge of European cult cinema, these fans relied on fanzines, particularly those from America, as way to discover the work of directors and genres they were not familiar with. As knowledge of European cult film began to grow in the UK, fanzines emerged that were specifically devoted to Italian cult film and wider European cult cinema. Seeing the existence of a market, one particular fan decided to start their own enterprise; a publishing company specialising in the production and distribution of fanzines focused on horror cinema.

5.3. The British horror fanzines

I have now identified that a culture of fanzine production and the distribution of Italian cult cinema on VHS led to the emergence of a fan community in the UK surrounding European cult cinema in which Italian cult cinema has a significant role. For the remainder of this chapter I now focus on aspects of fantreneurialism within the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, particularly those who published fanzines not only out of their love for film but also for economic benefit. Much like the entrepreneurs who set up video labels to take advantage of the

¹⁹ This calculation was made from the DPP list published in Wingrove and Morris (2009).

demand for home video content, the fantreneurs I discuss here started publishing houses that specialised in the production of artefacts targeted at the European cult cinema fan community in the UK and also wider Europe and the US. I will demonstrate how this fantreneurship can be seen as part of the wider “enterprise culture” established in the 1980s by Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government (Keat and Abercrombie, 1991).

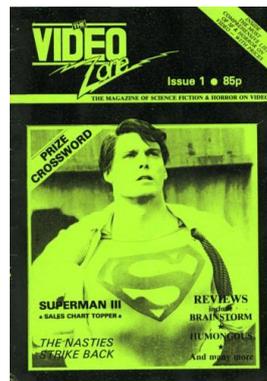


Figure 5.4: Front cover of the first issue of *The Video Zone*

As I indicated when discussing American horror film fanzines earlier in this chapter, it is difficult to construct exhaustive histories of fanzines because of their limited distribution and short life spans. Consulting the valuable, yet occasionally incorrect, resource *MovieMags*²⁰, a website that provides information on magazine publications, both mainstream and fan produced, reveals that the first British horror fanzine of the 1980s was *Video Zone*. Before this, there were several fanzines available devoted to horror, the earliest examples being *Insight*, *Movie Matinee* and *Gothique*. These were all published in 1965, and the latter, *Gothique*, ran for ten issues until 1970 later being resurrected in 1985 for a 20th anniversary issue. It is difficult to locate any information on the background of *Video Zone*, but an examination of the front cover of issue one shows the magazine has a clear focus on films being released on video (shown in figure 5.4). The first issue, featuring Christopher Reeves’ *Superman* on the front cover, has a professional appearance when compared to the black and white fanzines common at this time. It also appears to have been carefully designed, not relying on hand drawn artwork but photographs. On first glance it seems to have a wider appeal

²⁰ www.moviemags.com

rather than being specifically targeted at the British horror fan community. However, closer examination reveals that this particular issue contains a feature on video nasties. This again reflects Egan's (2007) work, showing how fanzines helped to construct a community surrounding the video nasties.



Figure 5.5: Issues of *Shock Xpress*

British fanzines specifically focused on European cult cinema did not emerge until the late 1980s, but that is not to say that fanzines prior to this did offer coverage of European cult films. From my experience, the first British horror fanzine to incorporate coverage of European cult cinema was *Shock Xpress*. All interviewees mentioned the significance of this fanzine to the British horror fan community and those who became fanzine producers, such as Harvey Fenton, cited it as an influence. *Shock Xpress* was first published in 1985 and the aim, according to its first editor, Dave Reeder, “was to delve in the underbelly of exploitation cinema, paying homage (*sic*) to the low-budget american fanzine sector, rather than becoming yet another publicity outlet for modern horror movies”²¹. The magazine was a sleek production, similar in many ways to *Video Zone*. Though Stefan Jaworzyn, the later editor of *Shock Xpress*, has commented on the first three issues being a “shitty black and white thing”, it is evident that *Shock Xpress* was of of higher quality than other fanzines from this period²². The fanzine is well laid out, does not make use of the typical hand

²¹ Dave Reeder's comment is taken from a response to a blog post on the *Shock Xpress* fanzine: <http://surrealdocuments.blogspot.co.uk/2008/08/shock-xpress-essential-guide-to.html>

²² Taken from the same blog post: <http://surrealdocuments.blogspot.co.uk/2008/08/shock-xpress-essential-guide-to.html>

written art found in fanzines, preferring to use posters and stills and was very well written, adopting a more journalistic tone than a fan discourse. Contributors like Kim Newman would become a recognised genre critic and Steven Thrower would go on to write the Italian cult focused zine *Eyeball*, which I discuss later, and publish books on Lucio Fulci (2000) and American ‘grindhouse’ films (2007). After three issues, Stefan Jaworzyn became the editor of *Shock Xpress* and the presentation of the magazine further improved. The first volume, containing six issues that were published quarterly, was replaced in 1987 by the second volume. The fanzine now had a full colour front page, using eye catching, if often violent, images taken from cult horror cinema, as demonstrated in figure 5.5.

The significance of the magazine to the British horror fan community became apparent when Jaworzyn, alongside British horror journalist Alan Jones, co-organised the ‘Shock Around the Clock’ film festival based at the Scala cinema in Kings Cross London. Running from 1988 to 1990, this festival specialised in the screening of controversial cult horror films. The magazine ceased publication in 1989, re-emerging in 1991 as a book published by the independent London publisher Titan Books (Jaworzyn, 1991). A total of three books were published, volume two appearing in 1994 (Jaworzyn, 1994) and 1996’s volume three, now simply titled *Shock* and not using the familiar *Shock Xpress* logo, being the last (Jaworzyn, 1996). The books followed the same format of the magazine, containing different articles on subjects related to cult cinema. *Shock Xpress* is an important fanzine to discuss here as it was the first fan produced publication to become fully commodified and turned into a book. This would be a model that one specific fanzine publisher, Harvey Fenton, would follow, which I discuss later in this chapter. The other highly influential fanzine of this period was *Samhain*. Like *Shock Xpress*, *Samhain* also became commodified, moving from a fan publication to a commercially available magazine that was sold in newsagents and specialist stores, such as *Forbidden Planet*. These fanzines not only set the foundation for the other British horror fanzines that followed, they that it was possible for other fans to start their own

publications and to make money, albeit little, out of producing fan publications. One particular fan went further, starting a business that would produce fan publication with an emphasis on European cult cinema.

5.4. Media Communications - The first fan enterprise

To understand how the first fan enterprise came into existence, it is necessary to look at the emerging enterprise culture in Britain in the 1980s. One fan who made use of the benefits of this was Roman Nowicki, who started the company Media Communications, which specialised in the printing of fan publications. The information I present here is constructed from an interview I conducted with Nowicki²³. Not his real name, I use the pseudonym, Roman Nowicki, a ‘nom de plume’ he adopted when producing a fan film inspired by Italian cult cinema, which is the focus of the following chapter. Though not initially a fan of horror cinema, Nowicki informed me that he came to have interest in the genre through owning a video recorder and renting VHS tapes. Ironically, considering that he has made a career of producing fan texts devoted to the horror genre, Nowicki found films like *Conan the Barbarian* (John Milius, 1982) and *Creepshow* (George Romero, 1982) to be “a bit strong” in terms of their violent content. As his interest in horror cinema grew, he began to import photocopied fanzines from America, such as the aforementioned *The Gore Gazette*, horror fanzines being rare in the UK at this time. Nowicki was already familiar with the fanzine format having been a punk music fan and a collector of the punk fanzine *Sniffin’ Glue*.

Nowicki recalls the excitement of this period when fanzines were thriving:

“In those days it was really was just about getting the information about the films and it was quite something to read, it really was exciting, very exciting for people who were into the whole the genre and now people can fire out any old thing on the internet, it was much harder to get the information.”

Though unemployed and receiving Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Nowicki, a musician, would play

²³ Nowicki was interviewed by phone on Monday 14 December 2009.

in rock and roll bands at weekends and toured Europe as part of a rockabilly group. After receiving JSA for an extended period of time, Nowicki was advised by his local job centre to enter a scheme called the Enterprise Allowance Scheme (EAS).

The EAS was introduced by the Conservative government in 1983, according to Colin Gray (1998), for the following reasons:

“...on the supposition that unemployment benefits act as a disincentive to the unemployed to seek work, the EAS was designed as the main enterprise culture policy instrument for encouraging the unemployed to give up their ‘dependency’ on unemployment and related social benefits in exchange for limited support in setting up their own businesses.” (71)

The limited support offered was £40 per week, providing the applicant could invest £1000 of their own money into the business that they were setting up and provide a basic business plan. The scheme was first introduced to areas where there were high levels of unemployment, though critics have stated that it was a way for Thatcher’s Conservative government to reduce the increasingly high unemployment statistics. Gray states that EAS was an ineffective approach to reduce unemployment in the UK, but in 1986 the government reported that it led to a “remarkable transformation” of the UK’s small business sector (Hughes, 1993: 15). Whilst it is hard to assess how successful the EAS was in generating enterprise it did lead to the development of well known cultural enterprises, for example Alan McGee’s Creation Records and *Viz* magazine (173). For Chris Donald (2004), the founder of *Viz*, despite the EAS being “ridiculed as a political scam to cut dole figures” it provided him with the opportunity to leave his design job and start *Viz*. He believes that the scheme worked on the “throw enough shit at a wall principle” and that *Viz* was “one of the shits that stuck” (73). According to Nowicki, he was fed up with the hassle he received for being on the dole and, in 1986, decided to enter the scheme. He started a “printing company” named ‘Media Communications’²⁴ that would specialise in selling publications focused on horror films. He was able to draw on skills he had learned when working for a printing company in previous employment

²⁴ I have chosen to use an alternate name for Nowicki’s company in order to further protect his identity.

and the knowledge from his own fandom. Nowicki opted to choose such a vague company name to not attract unwanted attention. One of the guidelines for the EAS was that the proposed business could not be controversial and immoral. Being a horror film fan Nowicki was well aware of the “paranoia” surrounding horror in the UK and, because of the video nasties moral panic, he chose a “safe”, bland company name.



Figure 5.6: Nowicki's Publications: *Cold Sweat* and *The Good Giallo Guide*

Nowicki produced a number of fanzines in 1987 including *Video Horror*, *The Good Giallo Guide* and the long running *Cold Sweat*. All of Nowicki's publications had a predilection towards Italian cult cinema, *The Good Giallo Guide* notable for being the first fanzine in the UK to give exposure to the *giallo* film. Nowicki's fanzines had a particular style. In terms of their format, they were atypical fanzines, black and white, cut and pasted with typed text. Early efforts were photocopied before using professional printers. Spelling errors were constantly present and the tone of writing was jocular, crude and often misogynistic, images of naked starlets not being uncommon. In many ways, the tone is not too dissimilar to the bawdy humour found in the British *Carry On...* films, the *Confessions of a...* film series and the *Benny Hill Television Show*, which presented women as sexual objects (Turner, 2003). When discussing British horror fanzines such as *Cold Sweat*, David Sanjek (2000) explores how they would “nihilistically identify with repulsive imagery” and “relish in the deliberate breaking of social and aesthetic taboos” (321). When I spoke to fanzine reviewer Steve Green, who reviewed British horror fanzines for *The Dark Side* magazine, and asked him why

so many British horror fanzines adopted such a tone, he believed that it could be explained by the ages of the producers; the majority of them being young men.

Though Nowicki did not reveal his earnings during the early period, he did inform me that he was successful enough to employ a staff of two people. One of these staff members was specifically employed to produce and promote a fanzine called *Delirium*, as shown in figure 5.7. The intention of *Delirium* was to produce a reference list of cult Italian cinema. The magazine ran for five issues, starting as a basic fanzine before finishing as a SPP with colour covers and computer designed layout. In 1997, the second issue, covering the years 1975 - 1979 of Italian cult cinema, was released in a softcover book format, following the pattern set by *Shock Xpress*. Nowicki estimated that he printed 2000 copies per issue of *Delirium*. Taking issue four as an example, which was printed in 1996 and sold at a cover price of £3.95, approximately £5.96 in 2013, Nowicki could generate a possible revenue of £7900 (£11,929 in 2013²⁵). Though this figure would be *considerably* less after taking into consideration production costs and reductions in cover price for bulk purchases, a considerable profit could potentially be made.

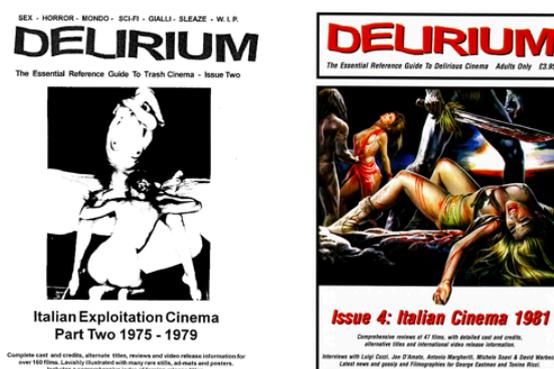


Figure 5.7: Media Communications' *Delirium*

In addition to being a publisher, Nowicki also acted as a distributor for other fanzine producers, advertising them via a mail order catalogue alongside Media Communications titles. He would also

²⁵ I used the inflation calculator available at <http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/bills/article-1633409/Historic-inflation-calculator-value-money-changed-1900.html> to estimate how much the magazine would cost in today's market.

sell books and videos in addition to fanzines. In an attempt gain further exposure, Nowicki used the distributor Diamond as a way to try and get his publications into shops. Like Craig Ledbetter's experience using a distributor for *European Trash Cinema*, Nowicki found that there was little money to be made, only making 15% of profit from the cover price. Though "turnover was good" it meant that he had to be very careful with his production costs because of the low profits. Mail order was therefore a more preferable method of distribution as he was able to make money out of each publication that was sold. But even this form of distribution was not ideal, citing the challenges of posting magazines to buyers without them being damaged in transit by the Royal Mail. Nowicki identified this as being one of the contributing factors to him ceasing to produce fanzines. At the height of its success, Media Communications occupied two warehouses on the outskirts of London, which served as the premises for the company.

Nowicki was also instrumental in setting up the first film festival dedicated to to European cult cinema in the UK. Having built up a mailing list with around 2500 subscribers, he was aware that there was a fan community surrounding European cult cinema in existence. A contact in Spain informed him that there was the possibility of inviting the cult Spanish director Paul Naschy to the UK. Nowicki envisaged that he could stage an event that would be centred around a special guest, who would be Naschy, prints of rare films could be screened and he could sell his publications. The first *Eurofest* was held in 1994. Coincidentally, 1994 was a year that saw the inception of the first British film festival dedicated to horror and sci-fi, *Fantasm '94*. Despite not having any experience in event planning or promotion, Nowicki devised and organised the event, which took place on Saturday 28th May 1994. As this was before the mass adoption of the internet, *Eurofest* was an event that allowed British fans of European cult cinema fan to physically meet.

According to Nowicki, *Eurofest* never matched the amount of money made from the publications,

but the positive feedback from the fan community led to the holding of another two *Eurofests*, featuring the directors Jean Rollin and Jess Franco. Nowicki's memories of the events are fond but he found the organisation to be a "nightmare". Dealing with venues and having to locate prints of films to screen was problematic, particularly with the negative connotations that horror cinema had in the UK. In a review of the first *Eurofest* in his *Cold Sweat* fanzine, Nowicki recounts how venues were reluctant to stage an event related to horror, the projectionist warning him that anything deemed to be too graphic would result in the screening, and the event, being shut down. The staging of an event such as *Eurofest* further validates Nowicki's status as a fantrepeneur. In addition to running a profitable small-scale publishing house, from which he was able to make a living, this movement towards events management demonstrates a business acumen.

He scaled down fanzine production in the mid-1990s, now being focused on staging the *Eurofest* event. Adrian Smith, the writer of *Delirium* and former employee of Nowicki had now setup his own company, *Delirium-Direct*, which specialised in the selling of publications devoted to Italian cult cinema. In addition to *Delirium-Direct*, other competing companies had emerged, adopting the same business model as Nowicki. Their products differed, making use of desktop publishing software to produce high-end SPPs that no longer resembled the cut and paste fanzines of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. As the quality of the publications increased as did their costs. Small scale home made fanzines still existed that focused on niche areas of horror cinema, but their quality of design differed significantly to the publications from other fan publishing houses such as Dark Publications and FAB Press. With the market of SPP becoming increasingly saturated, Nowicki began to think of other opportunities.

Perceiving British censorship to be slowly relaxing in the late 1990s, Nowicki rebranded the

company as *Immorality*²⁶, alluding to the products that he produced and distributed. He developed a website for the business and continued to distribute a free publication called *Media Scene*, a hybrid of a mail order catalogue and fanzine, amongst his strong mailing list. With the advent of DVD in the late 1990s and its accelerated rate of adoption, there was as much demand for product on this new home video medium as there was with VHS (Barlow, 2004). As the internet globalised fandom, European cult cinema fandom had a greater identity online, increasing the awareness of European cult film. DVD releases of Italian cult films became common, particularly in the US (Guins, 2005). Being aware of this demand and still maintaining a strong mailing list of loyal customers, Nowicki saw that there was a gap in the market for a contemporary interpretation of the European cult film that could be targeted at this growing fan economy. Nowicki again diversified his production practices, moving from a producer of fanzines to fan produced films, producing the *giallo* inspired film *Fantom Kiler*, the focus of chapter six.

5.5. *Dark Publications - The second fan enterprise*

Having discussed how the first fan enterprise emerged, I now look at how another fan, who I name Tomas, followed the same path as Nowicki in setting up his company Dark Publications and assisted in the development of European cult cinema fandom²⁷. In an interview conducted with Tomas, he told me how he became interested in horror cinema after viewing horror films on television and reading about them in books. Before the advent of VHS, he recalled reading about the “odd foreign horror film mentioned in books and [I] thought, how am I going to get to see something like that?”. He recognised VHS as being a “whole new ball game” that presented him with the opportunity to finally access the films he wanted to see. Prior to starting Dark Publications,

²⁶ Again, I have renamed the company name to protect Nowicki’s identity.

²⁷ The name of the individual and the name of his company have been changed to protect his identity. At his request, I have also changed the name of his publications. The interview was conducted at the Birmingham NEC *Memorabilia* event on 3 March 2010.

Tomas published a fanzine called *Fantasia* in 1988, which labelled itself as the “magazine of fantastic films and visceral videos”. Five issues of the fanzine were published over a five year period. Being employed as a draughtsman at the time, Tomas was able to draw on these skills when producing *Fantasia*. Like many of the other fan publications discussed in this chapter, *Fantasia* began as a typical fanzine, but by its final issue had developed into a SPP with a colour front cover, interviews with directors and actors specialised features on particular films. Tomas sold *Fantasia* through mail order and also at film fairs. Having enjoyed producing *Fantasia*, he began to wonder if he “could actually get to do something like this full time”. Tomas started Dark Publications “around 1994”. Like Media Communications, he also entered the EAS: “I had to put the whole business package together and got, I think it was £2,000 spread out over so many weeks. It was £40 a week and then it went down to £10 a week or whatever, just as a help”.

The leading publication published by Dark Publications is *Censored?*, which was first released in 1995²⁸. Well designed, having a front cover with a coloured border and printed on thick quality paper, *Censored?* came to fruition out of Tomas’ attendance at film fairs where fans would pick up videos and ask the seller “is this censored”? Tomas saw the magazine as being a reference guide for horror film fans, not just those in the UK, who were trying to determine which release would be the most ‘complete’. When producing the magazine he drew on his art background as a draughtsman and taught himself computer aided design. Tomas used an Apple Mac computer and design software such as Adobe Photoshop and PageMaker. By issue four, *Censored?* was an even slicker publication, now having a full colour front cover; the cover price rising from £3.50 to £3.95 to cover the higher printing costs. The cover price slowly increased to £4.50 until issue eight was published when the cost became £6.95. The publication had further evolved, now using glossy paper for the front cover rather than the matte paper previously used.

²⁸ Illustrations of this publication have not been provided at the request of Tomas.

Eye catching, often lurid, images were used for the front cover, issue two's cover feature a bare breasted woman and issue eight showing an image, taken from the film *Frankenstein '80* (Mario Mancini, 1972), of a man removing organs from a dead body. Using graphic images such as these further signify its status as an alternative publication and might prevent it from being sold in a mainstream store. *Censored?* has an irregular release schedule. Approximately 3000 copies are printed, but because of the high printing costs, an estimated £3000 per issue, and the readership being a "minority group", Tomas has to "get the money back over a period of time". Once enough money has been recouped, another issue will go into publication. Print runs of recent issues have reduced, halving to between "1200 - 1500", because of increasing printing costs. Content contained in the publication is supplied by fans. Contributors are not paid money for their contributions but instead receive complimentary copies that they are able to sell on. This is further evidence of fans using the barter system of exchange that Atton (2000) speaks of.

In addition to *Censored?*, Tomas has also published a number of separate publications that have been dedicated to European cult cinema. There have been a number of British fan publications that have been solely devoted to Italian cult cinema. Aside from the aforementioned *Delirium* published by Media Communications, there was *Blood and Black Lace*, first published in 1989 and only lasting for two issues, and *Giallo Pages*, shown in figure 5.8. *Giallo Pages* was produced by genre journalist John Martin, a regular contributor to Britain's longest running horror magazine *The Dark Side*. Despite its title, *Giallo Pages* focused on Italian cult cinema in general, not just *gialli*. Over the course of four years, five issues were printed. The publication was A4 sized and had colour borders but was printed in black and white, being professionally printed rather than handmade. Reading the magazine serves as an interesting time capsule and offers an insight into the cultural and economic politics of European cult cinema fan production. Martin's editorials are often scathing, insulting other producers of fanzine publications. The editorial of issue five is particularly acidic, with Martin directing his anger at "delinquent debtors" from who he has not

received royalties from²⁹. Other interviewees, such as Nowicki, who is referred to in issue five’s editorial, recalled the conflict. Whether Martin’s rants are justified cannot be determined, but they highlight the competitive nature of fan production, with a variety of fan publications each vying for a place in the market. The first issue of *Giallo Pages* was republished in US, but no further issues followed. Martin decided to move away from the magazine format and produce *Giallo Pages* as a book, though it more closely resembled the glossy style of the SPPs manufactured by Dark Publications. *Giallo Pages* and *Blood and Black Lace* demonstrate that there was a market for publications devoted to Italian cult cinema, which Dark Publications chose to target.



5.8: The first issues of *Blood and Black Lace* and *Giallo Pages*

One such publication was *Paura*, edited by Lucio³⁰. The first issue was published as a SPP by FAB Press, the final fan enterprise that I discuss shortly. For the second issue, Lucio informed me that he made the decision to change publisher as FAB Press were changing their focus, moving from SPPs to book publishing. He also admitted that he and Harvey Fenton, the proprietor of FAB Press, “buted heads over finances and choices”. Issue two of *Paura* was published by Dark Publications. Lucio did not choose to publish it himself as he “had no idea” how to go about doing it and “was also rather skint”. An agreement was reached with Tomas, he would pay for the production costs while Lucio would pay for the design, being “paid a fee as editor and owner of the magazine”. Lucio found that “owed funds did not materialise” and “felt ripped off to a degree”. Instead, he decided to become a “freelance genre journalist” so he would be “be paid without a fuss”. Tomas’

²⁹ I attempted to interview John Martin but was unable to locate him.

³⁰ Interview with ‘Lucio’ conducted via email on 30 August 2012.

recollection of the production of *Paura* differs: “owed funds were paid but were spread over a period of time as this magazine never did make its production costs back and it cost a small fortune to do, lots of complicated issues with software/printers, etc”.

Tomas “liked this magazine” and was disappointed that it did not do as well as anticipated. He lost money on *Paura* and had a number of copies ended up being “pulped” because they did not sell. Later, Lucio would move into book editing and work for a book publisher. This experience shares similarities with John Martin’s, who claimed to have also not received owed funds from distributors. Following this, Dark Publications would release further publications focused on Italian cult cinema. Tomas would be editor and publisher and would pay the author of the content a designated fee. Two volumes of *Giallo Diaries* were published as small A5 publications designed as if they were the diary of a serial murderer, *Italia Violenta* was a similar sized publication devoted to *poliziotteschi* and genre journalist Alan Jones authored *Dario*, an appreciation of the films of Dario Argento. The initial runs of these publications all sold out, the first volume of *Giallo Diaries* being reprinted due to demand. Tomas claimed that he made a “small profit” out of the magazines, but would be unable to make a living out just publishing SPP. For the A5 publications, such as the two volumes of *Giallo Diaries* and *Italia Violenta*, 1000 copies of each were produced and sold at a cover price of £5.95. Most copies are sold to distributors who “get a 50% discount of the cover price”. Though it is difficult to ascertain how much profit is made from producing these publications, Tomas did indicate that they made a small profit, highlighting that this is a money generating activity.

Like Media Communications, Dark Publications also sell other fan produced publications and related material, such as overseas DVD releases. Initially, Dark Publications had two main methods of distribution: mail order and selling at film fairs. Tomas now runs a website and an *eBay* store, taking payments through the payment service *PayPal*. His primary sales are now made by selling

online, giving him easy access to a global audience, but he still receives a number of telephone orders from long term customers. In addition to running Dark Publications, Tomas organises regular film fairs that are held in London or its surrounding parts. He was originally involved in running *Eurofest* in collaboration with Nowicki, but began to run his own small scale events. These have special guests, such as actors and directors, for signings and tables that could be rented by traders to sell products. Matt Hills (2010) addresses the significance of the horror fan conventions, seeing them as sites where fans display subcultural capital. He also recognises that the horror fan convention is a neglected area of academic study. My brief research into this topic revealed how, prior to the internet, the horror fan convention was the primary marketplace for fan related artefacts.

In addition to *Eurofest*, *Fantasm*, *Memorabilia* and *Dark Publications*' film fairs, there were a number of smaller scale events across the UK, such as the film fair held at Carr's Lane Church in Birmingham that I would attend. Though these were spaces for fans to meet others, converse and purchase fan produced publications, they primarily served as the marketplace for the selling of banned and uncertified films; either international imports or pirated copies. I recall visiting such events and witnessing raids by Trading Standards, who would confiscate material that was uncertified. Franco³¹, a trader who primarily sold pirated copies of banned films, informed me that the "circuit" would involve 20-30 events a year, the "main earners" being the six that were organised by Dark Publications. When these events were at their peak, before the advent of the internet and DVD, Franco would make between £3000 and £5000 cash, it being a "disappointing day" if he made just £3000. For Franco, this was a weekend activity in addition to his full-time job in advertising. Over the course of "six or seven years" he made "£80,000" from selling at film fairs. According to Franco the popularity of horror fan convention waned in the early 2000s, as films that were once hard to obtain on VHS in the UK could now be purchased from international online shops at a lower cost. Despite this, after nineteen years of operation, Dark Publications continues to

³¹ Interview conducted with 'Franco' on 8 August 2012.

promote six film fairs each year, which are regularly attended by horror fans. Tomas also continues to publish *Censored?* and, at the time of writing, is planning a third volume of *Giallo Diaries*.

5.6. FAB Press - The third fan enterprise

The past two fan enterprises, Media Communications and Dark Publications, were formed using the Conservative government's EAS. I now focus on the third, and final, fan enterprise of this chapter, discussing how this enterprise was established and, unlike other two, has become fully commodified. Before establishing FAB Press, Harvey Fenton³² published a fanzine named *Flesh and Blood*. Like many interviewees, Fenton first became interested in horror cinema after watching "double bills of horror movies on BBC Two in the 1970s". For his tenth birthday he received a book on horror cinema that further enhanced this fascination. His interest in European cult cinema came after reading a book called *Vampire Movies* by David Pirie (1977). Here he learned about the European vampire films of Jean Rollin and Jesus 'Jess' Franco. He found it frustrating that "you couldn't see the films in those days", this being before the advent of VHS. Harvey's knowledge of European cult cinema was developed through reading fanzines, such as *Shock Xpress* and the American magazine *Deep Red*. He singled out the British fan publication *Eyeball* as being a particular favourite.

Many interviewees referred to *Eyeball* as being the first British fan publication to be completely devoted to European cult cinema. It was first published in 1989 by Stephen Thrower³³. Thrower was a regular contributor to *Shock Xpress* and once it ceased publication he decided to produce his own as he "enjoyed writing for Shock [Xpress] so much that I didn't want to stop". Growing up

³² Interview conducted with Harvey Fenton at *CineExcess* 28 May 2011. The full transcript of this interview can be found in section A of the appendices.

³³ Email interview conducted with Stephen Thrower on 26 September 2012.

during the era of punk in late 1970s Britain shaped Thrower's identity, the "DIY ethos" of punk being "as natural as breathing" to him. He was also inspired by the British Film Institute's (BFI) *Monthly Film Bulletin*: "it had almost no pictures, it was entirely made up of detailed reviews with detailed credits, and a very clean and simple two column design". This influence is evident when reading the content found in *Eyeball*. Unlike other fan publications, such as *Giallo Pages* and *Delirium*, *Eyeball* has a much more 'serious' approach to writing about film, almost verging on what Hills (2000) terms as "fan-scholarship". Rather than just review films, contributors textually analyse them. Thrower stated that he "wanted *Eyeball* to have that formal look of an authoritative film journal but to cover really bizarre anti-establishment material".

To produce the publication, Thrower utilised help from friends. The first issue cost £500 to publish, the money being borrowed from a friend, and was printed by a "small printing company in London". Another friend, who produced promotional videos, allowed Stephen to use his Macintosh Performa computer to design *Eyeball*. He recalled how the publication was printed the "old fashioned way" using "paper plates". Here a template was produced containing text and images being glued alongside each other and then printed. Unlike typical first issues of fanzines which are often handmade, *Eyeball*, being produced on a computer, was well designed. Colour images adorned the front cover and used an effective black and white colour scheme, as shown in figure 5.9. The use of colour, however, was a mistake by the printers. Thrower had requested black and white reproduction, but his instructions were misread by the printers. He received a colour publication instead of the intended black and white one at no extra cost, the printer recognising that they had made the error. Not wanting to revert back to black and white for the second issue, more money had to be raised. Sales from the first issue were strong, meaning that there was "cash in the pot" and, after borrowing more money from friends, a second issue was printed, the cover price rising from £1.75 to £2.00. It was distributed through London stores, such as *Forbidden Planet*, and mail order. Having previously being an employee of *Forbidden Planet*, Thrower had made contact

with the owners of similar stores and was able to convince them to stock *Eyeball*. After three issues, the last being published in 1993 and now being sold for £3.50, personal problems prevented the publication of further issues. A chance meeting with Harvey Fenton in the late 1990s resulted in a further two issues being published in 1996 and 1998 by FAB Press, the publication now being more “ambitious” in scope with more pages and a “greater range of material”. With a declining “independent magazine distribution market, shops like *Tower Records* started refusing to stock them” and with Fenton recognising that the publication was not selling enough copies, no further issues were printed. FAB Press would later publish the *Eyeball Compendium* (Thrower, 2003), which contained reviews and articles taken from past issues.

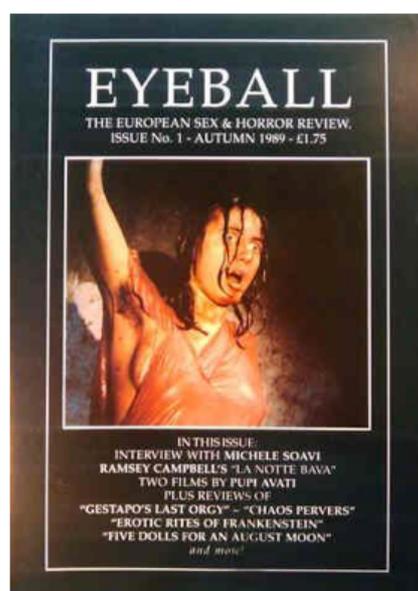


Figure 5.9: Stephen Thrower's *Eyeball*.

Fenton's own fanzine, *Flesh and Blood*, was produced in 1993. Unlike the first issue of *Eyeball*, which had a colour front cover and was designed using a high end Macintosh computer, the first issue of *Flesh and Blood* had the appearance of a typical home made fanzine. The text was written using an Amiga home computer and spaces were left for the pasting of images once it had been printed on paper. 200 copies were printed using his father's photocopying machine. At first, this was very much a hobby for Fenton, the first issue having no set cover price just the word “cheap” in the top right hand corner. Copies were distributed outside the Scala Cinema in London, a cinema that specialised in the screening of controversial horror films, during one of their “all night horror

film festivals”. They were handed out to patrons for free or a donation of 50p was requested “if they were feeling generous”. Initially Fenton had intended to just “get something out there”. A second issue was released in 1994 and the third issue, released in 1995, now had a full cover colour, using a bloody image taken from *Vampyres* (José Ramón Larraz, 1974), the cover price now being £3.00 (illustrated in figure 5.10). Fenton doubled the print run for issue two, printing 400 copies, and for issue three printed 1000. Fenton explained that this growth occurred because he could afford it: “it’s just a matter of economics, because at that point you can afford to print it properly with offset printing rather than photocopying”. By issue four, a Mac LC2 with a 250mb hard drive was being used for design, replacing his limited Amiga home computer. Fenton taught himself how to use the machine: “I can’t describe it any other way. I had a vision in my head of what I wanted on the page. I just worked away at it until I got something approximating it and just learnt as I went along, really”. This was to be a costly venture as external storage drives, named SyQuest drives, were required for the extra storage of image films. At the time, this storage technology cost £80 per drive, which, in 2013, would be £124.80 each. Fenton purchased four of these drives to store the digital files containing the magazine so they could be given to the printers for production.

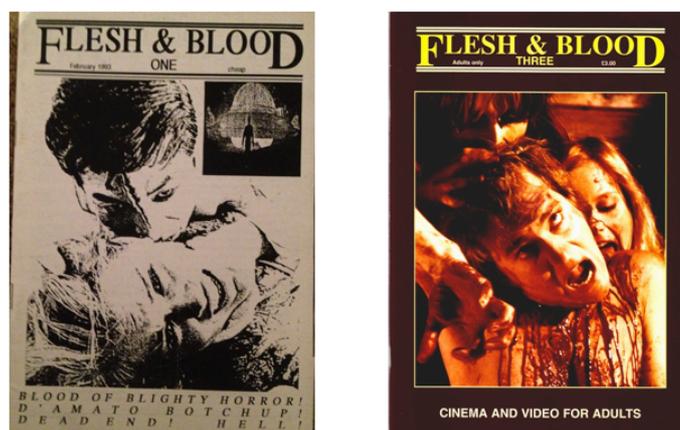


Figure 5.10: Issues one and three of *Flesh and Blood*

Until publication of issue seven, Fenton worked as a sorter at his local Post Office. He chose this particular job because the shift pattern of 2pm till 10pm gave him time during the morning and late evening to work on *Flesh and Blood*. In addition to using this time to produce the *Flesh and Blood*, it would be used to contact distributors and improve the sales of the magazine:

“I did all my sales to start with as well. I just got a list of all the *Forbidden Planet* shops in Britain and phoned them all up. Did individual sales and sold through Dark Publications, and I sold through Media Communications, and I sold direct to the Cinema Store. I started completely independently, self publishing and self distributing.”

This gives an insight into how the alternative economy operates. The fan enterprises, though operated independently and responsible for producing their own publications, would exchange product with one another at reduced prices and cross promote. For example, Dark Publications would sell Media Communications’ products and vice versa. Whilst these companies compete, they also support one another. Atton (2000) speaks of the “gift relationship” that exists between producers and purchasers of fanzines. Though a fanzine is sold for a price, it still retains elements of gift exchange because it has been produced by fans for fans. The amount of labour that fans put into publications like *Flesh and Blood* is not necessarily reflected in the cover price. Atton believes that fans are more willing to be supportive of fan artefacts because they understand the conditions of production. This relationship also exists between the producers of fanzines, it not being uncommon to see producers of fan publications contributing material to others. This is also evident in the review sections of fan publications, which give exposure to other fanzines and provide details on how they can be purchased.

For two years, Fenton produced *Flesh and Blood* while working full time. In 1996 he became self-employed, identifying himself as a sole trader. According to Maheshwari (1997), a sole trader is “a person who carries on a business exclusively by and for himself” (147). The sole trader is solely responsible for profits and losses that might incurred but provides “unlimited freedom” (147). Any income earned is included as part of a regular annual tax return and is designated as self-employed earnings. This is a different approach to that taken by the fantreneurs I have discussed. When asked if he was inspired by other fans who had set up fan enterprises, such as Nowicki and Tomas, Fenton responded: “I just made it all up as I went along. I never used any sort of enterprise initiative, never got any funding, and my rule was simply if I couldn’t afford to print it I didn’t”. Fenton traded under the name FAB Press, FAB being an acronym of *Flesh and Blood*. Being

typical of fan publications, *Flesh and Blood* had an irregular release schedule, three issues appearing in 1996, two in 1997 and one in 1998. Like *Shock Xpress*, *Eyeball* and *Necronomicon*, the style of writing is semi-academic, attempting to critically interrogate film. Interestingly, a number of contributors became academics, such as I.Q Hunter and Xavier Mendik. This further indicates the professional ambitions of Fenton, not just publish a fanzine but a “serious” magazine devoted to cult cinema. The final issue of *Flesh and Blood* was published in 1998. After also publishing issue five of *Eyeball*, Fenton recognised that the market for such publications was changing. Tower Distributors, one of the main distributors of *Flesh and Blood* had closed and a number of the small high streets that also sold the publication were going out of business. This created an “inherent risk” and led to Fenton changing how approached producing fan publications.

In the 1990s a number of former fan publications began to reemerge as published books. I established earlier that the fanzine *Shock Xpress* resurfaced as three paperback book published by Titan Books, a publisher that specialises in the publishing of texts devoted to film, television and music³⁴. *Necronomicon*, a fan publication in the spirit of *Eyeball* and *Flesh and Blood*, was first published as a book by Creation Press in 1996. Identifying itself as the “Journal of Horror and Erotic Cinema”, *Necronomicon* is yet more evidence of fan-scholarship. Numerous articles draw on psychoanalysis, cite academic work and are fully referenced. A total of five *Necronomicon* books were published, the last in 2007. Fenton adopted a similar approach, instead of producing publications that would have little coverage in stores, he produced high-end publications focused on cult cinema. The reason for this change being the rise of the online retailer *Amazon*. Fenton sees *Amazon* as “great” for the independent publisher because “they have a very efficient inventory stock system and payment system”. I have already indicated in this chapter how distributors have not paid owed funds, *European Trash Cinema* serving as an example of this. Fenton no longer has to worry about not receiving payments, as selling books through *Amazon* means he is paid regularly

³⁴ Details of Titan Books’ mission statement can be found on their website: <http://titanbooks.com/footer/about-us>.

and on time. Using *Amazon*, however, is “a double-edged sword” because of their discount policies. Fenton believes that this “reduces the perceived value of your products”. In response to this, Fenton produces lavish, fully illustrated books in both hardback and paperback formats. Hardbacks being preferable “because even if they [*Amazon*] do discount it, I’ve still got a decent margin so I can still make a profit on it”.



Figure 5.11: Examples of FAB Press' publications

The first book published by FAB Press was David Szulkin's (1997) study of the video nasty *Last House on the Left* (Wes Craven, 1972). This was followed by a book version of *Flesh and Blood*, published in 1998 and academic Steve Chibnall's (1998) book on British cult cinema director Pete Walker. 1999 saw FAB Press' first publication on Italian cult cinema, Gian Luca Castoldi, Harvey Fenton and Julian Grainger's (1999) book on director Ruggero Deodato. Again, these publications would be either semi-academic, or in the example of Harper and Mendik's (2000) book *Unruly Pleasures*, academic. By 2000, Fenton began to publish hardback editions as well as paperback editions. A number of these would be devoted to directors of Italian cult cinema such as Dario Argento (Gallant, 2000; Jones, 2004 and 2012), Lucio Fulci (Thrower, 2000) and Mario Bava (Howarth, 2002). The hardback editions would sell for £29.99 and paperbacks retailing at between £19.99 and £24.99. In addition to selling on *Amazon*, Fenton sells direct through the FAB Press website and through some bricks and mortar shops such as *Waterstones* and *Forbidden Planet*. Dark Publications also sells FAB Press product. I met Fenton at the *CineExcess* 2011 conference

where he sold his latest publications, a hardback reissue of the Ruggero Deodato book (Fenton, 2011) and a book on the *Spaghetti Western* (Grant, 2011). Interestingly, these publications were timed to coincide with the guests of *CineExcess 2011*, Ruggero Deodato and Franco Nero, star of the *Spaghetti Western Django* (Sergio Corbucci, 1966) who were on hand to sign copies of purchased books.

Fenton outlined the process he goes through when producing a new publication. Book proposals are received almost every week, but “95%” of these are turned down. This is not necessarily because of their quality but that it takes “months” for Fenton to produce a new title, only being able to produce two or three each year. Though exact production costs or details of print runs were not provided, I was told that £10,000 is invested in every title and that it is “an expensive business”. Fenton has the books printed by two UK based printers, one based in Scotland and the other in Bath. He explained that he uses the the former to publish paperbacks only while the latter is used for the high-end hardbacks as they have the necessary equipment. In 2007, Fenton moved from being a sole trader to establishing FAB Press as a limited company. According to Gerald Cole (2004), a business becomes a limited it is “incorporated”, meaning that it is “endowed with a separate body, or person” (98). As a sole trader, Fenton was FAB Press, now a limited company, FAB Press is a separate entity of which Fenton is the company director. Though no reason was given for FAB Press becoming a limited company, Black and Black (2011) suggests that one of its advantages is that “suppliers and customers may perceive that limited companies have more credibility, which could be a competitive advantage” (56). I was informed that FAB Press is currently a profitable business and will remain in operation as long as it continues to be. Fenton admitted that running FAB Press, designing and selling the books “is a hard way to make a living...it’s very hard work, long hours and it’s a low profit margin”. The main challenge he faces is determining what would be a “decent print run” that “makes sense commercially”. The high amount of investment means that he has to ensure there is enough potential in return. Therefore,

every title Fenton releases in a commercial risk as his profit margins are very low, particularly because, *Amazon*, his main seller, discount heavily. He realises that he would “probably be better off working for a multi-national publishing company and designing books for them”. Whilst this might pay him a higher salary than what he earns now he much prefers the freedom self-employment brings.

5.7. Conclusion - Diversifying production

In this chapter I have historicised the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production to demonstrate how fans have culturally and economically made a category known as European cult cinema. From ethnographic observation and interviews, focused on public offline and online fan activities, my own personal fan experiences and using secondary literature, I have been able to determine a number of significant events that contributed to the development of this alternative economy. Firstly, I discussed how a culture of fanzine production, popularised by the punk DIY movement, inspired a wealth of film fanzines in the US. These fanzines gave coverage to films ignored by mainstream publications, two in particular, *Spaghetti Cinema* and *European Trash Cinema* focused exclusively on European cult cinema. *ETC* moved from being a fanzine to a SPP, demonstrating that fan publications could become commodified and not be produced non-for-profit. I then identified the development of the VCR as being a key moment in the development of European cult cinema fandom. Small independent video labels, taking advantage of the demand for product created by this new technology, released low budget films from Italy, Spain, the UK and France. Many of these films were uncertified as video was not subject to BBFC certification at this time. This resulted in the video nasties moral panic, which called for video regulation. A list of 39 titles were identified as being potentially obscene by the DPP; many films in this list originating from Italy. The forbidden nature of these titles helped to privilege Italian cult cinema as a fan

object. This led to a number of fanzines emerging in the UK giving coverage to these films, such as *Shock Xpress* and *Samhain*.

I then discussed how three particular fans inspired by these early fan publications formed enterprises that produced fan publications that privileging European cult cinema. These fans, or as I have described them fantreneurs, sought to benefit economically from their fandom. Media Communications and Dark Publications made use of enterprise initiatives to help support their businesses while Harvey Fenton started FAB Press as a sole trader, later registering as a limited company. All three fantreneurs were self taught, later using computer design software to professionalise their production. In addition to producing publications, Dark Publications and Media Communications organised festivals and distributed other fan related ephemera. Out of the three fan enterprises, FAB Press is the only one to become fully commodified, their lavishly produced books having wider circulation. These three fantreneurs did not just produce artefacts relating to European cult cinema, I argue that they culturally and economically made what is now referred to as European cult cinema. However, this was “inadvertent”; the fantreneurs were unaware that they were creating a cultural and economic category through their fan production (Kawin, 1991: 18).

In the coming chapters, I focus on others forms of activity in the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. By the early 2000s, fan publications had begun to reduce in number, the internet now being a more efficient publishing platform. Atton (2000) notes how the internet changed the nature of fanzine production. No longer would fans have to risk investing money in producing fanzines that might not sell, leaving them with a considerable surplus of stock that has no economic value. The World Wide Web could be used instead as distribution platform for fan publications. Atton sees that the social aspect of the World Wide Web has helped to strengthen

communities that are traditionally formed out of fan publications, reducing the “social distance” of physically produced fan publications. In the alternative economy I describe, it has been online websites with message boards that have replaced the fanzine. Websites such as *LL&L*, *AV Maniacs*³⁵ and *Mobius Home Video Forum*³⁶ feature content that might be found in a typical fanzine, such as news and reviews. However, the websites have message boards when fans can discuss, share information and trade artefacts; a more social re-imagining of the letters page and classified sections found in fan publications.

There has been a recent resurgence in fan publications, perhaps an extension of the nostalgia that helped to increase the exchange value of artefacts that were deemed to be obsolete, such as vinyl records and VHS tapes. Fan publications have emerged, such as *Creepy Images*, a full colour publication that reproduces poster art, and *Tenebrarum*, whose issues have been devoted to Italian cult films such as *Cannibal Holocaust*. Both of these are produced in Germany and are sold through Dark Publications and FAB Press. The fan publications from the 1980s and 1990s that I have discussed here now often command high prices in specialist shops and on *eBay*. For example, four issues of John Martin’s *Giallo Pages* can be purchased for £45.00 on the book reseller website *AbeBooks*³⁷. Though the internet contributed to the decline in fan publications it has at the same presented new opportunities for fan enterprise. Chapter seven shows how online file-sharing technologies allow fans to archive, recirculate and reappropriate European cult cinema texts and chapter eight focuses on how a number of fantreneurs have setup online fan enterprises to sell the artefacts they produce. The following chapter focuses on how Roman Nowicki diversified his production moving from producing fanzines to making fan films inspired by European cult cinema that I term ‘slash production’.

³⁵ www.avmaniacs.net

³⁶ www.mhvf.net

³⁷ <http://www.abebooks.co.uk>

CHAPTER SIX

‘SLASH PRODUCTION’: OBJECTIFYING THE SERIAL ‘KILER’ FOR PLEASURE AND PROFIT

In this chapter, I examine how the *Fantom Kiler* film series can be understood as an example of what I define as ‘slash production’; a form of fan-film production that gives specific attention to serial murder and reproduces the serial killer as a fan object. In chapter five I demonstrated how the alternative economy of European cult fandom developed culturally and economically, concluding that three fantreneurs cultural and economically created what has become known as European cult cinema through their production of artefacts. At the close of the chapter, I considered how a change in market conditions led to a decline in fan publications, but at the same time allowed for greater diversification in fan production. I now focus on a specific example of this diversification by looking at the fan produced film *Fantom Kiler* to further demonstrate how fan production can be understood as a cultural and economic process. I argue that the *Fantom Kiler* film series, through its intertextual relationship with *giallo*, further illustrates the contemporary fascination with the serial killer and allows for a new consideration of the ways this cultural figure is appropriated by fan cultures for pleasure *and* profit.

6.1. *The Fantom Kiler* enigma

In early 2003, it came to my attention that a film called *Fantom Kiler* (1998) had been released on DVD; promotional materials for the film labelling it as a “stylish East European *giallo*”. Its production shrouded in mystery, *Fantom Kiler* gained notoriety within the online European cult cinema fan community. Apparently made in Poland, though most of the spoken dialogue is a

mixture of both Polish and Russian, the film follows a masked serial killer who stalks and murders a number of scantily clad women. Filmed on video tape, suffering from constant changes of aspect ratio and having numerous subtitle spelling errors, the low budget origins of the film are apparent. On viewing the film for the first time I did not find it pleasurable, primarily because of its amateurish appearance, the highly sexualised depiction of serial murder and bawdy comic interludes. I found it to be similar in content to the large body of extremely low budget 'shot-on-video' horror films that are produced by fans of horror and are specifically aimed at the horror fan market. These productions blend near hardcore pornography, gratuitous nudity, poor acting and graphic scenes of serial murder into a near ninety minutes of running time. But, as a scholar of European cult cinema, I found it especially interesting as a contemporary interpretation/tribute to the *giallo* film. Following the release of the first instalment of the series, rumours began to circulate within online message boards regarding the mysterious production history of the *Fantom Kiler*. Who was Roman Nowicki, the credited director of the film? Were the production company Teraz Films responsible for any other films? Information emerged stating that 'Roman Nowicki' was a pseudonym for a British horror fanzine producer who played an important role in developing European cult cinema fandom in the United Kingdom. Clues to the British origins of the film could be found throughout the film, one particularly attentive viewer identifying the English locales used. As further details surfaced more *Fantom Kiler* films were released. To date, there have been four films in the *Fantom Kiler* series, with each sequel closely matching the theme of the earlier entries: scantily clad women being murdered in varying sexually aggressive ways by a masked serial killer. Yet each of these sequels becomes increasingly sexually explicit in their representation of serial murder.

When interviewing the owner of Media Communications, the first fan enterprise discussed in the previous chapter, I was aware that he could possibly be the 'Roman Nowicki', the director of the

Fantom Kiler films. When I questioned him about his involvement in producing them, I was surprised to find him confess to being Roman Nowicki. This chapter continues the story of Media Communications from chapter five. It considers how Nowicki, noticing the declining sales of his publications and the growing demand for *gialli* on the new DVD format, diversified his production yet again, producing films that he thought would appeal to customers on his strong mailing list. I begin this chapter by demonstrating how serial murder is often a common element in the narrative of many *gialli*. Secondly, I define the term ‘slash production’ and examine how it can be understood as an extension of slash fan fiction, but instead focusing on fan reinterpretations of serial murder. Finally, the production, distribution and consumption of the *Fantom Kiler* series is analysed to understand how it can be considered an example of slash production. Conclusions are drawn on how this example of fan film making is an extreme expression of fan passion for horror cinema, but also has an important economic dimension; a way for fans to make an income from the texts that they have produced. In this sense, they are blurring the boundaries between amateur and professional media production. Additionally, the *Fantom Kiler* series also raises questions about policy and the regulation of production of such films in the United Kingdom.

6.2. Serial murder and the ‘giallo’

In chapter three I provided my definition of the *giallo*. I suggested that it is better referred to as a cycle or movement of film, as many of the films Italians refer to as *gialli* do not encompass the ‘typical’ conventions that audiences outside of Italy apply to the form. For British and American audiences, the *giallo* is identified as a sub-genre of horror. The problems in defining the *giallo* as further highlighted by Mikel J Koven (2006), who differentiates between the *giallo*, *poliziotto* and *giallo fantastico*:

“While the classical *giallo* features a serial killer clad in black gloves, hat, and overcoat being hunted by an amateur detective, the *poliziotto* puts the police investigation front and center in the investigation. Other *gialli* tend to focus on more private and interior settings, creating more of a suspense *giallo*. Still others, embracing the strong connection between the *giallo* and the horror film, offer a more supernatural narrative, the *giallo fantastico*” (15).

Koven’s attempt at definition further complicates how the *giallo* is understood, using a number of different sub-terms to describe the complex nature of the *giallo*. I use *giallo* as an overarching term to describe a cycle or a movement of filmmaking that occurred in Italy from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. Therefore, the *giallo* cannot be understood as a film genre as it lacks a cohesive set of narrative and character elements, but having a unique, identifiable style. I have suggested that this relates to debates surrounding *film noir*, which is argued, by theorists such as Alain Silver (1999), to be a style rather than a film genre. However, serial murder is a common plot device in the narrative of many *gialli*.

The serial killer is a common entity in American and British culture. Mikel J Koven (2006) notes that whilst serial killing and serial murder does exist in Italy it is so uncommon that there is no actual equivalent Italian word for the term; it is considered very much an American phenomena (97). Koven points to the term “il mostro” (the monster) as the one commonly used by Italians, such as in the *Il mostro di Firenze* (The Monster of Florence) murders, when referring to serial murder (97). ‘Il mostro’ gives the serial killer a fantastical quality, equating them with “boogeymen” and folklore (97). This lack of an Italian word for ‘serial killer’ is surprising considering the large number of *gialli* that focus on serial murder. The film of particular importance here is Mario Bava’s *Blood and Black Lace* (*Sei done per l’assassino*, 1964), arguably the most influential film in the *giallo* canon and a stylistic influence on the *Fantom Kiler* film series. Luther Smith (1999) believes that *Blood and Black Lace* “encapsulates the very essence of what most people define as *giallo* cinema” (11-12).

Blood and Black Lace focuses on a series of murders committed by a masked killer who is trying to recover a diary that contains scandalous information. The killer is dressed head-to-toe in black; black overcoat, black leather gloves and black Trilby hat. The faceless gauze mask hides the identity of the killer, a distinctive generic iconography that has become ever present in the American stalk and slash sub-genre, such as the mask worn by Michael Myers in the *Halloween* film series. The film contains a number of notable murder set pieces where victims are stalked and ultimately murdered in lurid ways. For example, one female victim is tortured and then has her face scalded on a hot stove and another has a spiked glove thrust into her face. Though these scenes are not shown in graphic detail, they set a standard for a number of *gialli* that would be released after this film. Many future *gialli* would have particularly graphic murder sequences, where attractive women, often in varying states of undress, would be stalked and eventually murdered in horrific ways by a serial murderer. This had led to many *gialli*, particularly the work of Dario Argento, being labelled as misogynistic due to the graphic representations of female murder in his films (Hope, 2005). As highlighted by Leon Hunt (2000), many murder sequences found in *gialli* are highly sexualised, demonstrating “hostility to the female body” (348). Crotch stabbings feature in a number of *gialli*, such as *The Killer Reserved Nine Seats* (*L'assassino ha riservato nove poltrone*, Giuseppe Benati, 1974) and *Giallo a Venezia* (Mario Landi, 1979), and murder weapons are commonly fetishised; the camera paying attention to the phallic quality of knives (Guins, 1996). In an oft-cited quote, Argento has said that he prefers to see women murdered on screen than men: “I like women, especially beautiful ones...if they have a good face and figure, I would much prefer to watch them being murdered than an ugly girl or man” (in Clover, 1992: 42). In a macabre spin on the director cameo, popularised by Alfred Hitchcock, Argento is known for wearing the black gloves and assuming the role of the serial killer during many of the murder sequences in his films (Mendik, 2000).

Though *gialli* were low budgeted B movies they have a particular visual style that conflicts with their origins (Bondanella, 2003:419). Bava would draw on his skills as a cinematographer to employ unusual lighting techniques and use primary colour filters in his films to “forge unforgettable images of visual poetry and narrative potency” (Jones, 1997: 58). One of the murder sequences in *Blood and Black Lace* is shot using a variety of colour filters, adding an artistic, fantastical element to the brutal murder. Argento is also renowned for his unique visual style that will often place viewers in the killer’s gaze or position audiences in the shoes of the investigator. Guins (1996) has suggested that Argento will often punish the viewer, as well as aesthetically please them, with his use of creative camera angles and setups (148). Like Bava, Argento also is known for his use of primary colours in his films, particularly the colour red. Even some of the lesser-known and lower budgeted *gialli* will have similar creative touches in their use of camera angles and colour. Many *gialli*, but especially those directed by Argento, explicitly reference psychoanalytic ideas in their narratives. In *Deep Red (Profondo Rosso)*, Dario Argento, (1975), for example, Freud’s primal scene is used to explain the motivations of the film’s serial murderer. This might explain why the majority of fanacademic enquiry into the *giallo* has focused on psychoanalytical readings of the work of *giallo* auteurs such as Argento and Lucio Fulci (Mendik, 1998, 2000, 2001; Gallant, 2000). Having identified that serial killing is a key element of many *gialli* and that murder is represented in a particularly graphic, sexualised manner, I want to consider how fan communities might and do engage with these narratives of serial killing. To this end, I will examine in detail the production of the *Fantom Kiler* series as a form of ‘slash production’, but first I define this term.

6.3. From 'slash fiction' to 'slash production'

For my purposes, slash production can be defined as a form of amateur fan produced film, or other fan produced text, that is primarily concerned with serial murder and scenes of extreme violence. I use the term as a playful extension of 'slash fiction', though it is significantly different in terms of its topic and concerns, moving beyond its common definition and indicating a wider set of fan practices. As I described in chapter one, slash fiction is a form of fan writing that "refers to the convention of employing a stroke or slash to signify a same-sex relationship between two characters and specifies a genre of fan stories positing homoerotic affairs between series protagonists" (Jenkins, 1992a: 186). Slash fan fiction, whether written or visual, offers alternative interpretations to the sanctioned, legitimate storylines and character relationships offered by scriptwriters. The difficulties in defining slash fiction are highlighted by Cheryl Harris and Alison Alexander (1998) who identify not only the sexually explicit and politically conscious nature of the genre but also see it as both "complex and constantly evolving" (174). For example, online searches for fan fiction will not only find homoerotic re-imaginings involving popular television and film characters. It will also locate fan writings that can offer extreme sexual or violent reinterpretations of popular media. However, unlike conventional homoerotic slash fiction, this form of slash appears to lack a strategic political dimension; it is a deviant reinterpretation of a popular media text. An extreme example from a rather innocuous sector is a fan written script for the Australian soap opera *Neighbours* that can be found online. This script focuses on the kidnap and subsequent sexual torture of a character from the show, providing a graphic detailed breakdown of the scene. Though potentially disturbing, it provides an example of the diversity of slash fiction and how fan audiences can produce new meanings from the media they consume. It also highlights how the ease of online publishing allows for a greater proliferation of slash fiction and makes it accessible to a wider audience. Usually confined to fanzines only obtained through grassroots fan

networks, slash fiction can now be easily located through a simple *Google* search or on sites such as *fanfiction.net*³⁸. By looking at the wealth of categories on *fanfiction.net*, one can see both the variety and sheer abundance of fan written material that offer all sorts of fan interpretations of popular media.

Camille Bacon-Smith (1992) believes that slash-fiction contains a number of sub-genres. In the “genre of pain”, she notes that slash fiction can be violent, focusing on both pain and suffering (55). This not only shows the diversity of slash fiction, but also how extreme the content of fan production can be. Therefore, I present ‘slash production’ as an extension of slash fiction that offers fan interpretations of serial murder through varying fan practices, such as fan film production. The term employs the literal interpretation of the word slash (to cut in a violent manner) and is primarily found within horror fan fandom. Anyone familiar with the specialist fan publications devoted to horror films, particularly those originating from the 1990s, such as the US publications *Fangoria* and *Deep Red*, will have noticed that they gave a significant amount of attention to violent murder and the amount of gore contained in horror films. One can see this association evident in the titles of these publications, with *Fangoria* containing the syllable ‘gor(e)’ and *Deep Red*, producing connotations of blood and sharing its name with the co-incidental international release of Dario Argento’s *giallo Deep Red*. As mentioned in chapter three, Guins (2005) notes how fan writings on Italian horror films, such as *gialli*, in the pre-DVD age would focus on them as “gore objects” (24). These fan publications would place specific attention on the serial killer as part of their fascination with blood and gore. In Britain, fan publications, such as those discussed in the previous chapter, have a similar focus, but adopt a more bawdy style of writing that is not too dissimilar to the tone of the Benny Hill television series or the *Carry On...* films. They would also give a large amount of coverage to film and video censorship (Kimber, 1998). The British fanzine *Censored?*, published

³⁸ www.fanfiction.net

by Dark Communications, is one of many that explores the censorship of horror films and identifies the most uncut version available on DVD or VHS. This suggests that fan publications can be important mechanisms in the shaping of reception of horror films.

Linda Badley's (2009) research into horror cinema and video culture makes mention of the American underground horror scene and the fan produced horror films that are circulated. Badley suggests "underground horror appeals to people who want something 'real', raw or extreme" (51). She refers to these as direct to video films (DTV); films primarily produced by and for the horror community. As the term DTV is limited, due to it being applied to any film that does not receive a theatrical release, I suggest that it is better to understand them as amateur fan produced horror films that have professional aspirations. I use the term 'amateur' to reflect their low production values, such as the use of consumer video production equipment and unknown casts. Low budget, amateur produced horror films were a feature of the American VHS boom of the 1980s where a consumer demand for product created a market for horror films, especially those from the 'stalk and slash' sub-genre. Badley suggests that this movement of filmmaking shares some similarities with the DIY punk ethos of the 1970s and 1980s (51). The availability of video camcorders and home editing equipment meant that anyone with access to the technology could produce a homemade film. Kerekes and Slater (1995) identify early examples of this form of fan production that were distributed in the US in the mid-1980s. For example, in films such as *The New York Centrefold Massacre* (Louis Ferriol, 1985), "nothing happens but the torture of girls" (167). Before the ubiquitous capacity of the internet was available, these films were advertised in fan publications, distributed through mail order, fan networks and conventions, but have now become more noticeable in the internet age, where fan word-of-mouth has helped them to find a larger international audience.

There have been a number of recent amateur produced horror films that have offered extreme representations of serial murder; these can be seen as examples of slash production. Films comparable to the *Fantom Kiler* series are *Murder Set Pieces* (Nick Palumbo, 2004), which tells of a fashion photographer who is also a serial killer who tortures and murders women in his basement; the *August Underground* series of films, which follow serial killers who film each other committing murders to produce snuff films; and *Scrapbook* (Eric Stanze, 2000), in which a serial killer tortures a woman for the duration of the film's 95 minute running time. While even more extreme in their representation of serial murder than the *Fantom Kiler* series, they have found niche audiences. This is largely due to their graphic interpretations of serial murder, and coverage given in fanzines and online reviews that have awarded attention to their strong content.



Figure 6.1: Examples of 'slash production' - *Scrapbook*, *Murder Set Pieces* and *August Underground*

Alongside these films, there has also been a recent spate of low budget films that have paid attention to the crimes of infamous serial murderers such as Ed Kemper - 'The Coed Killer' (*Kemper*, Rick Bitzelberger, 2008) and Gary Ridgeway - 'The Green River Killer' (*Green River Killer*, Ulli Lommel, 2005). One online reviewer has labelled these films as 'serial killer fan fiction' due to the

way in which the narratives of the films deviate from the case files³⁹. I also include these under the rubric of slash production as they reproduce the serial killer as a fan object. These low budget, digitally shot films are aimed at those with an interest in true crime and, more specifically, the serial killer. Having little budget, slash production has been filmed using digital production techniques because of its affordability. The relatively low cost of digital camcorders and availability of digital editing software makes this an accessible pursuit for fans who are willing to invest the labour required to make a movie. Despite having low budget origins, slash producers attempt to mirror professional production practices. For instance, special effects and make-up are an integral part in making the murder set piece, a drawn out sequence devoted to the stalking, torture and murder of a female, as realistic as possible. This might involve the use of props, prosthetics and fake blood. It is these murder sequences that are awarded the most attention; much like pornography, the acting and storyline are of less importance.

Because of the relaxed laws for producing and distributing amateur produced films in the United States, slash production tends to be primarily an American phenomenon. When distinguishing the differences between American and British film classification, the British Board of Film Classification website (BBFC) highlight that classification in the United States is entirely voluntary, and, unlike the United Kingdom, there is no specific classification process for home video⁴⁰. Therefore, any film can be distributed in US providing that it does not breach copyright or obscenity laws. As 'slash production' contains extreme representations of serial murder, they may not be available in countries that have strict film censorship policies and can only be obtained via specialist online retailers or purchased at specialist horror conventions. Tighter regulatory laws in the UK and

³⁹ The term 'serial killer fan fiction' has been used in Dread Central's reviews of Kemper (Rick Bitzelberger, 2008): <http://www.dreadcentral.com/reviews/kemper-dvd> and *Bundy: A Legacy of Evil* (Michael Feifer, 2009): <http://www.dreadcentral.com/reviews/bundy-a-legacy-evil-2009>.

⁴⁰ Same Difference? A comparison of the British and American film and DVD rating systems. Taken from the BBFC website: <http://www.sbbfc.co.uk/mpaacomparison>

the need for certification by the BBFC discourages slash production in the United Kingdom. Submitting a film to the BBFC for classification incurs a fee. A 90 minute English language film costs approximately £245 to be certified by the BBFC⁴¹. In addition, there is the risk of having your film censored or, more likely, rejected. For instance, the film *Murder Set Pieces*, which I identified earlier as being an example of slash production, was rejected by the BBFC for DVD release because the Board had: "...serious concerns about the portrayal of violence, most especially when the violence is sexual or sexualised, but also when depictions portray or encourage: callousness towards victims, aggressive attitudes, or taking pleasure in pain or humiliation"⁴². Unlike in the US, where it is possible to bypass the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and release a film without a rating, distribution of unclassified material in the UK can result in a fine or a prison sentence. Therefore, both the production and trading of slash production in the UK is very much an underground activity. Fans wishing to view slash production will either have to import DVDs from outside of the UK, and risk potential seizures from Customs and Excise, or download it from a file-sharing website.

As a contextual examination of *Fantom Kiler* demonstrates, there is also an important economic dimension to the production of slash fiction. One possible explanation for slash production is that it gives fans an outlet to express both their passion and knowledge of horror films to the fan community, drawing on already established textual features as a form of homage. However, the amount of investment, in both time and money that goes into producing a film cannot be ignored. Will Brooker (2002) suggests that fan films are often produced to be "calling cards", acting as potential "springboards" to a professional career in filmmaking (175). This is also emphasised by Clive Young (2008), who uses the example of Dan Poole's fan film *The Green Goblin's Last Stand*

⁴¹ <http://www.bbfc.co.uk/industry-services/digital-ratings/watch-rate-faqs#costs>

⁴² Taken from the BBFC online database: <http://www.bbfc.co.uk/website/Classified.nsf/0/C459C3DC24C72664802573FC005EB482>

(1992), to show how Poole attempted to use the film as a calling card, sending copies to director James Cameron and Spider-Man co-creator Stan Lee (134). However, there is a greater economic incentive to slash production that goes beyond pursuing employment in the Hollywood industry. The existence of slash production from the 1980s onwards suggests that the serial killer is a marketable cultural product. Both Ian Conrich (2003) and David Schmid (2005) make mention of the “murderabilia” industry, which Conrich has defined as the “marketplace for serial killer-related products, which fetishise a murderer or allow for a particular private association” (Conrich, 2003: 158). This not only highlights the fandom surrounding serial murder but also emphasises how they are entertainment figures and awarded celebrity status. The fictional serial killers of many horror films also demonstrate the existence of this market. Schmid (2005) uses the examples of fictional serial murderers Freddy Krueger, Jason Voorhees and Michael Myers who have featured in numerous slasher movie sequels as evidence of the “celebrity of the filmic serial killer” and how they have become stars of “extremely profitable” movie series (108). The slash producer is not driven solely by homage; it is a potential profit making activity that exploits an established market. The conditions for slash production, such as the low budgets, lack of named talent, small crews, inexpensive equipment and independent distribution, further indicate how it is possible to make money from producing films that make the serial killer, and serial murder, the primary focus. The following case study of *Fantom Kiler* highlights this economic dimension of slash production.

6.4. *Re-imagining the serial ‘kiler’*

An exploration of the production, distribution and consumption of the *Fantom Kiler* series demonstrates the ways it can be understood as slash production. The majority of information contained here was sourced from a semi-structured interview I conducted in December 2009 with

'Roman Nowicki'; the named director of the *Fantom Kiler* series. Speaking to the author of these texts allowed for a greater understanding of their production and distribution context. Using information obtained from online fan discussions, I asked Nowicki if he was involved in producing *Fantom Kiler* and was surprised to find that he not only admitted involvement, but was open to discussing how he produced the films. In the previous chapter, I described how Nowicki started the fan enterprise Media Communications, entering the Enterprise Allowance Scheme provided by the Conservative Government. Nowicki produced a number of fan publications that explicitly referenced Italian cult cinema, such as *The Good Giallo Guide* and *Delirium*, and had also established *Eurofest*, the first film festival devoted to European cult cinema. By the late 1990s, the market for fan publications was changing. The affordability of home computing, increasing internet access and the closure of distributors of publications each had an impact. Initially, the proliferation of home computing had led to the professionalisation of fan publications, them now being designed by computer rather by hand, but the cost of printing and decreasing distribution channels made them risky propositions. Other fanzine producers moved to publishing online, the website and online forum replacing the physical fan publication. Another fan enterprise, FAB Press, responded by moving into the production of high-end books.

Nowicki, became frustrated with using the Royal Mail to dispatch publications, receiving complaints from customers about them being damaged in transit. Sensing the need to further diversify his production, he decided to change his approach. A further technological development, the introduction of DVD in 1997, presented an opportunity for Nowicki. Much like the emergence of VHS, the introduction of DVD led to a consumer demand for product. Guins (2005) indicates how this early period of DVD saw the release of a number of Italian horror films on the format. One of the earliest DVD releases was the Italian cult film *Rabid Dogs (Cani Arrabbiati, 1974)*, published by Lucertola Media. Further DVD releases of Italian horror and *gialli* followed.

Nowicki, being a fan of Italian cult cinema, was aware of this growing global market. This could be evidenced in the message board discussions of European cult cinema fans on online communities such as *DVD Maniacs* and *Mobius Home and Video Forum*. Now having access to a large mailing list of around 2500 reliable customers, Nowicki perceived that there was a market for a modern day interpretation of the *giallo* that could be marketed at the European cult fan community. This sequence of events led towards the development of *Fantom Kiler*.

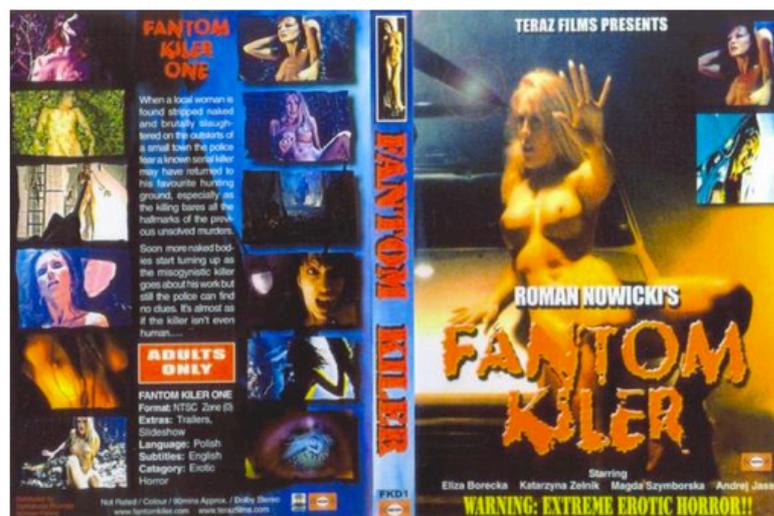


Figure 6.2: *Fantom Kiler* DVD cover

As the central figure within the vast majority of *gialli* is the serial killer, which I identified earlier in this chapter, it was inevitable that the antagonist within the *Fantom Kiler* series was going to be a serial murderer. The original working title for the first *Fantom Kiler* film was *A Town Called Hate*. Nowicki's initial idea for the plot of the film was to have a town occupied by misogynistic males; one of these male occupants, possessing so much hatred towards women, that it leads him to murder. This title was rejected on the basis that it might lead people to believe that it was a *Spaghetti Western* rather than a *giallo*. When setting out to make the film, Nowicki did not intend for it to be a *giallo*. The initial inspiration for *Fantom Kiler* were the *fumetti* rather than *gialli*. *Fumetti*, also known as *fumetti neri*, are Italian comic books aimed at an adult audience, examples are given in figure 6.3. Their violent storylines and antiheroes, such as the Diabolik character

popularised in Mario Bava's *Danger: Diabolik* (1968), would become influential to those directors commonly associated with Italian cult film (Paul, 2005). Nowicki told me it was the "outrageousness" of the *fumetti* that inspired him and that no film he had seen matched the general "craziness" of the *fumetti*.



Figure 6.3: Examples of *fumetti*

The first *Fantom Kiler* film was produced in 1998. Nowicki self-financed the films and estimates that the budget for the first *Fantom Kiler* film was "anywhere between £2,000 to £3,000". It was filmed using a Sony VX1000 digital video camera, a popular camera that was used by both professionals and semi-professionals in the late 1990s. One particular difficulty he encountered was the editing of the film, taking "well over a year to complete". Not only did Nowicki find software and hardware for editing expensive, it also took a long period of time to familiarise himself with the Ulead Media Studio Pro software, being self-taught. The difficulties encountered can be seen in the final edit of film, where the aspect ratio changes on a number of occasions, again reminding the viewer of the amateur origins of the film and signifying *Fantom Kiler* as slash production. The storyline, albeit rather thin, focuses on a series of murders that are being committed in a small, Polish village. It transpires that the men share such a hatred of the attractive women of the village

that the hate manifests itself into an energy, which results in the creation of the supernatural *Fantom Kiler*. The director maintains that the film is not about a masked serial murderer, but is instead a comment on misogyny and how religion can create repressed individuals. Defending his film, Nowicki believes that it has “more storyline” than the original *Friday the 13th* (Sean Cunningham, 1980) and cites the influence of psychoanalysis to explain the killer’s motivations, particularly the drive of the id and the repressed sexuality of the villagers. Despite these high claims, it is difficult to see past the fact that this film devotes the majority of its running time to scenes of women being stalked by the *Fantom Kiler* and murdered in varying sexually violent ways.

Many of the prolonged murder set pieces will feature a woman, conventionally attractive with oiled bodies and silicon-enhanced breasts, walking through foggy woodland. Contact with the branches of woodland trees and barbed wire help to remove her clothes, making her completely naked. The *Fantom Kiler* appears and informs the women of their forthcoming ‘punishment’, in one scene uttering the following dialogue (please note that the spelling mistakes are intentional and are found in the actual subtitles):

“It’s not safe to be in the woods after dark especially dressed only in a pair of hi-heels, you might catch a cold or something. You have such a pretty body, it would be a shame if something happened to it wouldn’t it? Soft flesh...so delicate...what could be the worst thing that could happen to it? I wonder if you could even begin to imagine can you? Is that why you are here? To be punished? Do you feel the need to be punished? Why else would you be here? Defenseless and naked, you’re a lady of expensive tastes, only the best is good for you: the best furs...the best jewellery but where are they now? Do you miss them? Has the lust for fine things been replaced by a more basic lust? A lust for excitement, forbidden sexual desire? You’ve never felt this way before...my steele blade caressing your tender skin creating the ultimate sensation...the ultimate...orgasm...and death.”

Rather than instil fear, this dialogue appears to arouse the woman and the killer vaginally assaults the female victim with a phallic replacement, either a knife or broom handle. In between these murder sequences there are scenes featuring inept police and two misogynistic janitors, offering nothing more than a crude commentary and serving as potential suspects for the murders. Much of

the humour offered by these two characters shares many similarities to the jovial misogyny contained in the fanzines previously produced by Nowicki and many other early British fan publications. Jenkins (2006a) recognises that many producers of fan videos have often had experience in producing fanzines, and that it is no coincidence that the content of the fan produced texts share many similarities (228).

As with *gialli*, it would be easy to label *Fantom Killer* as misogynistic due to the sexual punishment of the female victims. Nowicki intentionally chose what he referred to as a “special look of girl” for the role. The women used are not actresses, but glamour models with heavy make-up, many having surgically enhanced breasts. None of the actors or actresses used in the production are professionals, the majority being friends or family of the director, in keeping with its low budget origins. Whilst the film may not be as gory as the slash production I identified earlier in this chapter, such as *Murder Set Pieces* or the *August Underground* films, it is the textual specifics of these representations of serial murder and sexual violence that have the potential to disturb viewers. Here sexual violence towards women is presented as an exciting spectacle. Defending these scenes, Nowicki believes they border on the ridiculous because of their excess, believing they should be seen more as black comedy. Nowicki claims that it was his intention that murder sequences should be regarded as fantastical set pieces and be as “unrealistic” as possible. Nowicki might be suggesting that his films are an antidote to other slash production, such as the *Murder Set Pieces* series of films, which are too violent for his liking. Nonetheless, fans of *Fantom Kiler* have contacted him requesting for more, rather than less, gore in his future productions. The similarities *Fantom Kiler* shares with pornography is also noticeable. The models are reminiscent of porn stars because of their artificial bodies, extended murder set pieces replace sex scenes, the act of penile penetration replaced by phallic objects, such as knives and wooden spoons, and the ensuing ‘money shot’ is the death of the victim. This is all intercut with narrative ‘filler’. While the first *Fantom*

Kiler film does not involve genital sex, the acts of vaginal penetration with phallic objects and much of the spread-legged female nudity moves this beyond the category of softcore. In *Fantom Kiler*, the serial killer is being portrayed as an excessively sexualised figure. Victims are seduced before they are murdered, sharing many similarities with the common cinematic representation of Dracula; an antagonist that is both feared, but also desired. In the ensuing sequels, the eroticisation of the *Fantom Kiler* progressively moves towards presenting the character as a rapist, as well as a sexual sadist, the content increasingly becoming hardcore pornography.

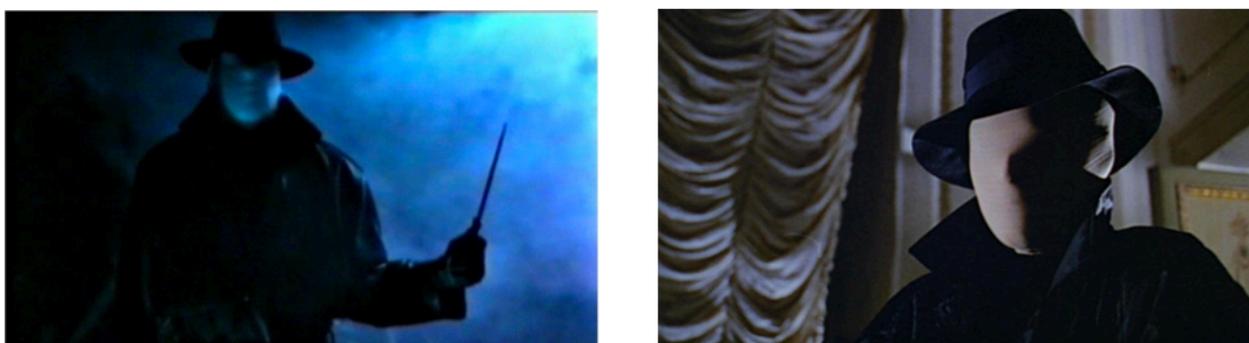


Figure 6.4: The Fantom Kiler (left) and the killer from *Blood and Black Lace* (right)

The appearance of the titular character, the ‘Fantom Kiler’, shares many similarities to the masked serial killer of Mario Bava’s *Blood and Black Lace*. They are both adorned in black trilby hats, long black coats, black gloves and the faceless gauze mask (see figure 6.4). Surprisingly, given that this is a fan based production, Nowicki claimed that the similarity was entirely unintentional. This suggests that the ‘look’ of the masked serial killer, as pioneered by Bava, has become so embedded within the iconography of the horror genre that it is a recurrent stylistic trope for filmmakers. There are a number of other stylistic touches present in the film that are reminiscent of many *gialli*. According to Nowicki, the gels and colour filters used in the lighting were intentionally employed to resemble the lighting used by Bava and Argento and to add to the overall fantastical nature of the film. The opening close-up of an eye is yet another nod to Italian cult cinema; the eye, and particularly the destruction of the eye, has been identified as playing an “important role in Argento films” (Guins, 1996: 146). These intertextual references to the *giallo* are seemingly being

employed to position fans to contextually read the generic signifiers - the black-garbed serial murderer, the close-up of the eye and the use of lighting - to encourage fan pleasure.

The village setting of the film and its marketing would lead one to believe that it was produced in Poland when it was filmed in a warehouse in London that belonged to Nowicki and the home of his company Media Communications. His links to Poland enabled him to film some exterior shots in order to add to the 'authenticity' of the film's supposed location. Friends helped to construct the woodland sets and the warehouse offices were used for several scenes. Such detail went into hiding the true location of filming that the cars shown in some of the exterior shots had their British license plates covered with Polish license plates. Originally shot in English, the film was dubbed into a combination of Polish and Russian during post-production, and English subtitles, containing intentional spelling errors, were added. Presumably this was done in order to create the myth that the film was produced in Poland rather than the UK. Much of the fan debate surrounding the *Fantom Kiler* series centres on trying to uncover who was responsible for their production and why a pseudonym was used. Speculation in message boards found on online communities, such as *DVD Maniacs*⁴³, the *Cult Movie Forums*⁴⁴ and the *Internet Movie Database*⁴⁵ forums, results in a range of possibilities to explain the shroud of secrecy around the production⁴⁶. These can be summarised in three points:

- An effort on the part of the director to maintain artistic distance from the film
- That the producer was not happy with the finished product, or,
- A marketing ploy to incite rumour and attract attention.

⁴³ Now rebranded as AV Maniacs: <http://www.avmaniacs.com>

⁴⁴ <http://www.cultmovieforums.com>

⁴⁵ <http://imdb.com>

⁴⁶ I have chosen not to provide evidence of these discussions here as many reveal the true identity of Roman Nowicki.

According to Nowicki the actual explanation is very different. The name Roman Nowicki was chosen as it is a “common Polish name”. He believed that if he had attached his real name to the film many people would instantly think that it was a poor quality film regardless of the effort he put into the production. He also believed that there were a number of people in the community that would have been “happy” to see him get in legal trouble for distributing a film that had not been certified by the BBFC. Regardless of Nowicki’s genuine reasons, the debate about the film’s origins in the European cult cinema fan community did help to create awareness of the film.



Figure 6.5: *The Fantom Kiler* sequels.

In another effort to anonymise the production background of the film, it was produced and distributed under the Teraz Films label; again purposely created to be in keeping with the supposed Polish origins. *Fantom Kiler* received a lot of coverage in one of the fanzines produced by the Nowicki, featuring a self-conducted ‘interview’. It was also promoted on his company’s website and in the catalogue distributed to the people on his mailing list. Nowicki produced the cover art and blurb for the DVD and VHS release, maintaining the DIY production ethos of the film. The film was available for purchase on VHS and DVD formats through the director’s website and other online retailers that specialised in the sale of cult horror films. I also encountered it for sale at some fan conventions. The popularity of the film led to the making of three sequels, *Fantom Kiler 2* (1999); *Fantom Kiler 3* (2003) and *Fantom Kiler 4* (2008), which followed the identical formula of the first film yet becoming more sexually graphic, moving further towards hardcore pornography

(see figure 6.5). The same production processes as those used for the first *Fantom Kiler* film were utilised until the fourth instalment of the series, which used higher quality camera equipment.

The popularity of the films has led to Nowicki ceasing to produce fanzines; film making is now his primary pursuit. Nowicki suggested that the reason for his sole devotion to film production is that DVDs are both cheaper and easier to distribute than magazines, requiring less packaging and having less chance of superficial damage. Also, the content that would make up a fanzine can now easily be sourced online at no cost, meaning a declining demand for printed publications. This is evidenced on Nowicki's website where DVDs have replaced fan publications as the main items for sale. This illustrates that there is an economic incentive to this form of fan production. The *Fantom Kiler* series stands out from the other numerous other fan films that are in existence, such as the *Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001) fan film *Born of Hope* (Kate Madison, 2009), which are produced purely as homages and intended for distribution online. Nowicki instead produced these films as a way to take advantage of the renewed attention the *giallo* was gaining with the advent of DVD and to offer his strong mailing list members something new to purchase. The number of films Nowicki has now made further highlights the economic benefit of slash production and the demand that exists for such product.

There is an interesting coda to the *Fantom Kiler* story. A fan of the *Fantom Kiler* series who worked for a well-established European pornography company, contacted Nowicki and asked if he would be interested in producing hardcore pornographic versions of the *Fantom Kiler* series. The *Fantom Kiler* became the *Fantom Seducer* (Roman Nowicki, 2005) in two full-length pornographic features. The films follow the same themes found in the *Fantom Kiler* series and continue to show the sexual degradation of women, merging the genres of pornography and horror. Nowicki

explained that the sexual violence had to be toned down, as there were limitations on what could be performed. This is just one example of the ways fan production can become fully commodified, moving from the alternative economy to the mainstream. The relationship with the company was short lived, Nowicki finding the experience of working for the pornography company difficult. This was due to a number of constraints that prevented him from producing the films in the way that he wanted. Rather than work under these conditions, he decided to move back to producing slash production in the alternative economy. At the time of writing, he continues to make films that reinterpret European cult cinema and objectify the serial killer as a highly sexualised figure.

6.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined how fantrepeneur Roman Nowicki responded to market changes within the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, diversifying to make films that are contemporary re-interpretations of the *giallo*. I have termed this type of fan film making as slash production, a form of fan production that offers extreme representations of serial murder and objectifies the serial killer. These texts are motivated by (and towards) the presentation of spectacular, eroticised murder set pieces, often at the expense of narrative coherence. In opposition to fan films produced in other genres, slash production has a greater economic incentive. These are not mere expressions of fandom, but are commodities intended to be sold to fans on DVD through both online and offline outlets. The *Fantom Kiler* films, as an example of slash production, are, unlike the majority of amateur fan produced horror films, produced in the UK and not the US by a key figure in the development of European cult cinema fandom. The *Fantom Kiler* series draws inspiration from the *giallo*, referencing both its style and general conventions, but are interpreted in such a manner that extends the core pleasures found in *gialli* to extreme levels. Here the serial killer is presented to us a highly sexualised figure both feared and desired by his victims. Stills

present on the DVD covers for each of the *Fantom Kiler* series further emphasise how the scenes of sexualised serial murder are the main selling point for the films (see figures 6.2 and 6.5). Nowicki created a myth that the film was made in Poland, as a way to detract attention from its British origins. In turn, this helped to attract attention to the film from the European cult cinema fan community who were eager to uncover its true origins. It could also be seen as way to circumvent the regulations imposed by BBFC on the distribution of unclassified material in the United Kingdom which prevent slash production and, to a larger extent, a money making amateur film industry like that found in the US. This theme of transgressing rules and regulations continues in the the following chapter where I focus on the online file sharing website *CineTorrent*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CINETORRENT AND 'THE GIALLO PROJECT': REWARDING AND ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY

This chapter considers how fans have responded to declining commercial DVD releases of *gialli*, by taking it upon themselves to archive, reappropriate and release films using the online file-sharing technologies. In the previous chapter I discussed 'slash production': a form of fan production that focuses on serial murder and highly sexualised content. I explored how fantrepeneur Roman Nowiki purposely used the object of the serial killer, the common antagonist found in many typical *gialli* narratives, in his film *Fantom Kiler* for fan pleasure and profit. Nowicki distributes these films in the UK without a BBFC certificate, contravening BBFC regulations. This chapter focuses on similarly legally contentious fan activity by looking at how the *giallo* is shared, reappropriated and recirculated on an invite only file-sharing community that I refer to as *CineTorrent*.

Drawing on a virtual ethnography of this community, engagement with its members and my own experiences of using *CineTorrent*, I consider how rules and regulations instigated by the moderators of the site both encourage and reward member creativity. I argue that this has led to the generation of a comprehensive archive of cult film, in which Italian cult cinema plays a significant role, but also the emergence of a specific group of members who make commercially unreleased *gialli* accessible to English speaking audiences through a variety of DIY means. Their work demonstrates a high level of investment in both time and also equipment, in some instances mirroring professional media practice. However, unlike those gainfully employed as media professionals, members of *CineTorrent* receive no obvious financial reward for their production and display no clear intention to make money out of this fan pursuit; instead their products are exchanged as gifts amongst the community. I argue that *CineTorrent* operates as a factory of fan production, where fans are responding to the current limitations of commercially releasing *gialli* on DVD by making

them available for distribution on *CineTorrent*. I suggest that *CineTorrent* acts as a media enterprise, such as an independent DVD label, taking on the role of production house and distributor for the content that their ‘workers’ produce. These workers engage in two specific acts of production: they *archive* and *reappropriate* cult film. Though legally uncertain, the activities of *CineTorrent* and its membership are expressed as a moral act, providing a service that is not economically viable outside of this alternative economy of production. Therefore, *CineTorrent* is in opposition to the independent DVD label, creating tension between the two parties and once again highlighting the conflict between fans and producers, as discussed by Jenkins (1992a). It is not the purpose of this chapter to question the ethics of file-sharing communities such as *CineTorrent*, but to instead consider the creativity that exists within them.

I begin the chapter by outlining how commercial DVD releases of *gialli* have slowed. Drawing on an interview conducted with the owner of a UK independent DVD label, I demonstrate that a combination of the global recession, new home video formats, file-sharing and rights ownership have contributed to this decline. Following this, I introduce the *CineTorrent* website, describing its organisation, structure and policies. I consider how these are fundamental in allowing the site to function as an alternative economy of fan production. I then focus on the two specific forms of production that exist on *CineTorrent*. Firstly, I discuss the ‘Projects’ and ‘Collections’ section of the site and how members archive cult film. I refer to *The Giallo Project* as an example of what I term an ‘amateur archive’. Secondly, I concentrate on how members strengthen *The Giallo Project* by collaborating to build and distribute what the site refers to as ‘exclusive’ releases of hard to locate *gialli*. As I discussed in chapter four, in order to protect the identity of the site and its membership, I have changed the name of the website to *CineTorrent*.

7.1. *The decline of gialli on DVD*

In chapter five, I historicised European cult cinema fandom. I discussed how fans in the UK became aware of Italian cult cinema through VHS releases in the early 1980s, which would be reviewed in fanzines dedicated to horror films. Following this, fan publications explicitly devoted to European cult cinema emerged, for example America's *European Trash Cinema* and *Spaghetti Cinema* and the UK's *Blood and Black Lace*, *eyeball*, *Delirium*, *Paura* and *Giallo Pages*. In the UK, a film festival devoted to European cult cinema, named *Eurofest*, was established by the fantrepeneur Roman Nowicki in 1994 and ran for several years. Further evidence of the growing European cult cinema fan economy can be found in 1993, when the British video label Redemption Films began releasing European cult cinema on VHS. A number of these releases were *gialli*, such as Dario Argento's *Deep Red*, Mario Bava's *A Bay of Blood* (*Ecologia del delitto*, 1971) and Luigi Bazzoni's *The Fifth Cord* (*Giornata nera per l'ariete*, 1971). Being a fan of *gialli* during the mid-1990s, I recall having to gain access to trading circles and attend film fairs to be able to locate some of the lesser known *gialli* that were reviewed in fan publications but not widely available. These would often be foreign VHS releases or pirated copies.

Perhaps the most significant evidence of the fandom surrounding European cult cinema can be found in the early 2000s, when a considerable amount of *gialli* were released on DVD in America and parts of Europe. The short lived American independent label Lucertola released a DVD of Mario Bava's *Cani Arrabbiati* (*Rabid Dogs*, 1974) in 1998, the first instance of European cult cinema appearing on DVD. Other independent labels in America such as Anchor Bay, Blue Underground and Shriek Show released the majority of *gialli* on DVD outside of Italy. A possible explanation for the growth of interest in Italian cult cinema at this time is found in Guins (2005). For Guins, the remediation of Italian cult cinema on DVD has created a different viewing context, one that invites

the films to be treated seriously as an “art object” rather than a “gore object”, as encouraged by VHS releases. This coverage helped to generate further attention towards the *giallo*.

In the late 2000s, releases of *gialli* on DVD in the UK and US began to slow. After interviewing Fernando⁴⁷, the owner of a British independent cult DVD label and fan of European cult cinema, there appears to be four possible explanations for this downturn:

1. The global recession
2. The advent of new home video formats, such as HD-DVD, Blu-Ray and online streaming
3. The impact of file-sharing
4. The high costs involved in releasing Italian cult cinema on DVD

According to Fernando, of all of these explanations, it is the high costs involved in releasing Italian cult cinema on DVD that is the main factor preventing further *gialli* being released on DVD outside of Italy. Though I have established that there is a fan economy surrounding European cult cinema, I must indicate that this is a micro-fandom, being much smaller than the following that surrounds macro-fandoms such as *Star Trek* or the *Star Wars* film series. Therefore, there is a limited market for *gialli* on DVD, restricting the amount of profit that can be generated from releasing them. The next difficulty independent DVD labels face is the amount of capital required to purchase the rights to be able to release *gialli* on DVD or Blu-Ray. Fernando informed me: “the reason why many *gialli* remain unreleased is because the Italian companies who own the rights demand anywhere between €10,000 and €15,000. As there is a small market for these kinds of films, there is no way that we would be able to recoup our production costs”. In addition to purchasing rights, labels might have to pay for the production of a new master from the original film negative, remastering costs, subtitle production, DVD authoring, cover art design, disc replication, promotion and sales agents.

Factoring in all of these costs, I was told that it would cost approximately between £15,000 and £20,000 to produce 1000 copies of a currently unreleased *giallo*, such as *L'assassino ha riservato nove*

⁴⁷ Telephone interview with ‘Fernando’ conducted 21 December 2012.

poltrone (*The Killer Reserved Nine Seats*, Giuseppe Bennati, 1974), on DVD in the UK. The estimated costs of producing such a DVD are included in figure 7.1.

Processes	Estimated Cost
Buying the rights (per film, cheaper for package deal)	€10,000 - €15,000 (£8500 - £12800)
Printing a new master (only if master provided by studio is of poor visual quality)	€10,000 (£8500)
BBFC Classification (90 minute film)	£900
DVD Authoring	£500 - £1000
DVD cover design	£300
DVD Replication (for 1000 copies, including cases and artwork)	£500 - £750
Subtitle production (if needed)	£1000
Other costs (PR and sales representation)	£500 - £1000 (per month)

Figure 7.1: DVD production costs

To make a profit, these would have to sell at above either £15.00 and £20.00 each, which is above the the typical price (£11.99 - £14.99) for a new DVD release in the UK. The label owner believes that the market for *gialli*, especially in the UK, is not strong enough to justify such high production costs and that a similar situation exists in America, prohibiting further releases there. DVD releases of *gialli* continue to surface in Italy, particularly on Cecchi Gori's CineKult label, but the majority lack English audio or subtitles, making them inaccessible to non-Italian speaking audiences. *Giallo* fans have responded to this lack of recent DVD releases by making commercially unreleased *gialli* available through varying means and distributing them through online file-sharing websites, such as *CineTorrent*.

7.2. *CineTorrent* - An introduction

To understand how *CineTorrent* is part of an alternative economy of fan production, firstly the structure and organisation of the site needs to be discussed. This provides an insight into how it operates as a factory of fan production. There are many different options for online file-sharing, such as third-party file sharing sites, also referred to as ‘cyberlockers’, which host direct download links to user uploaded files, newsgroups (arguably the original method used for online file-sharing), peer-to-peer software (such as the infamous first incarnation of *Napster*) and BitTorrent. As the name of the website indicates, albeit modified here to protect its identity, *CineTorrent* adopts the BitTorrent protocol for file-sharing. One of the advantages of using this particular method of file-sharing is that complete films are not hosted on the site. Instead, users create torrent files of content they wish to upload, which are approximately 20kb in size. Using a BitTorrent client on their computer, for example uTorrent or Transmission, they are able to upload the file to be shared with others. The BitTorrent protocol works by having the uploader ‘seed’ the file to a variety of ‘leechers’, those downloading the file. The leechers are in turn expected to become seeders, instantaneously uploading the content as they download it. Therefore, the more people who seed the content, the faster a file can be downloaded. Upload speeds are controlled by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and are often considerably slower than download speeds, some ISPs, such as the UK’s Virgin Broadband, offer download to upload ratios of 50:1. For example, a 50mbps download speed would be accompanied with a 1mbps upload speed. This is a way to control, and more importantly limit, what customers are able upload, higher upload speeds potentially leading to an increase in the sharing of large files.

Perhaps the best way to understand *CineTorrent* is to view it as a *catalogue* of content rather than a simple repository of files. The reason for adopting this approach to file-sharing has two possible explanations:

1. The hosting of such a large amount of content would be unrealistic due to the high costs of website hosting.
2. By not directly hosting the files the owners of the site are able to distance themselves from potential prosecution and legal action. There are statements that can be found on the login page of the site that highlight this, indicating that content is provided by the users and the administrators cannot be blamed for the actions of the users.

What sets *CineTorrent* aside from the vast number of BitTorrent communities available on the World Wide Web is that it has a particular niche. Other BitTorrent communities, such as the well known *Pirate Bay*⁴⁸, share all manner of media, whereas *CineTorrent* specialises in the sharing of cult film. As the site has this particular focus it tends to attract a specific audience: those who are interested in obtaining films that are hard to obtain in the offline world. Due to the recent panic surrounding online file-sharing that was instigated by the closure of *MegaUpload* and the announcement of the Stop Online Piracy Act, the community has become ‘invite only’. Only current members are now able to offer invites to those wanting to join the site. By closing down access to the site it not only secures it from those who might attempt to infiltrate the site in order to get it closed down, but also detracts the casual downloader. This means that there is a greater potential to attract members who will be active in the community, sharing content rather than just downloading it. Site membership is capped at 22,000.

Judging from comments found in various online cult film fora and also on *Twitter*, membership to the community is highly sought⁴⁹. Those who are unable to gain an invite are given the opportunity to ‘apply’ for membership by contacting the administrators of the site using Internet Relay Chat (IRC). IRC is a long existing system of peer-to-peer synchronous communication used on the internet that is often referred to as the “darknet” because of its underground nature, being populated by hackers and file-sharers (Lasica, 2005). Through this channel of communication, potential members have to prove their worth to the community in what can be seen as a form of initiation. Those desiring membership might be requested to produce ‘art’ that draws on iconography from

⁴⁸ www.thepiratebay.se

⁴⁹ For an example of this, visit: <http://www.avmaniacs.com/forums/showthread.php?t=50636&page=1>

cult film, using software such as Microsoft Paint. A thread found in the *CineTorrent* fora ridicules and celebrates this process, reproducing examples of submitted work. This process again reflects how highly sought after membership is and also evidence of a masculine discourse that is prevalent throughout the site, which I discuss shortly.

To maintain membership, users are required to actively share material. Those who only leech from the site are ultimately banned by moderators for not contributing to the community. To ensure that material is consistently shared, the site uses a ratio system commonly employed by many other online BitTorrent communities. Once a member has downloaded 5GB worth of material they have to maintain a minimum ratio of 1:1. To preserve this ratio, members are expected to re-upload everything that they have downloaded or contribute new material to the community. The more content a member uploads to the site will result in them receiving a higher rank on the website. Upon joining the site new members automatically receive the label of “cardboard robot”, the lowest possible rank above “defective” that is given to members who are unable to maintain a successful ratio. The more data a user uploads results in an upgrade in rank. As members advance in rank they are given greater privileges. An example of this can be seen in the hidden fora that become available once a member has been awarded ‘Very Important Person’ (VIP) status. VIP status can be received either by uploading a large amount of content to the community or through the obtaining of credits from other members, a key aspect of the site that will be outlined shortly. After browsing these hidden fora, it is evident that a clear hierarchy is in existence and that it plays an important role in conserving the policies that govern the site. For example, one of the hidden fora is named “the no users allowed club”. This is just one instance of the derogatory discourse that surrounds the users or “cardboard robots” who exist on the site; there is a clear sense of inferiority towards them. Language found in some of the user guides and frequently asked questions sections of the site further emphasise this, taking an aggressive tone. If you were to visit the help page to receive advice on how to use the site you would find phrases such as:

“Don't be an idiot...”

“...you'll be virtually kicked in the nuts.”

“...you'd have to be an awful jackass to do any of that ...”

There are other instances of this aggression towards users found in other areas of the site. Emails and messages from members who have been banned are posted for others to view, almost as a warning to those who might break rules. Alternatively, this could be a method administrators use to manage the site and discourage users from contacting them with basic questions.

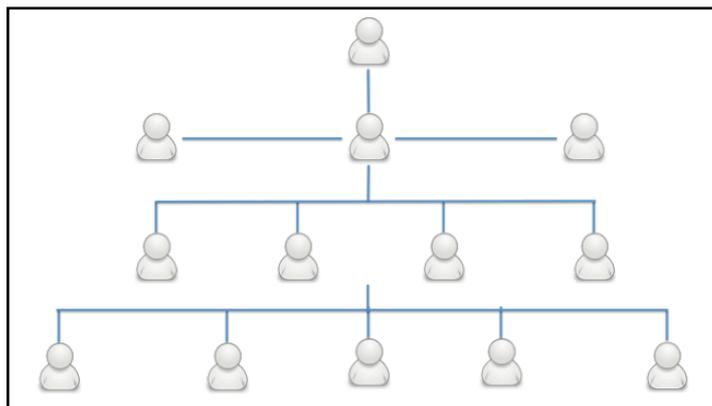


Figure 7.2: Organisational structure of *CineTorrent*

Discourses on file-sharing that circulate in the media would have us believe that these communities are sites of lawlessness. However, the irony is that BitTorrent communities such as *CineTorrent* are bound in their own strict laws, policies and regulations. As illustrated in figure 7.2, *CineTorrent* operates a typical top-down institutional hierarchy. At the top is the “head honcho”, who has the greatest amount of authority, followed by other “staff classes”, such as “administrators”, of which there are three; four “moderators” and finally five “justice friends”. Below these exist the following user-classes in ascending order: Defective, User, Power User, Superfan, VIP and Team. The staff class “justice friend” is an interesting choice of term, an intertextual reference to the American cartoon *Dexter's Laboratory*. Within this text, the justice friends are a group of superheroes who serve to protect society by following rules. Whilst it is imagined that the usage of this is intended to be a humorous one, it cannot be ignored how this articulates the role of the staff on the site. The staff have a high level of engagement with the community. Judging from how the rules are enforced, particularly through the seemingly instantaneous removal of content that is deemed to be in breach of the communities remit, there always appears to be a staff member online. This allows

user activity to be heavily controlled. When asked about the level of control exerted by *CineTorrent* and the aggressive language used by the staff, a member of the *CineTorrent* community informed me that:

“I don't necessarily agree with the tone used which at times can be down right insulting but make sure that I follow the rules as I don't want to lose access to the site. In fact, even speaking to you about my experience has me a little worried.”

This demonstrates the level that some members will go to in order to ensure that they adhere to the enforced policies so that they are able to remain members and be able to access the rare material available. It also shows how a sense of fear, or perhaps even paranoia, is cultivated by the staff as a means to control the users.

In addition to this aggressive discourse, there is also a very strong masculine discourse prevalent throughout the site. Judging from some of the handles, profiles and avatars that are used by members, it would appear that the majority of members are male. That is not to say that there are no female members; there are some members who could be assumed female based on how they present their identity on site. But, as according to Judith Donath's (1998) work on identity in online communities, it is difficult to determine gender in the online environment. Joanne Hollows (2003) suggests cult fandom is typically gendered as masculine and devoted to oppositional taste, which revels in the rejecting of the mainstream. This strong masculine discourse is evident in the iconography of the site. As I discussed earlier, credits exist on the site which act as a form of currency that can be shared between members of the community. These credits take the form of virtual cigars, which are encouraged to be 'smoked', as a reward for sharing content on the site. Once smoked, the receiver of the cigar is awarded an assigned amount of credits. The credit value of the cigar is determined by the sender. These credits can be used to purchase different items such as upload credit, VIP status, lottery tickets (to win a large amount of upload credit) and to make requests for specified content to be uploaded to the site by other members. When requests for uploads are made, cigars are offered as a "bounty", an incentive for someone to contribute the

requested film to the site. Member profiles automatically display the amount of cigars a user has accumulated. It could be argued that these cigars serve as an indicator of cultural capital; the more cigars a user has, the greater standing they have within the community. Cigars are an interesting choice of iconography. They have connotations of celebration and masculinity, but they are also indexical of the *Spaghetti Western*, which, coincidentally, is heavily shared on *CineTorrent*. In addition to cigars there are numerous instances of sexualised imagery, particularly found in the avatars of some users. Here can be found acts of urophilia, abuse towards women and celebrations of the naked female form. These might be outweighed by other avatars, which are either innocent or signifiers of cult film, but still demonstrate the highly masculinised nature of the site. A possible explanation for the lack of female membership might be because these masculine activities exclude women from feeling that they are able to fully participate within the community.

7.3. Policies, rules and regulations

Judging from the first movie added to *CineTorrent*, the site was established in April 2007. At the time of writing there is access to over 100,000 films. The daily amount of posts to the site are in the region of 20 to 30. Films are the main source of content uploaded, but also present are soundtracks, books and magazines/fan publications. The appearance of *CineTorrent* is not especially ostentatious. It adopts a basic colour scheme of grey, black and yellow, resembling the dark, dusty grindhouse cinemas that would once screen the kind of films that are available on the site. When contributing to the site, members have to follow a specific template that will include technical details about the digital file, a plot summary, a hyperlink to the *Internet Movie Database* entry of the film and screenshots that demonstrate the picture quality of the shared file. Posts that do not follow this template will be told to follow the set rules or face having their contribution removed. This is just one of the many policies that exist on *CineTorrent*. Though an air of rebellion runs throughout the site, revelling in the sharing of copyrighted content, the site paradoxically adopts its

own interpretation of copyright law through a series of policies that govern what can and cannot be shared and how it should be shared. Yet, I argue that it is these strict rules that direct the activities of the users, encouraging the sharing of content and ensuring that a focused archive of cult film is constructed. This is in opposition to other file-sharing sites, such as the aforementioned *The Pirate Bay*, that have no clear identity and make all manner of media content available for download. On a separate level, I suggest that the policies adopted by *CineTorrent* also act as a form of self preservation. Sharing material that is outside of the mainstream and has a limited audience is not as likely to generate attention from media companies looking to protect their intellectual property. Since a large majority of the films are not commercially available on a legal digital format, it could be assumed that the films are not economically viable for release because of their limited audience. My earlier discussion of the decline in *giallo* DVD releases would appear to indicate this.

Before making a contribution to the community, members are asked to self determine whether the text that are adding is in keeping with the rules of the site. A guide is offered that indicates what is 'safe' and what would be deemed as 'unsafe', presented in figure 7.3. Of specific interest here is the "12 month rule". This was a recent introduction by *CineTorrent* staff to appease accusations of copyright theft received from independent DVD labels who had contacted the site to request that their property be removed. Whilst this does not solve the issue of intellectual property theft, it intends to offer the companies a full year of exclusivity, not too dissimilar to the window given to cinema releases of films before they are made available on DVD or Blu-Ray. However, this conflicts with Chris Anderson's (2006) theory of the long tail. Anderson suggests that products outside of the mainstream, particularly those released by independent companies, often make more money over a longer period of time than mainstream products. According to forum posts found on the site, *CineTorrent* has received notice from a number of independent DVD labels to cease and desist making available content from their catalogues. *CineTorrent* staff have responded to the more amicable requests by removing offending material, but have flagrantly opposed the more

aggressive attempts, such as those who threaten legal action. In one specific case, they have engaged in a battle with an independent UK DVD label. Any material released by this label is excluded from the 12 month rule, and uploads of any material pertaining to the label is encouraged, rewarding the uploader with a high amount of credit.

Unsafe Content	Safe Content
Popular films: If it's easy to find elsewhere and won major awards, it's probably not suitable.	Any movie with a rating of below 3.0 on IMDb.
New releases: Anything released within the last 12 months is not allowed	Any movie with fewer than 1000 votes on IMDb.
Movies that had their first theatrical release within the last 12 months are not allowed. This DOES apply to STV (straight to video)	Any movie that does not have an IMDb page at all.
Movies that have been reprinted by the copyright holder within the last 12 months are allowed, but the reprints themselves are not	Soundtracks to any movies that are safe for upload.
The 12 month rule generally does not apply if the uploader owns the rights to the content in question or if the rip is from a TV broadcast.	Documentaries about movies that are safe for upload.
Real violence/Mondo: Anything containing real violence towards living creatures or their corpses must be cleared first.	
No material that contains unsafe material, so a documentary about an unsafe film would also be unsafe.	

Figure 7.3: Safe and unsafe content

Another unique aspect of *CineTorrent* is its approach to censorship. This is surprising, as banned or restricted films attract a cult following and horror film fans typically oppose censorship (Hills, 2002). Shaun Kimber (1998) identifies that an anti-censorship discourse is common in horror film fandom. This is demonstrated in horror film fanzines such as Tim Lucas' *Video Watchdog* and especially those from the UK, such as Dark Publications' *Censored?* or Daniel Stillings' *Attack of the Scissor People*. Many cult films that one would expect to be available on *CineTorrent* are effectively banned from being shared. For example, *Cannibal Holocaust* (Ruggero Deodato, 1980), a film notorious for its presentation of graphic violence, is prohibited as it breaches the site's policy against uploading films that feature cruelty to animals. This also excludes many other films from

the cannibal sub-genre as well as films from the *Mondo Cané* (Paolo Cavara, Franco Prosperi and Gualtiero Jacopetti) series or ‘shockumentaries’, such as *Faces of Death* (Conan Le Claire, 1980). Films, such as the banned in the UK *Murder Set Pieces* (Nick Palumbo, 2004) or those from the *August Underground* (Fred Vogel) series, discussed as ‘slash production’ in the previous chapter, which graphically represent of graphic sexual violence and present themselves as faux snuff movies, are readily available for download. *CineTorrent* make available a list of some the films that are prohibited, this is reprinted verbatim below:

- The *Hellraiser* series
- *Friday the 13th*
- *Halloween* (Entire series with the exception of part 3 since it's such an atrocity and has nothing to do with the rest of the series at all.)
- *Evil Dead* series
- George A. Romero's zombie films
- *Men Behind The Sun*
- *Nekromantik 1 & 2*
- *Benny's Video*
- *The Wicker Man*
- *Faces of Death* series

Again, note how many of these are either controversial films or considered to be ‘classic’ horror films. These can be easily located on many other file-sharing websites, but are surprisingly unavailable on *CineTorrent*. As indicated earlier when discussing the “twelve month rule”, it can be assumed that these films are excluded because they are either too popular and might attract attention from copyright holders. It may also be a form of self-preservation, ensuring they are not closed down for making available controversial content. Once again, this is an odd distinction that clashes with the outlaw discourse so prevalent within the community.

After following the above guidelines, if a member is still unsure as to whether a film is safe for upload to *CineTorrent*, they are instructed to ‘declare’ their intentions at the ‘Customs and Excise’ forum. Here, members will produce a post outlining what their upload to site will be and, in some cases, they might attempt to justify its worthiness for inclusion. Once the post has been made, either a staff member or another user of the site will determine whether it is permitted. The use of

the terms ‘customs and excise’ is again ironic for a site that pertains to have little disregard for intellectual property, replicating rules and regulations found in the offline world. This serves as a form of border control, much like what one would experience when attempting to enter a country and having to declare materials that might be exempt. Those contributing content to the site that has not been cleared for inclusion may find themselves punished in some way by either having their post removed, receiving a written warning from staff members or, in extreme cases, such as repeated offences, being banned from the site. I argue that this policy has a dual purpose. It prevents the uploading of ‘popular’ content, such as the films they declare as unsafe, but also serves a purpose in setting clear boundaries to ensure that an archive of cult film is constructed. The policing of uploads to the site is very strict yet surprisingly efficient. Within minutes of an errant contribution, the offending upload will be deleted from the site. This highlights the stringent nature of moderation found on *CineTorrent*. That a post can be removed or amended with minutes suggests that a staff member is always online managing the site and controlling user behaviour. Without tight management, the site would struggle to maintain a clear identity and become inundated with greatly differing material. I will now discuss how these rules and regulations work to direct member activity in particular ways, operating as a factory of fan production.

7.4. Constructing an amateur archive

In his autoethnography of horror fandom, Mark Kermode (2001) believes that the watchword of the cult film fan is “completist”. He identifies that this is a theme constantly repeated in fanzines, such as the aforementioned *Video Watchdog* and *Censored?*, which serve to alert the horror film fan which versions of cult films are the most ‘complete’. The completist nature of the cult film fan can be further evidenced on *CineTorrent*. One of the outcomes of *CineTorrent’s* rules and regulations is that they guide member activity in a certain direction. By creating a system that ensures specific content is being regularly uploaded to the site, I suggest that it leads to the creation of an archive of

cult film, or, as I describe it, an ‘amateur archive’. This is the first instance in which I argue that *CineTorrent* is part of an alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. To further clarify, by referring to it as an amateur archive it highlights the crowd-sourced nature of the collection and how the boundaries of the archive are set by fans themselves rather than a typical curator. In her study of a media pirate, Abigail De Kosnik (2012a) uses a case study of ‘Joan’, a female fan of film who uses file-sharing to extend her collection. De Kosnik presents Joan as an “archivist” of film, collecting and storing content that is often ignored by media institutions and remains commercially unavailable. It is Joan’s “mistrust of museums and rights holders” that sees her take on the role of archivist (529). This mistrust is also apparent at *CineTorrent*, members taking it upon themselves to preserve films that remain commercially unreleased and can be hard to locate. For an archive comparable to *CineTorrent* to exist in the mainstream economy would require an extensive change to current copyright law, particularly rights ownership. As *CineTorrent* is part of the alternative economy, they are able to break these rules and overcome this obstacle. The only archive comparable to that found on *CineTorrent* that physically exists would be ‘The Cult Film Archive’, currently located at Brunel University in the United Kingdom⁵⁰. According to its director, Xavier Mendik, “the archive consists of an estimated 3000 audio and visual resources that are available in a variety of different media formats”. Many of these resources have been donations from collectors or those involved in the film industry. Two key limitations prevent The Cult Film Archive from being as exhaustive as *CineTorrent*. Firstly, if we take the physical aspect, the storage of over 100,000 texts would be costly, both in terms of space and in management. Secondly, if the archive were to take the form of a digital repository, the costs of hosting material that is only available in digital format, which makes up all of the content available on *CineTorrent*, would be prohibitively expensive due to the amount of money it would cost to host such a large amount of data. By transgressing intellectual property laws, *CineTorrent* is able to serve as an amateur archive for both fans and also scholars of cult cinema.

⁵⁰ <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/arts/research/screen-media/the-cult-film-archive>)

The drive towards completism on *CineTorrent* is most explicitly demonstrated by the ‘Projects’ and ‘Fan Pages’ sections of the website. These two sections collect and collate torrents in an easy to navigate list, but they have some important differences that serve to encourage user activity and creativity. Fan Pages are a way for users to demonstrate their interest in a very specific area of cult film. Any member has the ability to start a Fan Page. Fan Pages take the form of Wikis that only the owner of the page is able to maintain. A typical Fan Page might be devoted to a very specific actor, actress, director or genre. Currently in existence are Fan Pages for cult movie actor John Vernon, serial killer movies and ‘Ozploitation’ director Brian Trenchard Smith. It will then list all of the torrents relevant to the actor, actress, director or genre on one web page. When compared to Projects, Fan Pages appear to have less significance. This is because there is no actual reward for a user creating and maintaining a Fan Page; they purely serve to itemise content that is already available on the site. Perhaps the only reward earned by those who maintain Fan Pages is that they can demonstrate “subcultural capital” to other members on site, identifying themselves as experts in a niche of cult film (Thornton, 1996). Some members start Fan Pages with the intention of it being developed into a Project. For example, the owner of the Brian Trenchard-Smith Fan Page states that it was created to encourage other members of the community to become familiar with his films and for it to ultimately become a Project.

Projects found on *CineTorrent* might seek to collect the complete work of a particular actor, director, studio or genre. Like any contribution to the community, there are strict guidelines that constitute whether a Project is deemed worthy for inclusion by a staff member. *CineTorrent’s* rules for what constitutes a suitable Project are as follows:

- Must be hard-to-find/obscure movies that are themed in the spirit of the site.
- The contents of the project must be difficult to find (it must be time consuming)
- Must contain a minimum of 10 movies
- Must be approved by staff.

Any user can choose to start a Project, but must first propose their intentions in the ‘Collectatorium’ forum. Some posts within in this forum even use the words ‘proposal’, again

indicating the businesslike approach adopted by the site. Providing that the idea for the Project meets the above requirements and has been approved by *CineTorrent* staff, it can be added to the site. Like Fan Pages, Projects also take the form of Wikis, but the difference here is that they can be edited by any user who wishes to add content to the Project, not just by the original proposer. Once a Project is started, the 'Project Leader' will have to compile a list of all the films that are related to the Project and need to be obtained in order to complete it. These lists might be drawn from books, fanzines or websites, such as the *Internet Movie Database*. Members are encouraged by the community to upload absent films to complete Projects. Uploads to Projects are usually given 40% 'seeding bonuses' to attract contributions. Regular uploads to the site are not given such awards. For example, if a member uploaded a 1GB sized movie file to a Project, they would receive a 40% bonus, which would work out at 400mb, as a payment for their labour. This bonus would also be extended to any other member who has downloaded the file and reseeds it back to the community.

This policy of rewarding members for contributing to Projects further highlights *CineTorrent* as an alternative economy. Members of the site are not simply sharing content, they are acting as if they are workers, investing their time to capture material from VHS, DVD and television broadcasts, making it available for access. This requires a considerable investment of time, but also knowledge of how to reappropriate media content. It also indicates the collaborative nature of the site, crowd-sourcing rare titles from a global network of members that are often unavailable commercially.

Some of the content uploaded to Projects might be taken from rare 16mm prints, international VHS releases and even director workprints that were not intended to be viewed by the general public. If a better quality version of a film is uploaded to a Project it does not replace the one that is already in existence on the site, taking its place alongside uploads of the other versions. Whilst members strive to obtain films in the best visual quality possible, they do not abandon lesser quality versions. It is all about completism and strengthening the amateur archive they construct. Evidence of this and other fan practices can be found in *The Giallo Project*.

7.5. *The Giallo Project: an example of the amateur archive*

There are a variety of Projects in existence on *CineTorrent*. Examples of some of the Projects found on the site are:

- *The Godfrey Ho Project* (considered the ‘master’ of the cut and paste Ninja film, Ho is known for splicing together footage from two films and has been involved with an estimated 121 films, according to the *Internet Movie Database*).
- *The Corey Haim and Corey Feldman Project* (devoted to films starring the two cult celebrities)
- *The Lost World of Film Noir Project* (collecting films that are considered to be film noir)
- *The Hammer Horror Project* (collecting all films that were produced by the Hammer Films studio)

For the remainder of this chapter, I intend to focus on a specific Project: ‘*The Giallo Project*’. The reasoning for focusing on this specific Project is that it best demonstrates how *CineTorrent* can be understood to be part of an alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. It shows further evidence of amateur archiving in the constructing of an exhaustive list of *gialli*, many of which are commercially unavailable, but also demonstrates how specific members of the site engage in forms of media production. Also, judging by the amount of downloads content from *The Giallo Project* receive, it is evident that *gialli* is highly popular amongst many of the members of *CineTorrent*.

Much of the evidence presented here was obtained through an interview conducted with the curator of this project, a highly respected member of the community who I will refer to as ‘profondorosso’; his username, which references the Italian title of Dario Argento’s *Deep Red*, immediately signifies his passion for the *giallo*. From browsing through the Projects section it is evident that European cult cinema has importance for the *CineTorrent* community. There are a number of Projects directly devoted to different aspects of European Cult Cinema. As already seen in the previous list, there is the Hammer Horror Project, but in addition to this there are projects devoted to *Spaghetti Westerns*, *pepla* (Italian Sword and Sandal films), *Eurospy* films (European imitations of the James Bond films), *poliziotteschi* (Italian crime films) and also to directors synonymous to European cult

cinema, Joe D'Amato and Jesus Franco, for example. However, *The Giallo Project* stands aside from these, not just because it is deemed to be 100% complete by the curator, but because of the different user practices identified within.

The purpose of *The Giallo Project* was to create an exhaustive archive of *gialli*. Outside of those commercially released on DVD there remains many that are unreleased, only existing as obscure European VHS releases from Holland, Scandinavia and Greece or DVD recordings (DVD-Rs) taken from these sources. Before the Project began the only ways that fans could obtain these titles would be to obtain the original video, locate them on other file-sharing websites or purchase bootleg DVD-Rs on auction sites such as *eBay*⁵¹ or *iOffer*⁵². The list of *gialli* found in the Project was drawn from the book *Blood and Black Lace* (1999), a text regarded by fans to be the definitive guide to the *giallo*, with additions from other members of the community. A scan of this book exists as a torrent on the site, which, at the time of writing, has been downloaded 1326 times since being uploaded on the 2/5/2009. At the top of the Project page is a user created banner for the Project, which draws on colours and iconic artwork taken from posters of different *gialli*. The remainder of the page is effectively a table that is separated into different decades from the 1950s onwards. Within each of these decades can be found lists of films in chronological order. Some films in the Project are organised outside of this structure. For example, there are sections for uploads to the collection that only have Italian audio and another section for those films which fall outside of what is considered to be the 'golden age' of the *giallo* by fans. Each film will feature a small scan of the original Italian locandina poster art (a common form of movie poster used in Italy), the title of the film in the form of a hyperlink to film's *Internet Movie Database* page and finally a link to download the torrent. Members of *CineTorrent* are invited to add to the list in order to pool together the best quality versions of the films available. A thread devoted to *The Giallo*

⁵¹ www.ebay.com

⁵² www.ioffer.com

Project can be found in the Collectatorium forum where members discuss future uploads and debate what other films might be worthy of addition. This helps members to indicate which films they will contribute, therefore avoiding duplicates appearing on the site. This demonstrates how highly organised many of these Projects are, moving beyond the practice of uploading a film to be shared.

Curator of *The Giallo Project*, profundorosso, has had an interest in European cult cinema since he was a teenager. His interest was generated by renting VHS tapes from his local video store, leading to him becoming a collector of VHS tapes, many of which he would trade through the classified sections found in British magazines devoted to horror cinema, such as *The Dark Side*, *Samhain* and *Fear*. In the late 1980s and 1990s it was difficult to obtain copies of European cult cinema, mainly because of the strict censorship of the BBFC. As I indicated in chapter five, 16 of the 39 films identified as video nasties by the Director of Public Prosecutors were of Italian origin. The classified sections of magazines such as these served as precursors to sites such as *CineTorrent* where fans could share films, which were usually bootlegged tapes, amongst one another. Like others who engaged in this activity, profundorosso was raided by Trading Standards and had all of his original tapes confiscated. “At this point”, he stated, “it was all about money”, attesting that this was a way he made money from his fandom during this period. However, it was this experience that led him to stop collecting originals and to “appreciate the movies again”. Though profundorosso cannot remember what led him to join *CineTorrent*, he recalled joining the site in late 2007. He was quick to indicate that he was not the primary instigator of *The Giallo Project*: “I was asked to take charge as I started to take an interest, making lists, setting the Project guidelines etc”. Due to his effectiveness in managing *The Giallo Project* to completion, profundorosso had his membership status upgraded to ‘moderator’ as a recognition for his hard work.

Films included *The Giallo Project* have been taken from a variety of media forms. There are media files that have been compressed from DVD releases, captures of television broadcasts and DVD

structures that can be burned to DVD for playback on DVD players. However, out of all of the 217 films featured in *The Giallo Project*, 115 of these are taken from VHS. This means that 53% of the films on this list still only exist in VHS format, the only medium they are currently available on outside of *The Giallo Project*. The VHS format is of importance here as it remains the primary medium on which many *gialli* were made available for home viewing. Even though the torrents are digital conversions of VHS video, the picture quality is either the same or of lesser quality than the original VHS source. When viewing one of these digital files, one cannot escape the fact that they are viewing video taken from a VHS source. Imperfections such as video noise, pan and scan cropping of the frame, burnt-in foreign subtitles and print damage will still be present. I would argue that this enhances the cultural value of VHS to this particular community and further signifies their status as rarities. For example, the degradation in video quality, when compared to that of DVD or digital video captured from a television broadcasts, further highlights the overall scarcity of the film. By capturing VHS in a digital media file it suggests that original is of importance and is worthy of preservation. Marita Sturken (1990) points out that the VHS format was not designed to be used for archiving. Original VHS releases of *gialli* are becoming increasingly hard to locate and, as VHS tapes have a finite life before they begin to degrade and ultimately become unusable, *The Giallo Project* serves as a digital archive for future consumption of these films. I now discuss how a particular group of members use this archive as a resource in their production of fan DVDs.

7.6. The Giallo Project: user creativity

I have already outlined how the the construction of an amateur archive of cult film is evidence of *CineTorrent* being part of an alternative economy of fan production. Further evidence of this can also be found in *The Giallo Project* where there exists a small but highly dedicated sub-community

of members devoted to the producing of fan DVDs⁵³, fan dubs⁵⁴, fan edits⁵⁵, fan subs⁵⁶ and DVD covers. Here, *CineTorrent* acts as if it were both a media production company and a distribution platform for fan content. Within the *CineTorrent* message boards is a forum titled “In My Country, Subtitle Read YOU!!”; this acts as a hub for user creativity. Those active in this forum tend to be members involved in fan production, particularly the practice of producing subtitle files. Browsing through this forum reveals a wealth of posts that offer rewards of cigars for either custom built subtitles or requests for the overdubbing on an English language track to a foreign film.

As producing subtitles and overdubs demands a considerable investment of time, the rewards offered are of very high amounts; anywhere between 500 and 10,000 credits per job. In addition to the cigars offered by single members of the community, *CineTorrent* has a policy in place that rewards member generated content. Instead of cigars, Staff will reward members with upload credit; anywhere in the region of 25GB to 50GB. This reward scheme was championed by user *profondorosso*, who, in addition to being known for his role in *The Giallo Project*, is also one of the most active fan producers found at *CineTorrent*. The intentions of this reward are to encourage other members to participate in this activity and populate *CineTorrent* with exclusive content, but to also make films that are only available in foreign language accessible for an anglophone audience. This shows how the moderators of *CineTorrent* privilege fan production. Fan produced texts, especially those belonging to *The Giallo Project*, are the most popular texts shared on the site. This is demonstrated by amount of downloads these will receive, anywhere between 250 or 500. To further highlight the significance of member generated content, when any fan produced text is

⁵³ Fan DVD - A fan authored DVD, replicating the conventions of a commercial DVD release (menus, special features, multiple audio tracks, for example).

⁵⁴ Fan dubbing - Extracting an audio track, usually from a VHS release, and adding it to video extracted from another release of the film, usually DVD or a television broadcast.

⁵⁵ Fan edits (also know as fan composite) - Extracting video and audio from variety of sources in order to combine and reproduce the ‘original’ edit of the film.

⁵⁶ Fan subs - Subtitles generated by fans to add to films that have audio which is not in the viewer’s ‘native’ language.

uploaded the site it is branded as being “exclusively” produced for *CineTorrent*, acting as if it were the distributor for the produced content.

This form of production has political intent. Members are not wholly motivated by the rewards offered by the community, they also responding to the current market conditions preventing further commercial releases of *gialli*, which I described at the beginning of this chapter. From a de Certeauian (1984) perspective, these fans are “making do” with what releases of *gialli* are currently available in the public sphere and reappropriating them to create ‘new’ releases. This is where understanding *CineTorrent* as an amateur archive has merit. As films exist in *The Giallo Project* as a variety of different versions, such as VHS conversions, DVD extractions, TV captures and full DVD rips, members like *profondorosso* are able to use these materials in their production. For example, a member might download from *The Giallo Project* a full DVD extraction of a film that has only Italian audio and download a VHS conversion of the exact same film that has English audio. Then, using instructions that are made available in the *CineTorrent* fora, the user will extract the English audio from the VHS conversion and synchronise it to the video track extracted from the full DVD rip using readily available software. Alternatively, a more adept user might attempt to also take video from the VHS conversion that might not be present in a DVD release and edit the footage back in to produce a ‘complete’ composite of the film. These practices are highly common on *CineTorrent*, with member generated content appearing regularly, sometimes daily. The way this activity is organised is of particular importance.

The role that *CineTorrent* adopts during this process resembles that of a media production factory. Within this ‘factory’ there are ‘workers’ who adopt specific roles and attempt to mirror professional media production practices in the texts that they produce. The workers who are specifically amateur archivers populate the site with content to be reappropriated by others. There are workers who take a managerial role, such as *profondorosso*, who curate the Projects and organise the

production process. Then there are the ‘editors’, those technically proficient in audio and video editing, and also the ‘restorers’ who attempt to use digital software to crudely restore and remaster video and/or audio. In addition to these roles, there are also the ‘DVD authors’, who author the final DVD, the ‘subtitlers’, who translate different foreign languages into English and, finally, the ‘graphic designers’ who produce cover art for fan DVDs . Within *The Giallo Project*, and also other Projects that are specific to Italian cult cinema, there are some workers who will adopt the unofficial role of ‘rights holder’ by providing recordings of Italian television broadcasts of *gialli* for reappropriation; this is similar to how a rights holder will provide a DVD releasing company with the necessary materials.

Some workers are multi-faceted, occupying more than just one role. One such member would be profundorosso, who only became involved in production because he wanted to be able to experience commercially unavailable *gialli* in English (subtitles or audio) and in the best possible quality. He uses a variety of software, the majority being freeware. He lists the following as being part of his current workflow:

- DVD Decrypter - to extract video files from DVDs for editing
- Goldwave - audio editing software
- Audacity - audio editing software
- vobblanker - to manipulate DVD structures
- TMPGEnc DVD Author 3 - DVD authoring and video editing software
- DVD Lab Pro 2 - DVD authoring software

The latter two from the above list, TMPGEnc DVD Author 3 and DVD Lab Pro 2, are programs used by some professional DVD authors. With the high cost of both programs, it can be assumed that they have been obtained unofficially via file-sharing websites; the \$249 price of DVD Lab being expensive for a casual user. He has no formal training in DVD production and video editing, instead learning how to use the software from online guides and websites. His current workstation is an old Dell M90 laptop, which he has had to resort to using after his more powerful quadcore, high processing speed computer stopped working. When asked what leads him to undertake a new project he responded: “choosing what to do next is solely down to what appears either via a trading

mate or a new source [on *CineTorrent*] or sometimes just down to someone requesting a certain title being done”. On the time that it takes to produce a fan DVD he stated: “it really depends on how the audio is, sometimes a dvd can be done in under 10 hours, a few have took two weeks due to having to sync every word and rebuilding the entire english audio channel”.

This demonstrates the amount of labour workers such as *profondorosso* invest in such projects.

What must be remembered is that, unlike those involved in professional practice, there is no financial reward for those involved in this form of production. The only rewards for partaking this activity are the ‘payments’ *CineTorrent* provide in the form of credits and the kudos these members receive from the community. When asked how he finds the spare time to award to his interest, *profondorosso* commented: “I tend to devote a lot of time to doing them as i've been unemployed for four long years”. Effectively, this practice is *profondorosso*’s full time profession. Aside from not receiving payment for his work, he operates as if he were a self-employed DVD producer. His funding to do this work is provided by through his Job Seeker’s Allowance, hence funded by the state to engage in this activity. However, when asked he would consider selling the artefacts that he produces, *profondorosso* firmly stated “...for the record, I will never charge for a fandub”. This emphasises how texts are exchanged on *CineTorrent* as gifts, rather than commodities, and also indicates the morals of producers such as *profondorosso*. This is not a money making endeavour; it is instead a labour of love.

For *profondorosso*, torrents are the ideal distribution platform for his products, rather than sharing through offline fan networks: “I distribute mainly through torrents, because my upload speed is fast and a DVD-5 [a DVD no larger than 4.7GB in capacity] can be uploaded in a few hours, as opposed to days waiting for mail”. When asked for his views on copyright, *profondorosso*’s response was “copyright wouldn’t be a issue for fandubbers if the dvd companies released english friendly releases in the first place”, placing the blame fully on rights owners of *gialli* who refuse to offer

English subtitles or audio on Italian DVD releases, again demonstrating the conflict that exists between fans and producers (Jenkins, 1992a; Tulloch and Jenkins, 1995). Rights owners adopt this strategy to maximise sales of their property in other territories. If an Italian DVD release were to have English audio options it might discourage an American or British DVD company to purchase the rights to release it, knowing that fans may have already purchased the Italian DVD. This raises an interesting question: would this fan activity cease if all *gialli* were released on DVD in Italy, along with English audio and English subtitles? Though *profondorosso*'s comments appear to suggest that this would be the case, there are a number of other factors involved that would not prevent the sharing of these films of file-sharing communities like *CineTorrent*. For example those not willing to pay the high prices to import DVDs from Italy might prefer to download the film for free.

Another important contributor to this sub-community of media producers is 'Sergio'. Sergio is renowned on *CineTorrent* for being a subtitler of European cult cinema, usually producing English subtitles for films only available in their native Italian language. Using freely available software, such as Subtitle Workshop, Sergio would translate the Italian audio into English line-by-line. The resulting subtitle file can have anywhere between 750 to 1000 lines of text depending on the amount of spoken dialogue present in the film. This heavily labour intensive activity has no financial reward for the fan subtitler; they are purely doing it out of love for the films and making them available to other fans. According to my interview with independent DVD producer Fernando, in the commercial world, the production of English subtitles can cost between £1000 - £3000, an hourly rate being approximately £20 to £30. Sergio has found that his fan subtitles were being exploited for financial gain by bootleggers and allegedly a commercial American independent DVD label, who were taking advantage of his free labour. Rather than stop producing subtitles, Sergio setup his own website that would make previous subtitle files available for download. Frustrated by this, Sergio left *CineTorrent* for a period of time. His leaving resulted in a high level of animosity

directed towards him on the *CineTorrent* fora. An example of this can be found in a thread titled “Fuck you Sergio”. Posts here seek to uncover Sergio’s reason for leaving the site. Some members attest it to Sergio going “legit” and being employed by a independent DVD label who had threatened *CineTorrent* with legal action.

Sergio had been paid to produce subtitles for some DVD releases, having built a reputation at *CineTorrent* and amongst the overall European cult cinema fan community. In a post on the *AV Maniacs* forum, Sergio shared his experience of being employed by the UK DVD label Shameless to work on their Blu-Ray and DVD release of the Dario Argento *giallo* *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (*4 mosche di velluto grigio*, 1971). Sergio was paid £180, well below the market rate I previously identified, to produce English subtitles for an audio interview with Luigi Cozzi, the films co-writer, which would be a supplemental feature on the release. Several years ago, Sergio had produced fan subtitles for the film and made them freely available for download on his website. It transpired that Shameless had used Sergio’s fan subtitles without requesting permission or crediting him for his efforts or payment. He commented:

“I DID ask them if they were (a) using my subs and (b) if I could go over them one last time to really polish them... They never, at any point, responded to my query and I assumed they were creating their own subs from scratch. It turns out they DID use my fansubs and, by the looks of things, did very little proofreading. The subs on the Shameless disc do not represent the work I would provide to a professional company for inclusion on a retail disc”.⁵⁷

This saga demonstrates that Sergio has been both exploited as a fan subtitler and a professional subtitler. He has stated that he will no longer offer his services to Shameless following this experience.

In Lee’s (2010) study of the anime fan subtitling community he recognises how they initially adopted an ethical approach to production. Once a title they had subtitled was commercially released, the fan subtitler would withdraw it from the market. This was done out of respect for the

⁵⁷ I have not provided a weblink to this quote as it reveals Sergio’s real name.

owners of content and to encourage sales, which would hopefully result in further releases of anime. In turn, owners of anime would not pursue legal action against fan subtitlers as it was valuable for determining which films would be economically viable to release (Leonard, 2005). According to Lee, the impact that the internet has had in globalising fan communities has also led to their growth. What were once small groups have grown in size, Lee believing that this had led to a change in their ethics, no longer respecting the owners. The example found on *CineTorrent* suggests that there is lack of respect for the owners of material because they are exploiting their production. Yet, the practices of *profondorosso* and *Sergio*, although done in good faith, are legally questionable. It would appear that the reaction of industry to fan practice is to take advantage of it. Murray (2004) indicates how major Hollywood studios, for example New Line Cinema, have used fan labour to aid in their promotion. This raises questions about using fan labour to generate economic activity without any form of financial reimbursement. I argue that this further creates mistrust between fans and producers, creating a circle of exploitation that continues. In the following chapter, I suggest that the recent phenomenon of crowdfunding, if used responsibly, has the potential to create trust between the fan and producer.

In addition to fan labour on *CineTorrent* being exploited by legal owners of media, there have been a number of instances where it has been exploited by other fans for economic gain. The ease of setting up online shops and accepting payment through online organisations such as *PayPal*⁵⁸ has resulted in a number of websites that sell pirated material for profit. As I have indicated in chapter five, a black market has surrounded Italian cult cinema in the UK since the video nasties moral panic of the 1980s. This still continues to exist. A search of *eBay* for commercially unreleased *gialli* will often reveal a pirated copy for sale. Descriptions of items either contain vague information about the legality of the item or will attempt to justify its legality. This might involve

⁵⁸ www.paypal.com

the referencing of an obscure copyright act, such as the Berne Convention Act⁵⁹, which seeks to indicate to *eBay* that it meets their selling policies. In figure 7.4, I provide a screenshot of *eBay* auction for the *giallo* *Red Light Girls* (*Prostituzione*, Rino Di Silvestro, 1974). The listing details are vague, ignoring that this is pirated copy of the film. From my knowledge as a fan, I am able to determine that this auction takes *profondorosso's* fan DVD, exchanged as a gift on *CineTorrent* and currently the only 'uncut' version of the film available on the DVD format, and attempts to sell it for £7.50. Investigating the other items that the seller has for sale reveals a further 131 items, all being pirated copies of cult film.

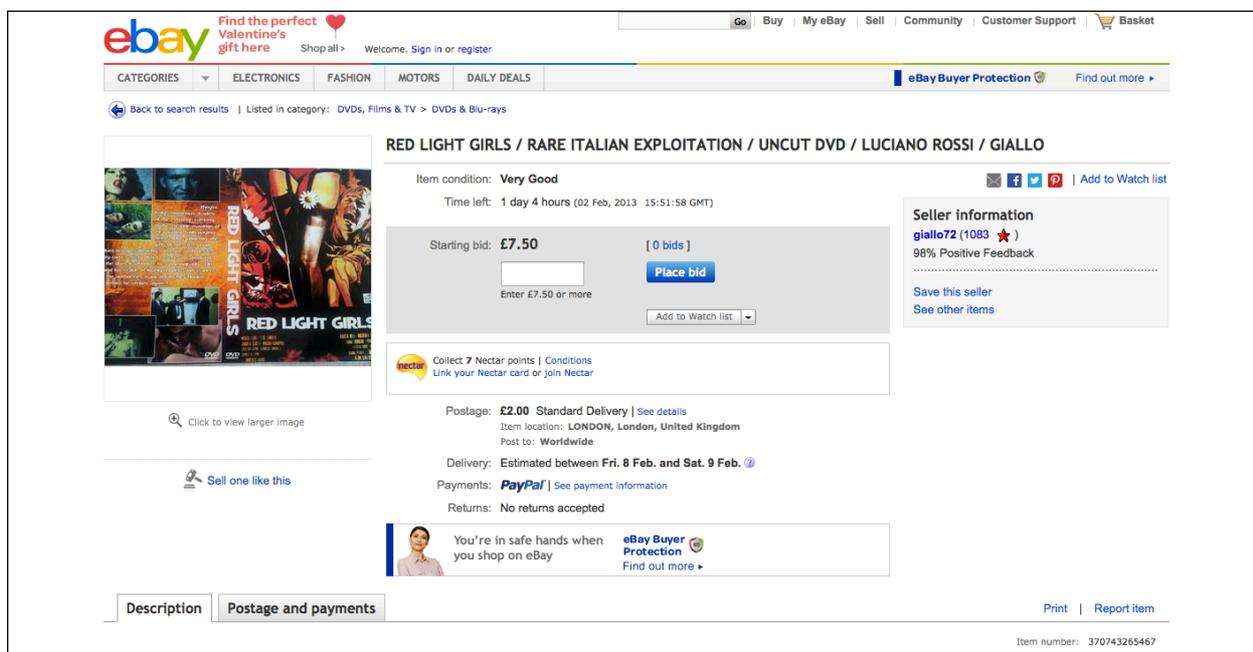


Figure 7.4: *eBay* advert for the fan DVD of *Red Light Girls*

Posts on the *CineTorrent* fora reveal that the site actively attempts to seek out those members who sell material that has been made available for sharing and to protect what they deem to be their intellectual property. Jenkins' (1992a) research into the science fiction fan community revealed that fans who attempt to make money out of selling pirated copies of films were frowned upon by others. This is demonstrated at *CineTorrent*, the exploitation of fan labour evidently a matter of concern for some of its membership. However, this is rather ironic considering how they take

⁵⁹ For a detailed definition of the Berne Convention Act see page 530 of Towers-Romero (2005).

commercially released material and make it available for sharing amongst the community. When any material that has been made ‘exclusively’ for distribution amongst the members of *CineTorrent* is taken and sold through online bootleg enterprises or auction sites they oppose the action. Certain members of the site will attempt to locate the offending member, through identifying their IP address, and ban them from being able to access the site as a punishment for them abusing the generosity of others. This is yet more evidence of the paradoxes on display of *CineTorrent* as it moves between being a transgressor of intellectual property to a protector of its own intellectual property.

7.7. Conclusion - A factory of fan production?

In this chapter I have shown that *CineTorrent*, a torrent file-sharing community centred around the sharing of cult film, is part of an alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production where fan labour is both encouraged and rewarded. With much of this fan production relating to the the *giallo*, I have argued that fans are responding to declining commercial DVD releases of *gialli* by taking it upon themselves to archive, reappropriate and release *gialli*. I outlined that the organisation of the website, particularly its structure, rules and regulations, have two primary outcomes: firstly, it engages workers in the act of archiving, leading to the creation of an exhaustive archive of cult film that is carefully catalogued and organised; and secondly, it forms a community of skilled fan workers that seek to make available material that is not commercially available for purchase in the physical world. Both of these outcomes compliment each other. Without the existence of the archive, fan producers would not have the raw materials required to produce their reappropriations and, without the fan producers, the archive would not be as exhaustive. I have demonstrated how *CineTorrent* adopts an approach to management that is very similar to that found in a typical business orientated organisation. After examining the top-down structure of the site and

its adopting of policy *CineTorrent*, I have suggested that it acts as if it were factory of fan production.

From the research I conducted it would appear that *CineTorrent* is not a profit driven enterprise. Unlike other file-sharing websites, there is no advertising to be found on the site. This is a common way many file-sharing websites make money out of the high level of user activity they receive. Research conducted by the website *Meganomics* suggests that small torrent sites like *CineTorrent* cost approximately under \$3000 (£2200) to run per year, or \$250 per month⁶⁰. This raises the question: how is *CineTorrent* funded? To help pay for the running costs, members are encouraged to make donations. Members who have negative sharing ratios have also been able to purchase upload credit in order to maintain their access to the site. Whilst the website clearly states in a number of locations that received donations only contribute towards the running costs, one could assume that with a membership of 20,000, there could potentially be a surplus of donation money each month. If each member had to pay £1 each year to maintain access, which no doubt many would to access such an exhaustive archive, a considerable profit would be made. This again raises questions relating to the issue of “free labour” (Terranova, 2004).

Terranova (2004) suggests that free labour is particularly evident on the internet and is demonstrated by practices such as “building web sites, modifying software packages, reading and participating in mailing lists and building virtual spaces” (74). My research has indicated that a considerable amount of *CineTorrent* members devote a large amount of time to archiving and reappropriation. For example, many staff are online at various points of the day, ensuring that rules and regulations are being adhered to. Even the act of creating a digital media file from a physical medium, whether it be VHS or DVD, requires a basic level of expertise, an investment of time and,

⁶⁰ <http://piracy.americanassembly.org/meganomics/>

to a lesser extent, money. The most involving fan practices, such as fan subtitling or overdubbing, involve an even greater investment of both time and money. Costs incurred include electricity usage, technical equipment, such as computer hardware and software, and internet access. In addition to this, fans are devoting a significant amount of time to their activities, which often resemble those found in professional practice, but offer no monetary reward. One can only assume that the reward for these members is either kudos, continued access to *CineTorrent* or the gratification of making rare films available for others. When questioned why he devotes such a large amount of time to fan production, member *profondorosso* commented that he does it purely out of love for Italian cult cinema. He also strongly believes that “films are meant to be seen not hidden away in private collections”, directed at fans who refuse to share rarities online, and “my sole intention in whichever fandub project I do, is solely to make the viewing more pleasurable for the fan”.

However, it must not be overlooked that much of the activity that occurs on *CineTorrent* is legally questionable, despite its attempts to limit its culpability by defining sets of rules that limit what can be shared on the website. In doing this it creates an archive of material that is unavailable commercially; the example of *The Giallo Project* emphasising this. Through an interview conducted with Fernando, the owner of an independent DVD label, I have shown that commercial DVD releases of *gialli* in the UK are not economically viable because of the high cost of rights and the limited market for *gialli* in the UK. Though labels such as *Shameless* continue to release *gialli*, they are often re-releases of those available in other countries, their release of *Torso* (Sergio Martino, 1973) being an example. Fans who have already purchased the American, Italian or German DVD releases of the film may not be inclined to purchase them again. As indicated by my interview with Fernando, the as yet commercially unreleased *gialli* remain unreleased outside of Italy because their rights are too expensive. I asked Fernando why the owners do not choose to

reduce the prices they request, he responded: “they don’t need the money”. Until there is a change in market, currently the only way to access these titles is through file-sharing websites like *CineTorrent*.

Lee (2010) suggests that the anime DVD industry is facing similar issues, such as declining markets and increasing piracy. He believes that other economic models need to be explored in order to make their content legally available for consumption. A similar argument could be made here. There are 217 compromised works in *The Giallo Project*, some being downloaded over 500 times and others only 6 times. The most popular downloaded files are the ones which are commercially available for sale on DVD, such as *Blood and Black Lace* and *Four Flies on Grey Velvet*. The activity surrounding the *giallo* on *CineTorrent* does indicate that there is demand and money to be made from releasing them, albeit small. It does, however, suggest that the current models for releasing film on DVD are outdated and need reconsidering. This chapter has focused on a particular form of online fan enterprise: an online file-sharing website where fans archive and reappropriate cult film. In the next chapter I look at other forms of online fan enterprise in the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. I argue that fantreneurs are moving away from the traditional economic model of ‘supply and demand’ to produce and distribute their artefacts and are now using manufacturing-on-demand (MOD) services to produce and distribute their products. I suggest that this less riskier and more economically beneficial model of production can be termed ‘demand and supply’ and consider how it presents new opportunities for fan enterprise, or as I describe them, informal enterprise.

CHAPTER EIGHT

INFORMAL ENTERPRISES:

THE EUROPEAN CULT CINEMA ONLINE FAN ENTERPRISES

This chapter considers how fans are using the World Wide Web to start online fan enterprises, or, as I describe them ‘informal enterprises, that distribute produced artefacts as commodities. In the previous three chapters, I have demonstrated that fan enterprise is a key element of the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. In chapters five and six I briefly mentioned the significance of the World Wide Web for fan producers. The fantreneurs discussed in chapter five started online shops to sell their products, giving them access to a global fan audience, and, in chapter six, Roman Nowicki sold his *Fantom Kiler* films through his website. The previous chapter focused on, *CineTorrent* a non-for-profit online fan enterprise. Having identified the significance of the Web for fan producers, I now focus on how fan producers are using the online environment to build informal enterprises. In order to do this, I explore how fan producers are using online ‘demand and supply’ services to make informal enterprise more sustainable and less economically risky.

Returning to the fan enterprises discussed in chapter five, Media Communications, Dark Publications and FAB Press, a key feature of these is that they can be understood as *formal enterprises*. This is because they were formed using enterprise grants and, in the case of FAB Press, were registered businesses. All of these companies can be located on ‘Companies House’, the body responsible for the registering businesses in the UK. I use the term ‘formal’ to describe their official status as businesses. In this chapter, I now focus on *informal enterprises*. ‘Informal enterprises’ are not registered companies or have been launched using enterprise grants. Instead, their proprietors have started these businesses *informally*. For example, all the informal enterprises

I discuss in this chapter do not appear to be registered on Companies House. Colin Williams (2006) refers to such activities as “off the books” business, meaning that earnings are not declared. He believes that this is a common way for many new companies to start before they become fully legitimate, or formal.

Drawing on data gained using the combined ethnography approach introduced in chapter four, more specifically, interviews with owners of online fan enterprises, virtual ethnography and my own fan practices as autoethnography, I show how these fan enterprises are part-time operations, run outside of full-time occupations. I focus on four specific forms of online European cult cinema fan enterprise: T-Shirt production and distribution, DVD retailing, fan publishing and finally crowd-funded fan production. I begin the chapter by examining two online enterprises, the shop *Crystal Plumage* and t-shirt seller *Giallo T-Shirts*, which operate using the traditional economic model of supply and demand. I then discuss how the economic model of supply and demand is moving to what I refer to as ‘demand and supply’, because of the introduction of manufacturing-on-demand (MOD) services. A further two case studies, one on fan publishing and another on t-shirt production, are used to demonstrate the possibilities MOD services present to the fantrepeneur. Finally, I use a case study of a European cult cinema inspired documentary to illustrate how crowdfunding websites such as *Kickstarter* are being used to fund independent projects. Conclusions are drawn on how the online environment, if used correctly, can help to nurture fan production and be harnessed as a full-time occupation.

8.1. Selling European cult - Crystal Plumage

There have been a number of UK based online shops over the years that have specialised in the

selling of horror/cult DVDs, but they have not had longevity. The longest running online horror/cult DVD shops are those that transferred from mail order to the online environment and have been able to maintain their customer base, for example Media Communications and Dark Publications continue to sell DVDs alongside their own products in their online stores. The main difficulty these shops have faced is the selling of films that either do not have BBFC certification or are banned in the UK. As I indicated in chapter six, it is selling material that does not have BBFC certification in the UK can result in prosecution. The regulations that govern the selling of products such as these might be off-putting for those who would want to set up an online DVD shop, risking fines and potential jail sentences. Fans purchasing non BBFC certified titles will often choose to import them from shops located in Western Europe or the United States and risk potential customs seizure. For this first case study, I discuss an online shop that I refer to as *Crystal Plumage*⁶¹. Like the pseudonym I have chosen here, the actual name of the shop directly refers to the title of a *giallo* film and the website uses iconography reminiscent of *giallo* cinema. The identity created by this website intends to address its main target audience: fans of European cult cinema.

Crystal Plumage refers to itself as “an independent online emporium dedicated to world wide weirdness”. Based in northern UK, it sells films, music (CDs and vinyl only), books and magazines and also tickets to events that have been setup by the website’s proprietors. It has been in existence since July 2011, steadily attracting regular customers that have been gained through online word of mouth, online searches and also their presence at film fairs and memorabilia events. The website is owned by three partners. The information contained in this case study was gained from an interview conducted with one of these partners, who I refer to here as ‘Mario’. Like many of the people I have interviewed for this dissertation, Mario’s interest in European cult came from the VHS boom of the 1980s. It was through the renting, purchasing and trading of horrors films on

⁶¹ Email interview conducted with ‘Mario’, the proprietor of *Crystal Plumage* on 10 May 2012. The name of the company has been changed, as requested by Mario.

VHS that led to a greater exposure of horror cinema, stating that when he was a teenager he would be receiving around six films per week through mail order. He would also actively visit film screenings and collectors fairs. Mario and his partners are currently employed by a high-street record and DVD retailer and one partner runs a successful underground record label. Therefore, *Crystal Plumage* is currently a part-time business until it grows large enough for to make it a full-time occupation. Mario's reasoning for starting *Crystal Plumage* was born out of frustration at the high-street store they currently work at, stating that it is "pretty rubbish as a result of poor decision making and budgeting over the last few years". As a result of this, they decided to start their own shop that would sell products more akin to their tastes. Initially they had intended to open a physical store but were deterred by economic climate at the time, believing it would be a "dangerous move"; an online store was deemed be less of an economic risk.

A web designer was employed to create the website and the graphics were designed by one of Mario's partners, who was able to draw on his experience of running an underground record label. The products that they sell are sourced directly from independent labels and are often what they, as fans, would purchase themselves. The website does not just sell European cult cinema ephemera, it also stocks other cult film titles from Asian cinema and arthouse cinema. A number of titles that they sell do not have BBFC certification which, under UK law, is prosecutable. When questioned about this issue Mario responded: "it does concern me a bit, yes, however I have worked in a record video/store for over 15 years and uncertified stuff has never come into question. I don't spend much time dwelling on it to be honest". A small stock inventory is kept and their catalogue continues to grow. Mario informed me that, on a good week, *Crystal Plumage* will take any where between 20-30 orders and, whilst the majority of orders are from the United Kingdom, they do sell internationally. Though online sales are their primary outlet they occasionally have a merchandise table at music gigs, sell at collector fairs over the country and they also sell at their own screening

nights. Currently they are unable to make a living out of the website. It is evident that Mario and his partners have high ambitions for the website as all of the revenue generated by the site are reinvested in the business to aid its growth. Mario views *Crystal Plumage* as very much a “long term investment”.

Crystal Plumage might be a side project for its owners, but they take it very seriously. By employing a web designer to build their website it shows that this is a professional pursuit rather than just a simple hobby. They also utilise the knowledge that they have gained from their full-time job, working in a high-street DVD/record store, and draw on this to help run their online store. Interestingly, *Crystal Plumage* was started as a response to the frustrations encountered working in a store that is driven primarily by an economic incentive rather than a cultural incentive. It may not be possible to earn a comfortable living from running a store such as *Crystal Plumage* but it gives the owners an outlet to express their fandom.

8.2. Pronto! Giallo T-Shirts

According to Andy Brown’s (2007) research into the significance of the heavy metal t-shirt, t-shirts carry a high amount of subcultural value. Though Brown focuses on the heavy metal t-shirt, the act of wearing a t-shirt as an act of distinction is evident in other fandoms, particularly European cult cinema fandom. Of all the interviews I have conducted for this dissertation only one of the fan producers I have spoken to is female. Not only does this show how heavily masculinised European cult cinema is, it also shows how roles within fandoms are gendered. Daria⁶² is a designer based in

⁶² Email interview conducted with ‘Daria’ on 4 June 2010. Her name has been changed to protect her identity. Extracts from my interview with Daria can be found in section A of the appendices.

the North West of the United Kingdom. She runs a website with a partner that specialises in the selling of t-shirts inspired by the iconography of the *giallo*. Daria is yet another of my interviewees who was first exposed to European cinema during the 1980s when she viewed *Suspiria* (Dario Argento, 1977). The experience of viewing the film “terrified” her and later led to her taking an interest in the *giallo* after finding out more about it on the internet. She states that it is the “mix of humour, kitchy/stylish [sic] clothes and location, sex and contrived plot” that compels her. The business was started organically. Daria wanted to purchase a *giallo* inspired t-shirt for her husband to wear at a festival that he was going to attend. After conducting an online search she realised that, aside from a poorly produced t-shirt that just read “*Giallo* Fan”, there was nothing available. Being quite surprised by this, Daria had the idea to make “stylish” t-shirts that would reference the *giallo*.

Having connected to other fans of the *giallo* over the years, primarily through the photo sharing website *Flickr*, Daria believed that there would be a market for producing *giallo* inspired t-shirts. She discussed her idea with a work colleague, who is also a *giallo* fan and a website developer with experience in building online stores. It was he who persuaded her to start *Giallo T-Shirts*. The business was started in November 2009 and experienced “good sales” over their first Christmas period. Daria is “amazed” by the amount of traffic that the website has received from fan websites, such as the fan blog *Giallo Fever*⁶³. It was through *Giallo Fever* that I learned of Daria’s website. As a member of fora devoted to European cult cinema, Daria has found it helpful to attract customers but she is reluctant to “blatantly advertise” in these environments, not wanting to be seen as trying to take advantage of them. She also notes the interest that is generated locally in the North West UK where she lives, where non-*giallo* fans have been attracted by the uniqueness and fashionability of the designs.

⁶³ <http://giallo-fever.blogspot.co.uk/>



Figure 8.1: Examples of Daria's t-shirt designs

Daria draws on her skills as a designer when producing the t-shirts. When producing t-shirt designs, she uses a variety of pen and ink and professional standard Adobe software such as Flash, Photoshop and Illustrator. Her first t-shirt design was inspired by her favourite *giallo* film *Your Vice is a Locked Door and Only I Have the Key* (*Il tuo vizio è una stanza chiusa e solo io ne ho la chiave*, Sergio Martino, 1972) and was produced so that she would be able to wear it. Two of Daria's other designs are inspired by the Dario Argento films *Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (*L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo*, 1969) and *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (*4 mosche di velluto grigio*, 1971). The designs for these three t-shirts, two are pictured in figure 8.1, include the title of the film and are accompanied by an image that visually represents the title. For example, the design for *Bird with the Crystal Plumage* includes a bird with crystal plumage and *Your Vice is a Locked Door and Only I Have the Key* features an image of a key and a lock. When I asked Daria why she uses this specific type of design, she told me that film titles are not covered by copyright in the European Union so they carry less risk. She also finds the "bizarreness" of the titles "interesting". Initially Daria produced a number of early designs that had "various stills juxtaposed against each other...using text to tell the story of the film", however, "the cost of printing photographs... and the

copyright issues led me to think of other ways of defining the genre in images”. To circumvent these problems Daria devised another way to represent the *giallo* in her t-shirt designs. Daria had the idea to produce designs that would be “coded references” to the *giallo* and would therefore not be instantly recognisable; it would require knowledge of the films to be able to identify the reference.



Figure 8.2: Daria's Pronto! t-shirt design

An example of this is her 'pronto' design, illustrated in figure 8.2. 'Pronto' is an Italian salutation that is used when answering a telephone call. The majority of *gialli* will have a scene with a character answering the telephone and saying "pronto". Daria's design references such a scene, the woman answering the telephone bearing close resemblance to Edwige Fenech, an actress synonymous with the *giallo*. Daria is keen to produce more designs that use the faces of *giallo* actors and actresses, but believes that she would need permission to use their likeness. She intends to wait until the business is more established before taking this change of approach. The main intention of Daria's designs is to be distinctive and offer a quality alternative to the typical film inspired t-shirts that are "posters printed on a t-shirt as a flat surface".

Daria informed me that the cost of producing the t-shirts is based on scale: the more that are

produced the cheaper that it becomes. The printing process used to transfer the designs to the t-shirt is called screenprinting. According to Daria, screenprinting is an expensive, high quality method used to print designs on to t-shirts. She prefers using this approach rather than the cheaper, but inferior, heat or digital printing methods. Though considerably more expensive, screenprinting provides a better quality transfer that is more hard-wearing and longer lasting. With screenprinting, a screen of the design needs to be produced; this takes the form of a stencil. A sponge is then used to push the coloured ink into the screen and onto the t-shirt. For each colour required another screen will have to be produced and the process repeated; it is not possible to use the same screen with different colours. The higher number of screens that need to be created, the higher the costs involved. Therefore, her aim as a designer is to produce a design that uses as little colour as possible in order to make production more cost effective.

Producing the screen(s) is the first initial cost incurred in the t-shirt production process. Being employed full-time as a designer, Daria already has access to the software and hardware that is required to produce the designs. The second cost is the price of the t-shirts. Daria has chosen to use a brand of t-shirts called 'Continental' because they are "eco-friendly, high quality and are available in a variety of different colours". The price per unit of the t-shirt reduces the more that she buys. The first run of printed t-shirts is the most expensive because of the setup costs. Further runs of the same t-shirts are cheaper as Daria does not have to pay for new screens to be made. The problem here is that she has to invest in stock. A decision has to be made on how many t-shirts in different sizes need to be produced without creating a surplus. The t-shirts are priced at £15.99 each. According to Daria, because the company is relatively new, the profit margins are very slim, but once the company becomes more established, she hopes that her profit margins will increase over time: "As a designer, it's great to be able to respond to something I love creatively. Although it's early days, and we're starting small, we're in it for the long run because we think we've got

something to contribute to the appreciation of the *giallo*”. Though the website designed by her business partner is the primary outlet for selling the t-shirts, Daria is also keen to sell t-shirts at cinema screenings and festivals where she would be able to connect with other *giallo* fans. She has also produced flyers that she distributes locally to help to create awareness of her designs.

These examples demonstrate how the Web has enabled new informal enterprises to be setup that specialise in the selling of niche products related to European cult cinema. Both Daria and Mario have identified a very small gap in the market and have invested capital in creating their online enterprises. In each of these examples, profit does not appear to be the short-term goal. Both interviewees highlighted how important reinvestment was for the business to grow and eventually turn profit, but recognise that this is the long-term goal for each company. The main similarity is that Daria and Mario’s companies have been created out of their passion for European cult cinema. This is what drives them to run enterprises that are essentially part-time hobbies and secondary to their full time jobs. However, it is their full-time employment that has provided them with necessary skills to be able to run their enterprises. Both companies are affected by regulatory factors. *Crystal Plumage* sell a number of DVDs that do not have BBFC certification and Daria is careful not to produce designs that infringe on copyright law. Whilst these regulations do not prevent enterprise they can suppress fan enterprise, limiting fan creativity. *Crystal Plumage* and Daria have found ways to circumvent these regulations, even though the former company expressed concerns about doing so.

Daria’s t-shirt production company contrasts with other t-shirt production I discuss later in this chapter. As I have established here, there is an element of financial risk in Daria’s company. She has to pay an upfront cost for the t-shirts, making a judgment on how many need to be produced to meet demand. If Daria produces too little she might not have enough to meet demand or, if she

produces too many, Daria could be left with a surplus of stock that she is unable to sell. Recent developments online have meant that companies like Daria's can now be setup online with very little risk and present profit making opportunities for the fantrepneur. I will now go on to discuss how MOD technologies provide these opportunities, using yet another example of t-shirt production that provides a solution to some of the risks that were faced by Daria.

8.3. From 'supply and demand' to 'demand and supply'

The examples of informal enterprise discussed so far in this chapter use the economic model of 'supply and demand' to sell artefacts. I now focus on a new economic model introduced by online technologies that I describe as 'demand and supply'. On March 2009, the film studio Warner Brothers' home entertainment division announced that they would be adopting a new distribution strategy for unreleased catalogue DVDs. Traditionally, like the book publishing industry, the home entertainment industry has used the supply and demand economic model when issuing films on VHS, DVD or Blu-Ray. A company such as Warner Brothers will typically make a 'run' of a product, producing a set number of copies of a DVD. For example, their accounting department might determine that they need to produce a run of 5000 copies for a film that they are releasing on DVD to satisfy public demand. In making this judgment, the accounting department will have carefully studied the market, identifying how many copies of similar films are generally sold on DVD. A 'recommended', also known as 'suggested', retail price for the title will then be set. Upon release, if the DVD sells well, the price will not need to be reduced as there is *demand* for the product. After release, when the demand for the product reduces, the decision might be made to reduce the price in order to increase demand. The price might be reduced even sooner if the title has not sold well. This is a very brief summary of the economic law of supply and demand. After

an initial run has sold out, the studio may decide to produce a second run or discontinue the title.

This decision will usually depend on sales; if they have slowed, the studio may not wish to take the economic risk of producing another run that may not sell.

In 2009, *Variety* magazine reported that Warner were discontinuing a number of popular catalogue titles and, with immediate effect, the remaining stock inventories of these titles would be destroyed⁶⁴. Though no reason for this decision was given it could be explained by the economics of DVD retail, as described by Chris Anderson (2006). Using estimated figures from an unnamed, large scale bricks and mortar retailer, Anderson determines that studios charge a set price for DVDs, but retailers sell them at less, therefore taking a loss (133). This loss is made up through other products that the retailer sells. For example, upon buying the DVD the consumer may choose to purchase another title that is priced higher or they will purchase other unrelated items from the retailer. The retailer can recover the loss by selling of other products. Anderson uses the term “loss leader” to describe this kind of economic behaviour. After a period of time, the wholesale price of the DVD will reduce significantly and become profitable to sell. This kind of model favours new releases. Anderson states that distributors will now allow retailers to send back unsold any copies of DVDs. This reduces the risk of the retailer being faced with having to keep titles that do not sell. From my experience as a DVD collector, DVDs of niche cult films rarely feature in large-scale bricks and mortar retailers, as they do not sell on such a large scale of the latest Hollywood blockbusters. This presents a problem for the releasing of cult film; they have to rely on online sales as opposed to bricks and mortar sales.

⁶⁴ Taken from Warner Brothers’ press release published on *Variety*’s website: <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118001496/?categoryid=1009&cs=1>



Figure 8.3: Chris Anderson's Long Tail⁶⁵

According to Chris Anderson's theory of the long tail (2006), online sales eventually benefit the niche as opposed to the mainstream. The long tail, illustrated by the graph found in figure 8.3, demonstrates that sales of mainstream, popular products (the top left of the graph) are eventually outsold by niche titles (the bottom right of the graph). Therefore, internet retailers such as *Amazon* allow for sales of niche products to grow over time, eventually outselling the mainstream products. This suggests that there are opportunities for the selling of niche products online. Anderson's model has been criticised by Hesmondhalgh (2012) for being another example of "digital ultra-optimism" (330). Hesmondhalgh cites the work of Will Page and Eric Garland (2009), whose analysis of music sales revealed that a long tail of digital music exists online, but few sales are received. Hesmondhalgh speculates that consumers are probably unaware of the wide availability of digital music, hence why they receive no sales. Whilst the theory of the long tail is over enthusiastic, I find it useful in indicating how traditional models of retail are becoming increasingly outdated as new technologies emerge. For example, there is less economic risk making an artefact

⁶⁵ Illustration taken from Chris Anderson's website: <http://www.thelongtail.com/about.html>

for sale as a digital download or manufactured on demand than there is in having an inventory of physical stock.

Bradley Schauer (2012) argues that the emergence of the Warner Archive model can be explained, in part, by Anderson's theory of the long tail. In contrast to the supply and demand model, the MOD service does not require a run of titles to be published. Customers instead 'demand' the title by making a purchase on a website. It is then manufactured and supplied to them; no surplus of stock actually exists. I describe this new model as 'demand and supply'. At the time of writing, there has been little academic research conducted into this economic model. Research that does exist has focused on the book publishing industry and their adoption of the MOD model. Davie (2007) looks at the implications of on-demand publishing for the academic publishing industry. She determines that whilst MOD services are growing in popularity, they seem unlikely to immediately replace models that are currently in place, yet, MOD meets the "needs of authors and audiences" (176). Whilst Davie does not state what these needs are, my research suggests that MOD enables authors/creatives to engage in forms of production without any of the external pressures, such as deadlines, editorial guidelines and profit driven incentives, faced when one is commissioned or working for a company. It also provides audiences with products that may not otherwise be produced due to them being too niche and unprofitable. Davie does acknowledge that MOD blurs the lines between "authorship, publication, distribution and form", but, in turn, this will present problems for the existing structures of production and retail (176). The threat being that MOD could eventually lead to publishers and book sellers closing or losing staff. Anderson (2006) suggests that the potential for MOD is "extraordinary" as it reduces risk of over-printing and eventual returns (96). With smart use of MOD technologies there is the possibility of reducing costs and increasing financial returns. The Warner Archives project is a useful example of this.

The Warner Archives project was launched on March 23 2009 with 150 titles being made available for purchase on their website. When using the MOD method of production the customer places an order for a specific title(s) on the Warner Archives website. The title is then made-to-order within five days and posted to the customer. The DVD will have the appearance of a regular produced DVD, being presented in a shrink-wrapped case with a printed colour cover. The only noticeable difference is that the actual DVD disc will not be factory manufactured and pressed like regular DVDs, instead being a ‘burned’ DVD-R disc. This draws on the same process that consumers are able to use on their home computers to burn DVD discs. Posts made on the *Home Theatre Forum*, an online community for home theatre aficionados and cinephiles, raise concerns about the quality of using such an approach⁶⁶. A burned DVD-R can be more susceptible to errors than a factory pressed DVD, can have a shorter life span and is generally regarded as being an inferior product. Warner also state in their press release that on-demand titles are not subject to any digital remastering processes, which are very costly. They stipulate that only current video masters are used rather than paying for new masters to be produced, again a costly venture. Also, the majority of releases will be without additional ‘DVD extras’, such as supplemental feature and audio commentaries. With the lack of investment in these titles and the ‘no frills’ approach to production, it can be determined that Warner are using the on-demand model as a way to reduce production costs and increase their profits. These made-to-order DVD-Rs retail at a similar price points to their factory pressed DVDs, an average of \$17.95 (£11.90).

As a film fan I responded to this news positively, viewing it as an effective way for the studio to publish unreleased catalogue titles. However, after discovering that I would have to pay the same price, or in some cases more than the cost of a manufactured DVD, for what is ostensibly an inferior product, my perspective changed. At the time of writing, the Warner Archives program

⁶⁶ <http://www.hometheaterforum.com/t/283916/warner-archive-discussion-thread-feedback>

continues to exist with titles being added to the inventory each month. In late 2012, Warner announced that they would be expanding the program to include Blu-Ray releases, a further indication of their commitment to the demand and supply model⁶⁷. Other studios have followed suit, with Fox/MGM establishing their “Limited Edition Collection” manufactured on-demand DVD-Rs.

DVD Production	Cost
Purchase of rights	\$25,000 (£16,000)
Lab costs (remastering, cleaning up image)	\$5000 (£3180)
DVD authoring	\$1300 (£828)
DVD cover design	\$500 (£320)
DVD manufacture (pressing 1000)	\$900 (£570)
DVD sleeve printing	\$300 (£190)
DVD extras (filming, paying talent, travel costs)	\$2000 (£1270)
Overall production costs	\$33,800 (£21,500)

Figure 8.4: Production costs of Code Red releasing a European cult film on DVD

Surprisingly, independent DVD labels have not yet chosen to utilise the demand and supply model. In the previous chapter, drawing on an interview conducted with independent DVD producer Fernando, I identified that, unlike major studios such as Warner Brothers, independent DVD labels have to pay to license films for release. To understand the potential benefit MOD might bring to an independent DVD label I conducted a interview with Bill, the owner of the label Code Red, an American DVD label that specialises in the release of grindhouse cinema⁶⁸. Bill informed me how much it cost for him to release a European cult horror film on DVD; this information is included in

⁶⁷ <http://www.engadget.com/2012/11/19/warner-archive-on-demand-disc-service-kicks-off-blu-ray-availabi/>

⁶⁸ Email interview with Bill, the owner of DVD label Code Red, conducted 11 May 2012.

figure 8.4⁶⁹. He told me that he had to pay approximately \$25,000 (£16,000) for the rights to be able to release the film on DVD in the US. Bill believed that there would be a potential market demand for a pressing of 10,000 copies, but initially pressed 1000 copies to “test the waters”. For each copy sold, he would only earn \$4 (£2.50), therefore he needed to sell 8750 copies to break-even. The approximate overall production costs were \$33,800 (£21,500). As only 1000 copies were printed, he made an overall loss of \$31,000 (£19,750). These figures demonstrate that the main issue facing independent DVD labels is the cost of licensing rights; they constitute almost 75% of the entire production costs. Even with a lower cost of rights, Bill would have still faced a loss, though not as high as the one he incurred because of demand not being what he had anticipated. If he had used a DVD MOD service such as *CreateSpace*⁷⁰, formerly *CustomFlix* but now owned by *Amazon*, and sold a DVD with a list price of \$25.00 (£16.00) through his own online store he would have earned \$16.50 (£10.50) per sale. Selling the same MOD DVD but through *Amazon* incurs a higher level of commission, reducing profit almost by half to \$8.80 (£5.60).

If Bill were to trust Chris Anderson’s (2006) long tail thesis and negotiate a rights deal that allowed him to own the film for an extended period of time, this would allow for greater sales over an extended period, instead of hoping for mass of sales in one short period. By calculating the overall commission for pressing and selling MOD DVDs on *Amazon* at an approximate 65%, Bill would earn approximately \$8.80 (£5.60) per DVD sale. This is double the amount of profit he received when using the traditional supply and model to release the film. He would have still needed to sell a large amount, approximately 3,863 copies, to break-even. While not solving Bill’s problem it would have helped to decrease his overall loss by a further \$6000 (£3800), creating an overall loss of \$25,000 (£16,000). Though not the perfect solution to the problems Bill faces as the owner of an independent DVD label, it does still demonstrate the potential that MOD can have for lowering

⁶⁹ To respect Bill’s wishes, I have not included the name of the film he released on DVD.

⁷⁰ <https://www.createspace.com/>

overall costs and, more importantly, cutting out the distributor; distribution costs eating reducing Bill's profit margins further. Instead, using *CreateSpace* would be a more cost effective solution that would increase the potential for profit. If Bill had been able to negotiate a better deal for the rights, or release a film that had equal demand but cheaper rights, he would have been able to generate a profit. In a response to increasing distribution costs, for certain titles he releases, Bill sells direct to customers through his website rather than use a distributor, relying on the established fan following his label has.

If used effectively MOD could be an ideal solution to many of the current issues faced not just by film studios but also book publishers, the music industry and, in some instances, clothing designers, as I will illustrate later. The main advantage is not having to invest money in stock, reducing the potential risk of having a surplus. Production costs are minimal; duplication is done purely through machinery and no large workforce is required. Also, by having products available over a greater period of time, it could increase overall sales. However, there are potential drawbacks. As I have demonstrated with the example of Warner Archives, there is the issue of quality. With DVD, MOD has been utilised as a way for studios to maximise profits and to not invest heavily in their production. Customers are also getting a product that might not have the quality of a factory manufactured product. Prices for MOD products also tend to be rather high as, again, the emphasis is placed on maximising profits. The purpose is to charge as much as possible for a product in order to gain the largest amount of profit for what are ostensibly niche products that do not sell on a large scale. But, for the fanpreneur, MOD services can present a number of opportunities, allowing them to publish their work and to sell it with little economic risk. I will now give two examples of MOD services that have been used by fans to distribute their produced texts and encourage informal enterprise. The first example will look at the website *Lulu* and how it was used to publish a book on Italian cult action films. The second example will focus on the personalised clothing printing

company *Spreadshirt* and how this site was used to create an online shop that sells t-shirts with designs inspired by European cult cinema.

8.4. *Tough to Kill and Lulu*

When discussing what he refers to as the “vanity” model of book publishing, Chris Anderson (2006) outlines how the demands of the book publishing industry have discouraged potential authors from writing (76). For the author who wants to write about a very specific area in a tone that might be suitable for commercial publishing, the traditional publishing model does not meet their needs. Anderson sees print-on-demand (POD) services, such as those provided by *Lulu*⁷¹, as the ideal platform for writers who want to be published. Founded in 2002, *Lulu* is an American company that provides a variety of POD services. It can be used by both commercial publishers and self-publishers. For the purposes of this specific case study, I focus on *Lulu* as a platform for self-publishing. *Lulu* provides an author, amateur or professional, with the opportunity to self-publish their work in a variety of ways for distribution as either a physical or digital artefact. Once having completed their manuscript, the author can download a template provided by *Lulu* for the specific size and format of book that they would like to publish. At the time of writing, they offer 14 different book styles that can be published in either paperback or hardback, colour or black and white, using premium grade materials such as high quality paper and binding. Like the example of *CreateSpace*, another MOD service that I discussed earlier in this chapter, *Lulu* take a commission and the author can set a price that will dictate how much profit they are able to receive from each sale. Once the author has produced the final manuscript, the final document is uploaded to *Lulu* and is then ready to be printed. According to Anderson (2006), *Lulu* produce a small run of ten copies that can be purchased through *Lulu*'s online store. Options also exist for the book to receive an

⁷¹ www.lulu.com

ISBN number and for the book to be made available for sale on *Amazon*. Once the ten copies have sold, the book is then printed-on-demand when another order is placed. Dependent upon the design skills of the author, the book can take the appearance of a commercial publication.

I argue that this new model of publishing can be of value to fan writers. From my interviews with fans who produced European cult cinema fan publications in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it became evident that one of the key economic issues they faced was investment. Those I talked to all used different approaches to fund their fanzines. As I have previously discussed, Media Communications and Dark Publications were started using the Conservative government's EAS of the 1980s, the weekly payment received funding the printing of their publications. Tris, another interviewee who produced a handmade black and white fanzine called *It's Only a Movie*, went as far as pawning items he owned to raise the funds needed to print his fanzine⁷². When publishing the first issue of *Flesh and Blood*, Harvey Fenton used a photocopier at his father's place of work. *Lulu* now makes these practices unnecessary. Anyone who wants to write can now be published and potentially make money from their work. The whole process now depends on internet access and having the required design skills to produce a manuscript. In January of 2008, two fans of a very specific cycle of European cult cinema started a blog using the online blogging platform *Blogspot*⁷³. The intention of this blog was to review films from the Italian action film cycle of the 1980s. In chapter three, I established that cycles of Italian B movie cinema, such as the *giallo* and *poliziotteschi*, were low budget imitations of popular American films and were produced primarily to make money by being distributed internationally. Films such as *First Blood* (Ted Kotcheff, 1982), *The Terminator* (James Cameron, 1984) and *Commando* (Mark L. Lester, 1985) were imitated by *Blastfighter* (Lamberto Bava, 1984), *Shocking Dark* (Bruno Mattei, 1990) and *Strike Commando* (Bruno Mattei, 1987). However, in comparison to the *giallo*, zombie and cannibal

⁷² Interview conducted with Tris at *CineExcess* 28 May 2011.

⁷³ www.blogger.com

cycles of Italian cinema, the Italian action cycle has received little attention in fan writings. Paul and David started the *Tough to Kill* blog as a way to address this lack of attention. David said: “I really like these movies and want to read more books about them-if nobody would write one, than I would have to join forces with Paul and do it”⁷⁴.

David was very hesitant to publish a typical homemade fanzine, having friends who published fanzines in the past but were now unable to produce them because of a rise in printing costs. Recently married and expecting his first child, David’s personal circumstances also played an important part in deciding to use a POD service. Because of these, he was eager to reduce costs and not be left with a surplus of unsold copies that would take up much needed space in his home. He had also considered contacting a commercial publisher to see if they would be interested in a book on Italian action films, but did not want to be controlled by a publisher. David saw *Lulu* as a solution to all of the concerns. For David and Paul, publishing using *Lulu* had four main advantages. Firstly, David liked the idea of being able to have greater control and to also use his own resources to self promote the book. Secondly, there were no setup charges and did not have to pay for the book to be sold through the *Lulu* online store. Thirdly, in addition to a physical copy of the book, an ebook copy could also be sold. And finally, he and Paul would be able to keep all royalties from the sales.

David found the use of the *Lulu* to be “simple”, having nothing but praise for the service they provide. The only problems encountered where his using of the necessary design software to produce the final manuscript, not having had any formal training in this area. The freedom that *Lulu* offered in setting profit margins was particularly attractive. As part of his promotional strategy for the book, he would occasionally reduce the profit from \$4.00 (£2.50) sometimes down to zero.

⁷⁴ Email interview conducted with David on 6 May 2010.

He would promote these limited reductions through *Twitter* or *Facebook* as a way to create further awareness. He has occasionally offered free downloads of the ebook version of *Tough to Kill* and also produced a signed ‘limited edition’ version that was printed and sent to a shop in Australia to be sold exclusively. The book is currently available in three different versions: a paperback that retails at £9.35, a hardback for £18.71 and an eBook for £3.12. The manufacturing cost for the paperback version of the book is approximately £4.22. This provides an 8.5” by 11” black and white paperback book that, according to *Lulu*, is “perfect bound” using standard quality paper. I chose to purchase the paperback directly from the *Lulu* store.

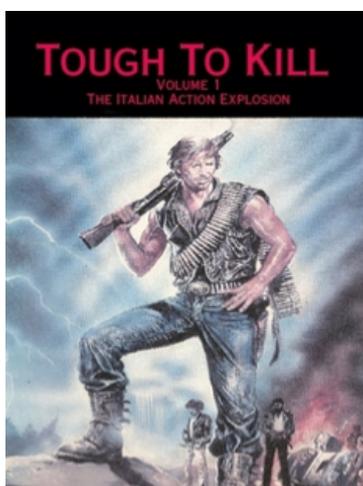


Figure 8.5: David's *Tough to Kill* book

The amateur origins of the book are revealed when browsing through it, not differing greatly to the formatting of traditional homemade fanzines. This is demonstrated by the design of the book, something that David admits he struggled with. The layout is very basic, being a combination of text and images. There is no clear structure to the book; it is nothing more than a series of reviews and an interview conducted with a director. Some of the images are poorly compressed and are awkwardly stretched, such as the image used on the front cover, shown in figure 8.5. *Tough to Kill* might lack the lavish colourfulness of the small press publications published by Dark Publications or the quality of the books published by FAB Press, but appearance is not the main purpose of this publication. The authors wanted to give exposure to a little discussed area of Italian cult cinema

and this is what the book achieves, containing 80 reviews of films, many of which have not been commercially released on the DVD format. At the time of the interview, David estimated that book had sold approximately 500 copies. Of these 500, physical copies were more popular than digital copies, but only by a slight margin. *Tough to Kill* sold well enough that *Lulu* listed it for sale on *Amazon*. David noted that this involved a small setup fee but liked how *Lulu* were keen to encourage that the book would have a wider exposure, *Lulu* earning commission from every copy that is sold. When asked how much money the book has generated David said that he was unsure of an exact figure but: “I always figure that I made more than I would have if I never tried it and less than I spent on the time and resources (most of these films needed to be tracked down from Japanese VHS-the shipping alone...argh.), but I loved doing it”.

This case study demonstrates the opportunity that POD services provide for aspiring fan writers who wish to give coverage to niche topics that may not be viable for commercial production. Though having a similar appearance to a typical film fanzine, *Tough to Kill* shows what can be achieved without having to take any of the risks that have faced fanzine producers in the past. There are no initial setup costs and the author does not have to pay for printing; *Lulu's* commission takes into account all of these costs. The author also has a high amount of freedom, not being controlled or guided by a publisher, and has control over the retail price of the book, profit margins being flexible. They also have the ability to publish in a variety of different formats, both physical and digital. *Lulu* provides greater coverage with successful books being featured for sale *Amazon*. More significantly the copyright remains with the author rather than the publisher. The only limitations with the service are with the user. In order for a high quality product to be produced the author has to be either skilled with design software or willing to hire someone to produce the design for them, the latter option would require an extra investment of capital. When using images in the publication, the author is responsible for determining whether they are able to be reproduced

without breaching copyright. David and Paul reproduced images of VHS covers in *Tough to Kill* and did not require for them to be cleared. David expressed the intention to produce a second volume of *Tough to Kill* and, if he does so, he will again be using *Lulu* as the publishing platform.

8.5. European cult t-shirts on Spreadshirt

Earlier in this chapter I discussed Daria's *Giallo T-Shirts* website that sells designs of t-shirts inspired by the *giallo*. The screenprinting method Daria uses to have her designs printed on to t-shirts can be costly and requires an investment of money to produce stock. Whether it be t-shirts, publications or retailing, fan producers have to invest before they are able to make money. This involves a high level of risk. Produce too much stock and you might not be able to sell it, produce too little and you will not have enough to sell. The previous case study of the *Tough to Kill* publication has demonstrated that MOD services can help to reduce this risk and increase the potential for profit. In this case study I refer to two examples of informal enterprise that use the POD website *Spreadshirt* to produce t-shirts. The first example focuses on Jonny, who uses *Spreadshirt* as a more cost effective and efficient way to produce t-shirts inspired by European cult cinema. In the second example I discuss how I used *Spreadshirt* to create my own t-shirts, document the processes that are involved and the problems I encountered.

According to Heinemann et al (2010) *Spreadshirt* was founded in Germany in 2002 as a Web 2.0 business by Lucasz Gadowski, a University student. It is one of a number of different websites that provide a platform for both individuals and commercial companies to sell customised clothing and

accessories, others including *CafePress*⁷⁵ and *Zazzle*⁷⁶. Though offering a range of clothing and other items that can be customised by users, it is most well known for producing customised t-shirts. *Spreadshirt* offers its users a range of printing options. Its most basic service allows for the production of a one-off design that can be printed on a variety of different items. A customer is able to upload an image they have created, choose an item they would like it to be printed on, such as a t-shirt or an apron, decide where they would like the design to be positioned and, finally, pay for the item to be produced. The item will be then be printed by *Spreadshirt* and mailed to the customer. Customers can choose from three different printing methods: flex, flock and digital printing. Flex is the most durable whilst digital is least durable. Flex and flock designs are produced by being cut from coloured foil and are then applied to the t-shirt using a heated press. The limitation of these methods is that only three colours can be used. Digital printing is used when photographs or colour designs need to be transferred. Here the design is sprayed directly onto the item of clothing.

Spreadshirt presents the opportunity for enterprise. Any user can setup a *Spreadshirt* shop, where they can upload three designs and create any items of clothing that uses these designs. These items are then made available for sale in their online shop. Like *Lulu*, *Spreadshirt* take a commission for each sale to cover the costs of printing and clothing. The user is then able to set the price that the item will sell at and determine the amount of profit that they will make from each sale. Users wishing to add more than three designs to their *Spreadshirt* store can become a premium members at the cost of \$10 per month. Heinemann et al (2010) estimate that there are over 300,000 “shop partners” that “make up a *Spreadshirt* community that continues to grow along with the business (110).

⁷⁵ <http://www.cafepress.co.uk/>

⁷⁶ <http://www.zazzle.co.uk/>

Since becoming a fan in the 1980s, Jonny has been involved in many different forms of European cult cinema fan production, producing a fanzine before starting the website *LL&L*⁷⁷. This website acts as an online fanzine, containing reviews, news, galleries of poster art, but it is mostly well known for its online forum. In addition to the website, Jonny has also produced small runs of screenprinted t-shirts, using a contact who runs a printing shop. When producing a t-shirt using the screenprinting method, Jonny will post the design on the *LL&L* forum to gauge how many members will want to purchase a shirt. The more people who would like a t-shirt, the cheaper the price will be per shirt. Once he has determined how many he needs to produce, he informs members of the price of the t-shirt and asks for them to pay upfront using *PayPal*. This money will then be used to fund the production of the t-shirts. Jonny makes very little profit from screenprinted t-shirts, roughly £2 per shirt. Though profit is not the incentive for making the t-shirts, Jonny finds the process of producing screenprinted t-shirts to be very time consuming. He has to produce the design, if the design has more than one colour he has to separate the colour elements so that they are ready for screenprinting. He then has to tout for interest, collect the money, collect the t-shirts and dispatch them. When Jonny discovered *Spreadshirt* he saw it as an ideal way to continue making t-shirts without any of the added “hassle”.

Jonny found using *Spreadshirt* to be “very easy”. The only difficulty he encountered was to learn how to create ‘vector graphics’, the design format accepted by *Spreadshirt*. He was able to acquire this skill by using online guides and tutorials. Jonny produced 12 designs, the majority of which are influenced by European cult cinema. These designs either feature the title of a film, such as the designs for *A Lizard in a Woman’s Skin* (*Una lucertola con la pelle di donna*, Lucio Fulci, 1971) or *Rome Armed to the Teeth* (*Roma a mano armata*, Umberto Lenzi, 1976) or a European cult icon, such as actor Maurizio Merli or Christina Lindberg, pictured in figure 8.6. Jonny liked how

⁷⁷ Email interview with Jonny conducted 23 May 2012.

Spreadshirt allows the buyer to customise their shirt: “they can choose their colour, the type of print (flock or cad cut vinyl) and the type of garment” and that there is “a nice choice for the buyer to get something more or less unique to them”. When determining the pricing of the t-shirts, Jonny wanted to balance selling the t-shirts at an affordable price in line with other t-shirt sellers, but to also make a profit. Jonny revealed another reason for selling on *Spreadshirt*. He saw it as way to generate money to help pay for the web hosting costs of *LL&L* rather than to “put money in my own pocket”. Since starting the store five years ago he has sold 67 t-shirts. Jonny did not want to reveal how much profit he has made, but did state that it has generated enough revenue to cover his web hosting costs.



Figure 8.6: Examples of Jonny’s *Spreadshirt* designs

Being curious about the *Spreadshirt* process, I decided to start my own *Spreadshirt* store to sell designs that I would produce. Creating an account and an online store was simple. Like Jonny, the major hurdle that I encountered was the producing of vector graphics. Having very little experience, I followed online tutorials and guides that demonstrated the process. Jonny also offered some guidance. I produced three designs that used the titles of three European cult films: *Deep Red* (*Profondo Rosso*, Dario Argento, 1975), *The Killer Reserved Nine Seats* (*L'assassino ha riservato nove poltrone*, Giuseppe Bennati, 1974) and *Suspiria* (Dario Argento, 1977), pictured in figure 8.7. The designs were created by cutting out the logos from the posters for each film using Adobe Photoshop and then converting them into vector graphics using Adobe Illustrator. Once the designs were uploaded and approved by *Spreadshirt*, I was able to add the designs to my *Spreadshirt*

store⁷⁸. I created a t-shirt for each design and also a hooded sweatshirt for the *Profondo Rosso* design. It was not my intention to make money from this activity, but to understand the *Spreadshirt* process. *Spreadshirt* charge £10.70 to produce a t-shirt. I chose to sell the t-shirt for £13.70, setting a profit of £3 per t-shirt. *Spreadshirt's* cost to produce the hoodie was £21.70, again I added £3 profit, selling it for £24.70. I advertised a link to my *Spreadshirt* store on my own personal website and on a European cult cinema discussion forum that I frequent.



Figure 8.7: My *Spreadshirt* designs

After opening the shop and making the items available for sale, I received an email from *Spreadshirt's* legal department; this informed me that my *Suspiria* design had been rejected:

“We're concerned that there is a possibility your designs are copyright protected by a third party. We have temporarily (sic) deactivated the above designs, and all products created with these designs, from your shop. When you uploaded your designs, you confirmed that you hold usage rights for this design. In order to uphold our legal obligations as a platform provider, we require written confirmation of this right. This is also to your advantage as fines for copyright violations are unlimited, with a minimum level of 1000 EUROS.”

The email gave me further instructions of the process I would need to go through if I could confirm that I was the rights holder. Believing that film titles were exempt from copyright I responded to the email and received a reply:

“I'm sorry but such designs are protected as a work title. The use of copyrighted text or designs without consent can lead to high monetary penalties. Above all, we want to protect you from these penalties. Sometimes the rights owner allows limited use of the design or text. If you can provide us with documentation allowing this limited use, we can activate the design. Please always make sure

⁷⁸ <http://dementedproductions.spreadshirt.co.uk/>

that you are not infringing on a third party's copyright when you upload a design. We hope that you understand our precaution.”

This highlights one of the limitations of using an MOD service such as *Spreadshirt*. Despite having designs of other film titles and likenesses of stars of European cult cinema available for sale on the site, my *Suspiria* design was deemed to be in breach of copyright law.

Spreadshirt were quick to remove my design from the store, but it appears that this policing is a highly inconsistent process. I assume that my *Suspiria* design attracted attention from *Spreadshirt's* legal team because a member of their staff was familiar with the title of the film. Compared to some of the titles used in Jonny's store and mine, *Suspiria* is probably the most celebrated of all the films. However, a number of Jonny's designs are directly taken from poster art and have not been removed from the site. *Spreadshirt* provide guidelines that detail what designs are acceptable. These are separated into two categories, ethical and legal and are listed in figure 8.8. Evidently, *Spreadshirt's* goal is self-preservation and to ensure that their reputation is not damaged by allowing offensive designs or those that are in breach of copyright law. According to Jenkins (1992a), the conflict of property rights and fan production is evident in “every media fandom” yet many fans find ways to circumvent intellectual property issues and therefore avoid potential prosecution (32). A year later, I uploaded the *Suspiria* design to my *Spreadshirt* shop to see if it would now be accepted. This time no email was received and the design remains available in my *Spreadshirt* shop. Fan producers who use MOD services, such as *Lulu* or *Spreadshirt*, have to either create designs that carefully avoid breaching copyright or find ways to circumvent *Spreadshirt's* policies. Respect of copyright is evidently an important factor for fans using MOD services to publish their artefacts, having to negotiate it if they are to use the services effectively.

<p style="text-align: center;">Ethical</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>We will not print...</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Legal</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>We will not print...</i></p>
<p>Nudity. We will not print any body parts that would normally be covered by underclothing. We will not print very graphic artistic renditions of persons having sex or their sexual body parts. There will also be times when we will not print a picture of some sort of nudity just because it is in very bad taste.</p>	<p>Unofficial merchandise.</p>
	<p>Names, logos, pictures or other intellectual property of musical groups or musical artists.</p>
<p>Child nudity .</p>	<p>Names, logos, pictures, or other intellectual property of sports teams, colleges/universities, clubs or organizations such as Boston Red Sox, Girl Scouts of America, or Princeton University.</p>
<p>Hate material. Hate material is anything that speaks to hate of any people, creed or race.</p>	<p>Trademarks, names or logos for companies. For example you can not use the name Coca Cola, Coke “It’s the Real Thing” or the design from the cans.</p>

Figure 8.8: Spreadshirt’s design guidelines⁷⁹

8.6. New opportunities for fan enterprise – crowdfunding Eurocrime

Having discussed two examples of informal enterprise that use MOD services and identified the opportunities they present for fan producers, I now close this chapter by looking at another online demand and supply service, the crowdfunding website *Kickstarter*, and how it was used to fund a documentary on Italian crime films. In 2012, the science-fiction comedy film *Iron Sky* (Timo Vuorensola, 2012) was theatrically released. *Iron Sky* differed from other theatrical titles released in 2012 in that it was produced collaboratively in conjunction with fans. Using the website *Wreckamovie*⁸⁰, film fans could be involved in the production of the film by completing a series of tasks set by the producers. These involved designing posters, sourcing ideas for events, research

⁷⁹ Taken from: <http://www.spreadshirt.com/help-C1328/categoryId/310/articleId/841>

⁸⁰ <http://www.wreckamovie.com/>

and suggesting what should be included in the film sets. By engaging in these tasks, film fans were able to participate in the making of a commercial feature film. This model is known as ‘crowdsourcing’, where producers are able to outsource tasks to the audience who, in turn, are able to collaborate in the production. These tasks are advertised on crowdsourcing websites such as the aforementioned *Wreckamovie*, which organises collaborative film production. Fans could also participate in the production of *Iron Sky* by helping to fund its production. Though having already received €6.3 million (£5.5 million) in funding from traditional film funding streams, the producers chose to also seek an additional €900,000 (£780,000) funding from the audience. Supporters were able to advance purchase one of 2000 “war bonds” that would entitle them to a DVD of the film, a certificate confirming their investment, official dog tags and the gratitude of the producers. This would be the return for their investment; they would have no stake in the final film. The funds generated from the advance sale of war bonds would go towards financing the film.

As well as crowdsourcing, *Iron Sky* serves as an example of crowdfunding, what Lawton and Marom (2010) define as “social networking meets venture financing”. Cunningham (2012) is of the opinion that crowdfunding “levels the playing field” for small businesses and minority groups that struggle to receive funding from traditional revenue streams. Though *Iron Sky* was only partly crowdfunded, there are a wealth of projects that have been fully funded through crowdfunding websites. This final case study examines how the crowdfunding website *Kickstarter* was used by a fan of European cult cinema to help fund a documentary on the *poliziotteschi*. I outline how crowdfunding websites have the potential to help fans gain funding for their productions and gain greater exposure to their work.

Since the economic downturn of the late 2000s, funding for cultural projects has drastically reduced (Davila, 2012). This has led to the creation of alternative funding streams to help fund cultural

projects that might ordinarily struggle to be funded, crowdfunding being an example of one such alternative funding stream. Crowdfunding follows a model that is very similar to the fundraising methods that are used by charities as it relies on raising money from the general public. The internet has enabled crowdfunding to thrive and become a genuine stream of funding for cultural producers. Prior to the rise of crowdfunding websites, there have been a number of examples where filmmakers and musicians have setup websites encouraging people to contribute money towards a project that they are working on. In return, the funder will usually be offered some form of reward for their contribution, a copy of the film on DVD or a digital download of the album, for example. However, these early examples of crowdfunding relied heavily on the reputation of the project creator, this being an indicator of trust to the potential funder. These were often reputable people with a track record of successful production that already had an established fan following. There was no fear that the investor would run away with the money that they collected. The British rock band Marillion were one of the first to use crowdfunding as a way to help fund a US tour. According to *Social Media Week*, Marillion were able to raise \$60,000 using the crowdfunding method⁸¹.

More recently a number of crowdfunding websites have emerged to address this issue of reputability, such as the websites *Kickstarter* and *Indiegogo*⁸² or the UK based sites *PleaseFund.Us*⁸³ or *Sponsume*⁸⁴. These websites allow anyone to submit an idea for a creative project, providing that it follows the website's guidelines. A funding target is then set along with a deadline for when this target needs to be reached. Those interested in the project are able to make donations through the website and become 'backers'. To entice backers, the project creator will offer incremental rewards. This might be a copy of the published artefact or an opportunity to have

⁸¹ Taken from: <http://socialmediaweek.org/blog/2011/12/a-social-history-of-crowdfunding/#.UQ6OVej0VoQ>

⁸² <http://www.indiegogo.com/>

⁸³ <http://www.pleasefund.us/>

⁸⁴ www.sponsume.com

a limited edition copy that has been produced specifically for them. The higher you donate the higher the credit you will receive. Some projects will offer very specific rewards, such as invites to events or the chance to feature in the production, in order to help attract high amounts of funding. One of the benefits of adding a project to a crowdfunding website is that it is relatively risk free. If the project does not receive sufficient funding the funds are not collected; if the full amount is raised the funds are collected. *Kickstarter*, for example, use *Amazon Payments* as the method to collect money from the backers. *Kickstarter* take 5% of these funds and *Amazon* charges between 3-5% for their payment service. The remaining funds go directly to the project creator. Since the launch of *Kickstarter* in 2009, *Kickstarter* has raised approximately \$450 million dollars for over 35,000 projects⁸⁵. As with any form of investment, there is an element of risk for the backer. Creators are legally obligated to complete projects. If projects are not completed, backers can pursue legal action to reclaim their money. Despite this risk, crowdfunding is a growing platform for independent production and, potentially, for fan production. By devising a project that will resonate with fans, the producer can expect support and enthusiasm that will not just provide funding but also help to give the project greater exposure to the wider fan community. An example of this is the *Eurocrime* (Mike Malloy, 2012) documentary. I interviewed Mike Malloy, the producer of *Eurocrime*, to gain a greater understanding of why and how he used *Kickstarter* to fund *Eurocrime*⁸⁶.

Mike's interest in European cult cinema came through watching films on VHS in his youth. Once he graduated University, Mike wrote a book about the American actor Lee Van Cleef in 2005. As well as starring in American films, Van Cleef was also known for starring in a number of *Spaghetti Westerns* during the 1960s. Following the publication of this book, Mike received a book contract for a project that was named *Movie Tough Guys of the 1970s*. The book was intended to be an

⁸⁵ <http://www.kickstarter.com/help/faq/kickstarter%20basics?ref=nav>

⁸⁶ Email interview conducted with Mike Malloy 18 May 2012.

encyclopaedia that would contain entries for each ‘movie tough guy’. Mike was two years into the project when his laptop and hard drive were stolen, losing all of the content he had written. As part of the research for this project, Mike was watching films from the Italian *poliziotteschi* cycle. Like many of the other Italian film cycles, such as the *giallo* and the *Spaghetti Western*, the *poliziotteschi* were low budget imitations of popular American films, such as *Dirty Harry* (Don Siegel, 1971), *The French Connection* (William Friedkin, 1971) and *Death Wish* (Michael Winner, 1974), that could be sold abroad in addition to being screened in Italy. According to Tris Thompson (2006), the *poliziotteschi* cycle existed primarily in the 1970s and during this period “over 300 cop/crime themed movies” were produced (1). Though the *giallo* and *Spaghetti Western* have received attention in both fan and academic circles, aside from Barry (2004) and a brief discussion found in Celli and Cottino-Jones (2007), the *poliziotteschi* has had little consideration. Because of this lack of attention, Mike thought it would be a strong topic for a filmed documentary contextualising the *poliziotteschi* and containing interviews with the actors and filmmakers involved.

Mike started working on the project in 2007 “before the full extent of the economic collapse”. He initially hoped that the documentary would be largely funded by private investors, but found that he only received “trickles” of private investment that did not provide enough money to cover expenses for the project. Mike had to self-finance to provide the remaining money required. He had received positive interest from “many outlets and broadcasters”, but they were unwilling to provide any support until they had seen the finished documentary: “TONS of projects are seeking to get across the finish line by this method; with the industry being so cautious these days and not offering much in the way of completion moneys, it's not hard to see why”. Still needing a considerable amount of money to finish the documentary, Mike had to find an alternative funding stream. He first heard about *Kickstarter* and crowdfunding through The Kinks documentary *Do it Again* (Robert Patton-Spruill, 2009), which used *Kickstarter* to generate \$5500 (£3500) to complete editing the

documentary. Through 79 backers, *Do it Again* received \$6632 (£4224) of funding through *Kickstarter*; more than original set target. Initially, Mike misunderstood the *Kickstarter* process and was hesitant to use it. He thought that he would have to deal with a number of small-money investors rather than receiving donations. Motivated by an eager fan, he decided to start a *Kickstarter* page⁸⁷ to raise what he thought would be “finishing funds” that would go towards paying for licensing clips used in the documentary. The *Kickstarter* page for *Eurocrime* is pictured in figure 8.9.



Figure 8.9: *Eurocrime* Kickstarter page

After consultation with his executive producer, Mike set a funding target of \$10,000 (£6370). He admitted that this target was very much “a stab in the dark”. Seven incremental rewards were

⁸⁷ <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1511274331/eurocrime-cinema-documentary-needs-to-begin-licen>

offered as a way to attract funders. These are illustrated in figure 8.10 with indications of how many donations were received for each increment.

Increments	Rewards	Funders
\$5 or more	Exclusive email or blog updates on the project	2
\$25 or more	Exclusive email/blog updates on the project plus free mp3 download of select tracks from the original EUROCRIME! Soundtrack	4
\$50 or more	All of the above, plus a 'Thank You' in the film credits	4
\$100 or more	All of the above, plus exclusive access to previews of rough cuts of selected film sequences and a DVD of the documentary (once released) signed by the director	26
\$1000 or more	All of the above, plus a limited edition screen-printed EUROCRIME! poster signed by a EUROCRIME! interviewee	0
\$3000 or more	All of the above, plus Associate Producer credit in the head credits of the documentary (and on IMDB)	3
\$5000 or more	All of the above, plus Executive Producer credit in the head credits of the documentary (and on IMDB), plus 2 VIP passes to Austin's FANTASTIC FEST 2010	0

Figure 8.10: Incremental rewards for *Kickstarter* donations to the Eurocrime documentary

Over a period of three months, the project received the amount of funding that was required. In all, the *Kickstarter* page generated \$14,600 (£9300) worth of funding, \$4,600 (£2930) more than what Mike had set as his goal. Mike did acknowledge that he did not receive all of the \$14,600 as *Kickstarter* and *Amazon* had taken their commission, an estimated 10% of the overall fund. Mike said he was “happy to live” with the overall commission, but was frustrated by the verification process he had to go through to receive the donation payments made through *Amazon*. This was the only major hurdle encountered throughout the entire process. The documentary has only recently been finished, taking much longer to complete than Mike had anticipated. Though it has taken more money than what was raised to complete the project, Mike believes that the *Kickstarter* process has had an unexpected benefit. The *Kickstarter* page has been used to demonstrate to potential distributors that there is market demand for the project and has also raised the profile of the documentary.

Mike's overall experience of using *Kickstarter* was very positive, giving him an easier method to raise funds in a difficult economic market. He would like to use it again when he starts work on a future documentary, but believes that "people are feeling a crowdfunding-solicitation fatigue in general". This fatigue can be evidenced through the amount of projects that are seeking funding on a whole range of crowdfunding websites. Mike is convinced the process works particularly well to fund popular culture documentaries because they have "existing, built-in audiences because of their subject matter" and that "narrative filmmakers have a much tougher time of it". Mike's *Eurocrime* documentary demonstrates the possibilities crowdfunding presents for fan producers. As they are producing for a pre-existing audience, they can expect to get support providing that the proposed artefact has value for them.

There have been other European cult inspired *Kickstarter* projects. The modern day *Spaghetti Western The Scarlet Worm* (Michael Fredianelli, 2012) was part funded using *Kickstarter*⁸⁸. The film features two recognisable *Spaghetti Western* stars; this was used as the 'hook' to help attract backers. \$2,735 (£1740) of funding was received from 21 backers, again relying on European cult cinema fans for support. Though not all projects meet the required funding. The *giallo* fan film *Giallo Girl* was proposed on *Kickstarter* by Dustin Austen in 2012⁸⁹. Despite providing a detailed outline of the project, a mock up poster and short promotional video, *Giallo Girl* only received \$1602 (£1020) from 24 backers, \$1398 (£890) short of the \$3000 (£1911) target. *Kickstarter* is becoming an increasingly popular funding stream for cultural producers and an alternative to traditional streaming funds that have become increasingly diminished following the recession. Rather than having to convince a venture capitalist to support a project, crowdfunding allows the producer to connect directly with their audience. This can create a bond between the audience and

⁸⁸ Link to the *Kickstarter* page for *The Scarlet Worm*: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/966139435/feature-length-western-the-scarlet-worm>

⁸⁹ Link to the *Kickstarter* page for *Giallo Girl*: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/118806345/giallo-girl>

the producer, also giving the donator a stake in the product. In chapter seven I briefly considered how crowdfunding might be a way for fans and owners of independent DVD labels to collaborate and build trust between the two parties. Donations of work could exist alongside financial donations, certain incremental rewards being provided for subtitles or a DVD cover, for example. Such an approach might help determine whether it is commercially viable for unreleased *gialli* to be published on DVD. Crowdfunding is yet another example of how the fan can become a funded producer of an artefact in the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production.

8.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided case studies of informal enterprise within the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production to demonstrate how fan producers are using online technologies that make enterprise less risky and can have an economic benefit. I have distinguished between two different kinds of informal enterprise, those that operate using the traditional economic of supply and demand and those who are using MOD technologies, a model I referred to as demand and supply. For the latter, I used the examples of *Crystal Plumage*, a UK based online store that specialises in selling DVDs, fan publications and movie soundtracks, and Daria's online shop that sells *giallo* inspired t-shirts. Both of these enterprises are part-time operations, but have high ambitions. Any money generated from sales is used to invest in more stock to try and make the companies grow. However, by using the supply and model, both of these companies have a high level of risk; they are investing in product that might not sell. The example of Daria's t-shirt production website demonstrated some of the risks that are involved in setting up an online enterprise selling fan produced artefacts. Daria's own *giallo* inspired t-shirts have high initial production costs but operate on an economy of scale: the more t-shirts she is able to sell, the more profit she will be able to make from her enterprise. The high setup costs involved in screenprinting

t-shirts mean that early printings are expensive. As Daria is relying on selling to a niche market, the risk of losing money is quite high. I have identified this as being the main difficulty for fan producers that use the traditional supply and demand economic model. Instead, using a demand and supply model has more potential benefits for the fan producer.

I used two case studies of MOD services, the POD website *Lulu* and the clothing printer *Spreadshirt*, and discussed how these have been used by fan producers to manufacture and distribute their artefacts. David's use of *Lulu* to publish *Tough to Kill*, a book focused on Italian action films, and Jonny's use of *Spreadshirt* to print t-shirts inspired by European cult cinema demonstrated how MOD services can aid fan production. Using MOD services can reduce economic risk. David did not have to invest money in an initial print run of *Tough to Kill*, which he would not have been able to do because of the high setup costs, and Jonny no longer had to produce costly screen printed t-shirts that made little profit. The services gave them greater control over how they sell their products, setting profit margins suitable for them. My own use of *Spreadshirt* indicated how easy it is to use MOD services. To fully benefit from these services, the fan producer needs to be able to use computer design software. *Tough to Kill* has the appearance of an amateur produced publication, this being explained by David's admitted lack of skill in using design software. However, Jonny's self-taught skills in using Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator, software used by design professionals, enable him to produce t-shirt designs. In the final case study, I looked at how a specialist documentary on the *poliziotteschi* was produced using the crowdfunding website *Kickstarter*. Director Mike Malloy was able to generate a significant amount of funds from European cult cinema fans to complete the project, something he was unable to do using traditional approaches to funding.

All of these examples show how the Web creates different opportunities for informal enterprise. Though all of these examples, excluding the *Eurocrime* documentary, generate profit, they do not make enough profit to enable the fan to make a full time living out of their fandom. However, MOD and crowdfunding websites such as *Kickstarter* demonstrate the potential for the fanpreneur to benefit economically from their fandom by carefully using these services. Well designed books or magazines on European cult cinema, such as those produced by FAB Press, could be distributed through *Lulu*, a variety of clothing items featuring European cult cinema designs could be sold through *Spreadshirt* and future documentaries and DVD releases could potentially be funded using *Kickstarter*. The only limitations are fan creativity and the policies MOD and crowdfunding websites have that dictate what can and cannot be produced. As fan produced artefacts can contravene copyright by reproducing copyrighted images and sounds, fans have to find ways to circumvent these or produce texts that do not breach copyright. Perhaps the greatest potential these services provide is for allowing cult texts to continue to reach the market place. The challenging global economy means that independent DVD producers, for example, need to keep their costs low to be able to generate profits that sustain their businesses. In this chapter and the previous chapter I have indicated some of the economic challenges DVD labels specialising in the release of European cult cinema currently face, dealing with rights owners that demand high amounts of money to license films and a small market. For example, a DVD label could use a crowdfunding website to fund their next DVD release, collaborating with fans willing to contribute their labour in return for a specialised reward, and distribute the DVD using an MOD service such as *CreateSpace*. Already established musicians and comedians, such as the American musician Jonah Matranga and American stand-up comedian Louis C.K are using online tools as way to distribute their productions. Whilst they may already have strong, established fan bases that support them by buying their products, it still demonstrates how the Web can facilitate what I describe as informal enterprise, which can potentially lead to formal enterprise. I now move on to

conclude this dissertation, discussing how the fan activities I have explored in this and the previous three chapters demonstrate that fans are culturally and economically making European cult cinema.

CONCLUSION

From researching the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production, using a model of data collection that I refer as ‘combined ethnography’, I have found that fans are not just producing artefacts relating to European cult cinema; they are culturally and economically *making* what has become known as European cult cinema. In this sense, it is the fans that make European cult cinema as an economic category through their cultural production. The purpose of this dissertation has been to move away from celebrating fandom as a wholly cultural activity and to instead understand fandom as a cultural and economic process. To do this, I introduced my concept of the alternative economy. The term ‘alternative’ is not used to indicate activism, but to instead distinguish fan industry from mainstream industry. I identified an alternative economy of fan production as having three key features: firstly, advancement of digital technologies have turned fans into creative workers and, in some cases, entrepreneurs; secondly, fan produced texts are exchangeable artefacts, being exchanged as gifts and commodities; and thirdly rules and regulations, such as intellectual property laws, are circumvented and manipulated. Evidence of these features have been demonstrated in the past four chapters, which focused on different practices found in the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production.

In chapter five, where I historicised the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production in the UK, I focused on how three fantreneurs started enterprises that produced and distributed fan publications relating to European cult cinema. I suggested that European cult cinema fandom was formed out of a culture of horror fanzine production, particularly in the US but later in the UK, and also a proliferation of European cult films being released on the new VHS format. Two of these enterprises, Media Communications and Dark Publications, were formed using the Contrastive Government’s Enterprise Allowance Scheme, which provided £40 per week to support business development, while FAB Press, the third fan enterprise, was started by Harvey

Fenton as a sole trader operation before later becoming a limited company. Though each of these fan enterprises initially produced hand made fanzines, they progressed to small press publications designed by computer software and professionally printed. All three were self-taught in their use of technology, as Fenton described, “making it up as I went along”. For these three fans, their fandom has become a formal, full-time operation. FAB Press, for example, has become fully commodified, now an established publisher of ‘high-end’ books.

Following the mass adoption of the internet in the early 2000s, fan publications were being replaced by websites that were cheaper and easier to produce. Fan producers responded to this by diversifying their production. While Fenton responded by producing ‘high-end’ books, Roman Nowicki, director of the fan enterprise Media Communications, produced fan-films inspired by European cult cinema, particularly the *giallo*. This was the focus of chapter five, where I discussed how Nowicki took advantage of the fan demand for releases of *gialli* on the new medium of DVD by producing the *Fantom Kiler* films. I described this as ‘slash production’, a form of fan-film production that gives specific attention to serial murder and reproduces the serial killer as a fan object for both pleasure and profit. Nowicki’s extreme representation of the serial killer, the antagonist of many *giallo* narratives, was a conscious decision to attract the attention of European cult cinema fans and to sell the film. Despite having no filmmaking experience, Nowicki self-financed the film and produced it himself, using digital technology. By distributing *Fantom Kiler* and its sequels in the UK without BBFC certification, Nowicki’s practice is legally questionable. To distance himself from the film, Nowicki created a myth that the film was produced in Poland and disguised its production history. The mystery surrounding the film also generated interest amongst European cult cinema fans. Slash production is now Nowicki’s primary economic activity, replacing fan publications.

Chapter seven gave attention to another form of enterprise in the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production that also raises moral questions about fan production. In this chapter, I argued that fans were responding to the decline of commercial DVD releases of *gialli* by archiving, reappropriating and releasing films themselves through online file-sharing websites. To demonstrate this I focused on the BitTorrent file-sharing website *CineTorrent*, which has a particular structure and set of rules and regulations that encourage and reward their members to archive and reappropriate cult film. I described *CineTorrent* as a factory of fan production, requiring members to ‘work’ to maintain their membership to the site. This work includes the ‘seeding’ of files to others, the archiving of rare material or producing fansubs, fandubs or fan DVDs. Much of this work resembles professional practice and requires a heavy investment of fan labour. There are members who digitally remaster video, overdub audio, produce fansubs, author DVDs and design DVD covers using computer software. These artefacts are then distributed as gifts amongst its membership, making films available that remain currently unreleased on DVD. *CineTorrent* are constructing an exhaustive archive of cult film where the *giallo* has a significant role.

In chapters five, six and seven, I have shown how the World Wide Web has significance for fan production. I have discussed how fantreneurs started websites to sell their products in chapter five, how Nowicki distributes slash production on his websites and how fans are sharing cult film on websites such as *CineTorrent*. Online enterprise is the focus of chapter eight, where I considered how fan producers are distributing their artefacts through online fan enterprises, or, as I termed them, ‘informal enterprises’. I used the term informal enterprises to differentiate from the fan enterprises discussed in chapter five. Informal enterprises differ as they are not registered companies or formed using enterprise schemes. From looking at two informal enterprises, *Crystal Plumage* and Daria’s *Giallo T-Shirts*, I showed how these part-time operations used the economic model of ‘supply and demand’ and how this carried economic risk. I then looked at informal enterprises that used MOD services, such as *Lulu*, *Spreadshirt*, to manufacture and distribute their

products, describing this model as ‘demand and supply’. I suggested that this model can make informal enterprise more sustainable and less risky as it requires little monetary investment. I closed the chapter with the example of the *Eurocrime* documentary crowdfunded through *Kickstarter*. Such services show how fan production is becoming increasingly commodified, presenting new opportunities for fan enterprise.

9.1. Making European cult cinema

In chapter three, I discussed the processes through which European cult cinema has been defined. I found that European cult cinema is a category defined by fans and has been further enhanced by fancademic study. From my research, the fans I spoke to were unaware of the exact origins of the term, many believing it to have been first used a category topic on online message boards in the late 1990s; incidentally this was also my first exposure to the term. When the films now labelled by fans as European cult cinema were first produced, they were not known as European cult cinema. As Newman (1988) has indicated, many of these films were responses to popular American cinema, being produced cheaply and quickly to exploit their popularity. In addition to being screened in Italy, they could also be sold back to America and other countries. These films were not produced as European cult cinema, or to be fan objects, they inadvertently became fan objects. It is through fan activity that European cult cinema has been made and continues to be made.

The fantreneurs discussed in chapter five that produced fan publications relating to European cult cinema fanzine helped to make what is now known as Euro-cult, or, as I use in this dissertation, European cult cinema. The publications gave exposure to films from Italy, France, Britain, Germany and Spain that were not commonly referred to in mainstream publications. At first, fanzines such as *Cold Sweat*, *Delirium* and *Giallo Pages*, adopted a fan discourse that focused on the more lascivious aspects of the films, being rather bawdy and jocular in their tone. Later

fanzines, for example *Eyeball*, *Flesh and Blood* and *Necronomicon*, adopted a semi-academic discourse, treating the films more seriously than previously by not just focusing on the excessive elements of the films. Once affectionately being referred to as 'Eurotrash' by the fan publication *European Trash Cinema*, by the late 1990s, the umbrella category used to describe cult films from Western Europe was European cult cinema. In chapter three, I argued that this was a reaction by fans to the use of trash as an academic term.

The generation of such a term as European cult cinema shows how fans are actively involved in creating fandoms. However, examples such as European cult cinema show how fans can make fandoms that have an economic value. I have shown how producers of fan publications were involved in cultural production related to their fandom that additionally had an economic benefit. The fan enterprises discussed throughout this dissertation demonstrate the existence of an alternative economy; a market that has been created by fans for fans. From fan publications there came film festivals and fairs such as *Eurofest*. The accessibility of digital technologies led to a further diversification in fan production, meaning that a greater variety of fan artefacts could be produced and exchanged as commodities, films, t-shirts and books, for example. The strength of the economy can be evidenced in how companies outside of the alternative economy were established to produce artefacts to be sold to fans. Independent companies, such as Redemption Films in the UK and later Shameless Films and Arrow Films, have released European cult films on home video media, specifically targeting the market that has been created by fans. I have also showed how fans have responded to changes in the home video market by taking it upon themselves to 'release' films through file-sharing technologies. The final example of fan enterprise in this dissertation showed how the crowdfunding website *Kickstarter* was used by a fan to partially fund a documentary on *poliziotteschi*, Italian crime films. This example shows how fans can support new forms of artefact production and are able to produce texts that move from the alternative economy to the mainstream. European cult cinema has therefore been, and continues to

be, made culturally and economically by its fans. Without the activity of fans such a market would not have existed; they have made what we now understand European cult cinema to be, not film producers or academics. It is this cultural and economic production of fandoms that warrants further academic investigation.

9.2. New directions for fan studies

Researching the alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production has indicated the need for a reconceptualisation of the fan that considers how fans culturally *and* economically make fandoms. To do this, fan studies needs to further consider the economic processes that are involved in fan activity, moving away from the celebratory, fancademic studies that I discussed in chapter one. Only recently have scholars related ideas of political economy to fandom, an area of study that, according to de Kloet and van Zoonen (2007), is much needed. Studies which have adopted such an approach, Meehan (2000) and Murray (2004) for example, suggest that producers have very little agency as they are controlled by media organisations for capitalist good, failing to recognise that fans economically produce. Other studies, such as the work of De Kosnik (2012b), relate ideas of work to fan production. De Kosnik (2012b) uses the concept of free labour, referring to the work of Terranova (2004), to build on Meehan's (2000) and Murray's (2004) approaches to fandom. De Kosnik approaches fan activity as a form of labour that is exploited by owners of media. For De Kosnik, fans show little awareness that they are engaged in acts of labour, she suggests that fans need to show an awareness that they are engaged in acts of work if they are to generate money. Both McKee (2004) and Kacsuk (2011) have shown how fandom can have an economic benefit, with fans making a career out of their fandom. McKee (2004) argues that fan production and mainstream production should not be separated as they are both related. Using the example of *Doctor Who* fandom, he shows how some fans became authors and editors of commercial magazines, playing an important role in furthering the *Doctor Who* canon. Kacsuk (2011) coins the

term 'fantrepreneur' to describe how Hungarian fans of Manga have started media companies relating to their fandom. This dissertation has attempted to build on these studies by further reconceptualising the fan in this manner.

My approach has been to view fandom as an economy, more specifically an alternative economy of fan production, where fans work to produce artefacts that are exchanged as both commodities and gifts. To do this I used a method of data collection, which combined traditional ethnography with virtual ethnography and autoethnography. Using this 'combined ethnography' approach I was able to build on the limitations of past ethnographic approaches to fandom, as suggested by Meehan (2000) and Hills (2002), by being able to gain a deeper interrogation into fan practice. Whilst such an approach allowed me to investigate the different forms of European cult cinema fan production and generate rich empirical data it had some limitations. As the legal status of much of the activities I discuss in this dissertation are uncertain, I needed to change the names of some interviewees, publications and companies. When having to do this, it is inevitable that self-censorship becomes a factor, where changing details can lead the writer to excise information that can have significance. Though I have attempted to avoid this, I have an obligation to protect the identities of my subjects. This has meant that some details have had to be changed, such as the names of interviewees, titles of enterprises and titles of publications. Also, being a fan actively involved in many of the activities I describe in this dissertation, places me in a difficult position. Though autoethnography allowed me to reflect on my own experiences as a fan, it also makes me complicit. Like past scholars, such as Bacon-Smith (1992), I have come to the conclusion that fan production is a difficult area to research because of its questionable legal and moral status. My own status as a fan producer was therefore necessary for me to gain access to research this alternative economy of fan production, but, as I have discussed, it prompts a number of ethical considerations.

The data I collected was interrogated using a theoretical framework that incorporated ideas from cultural studies and political economy: using the concept of an alternative economy of European cult cinema fan production. This enabled me to interpret fandom as a production of meaning, physical artefacts and commodities, therefore understanding fandom as both cultural and economic production. My investigation revealed that fans are not just producing artefacts relating to European cult cinema but are culturally and economically making European cult cinema. I now suggest that this is the direction future studies of fandom need to adopt to consider how fans are not just involved in producing meaning but producing fandoms. It is how fandoms are made that provide the opening for further fan activity and production. Such an approach would be able to indicate whether all fandoms are made in the same or, if not, how they are made differently in countries around the world. Leonard (2005), for example, describes how US fans were involved in the making of anime fandom and enabling it to become a mainstream industry. Culturally and economically studying macro and micro-fandoms relating to a whole range of different media would provide an insight into the activities that take place within them, but also help to understand how fandoms are culturally and economically made.

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APPENDIX A

A selected sample of interview material, featuring a transcription of a face-to-face interview with Harvey Fenton, the director FAB Press and extracts from an email interview conducted with 'Daria', proprietor of the *Giallo T-Shirts* online enterprise. These transcripts have been amended to protect the identifies of the people they mention.

Extract One

Interview with Harvey Fenton, conducted on 28 May 2011 at the *CineExcess V* academic conference, Odeon Cinema, Covent Garden, London.

Interviewer: So what lead to you starting *Flesh and Blood*, the original fanzine?

Harvey: As a hobby I guess. The first issue of *Flesh and Blood*, I produced 200 copies on my dad's photocopying machine and handed them out to people for free, or asked for a donation of 50p if they were feeling generous, outside the Scala Cinema when there was an all night horror film festival. Which I think was called *Splatter Fest*, early '93 I think. So yes, I just wanted to get something out there.

Interviewer: What led to it becoming more, from the photocopy to the introduction of colour and the high quality paper?

Harvey: That was just a growth because I could afford it. Each issue that came out I doubled the print run, and by issue three I decided to print 1000. It's just a matter of economics, because at that point you can afford to print it properly with offset printing rather than photocopying. In fact it probably makes more sense. So yes it's just organic growth really.

Interviewer: How did you design it?

Harvey: The first one I did on an Amiga. I don't know if you remember them?

Interviewer: Oh I do remember Amiga, yes.

Harvey: It was done cut and paste. All I could do on the Amiga was text and I just left spaces and literally just cut them out and stuck them on the piece of paper. *Flesh and Blood* #4 was the first one that I did on a Mac. That was a really old Mac called an LC2, which had, I think, a 250MB hard drive. The only way I could store all the images was on external storage devices called SyQuest drives, which were about £80 each and could store, about, 20 pages. So I'd have to send of a batch of about four of these discs to the printers to get the thing produced.

Interviewer: Were you self taught with the software?

Harvey: Completely.

Interviewer: How did you learn that?

Harvey: I made it up as I went along. I can't describe it any other way. I had a vision in my head of what I wanted on the page. I just worked away at it until I got something approximating it and just learnt as I went along, really.

Interviewer: Were you inspired by any of the other fanzines, or was it completely your own vision?

Harvey: I really liked *Shock Express* and *Eyeball*, in particular. From America I liked *Deep Red*, and Chas Balun. He had the heart and the passion for what he was writing about. I really respected the way he could communicate how exciting it was to see films for the first time. It was his passion and excitement. So definitely those that I just mentioned were the main influences.

Interviewer: So the natural progression from fanzine to say “We’ll be a company then.” Was that the next step in the evolution?

Harvey: I actually first started trading as a sole trader. So this is where you’re getting into the whole issue of business setup. So sole trader is fundamentally you’re working as a self employed person, and all your income goes in your normal tax return at the end of the year. It goes down as self employed earnings. So I didn’t actually set up the limited company until about 2005, I think. I worked as a sole trader for a long time.

Interviewer: Was it through looking how other people had set up their own, like [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]?

Harvey: No, again I made it up. I just made it all up as I went along. I never used any sort of enterprise initiative, never got any funding, and my rule was simply “If I couldn’t afford to print it I didn’t.”

Interviewer: Was it your full time job?

Harvey: When I was setting up *Flesh and Blood* I worked at the Post Office as a sorter. The reason being that my shift was 2pm until 10pm, which meant I had every morning to work and I could phone people. I did all my sales to start with as well. I just got a list of all the Forbidden Planet shops in Britain and phoned them all up. Did individual sales and sold through [REDACTED], and I sold through [REDACTED], and I sold direct to The Cinema Store.

Interviewer: So it would have taken a lot of your time up.

Harvey: Full time. I’d get up in the morning work on the magazine until about one o’clock. Have my lunch, go to the post office, come back, probably do another couple of hours work and that would be my day. I did that for two years and then I went totally self employed when I published ‘Flesh and Blood’ issue seven. I haven’t had a job since.

Interviewer: You’ve got a great job now.

Harvey: Yes, I haven’t worked for anyone apart from myself since then.

Interviewer: Obviously you talk about the Mac and the progression of technology impacting upon design and making it look more professional, but why the hard back books?

Harvey: You see I do more and more high end publications now. Quite frankly, that’s due to the market. The market’s shifted a lot, you’ve got Borders has just

gone etc, a lot of the traditional high street book sellers have gone, and it's been taken over by Amazon.

Amazon are great for an independent publisher because they've got a very efficient inventory stock system, and payment system. So it means I get paid regularly and on time. You're not fingers crossed that someone is actually going to pay you, which is happening.

I used to use Tower Distribution in the early days of *Flesh and Blood* and they're gone. So a lot of these companies were going, they were folding, of course that has an inherent risk.

I like working with Amazon because they're reliable. But it's a double-edged sword, because the way they work is they discount everything. As you know it's their standard policy. That actually reduces the perceived value of your products.

So my way of dealing with that, on a commercial level, is to make my products more high end. So they've got much more inherent value in them, which is why I've gone into the hard backs.

Interviewer: Could you tell me about the process you go through from commissioning to setting up a project such as, for example, *A Gun can Play*?

Harvey: I don't commission anything. It's all through submissions. So I don't go looking for work, I've never had to. There are always people every week. Every week I get new book proposals, 95% of which I turn down, through no fault of the author. But the fact that it takes months to put a book together and I can only do so many in a year. So I have to really pick and chose.

Interviewer: You don't have to give me any exact figures if you don't want to, and I'll perfectly understand. But how much, roughly, does it cost to make the book, for example?

Harvey: A lot. Its five figures, each production.

Interviewer: And how many runs are you looking at per book?

Harvey: I won't give you that information, but I invest more than £10000 in every title. That's as much as I'll be willing to tell you. It's an expensive business.

Interviewer: Do you use a UK company or an international company?

Harvey: I've had books printed in Italy and that didn't work out. So, yes, I tried that for a few titles. There are only three or four decent book printing companies in Britain and I use two of them, one in Scotland and one in the West Country.

It depends because each printing company is set up with different machines. So the one I use in Bath is for the paper backs. I do still do some of those. But for all the high end stuff I go up to Scotland.

Interviewer: What's been your most popular title?

Harvey: *Book of the Dead*.

Interviewer: Really? I've read it on the blurb that you said that.

Harvey: The good thing about that is it's been steady. A lot of books you'll sell very, very well for the first few months and then they'll tail off because you've met the demands. But that one, zombies are just so popular. It's just very steady.

Interviewer: What are your views on piracy of books now and the rise of the use of Kindles and iPads?

Harvey: Well Kindles and iPads aren't bad in their own right if people pay for the content. People involved in pirating a product, of any type, whether it is music, movies or books seem to miss the fact that these things only exist because other people pay for them. If they had their way they wouldn't have anything to pirate because no one would be producing anything anymore.

So, yes, quite frankly I have contempt for people who pirate anything. They're literally helping promote the downfall of the stuff they attest to be interested in. So yes, there's not much more to say about that really. It is theft. Obviously I say that from the point of view of a business man. Most people laugh it off, but they are stealing.

Interviewer: Do you find that your most reliable outlet is to have press website where most people buy from, or is it through Amazon, or you get a lot of fan based purchases?

Harvey: We do pretty well through direct sales.

Interviewer: I always try to buy from you rather than go to Amazon.

Harvey: We do pretty well with direct sales, but Amazon, because it's got a massive reach, it's very visible and they've got a very powerful search engine.

I'll tell you a story about that. The BBC programme 'QI' put out books, and one of theirs was called *Book of the Dead*, for some bizarre reason, a quiz book or whatever it is. Of course as soon as that came up our sales on *Book of the Dead* for Amazon tripled simply because it turned up on the same page search. That's the great thing that Amazon's got, that power to instantly connect people who otherwise might not know about the book, sometimes through sheer chance.

Interviewer: Just to conclude, you enjoy what you're doing and you're continuing doing it for the future?

Harvey: Yes. As long as I can keep it as a profitable business, yes, of course.

Interviewer: You're quite happy with the profit you make at the moment are you?

Harvey: I'm not a millionaire! I'm not going to be doing this. It's a hard way to make a living, in all honesty. It's very hard work, very long hours and it's a low profit margin. As I said, I've got a very high outlay in stock which you then have to cross your fingers and hope is actually going to sell.

With a book the highest cost you take on is setting it up. It's designing it, getting it to the printers, producing the printing plates, setting up the machine. That costs thousands, and thousands, and thousands, so you've got

to run a decent print run to get a unit cost on your product that is going to make sense commercially.

So yes, every book is a risk commercially and the profit margins are low, as I said, because of the massive discounting. But it works. It works just about well enough.

As a designer I'd probably be better off working for a multi-national publishing company and designing books for them. I'm sure they'd pay me a better salary than I make. But I like working for myself.

Interviewer: It's great to see that you're continuing to release these titles. It's been great to see you here as well and useful to have you. I'm really appreciative of your time. Thank you so much for that.

Harvey: You're welcome.

END

Extract Two

Excerpts from an interview with 'Daria', conducted via email on 4 June, 2010 (as this is a direct copy from the email text, spelling, grammatical and formatting errors may be present).

Interviewer: How did you become a fan of Euro-cult/*giallo* cinema?

Daria: I first saw "Suspiria" back as a young thing back in the late 80's. I'd chosen it from the video store with some friends and we went to someone else's house to watch it with a load of people I didn't know. As alcohol etc was also introduced the evening became slightly more challenging than I'd expected. From the moment the film started I was on edge; although I could appreciate the gorgeous colour and described the soundtrack as being 'like gothic spaghetti western' music I found the film terrifying, and spent a lot of it hiding behind a cushion. I should perhaps explain that I used to have nightmares in which there was something horrible on a video that I didn't want to watch but I was being made to! The alcohol etc probably heightened this feeling of terror but I was caught up in this terrifying nightmare world and I didn't enjoy it.

So, cut to late 90's, a friend asked me to recommend a 'really scary horror film. On my prompting they went and bought "Suspiria" and I later watched it with them. I was now amazed at how much for the film I'd actually watched and how beautiful it really was. I then borrowed it and watched it 3 times that weekend (slightly obsessive I must admit). I have bought the film 3 times now. Still, is Suspiria really a Giallo? It certainly galvanised me to search for something similar on the internet, which led me in turn to Tim Lucas' invaluable Video Watchdog site amongst others, and I bought "Blood and Black Lace" as a result. From there the whole world opened up to me. Having been exposed to Christopher Lee's Dracula at a very early age (hmmm not sure if that sounds so good) I loved the idea that Bava was

inspired by the Hammer films of the 50's. Although most of his films are really ghost stories I was intrigued more by the twisted plots and slightly kinky, off beat sensuality of his Gialli, especially "5 Dolls for an August Moon". This is seen to have been Bava's least successful movie, even by the director himself, but I found the mix of humour, kitschy/stylish clothes and location, sex and contrived plot an intoxicating and compelling mix. Each film I saw made me have to find more. I should add here that, although I loved horror films I wasn't a great one for gore and violence (hence the cushion earlier) and the reviews for many Gialli put me off for a while, which is shame because it was a few years before I arrived at my favourite director of the genre Sergio Martino. Most of the films I've seen have not really been that gory or violent in the end, although I've upped the ante now having seen most Argento movies as well as more recent horror films (such as "Haut Tension") without batting an eyelid let alone reaching for that cushion (in fact ask me about Antichrist at a later date). So in the end, I arrived at what I consider to be my favourite, and I think the ultimate Giallo: "The Strange Vice of Mrs Wardh". That is the film that has cemented my passion for Giallo and since then there has been no stopping me.

Interviewer: What inspired you to start *Giallo T-Shirts*?

Daria: There are two of us, [REDACTED] is the other half of GT's. We'd met about 2 years ago when we were both working in a play together (I do some acting and designing for a local theatre group). We ended up having so many film discussions offstage, (he was more into the Asian X-treme stuff) and I just couldn't stop talking about these films, so I ended up making a list of my top 11 Gialli and he, bless him, watched them all. A new fan was born. Last summer my husband (another fan, due to close proximity) was going to some festivals and I wanted to get him some t-shirts and thought "Aha! there must be a Giallo T-shirt out there that I can buy him". I looked and was amazed I could find nothing, well apart from one saying Giallo Fan which really didn't do it for me. Where were the stylish designs that reflected the genre. I'd also connected with many Giallo fans over the internet through the years (mostly through Flickr) and I thought surely there were fans like myself who were desperate for something different that reflected their taste. I mentioned this to [REDACTED], he happens to build websites and online stores and he said "Why don't we do it!" and that was it!

Interviewer: How much does it cost to produce the T-Shirts?

Daria: Well, the design is free, because I'm doing it. The set up fee for the screens depends on the number of colours used and size of print, then there is the unit cost of the blank t-shirt, which varies according to quantity and make. We use Continental who produce a high quality product, have a good range of colours and the right styles for the t-shirts and are eco-friendly. The print run then is also dependent on the number of colours and the quantity we put through. The first run is the most expensive because of the set up cost, and the more t-shirts we print at one time the cheaper it is, but this also means we have to invest in stock before we sell it. Because we are still relatively new, our profit margin is slim, but we feel that the screen-printing route (as opposed to Digital printing) gives us a better quality of product that lasts longer (I've been wearing my "Pronto Pronto" to death, so it's been washed

so many times and this is now giving it a lovely retro look) and length of run.

Interviewer: What software/techniques do you use to produce the T-Shirt?

Daria: I use pen and ink, Flash, Photoshop and Illustrator to produce the designs. Our t-shirts are screen printed by hand.

Interviewer: What are your sales like

Daria: We started Giallo T-Shirts last November. We had good sales over Christmas and have been building since then, hoping to grow as we expand our range and exposure. It is a niche market and being a member of various Giallo forums has been helpful although I've not wanted to use these for blatant advertising, being a Giallo fan myself, so we are looking to other ways of attracting fans and people who just like the look of the t-shirts. However, I'm amazed at the traffic we've been getting from other fan sites. The Giallo Fever Blog (<http://www.giallo-fever.blogspot.com/>) has been a great one for that, [REDACTED]. There's even interest coming from people locally, which surprises me, suddenly people I know are open to watching these films. I should be getting commission on Amazon as I think there might be a blip in Giallo DVD sales from West Yorkshire soon. As a designer, it's great to be able to respond to something I love creatively. Although it's early days, and we're starting small, we're in it for the long run because we think we've got something to contribute to the appreciation of Giallo.

Interviewer: Are you concerned about any of the copyright issues that might surround producing film inspired T-Shirts?

Daria: Titles are not covered by copyright in the EU, and it was the title for a Sergio Martino film which first inspired me, it seemed to me to be the obvious choice, I so wanted one for myself. I'd also done some designs using various stills juxtaposed against each other and using text to tell the story of the film. The cost of printing photographs, the quality of some and the copyright issues led me to think of other ways of defining the genre in images. I liked the ideas of using the titles because they are interesting 'slogans' in themselves they are bizarre but don't give themselves away too easily, somewhat reflecting the Giallo fan. I liked the idea of having the t-shirts as coded references to the subject matter or objects within the films, so they are not as instantly recognisable. The images are to get across the essence of the films - and I hope they work more as designed, interesting and wearable items rather than just being posters printed on a t-shirt as a flat surface.

I've worked on other recognisable faces, trying to capture the essence in as few lines as possible - and with certain people who are still alive it would be great to get their approval/permission, although I feel that we need to make a bit more of a mark first.

Interviewer: Are you involved in any other form of fan activity?

Daria:

Apart from watching the movies (and inviting friends around to indoctrinate them into Giallo) and contributing to forums and generally being in touch with other Giallo fans online I've found that starting this business may actually increase my activity as we've recently been getting in touch with festivals and cinemas about the t-shirts and meeting other fans in the flesh (as it were). Also, having had some flyers printed recently results in me getting into Giallo conversations most places these days.

END

APPENDIX B

Published in the chapter 'Sound and Vision' *Radio Documentary, Fandom and New Participatory Cultures* (co-authored with Sam Coley) from the forthcoming book *The Music Documentary: Acid Rock to Electropop* (Halligan, Edgar, Fairclough-Issacs, 2013).

"Sound and Vision"

Radio documentary, fandom and new participatory cultures

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Introduction

David Bowie has become one of the most mediatised figures in popular music, with many writers focusing on his diverse musical output and the deft manipulation of his public image. Previously published work has often blurred the line between academic and fan, such as biographer David Buckley's *Strange Fascination* in which he calls Bowie "one of the most important artists of the twentieth century"¹. The limited amount of semi-academic analysis that exists in such publications tends to drift between traditional biography and textual analysis, such as James E. Perone's *The Words and Music of David Bowie*². Building on Nick Stevenson's academic study on David Bowie, this article seeks to explore new territory in the analysis of Bowie's influence³. It will investigate the online practices of his fans in relation to content produced for a series of radio documentaries, which focused on Bowie's visit to New Zealand in 1983. David Bowie released his fifteenth studio album "Let's Dance" in April 1983. This marked the beginning of the most commercially successful period of his musical career with the eponymous title track becoming Bowie's fastest selling single; his first to reach number one on both the UK and US album charts.

According to Chet Flippo's book, *David Bowie's Serious Moonlight*, the world tour that accompanied the album, played 96 shows in 59 cities across 15 countries, performing to an estimated audience of nearly three million people⁴. The tour travelled through the South Pacific, reaching New Zealand in November 1983. The audience for Bowie's concert in Auckland was estimated to be 80,000⁵. This represented the biggest single crowd gathering in New Zealand and was credited in the Guinness Book of World Records as "the largest crowd gathering per head of population anywhere in the world"⁶. Shortly after his arrival in New Zealand, Bowie was invited to visit Takapuwahia Marae in Porirua, a sacred meeting place of the native Maoris, becoming the first rock star to be officially welcomed onto a Maori Marae. Twenty-five years after Bowie's, radio documentary producer, and self confessed David Bowie fan, Sam Coley documented this event in two radio documentaries: *Bowie's Waiata* and *Down Under the Moonlight*. Members of the Ngati Toa tribe and professionals involved in the tour were invited to reflect on the event that Bowie himself labelled "one of the most hospitable experiences of my life"⁷. The documentary featured the previously unheard song "Waiata" that Bowie wrote especially for the occasion, as well as the reaction to it of Bowie backing singer Frank Simms who had last heard the song while singing it live, twenty-five years earlier.

This chapter discusses the production of these and other related radio documentaries and audio slideshows, which this chapter will refer to as the 'Bowie project', along with the activities of the Bowie fan community prior to and following the AM broadcast and web-stream of the documentary by Radio New Zealand. The fan website Bowie Down Under⁸ promoted the documentary on their

front page, discussion fora and *Facebook* page, bringing it to the attention of both the antipodean and global Bowie fan community. Following the airing, a member of the Bowie fan community uploaded a recording of the documentary to a file-sharing website. This led to a number of different fan edits of the documentary appearing on YouTube, offering their own interpretations of the broadcast documentary. Drawing on Henry Jenkins' recent work into "new participatory cultures"⁹ and "convergence culture"¹⁰, the relationship between the fan and radio producer as well as fan practices that surrounded the documentary will be critically examined. Particular attention will be awarded to the activities of the David Bowie fan community, namely the ways in which fans promoted, captured and finally reappropriated the documentary. This highlights how audiences were able to continue the story of the documentary through their own forms of media production.

Radio and the Music Documentary

It is worth pointing out that this is the only article in this publication to give attention to the radio documentary. When contrasting the amount of academic work on television or film studies compared to that on radio it is easy to see how academics have tended to favour the moving image over audio¹¹. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify differences and similarities between radio and television documentaries and the role of the radio producer. While this chapter draws from a specific case study relating to radio documentary production, many comparisons can be made with the production of television and film documentaries. Some of these parallels are demonstrated in the book *Speech, Music and Sound*, where Theo van Leeuwen observes that sound dubbing technicians in the radio and film industries follow similar approaches to the categorisation of audio production¹². Both, for example, divide their respective soundtracks into three zones: close, middle and far distance. Similarly, Sarah Sherman's online article *Real(ly) Good Stories* noted the comparison of the structure and concept in both radio and film documentary, which achieved "a singular texture and strength". Sherman observes how certain film documentary production techniques can also be found in radio documentary production, such as the use of stock footage (or audio), interview segments, narration and scene recording¹³.

However, the radio producer can often enjoy far greater creative input than their television counterpart. David Hendy (2004) describes radio production as a less technically complex process than television¹⁴. He goes on to suggest that radio is more of a producer's medium than television since various roles such as researcher, director, editor, sound recordist and presenter are often combined into one role - a multi-skilled radio producer. Robert McLeish notes how this multi-skilling has led to reduced production costs and is part of a production "convergence" enabling more radio programmes to be made by fewer people¹⁵. This freedom has allowed the radio producer to exert a great deal of creative control, as their production decisions do not require the approval and assistance from the numbers of co-producers often required for television and film productions. Of course, the obvious difference between these two forms of media is radio's absence of visual information, leading Andrew Crisell to refer to it as a "blind medium"¹⁶. The listener is required to create their own "pictures" which, as Gulson Kurubacak and T. Volken Yuzer contend, gives them the ability to control and extract their own meanings in their minds¹⁷. This creative participation from the listener, coupled with the ability of music to trigger emotion, can add substantial intimacy to a production and help build a sense of trust between a documentary and its audience.

In the preface to her publication *Why Music Moves Us*, Jeanette Bicknell recounts listeners being "overwhelmed or overpowered by music, reduced to tears, and experiencing chills or shivers and other bodily sensations"¹⁸. By exploiting the strong emotion a fan feels towards certain elements of a favorite song, such as instrumental sections, choruses and bridge sections, the radio producer generates peaks and troughs in the listener's interest which, in turn, drives the narrative forward. The producer, by demonstrating their own fandom for the subject, establishes a connection with the listener, earning or conversely losing their appreciation of a production's worth. The producer

acknowledges the fans intelligence by selecting rare tracks, obscure live recordings, 12 inch remixes, archival recordings and other non-mainstream content, thereby flattering their attention to detail. As we are exploring the relationship between fandom and radio documentary production, it is necessary to consider how profoundly an audience can shape the initial stages of the production process. Guy Starkey sees the radio documentary as a means of communicating a story, which the producer expects an audience to be receptive to¹⁹. This empathy towards the expectations of the fan as well as the general listener can be said to underpin most aspects of the production process²⁰. Hendy contends that the selection of an appropriate approach, which takes into consideration the context and audience of a documentary, is of equal importance to the proposal stage of a project as the actual choice of subject and content²¹.

Bowie's Waiata

The origin of the Bowie project began in 2001 when a unique audio file of Bowie singing live at the Takapuwahia Marae in 1983 was located in the digital news archives of The Radio Network, Auckland, New Zealand. Any further information, regarding the source or context of the audio, was not available. This audio formed the starting point for two AM/FM radio documentaries, one online version with copyright music removed, eight *YouTube* clips and four on-demand web featurettes. The authors of this chapter have identified four audio slideshows created by the Bowie fan community, along with a file shared copy of a documentary captured from the web-stream and a file-shared excerpt continuing the song *Bowie's Waiata*, also taken from the initial web-stream. All of these artefacts were created to acknowledge the 25th anniversary of Bowie's *Serious Moonlight* tour. One of the main documentaries, *Bowie's Waiata* was produced for the public service broadcaster Radio New Zealand, while the second documentary *Bowie Down Under* was produced for The Radio Network's commercial rock station, Radio Hauraki. As both of these stations have very different identifies and attract different audiences both documentaries required a separate approach to production.

The quarter century milestone of the event was utilized as an opportunity to improve the chances of the project being commissioned. The relative freedom of radio programming allowed the documentaries to be scheduled around the 25th anniversary of the subject matter. An example of this is the programming of *Bowie Down Under*, which was broadcast on Radio Hauraki on the same date and hour as the concert began, exactly 25 years after the Auckland show, November 22nd 1983. Both documentaries utilised the same pool of contributors as well as interviews specific to the Marae visit and Auckland concert. These interviews were carried out in New York, Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and edited in Birmingham, UK. The content was mostly captured between August 2007 and September 2008, using a Marantz PMD660 Digital Recorder, a Beyer Dynamic M58 Microphone and was edited using an Adobe Audition 3.0 Multi-track Digital Editor. The soundtrack to the documentaries included tracks taken from the *Let's Dance* album along with various related Bowie hits. Live recordings from the tour were sourced from the DVD release *Serious Moonlight* (2006) directed by David Mallet. Members of the Ngati Toa tribe singing were recorded on location at the Takapuwahia Marae in January, 2008.

The *Waiata* documentary was commissioned to play on Radio New Zealand as an episode in the series "Music 101". The documentary was 26 minutes in duration and was broadcast on Radio New Zealand's AM/FM transmission signals from 4:10 pm, November 22nd, 2008. The *Bowie Down Under* documentary was created in six, sixteen-minute sections for Radio Hauraki FM which, including commercial schedule and news considerations, ran across a two-hour duration, starting at 7:05 pm on the 26th of November, 2008. Both stations were networked across the length of the New Zealand, reaching a national audience. The documentary project has received generally positive feedback via direct email, posted user comments and personal messaging. In June 2009, the

documentary *Bowie's Waiata* was nominated as a finalist the New York Radio Festival 2009, in the "Culture and The Arts" and "Community Portraits" categories.

The New Participatory Culture

Having outlined the production of the documentary discussion will now be given to how the documentary was consumed by David Bowie fans. In his 2006 publications *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers* and *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins considers new practices, particularly how the relationship between fandom and technology is changing in the digital age. In *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers*, he suggests moving from the De Certeauian approach he used in *Textual Poachers*²² and instead draws on the ideas of French scholar Pierre Levy²³. Now, rather than primarily seeing fandom as a form of resistance, Jenkins uses Levy's concept of 'collective intelligence' to understand present day fan activity. From this perspective, audiences work together in order to produce texts, sharing knowledge, ideas and approaches. According to Jenkins, such collaborative activities have come to fruition because of the proliferation of home computing software and the continuing rise in internet access. Jenkins coins this new stage in fan activity the "new participatory culture" and identifies it as having three distinct trends²⁴:

1. New tools and technologies enabling consumers to archive, appropriate, annotate and recirculate media content.
2. A range of subcultures promote DIY media production, a discourse that shapes how consumers have deployed those technologies.
3. Economic trends favoring the horizontally integrated media conglomerates encourage the flow of images, ideas and narratives across multiple media channels and demand more active modes of spectatorship.

It is the first of these two trends that are of particular significance when examining the fan response to *Bowie's Waiata*. The increasing affordability of home computers and components, the open-source software movement and broadband internet access have all been enabling factors in amateur media production. In the analogue age, media audiences had the ability to engage in forms of production, but the high costs of editing equipment and need for specialist training could be prohibitive to those who wished to participate. The rise in home computing, changed this. Many home computers come with basic editing software that allow the user to engage in media production. Other creative software can be downloaded from the internet, both legally and illegally. Audiences can now have access to software and hardware that is used by media professionals to create their own productions and reappropriations.

However, not everyone has the knowledge or skill required to participate in such forms of production. Unlike professionals, they may not have gone through any formal education that has instructed them how to use such technology. This is where the second of Jenkins' trends is important, as there are numerous websites and online communities that are devoted to promoting and encouraging amateur production. Through a simple *Google* keyword search advice can be obtained on how to use software and perform complex tasks that would usually be limited to those who have been trained to use such software. These communities adopt a discourse that promotes and encourages DIY production, producing tutorials that take you through a step-by-step process and offering troubleshooting advice. In the instance of the Bowie project, fans posted comments about where they could source the copies of the documentary, which other fans had managed to capture. These fan communities operate on a global level, meaning that users from all over the

world are able to collaborate. It is worth indicating that within specific fandoms there will often be a specialist subculture that is primarily devoted to DIY production. These are usually fans with a higher level of attachment than other members of the community. We might see these as the experts of community. Jenkins uses the example of Manga and Anime to demonstrate how the internet has enriched production within this specific fandom²⁵. In Manga and anime fandom, some fans outside of Japan have undertaken Japanese language courses in order to be able to both understand Anime and also to produce English subtitles for those films. This illustrates the lengths that some fans are willing to go to in order to participate in their fandom at a much greater level than casual fans.

An important issue surrounding the new participatory culture is that of intellectual copyright. Jenkins suggests that the regulation of copyright laws confuses fans on how they can interact with media. This confusion stems from the lack of understanding mass media producers have for interactive audiences. Fans might be aware of the legal ramifications of reappropriating and recirculating mass media, but still actively engage in the activity. Despite this somewhat militant approach fans take, Jenkins is quick to separate fan production from alternative media production, seeing fan production as celebrating media rather than directly opposing it. Lawrence Lessig adopts a similar view but suggests that in the digital age copyright law has become outdated and now serves to limit the creative opportunities offered by new media technologies²⁶. He refers to the case of an American mother who uploaded a video of her infant son dancing to a Prince song, “Let’s Go Crazy”, to *YouTube*. Universal, the rights owners for song, and infamous for their litigious nature, had the video removed from *YouTube* as it breached copyright and threatened the mother with legal action. Whilst this video does not display any technical skills, it still shows how copyright can impact upon an individual’s creativity. But for every instance where a video is taken down from *YouTube* or an individual is threatened with legal action there are numerous other instances that go by undetected. If anything, the amateur producer has more freedom from copyright than the media professional and has the opportunity to operate free from any limits. This allows for texts to be produced in a whole variety of manners.

The blurring of the boundary between amateur and professional production is a key issue associated with convergence culture. Using the example of amateur producers of fan films entering the mainstream, Jenkins sees convergence culture as the result of media audiences and their use of digital technology²⁷. He believes that we are all participants in convergence culture, but not all audiences will share the same role; some may have greater levels of participation than others. Convergence culture is primarily concerned with the ways in which the use of digital technology is empowering audience members and challenging the dominant forms of mass media production. The World Wide Web, for example, has provided a distribution network for fan produced material. Before the rise of the internet, distribution of fan produced texts would be confined to ‘underground’ networks such as mail order or fan conventions and fairs. Jenkins suggests that the “covert” nature of distribution in this period meant that fan producers escaped the wrath of mass media producers. However, in the internet age, fan production is more overt, it can reach a global audience. In the words of Jenkins, the web has “allowed folk culture to flourish” and has created a “creative revolution”²⁸. Mark Deuze believes that convergence culture is not just about technology and the “technological process”, but it also has a “cultural logic” where the boundaries between production and consumption and passive and active consumption become increasingly blurred²⁹. He also notes that the relationship between producers and consumers has changed as a result of digital technology. For example, mass media producers are encouraging audiences to interact with television programming by offering them channels for communication online. This can be seen in the websites for popular television shows that encourage discussion and debate as well as encouraging fan writing. But also, as indicated earlier in this chapter, producers are increasingly aware of the fan dimension when producing media texts, encouraging response and participation.

The Fan Response

After defining the terms new participatory culture and convergence culture this section will examine the different ways David Bowie fans responded to the *Bowie's Waiata* documentary. Fans responded in three main ways to the documentary: promotion, capturing and reappropriation. The remainder of this section will focus on each of these areas. It will closely interrogate how fans managed to recirculate the *Bowie's Waiata* after its initial broadcast and consider how this shows evidence of the “new participatory culture”.

Promotion.

Before the advent of the internet, fans would often be alerted to upcoming radio documentaries through promotional commercials and by way of announcers “trailer” an upcoming item on the station of broadcast, through publications such as the UK's *Radio Times* or the radio listings section of newspapers. The development of online chat-rooms, dedicated fan-sites, *Facebook* and RSS feeds has offered fans highly detailed information about upcoming programming specific to their particular fandom and provides easy access to previously broadcast radio documentaries, which have been unofficially archived by fans. The online promotion of *Bowie's Waiata* began when a member of the website *Bowie Down Under* saw the documentary listed in the New Zealand publication *The Listener* and alerted the fan community to its upcoming broadcast. On noticing this activity, the website was contacted to promote the *Waiata* documentary and its sister project *Bowie Down Under* to a target audience of fans who had already demonstrated their interest in Bowie's Australasian activities. The site identifies itself as “the David Bowie community of Australia and New Zealand” and was a rich source of pre-production information and photographic content for inclusion in the accompanying audio slideshows. Adam Dean, the webmaster of *Bowie Down Under* was enthusiastic about the project, posting a number of alerts on the site. These posts detailed programme content, musical track listings and new photographs taken during the production process of Bowie's associates from 1983, often holding items of memorabilia from the *Let's Dance* period.

These promotional postings provided an international audience of Bowie fans with specific broadcast information, such as links to the Radio New Zealand and Radio Hauraki websites where the documentaries could be streamed live. The site also provided a simple computer programme that enabled fans to convert New Zealand's standard time zone into that of their own country in order to hear the documentary streaming at the correct time. Other Bowie fan websites picked up on the *Bowie Down Under* story and their chat-rooms and forums featured several postings in which fans questioned certain aspects of Maori culture, such as the meaning of the word “waiata” (song). These online communities gave the producer the opportunity to interact with the fan audience and respond to questions about the production. This included the clarification of song titles and authenticating certain facts contained in the documentaries. There was also fan activity noted on the forums of the official David Bowie website³⁰, although, as an unsanctioned documentary, the project was not officially referred to on this site. The majority of the discussion relating to the documentary found on the official site was focused on the inclusion of unreleased Bowie song *Waiata*. Though only short in length and of poor audio quality, it would appear that this was the ‘hook’ to draw fans to the documentary playing on the completist nature of music fans³¹. From this evidence we can see fans as being promotional agents. By posting in these online fora, the producer was able to build a relationship with the fans and in turn rely on them to promote the documentary to a global audience rather than just its original broadcast location. But rather than simply just promoting the documentary, a select section of the online David Bowie fan community captured the audio from the broadcast and made it available online for those outside of New Zealand to experience.

Capturing

Capturing audio from radio is not a recent practice. Radio listeners have been capturing broadcasts since the audiocassette format made home recordings common in the mid-seventies. However, as many stations now stream their live content online, international audiences are able to capture audio using streaming audio capturing software such as Totalrecorder, StreamripperX and Audio Hijack. Some of these applications allow fans to record a direct digital signal with no discernible loss of audio quality. Users can then save these recorded files into wav or mp3 formats with various codec and compression options. These files can then be uploaded to online file sharing sites or to web content providers, as was the case in the Bowie project.

In an effort to combat copyright infringement, Radio New Zealand asks that producers provide a separate mix of their documentaries: one that contains copyrighted music and another that has all of copyright music removed. Although the station has a license to play documentaries with commercial music content on their terrestrial AM/FM broadcasts, this does not cover their listen-again content which is made available on their website. By making a music free version available online, fans still have access to the bulk of the spoken word content. This avoids potential legal issues with record companies and is hoped to pacify the fan into not illegally capturing content paid for and owned by Radio New Zealand. However, this did not work in the instance of the Bowie project. Several audio files were found to have been captured by Bowie fans from the streaming of the *Waiata* documentary on Radio New Zealand's website³². These were then uploaded to the internet for listeners outside of New Zealand to hear the documentary in full. The documentary was made available on the direct download site *4shared*³³ and it was also hosted directly on the *Bowie Down Under* website. Having the documentary available on the former website was important as it gave fans the opportunity to access an audio file that they were able to reappropriate.

Reappropriation

Following the broadcast of the Bowie documentaries, several examples of fans gathering and reusing the content to create new media artifacts were identified. Although, as previously mentioned, some had secured the audio by capturing the Radio New Zealand webstream, other fans resorted to more creative means of obtaining content for their own productions. Once the initial documentary had been broadcast, several emails were received, offering feedback and requesting further information. An email from a listener using the name "Kristi" provided a nostalgic backstory to assist her request for a CD version of the documentary.

"I look forward to hearing the Down Under documentary. I heard your Waiata one and thought it was very well made and just fascinating to hear about, especially as I was a little 7 year old who lived up the road from the Marae he visited in Porirua. I ran down to have a look at this Bowie guy that everyone was going on about. Thanks again" Kristi

A copy was duly posted to the address given and nothing more was heard, until a series of three *YouTube* uploads³⁴ were noticed approximately one month later. These took the form of three audio slideshows using related archival photographs, apparently sourced from the internet, combined with high quality audio from the *Waiata* documentary. The producer of these unofficial features had credited the original writer and producer along with c as the initial broadcaster and accompanied these credits with the date of production and the international copyright symbol. The username for these audio slideshows was credited as "Bodacea1". On contacting "Bodacea1" via *YouTube* messaging to compliment them on their production work, it was revealed that the producer was "Kristi", a Bowie fan who had used a certain amount of subterfuge in order to gain a CD copy of the *Waiata* documentary. This ensured the audio content of her YouTube clips were of a high standard. The *YouTube* user "MrDavidBowie" is credited as the producer of another audio

slideshow³⁵ based on content sourced from the original *Waiata* documentary. However, this version used inferior audio, which can be assumed to have been captured from Radio New Zealand's online streaming of the documentary. In the examples provided by "Bodaceal" and "MrDavidBowie", both had reappropriated the original audio by selecting new edit points, dividing the audio into chapters and adding their own accompanying visual elements.

Following the presentations of this paper at three different conferences audience members have questioned the producer's response to having their work re-appropriated and often un-credited. In regards to the case study provided by the Bowie project, the producer views reappropriation as an ultimately positive practice that has added new interpretations and greater depth to the initial story. It should be noted that the original Bowie documentaries themselves contained elements of re-appropriated audio taken from previously produced Bowie documentaries. Fan-generated reappropriations of the story can be seen as inevitable byproducts of online media distribution and its consumption. As these fan-generated productions have not been financially motivated and have only generated a relatively small amount of online activity, no known legal action has been invoked, to date.

Conclusion – The Story Continues

This chapter has highlighted the ways David Bowie fans responded to the broadcast of *Bowie's Waiata* documentary. It has been identified that both prior to and following the broadcast of this documentary, fans were engaged in the practices of promotion, capturing and reappropriation. These activities can be seen as evidence of the new participatory culture where fans make use of new media technology to work collaboratively and reappropriate media content. It also suggests the boundaries between producer and fan are becoming increasingly blurred as the producer of this documentary, a self confessed Bowie fan, drew on his own fan knowledge to produce the documentary. In reverse of this, some Bowie fans that consumed the documentary became producers of media by producing their own interpretations of the documentary. But perhaps it is this aspect that prompts the most interest. By having fans reappropriate the documentary and add their own interpretations the story presented in the original documentary does not end, it continues. Some of the reappropriations of *Bowie's Waiata* discussed here add images to the audio, giving further context to the audio. They also edit out pieces of the original documentary, choosing to use audio that is of particular relevance to them.

But this is not the only way the story is able to continue. Shortly after the documentary was broadcast, an Auckland based journalist, Greg Ward, contacted Radio NZ who in turn forwarded his email to the producer. This communication revealed him to be the original sound recorder of the *Bowie's Waiata* song at Takapuwahia Marae, 1983. Ward kindly agreed to write an online article detailing the story behind his capturing of the audio. This additional text content is currently accessible alongside audio and pictorial images from the documentaries and, in a sense, can be seen to continue the story by providing added depth and clarity to the narrative. In his email to the producer, Ward commented "listening to the *Bowie's Waiata* documentary, I was so pleased to hear Frank Simms' surprise and delight at hearing the recording after 25 years. I know how he felt! It's been a quarter century since I last heard it as well."

The initial forms of the Bowie documentaries were broadcast to a wide terrestrial audience that fell within certain AM/FM transmission signals and were consumed live in one simultaneous "listening" along with their live global streaming on the internet. Currently, in their online "on-demand" form, they exist to be heard one at a time, gradually accumulating individual listeners in the form of "hits". Incrementally building a continuous audience throughout the duration of the documentary's online lifespan who engage with the documentary in a variety of interesting ways and continue to add to the story.

Endnotes

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- ²² Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1992)
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- ²⁵ *Ibid*, 141.

- ²⁶ Lawrence Lessig, *Remix –Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2008).
- ²⁷ Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, 136.
- ²⁹ Mark Deuze, *Media Work*, (London: Polity, 2007), 74.
- ³⁰ www.davidbowie.com
- ³¹ Roy Shuker, *Wax Trash and Vinyl Treasures – Record Collecting as a Social Practice*, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010)
- ³² www.radionz.co.nz
- ³³ www.4shared.com
- ³⁴ These audio slideshows can found here: <http://www.youtube.com/user/Bodaceal#p/u/47/dv5sjMjT-kE>
- ³⁵ This audio slideshow can be found here: http://www.youtube.com/user/mrdavidbowie#p/u/3/t66_6jBPjFE

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APPENDIX C

Published in chapter ‘*Slash Production*’: *Objectifying the Serial ‘Kiler’ in Euro-Cult Cinema Fan Production* from the forthcoming book *Murders and Acquisitions: Representations of the Serial Killer in Popular Culture* (MacDonald, 2013).

‘Slash Production’: Objectifying the serial ‘kiler’ in Euro-Cult Cinema fan production

Introduction

Since the mid 1990s I have been a fan of the *giallo*, a cycle of films popular in Italy during the late 1960s and 1970s. A typical *giallo* film narrative will feature a crazed black-gloved serial killer murdering beautiful women in varying in exaggerated fashions. In the early 1990s British and American horror film fans learnt about the *giallo* in fan publications such as *Giallo Pages* and *European Trash Cinema* which created interest and paved the way to forming a Euro-Cult fan culture centred around the *giallo* film. Euro-Cult cinema itself is a fan determined category; not only do fans discuss the films in online communities but also actively produce texts for distribution amongst the fan network. In early 2003 it came to my attention that a film called *Fantom Kiler* (1998) had been released on DVD; promotional materials for the film labelling it as a “stylish East European *giallo*”. Its production shrouded in mystery, *Fantom Kiler* gained notoriety within the online Euro-Cult fan community. Apparently made in Poland, though most of the spoken dialogue is a mixture of both Polish and Russian, the film follows a masked serial killer who stalks and murders a number of scantily clad women. Filmed on video tape, suffering from constant changes of aspect ratio and having numerous subtitle spelling errors, the low budget origins of the film are apparent. On viewing the film for the first time I did not find it pleasurable, primarily because of its amateurish appearance, the highly sexualised depiction of serial murder and bawdy comic interludes. I found it to be similar in content to the large body of extremely low budget ‘shot-on-video’ horror films that are produced by fans of horror and are specifically aimed at the horror fan community. These productions blend near hardcore pornography, gratuitous nudity, poor acting and graphic scenes of serial murder into a near ninety minutes of running time. But, as a scholar of Euro-Cult cinema, I found it especially interesting as a contemporary interpretation/tribute to the *giallo* film. Through a close examination of the narrative and production of the *Fantom Kiler* film series, this chapter explores the politics of ‘slash production’; a form of fan production that gives specific attention to serial murder and reproduces the serial killer as a fan object.

Following the release of the first installment of the series, rumours began to circulate within online message boards regarding the mysterious production history of the *Fantom Kiler*. Who was Roman Nowicki, the credited director of the film? Were the production company Teraz Films responsible for any other films? Information emerged stating that ‘Roman Nowicki’ was a pseudonym for a British horror fanzine producer who played an important role in developing Euro-Cult cinema fandom in the United Kingdom. Clues to the British origins of the film could be found throughout the film, one particularly attentive viewer identifying the English locales used. As further details surfaced more *Fantom Kiler* films were released. To date, there have been four films in the *Fantom Kiler* series, with each sequel closely matching the theme of the earlier entries: scantily clad women being murdered in varying sexually aggressive ways by a masked serial killer. Yet each of these sequels becomes increasingly sexually explicit in their representation of serial murder.

Drawing on an interview conducted with ‘Roman Nowicki’, I will begin by defining the *giallo* film, demonstrating how serial murder is often a common element in the narrative of many *gialli*. Secondly, I will define the term ‘slash production’ and examine how it can be understood as an

extension of slash fan fiction, but instead focusing on fan re-interpretations of serial murder. Finally, the production, distribution and consumption of the *Fantom Kiler* series will be analysed in order to understand how it can be considered an example of ‘slash production’. Conclusions will be drawn on how this specific example of fan film making is an extreme expression of fan passion for horror cinema, but also has an important economic dimension; a way for fans to make an income from the texts that they have produced. In this sense, they are blurring the boundaries between amateur and professional media production. Additionally, the *Fantom Kiler* series also raises questions about policy and the regulation of production of such films in the United Kingdom. The *Fantom Kiler* series, through its intertextual relationship with *giallo*, further illustrates the contemporary fascination with the serial killer and allows for a new consideration of the ways this cultural figure is appropriated by fan cultures for pleasure *and* profit.

The ‘giallo’

Serial murder is a common plot device in the narrative of many *gialli*. The *giallo* film was based on pulp crime novels that were popular in Italy during the Second World War. They were often Italian translations of English books, authored by Agatha Christie, Edgar Wallace and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, published by a Milan-based company, Mondadori¹. These novels had distinctive yellow front covers, hence the Italian term *giallo* which translates into English as ‘yellow’. They proved to be a welcome distraction to a country embroiled in fascism and their popularity would influence a number of Italian filmmakers and scriptwriters. Though there is a certain amount of conjecture as to what is the first *giallo* film, many scholars, such as Adrian Luther Smith, consider it to be Mario Bava’s *La ragazza che sapeva troppo* (*The Girl Who Knew Too Much*, 1963):

“Although there had been a number of Italian murder mysteries, Bava’s *La ragazza che sapeva troppo* is generally regarded as the first thriller which typifies the term *giallo* as it uses plot elements from the popular crime novels with yellow covers and combines these with touches of horror.”²

Inspired by the Agatha Christie novel *The ABC Murders*, *La ragazza che sapeva troppo* tells of a young woman who travels to Italy to visit her sick Aunt. While there, she witnesses a murder that is committed by a serial killer and discovers that he is murdering his victims in alphabetical order. The Italian police do not believe her, as the body of the murdered woman cannot be found. This film introduced a number of conventions that have been employed in the narratives of many *gialli* that followed its release: a foreigner who becomes a witness to a murder; the amateur sleuth; serial murder; incompetent Italian police and a complex narrative structure. For many fans it is these generic elements that come to mind when attempting to define the *giallo*.

However, the *giallo* has a different meaning to Italian film audiences. Gary Needham suggests that the Italian understanding of genre is different to the British and American interpretation of genre³. Italians use the word *filone*, which can refer to both a genre and a cycle of films. For example, in Italy, the label of *giallo* will be applied to any film that is considered a thriller regardless of its country of origin. Outside of Italy, many fans see the *giallo* as a distinct sub-genre belonging to the category of horror film. I would argue that this interpretation is rather problematic as many of the films labelled as *gialli* by non-Italians fall outside of the ‘typical’ conventions.

Though murder is a key ingredient of all *gialli*, serial murder is not common to all *gialli*. There are a number of films labelled as *gialli* that focus on embezzlement, such as *Il dolce corpo di Deborah* (*The Sweet Body of Deborah*, Romolo Guerrieri, 1968), *Il posto ideale per uccidere* (*Dirty Pictures*, Umberto Lenzi, 1971) and *Paranoia* (Umberto Lenzi, 1970), and others that are concerned with a woman’s descent into madness, *Le orme* (*Footprints*, Luigi Bazzoni, 1975) and *Il profumo della signora in nero* (*The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, Francesco Barilli, 1974). Therefore, attempting

to apply the concept of genre to the *giallo* is somewhat problematic, sharing similarities with debates surrounding film noir⁴. With this in mind, I will be referring to the *giallo* as a cycle or a movement of film that has an identifiable style as opposed to a cohesive film genre that is defined, in part, by a particular set of narrative and character elements.

The serial killer is a common entity in American and British culture. Mikel J Koven notes that whilst serial killing and serial murder does exist in Italy it is so uncommon that there is no actual equivalent Italian word for the term; it is considered very much an American phenomena⁵. Koven points to the term “*il mostro*” (the monster) as the one commonly used by Italians, such as in the infamous *Il mostro di Firenze* (The Monster of Florence) murders, when referring to serial murder⁶. The lack of an Italian word for ‘serial killer’ is surprising considering the large number of *gialli* that focus on serial murder. The film of particular importance here is Mario Bava’s *Sei donne per l’assassino* (*Blood and Black Lace*, 1964), arguably the most influential film in the *giallo* canon and a stylistic influence on the *Fantom Kiler* film series. Luther Smith believes that *Sei donne per l’assassino* “encapsulates the very essence of what most people define as *giallo* cinema”⁷.

The film focuses on a series of murders committed by a masked killer who is trying to recover a diary that contains scandalous information. The killer is dressed head-to-toe in black; black overcoat, black leather gloves and black Trilby hat. The faceless gauze mask hides the identity of the killer, a distinctive generic iconography that has become ever present in the American stalk and slash sub-genre, such as the mask worn by Michael Myers in the *Halloween* film series. The film contains a number of notable murder set pieces where victims are stalked and ultimately murdered in lurid ways. For example, one female victim is tortured and then has her face scalded on a hot stove while another has a spiked glove thrust into her face. Though the scenes are not shown in the graphic detail, they set a standard for a number of *gialli* that would be released after this film. Many future *gialli* would have particularly graphic murder sequences, where attractive women, often in varying states of undress, would be stalked and eventually murdered in horrific ways. This had led to many *gialli*, particularly the work of Dario Argento⁸, being labelled as a misogynistic due to the graphic representations of female murder in his films. As highlighted by Leon Hunt, many murder sequences found in *gialli* are highly sexualised, demonstrating “hostility to the female body”⁹. Crotch stabbings feature in a number of *gialli*, such as *L’assassino ha riservato nove poltrone* (*The Killer Reserved Nine Seats*, Giuseppe Benati, 1974) and *Giallo a Venezia* (*Thrilling in Venice*, Mario Landi, 1979), and murder weapons are commonly fetishised; the camera paying attention to the phallic quality of knives¹⁰. In an oft-cited quote, Argento has said that he prefers to see women murdered on screen than men: “I like women, especially beautiful ones...if they have a good face and figure, I would much prefer to watch them being murdered than an ugly girl or man”¹¹. In a macabre spin on the director cameo, popularised by Hitchcock, Argento is known for wearing the black gloves and assuming the role of the serial killer during many of the murder sequences in his films¹².

Though *gialli* were low budgeted B movies they have a particular visual style that conflicts with their “low budget” origins¹³. Bava would draw on his skills as a cinematographer to employ unusual lighting techniques and use primary colour filters in his films in order to “forge unforgettable images of visual poetry and narrative potency”¹⁴. One of the murder sequences in *Sei donne per l’assassino* is shot using a variety of colour filters, adding an artistic, fantastical element to the brutal murder. Argento is also renowned for his unique visual style that will often place viewers in the killer’s gaze or position audiences in the shoes of the investigator. Raiford Guins has suggested that Argento will often punish the viewer, as well as aesthetically please them, with his use of creative camera angles and setups¹⁵. Like Bava, Argento also is known for his use of primary colours in his films, particularly the colour red. Even some of the lesser-known and lower budgeted *gialli* will have similar creative touches in their use of camera angles and colour. Many *gialli*, but especially those directed by Argento, explicitly reference psychoanalytic ideas in their narratives. In

Profondo Rosso (*Deep Red*, Dario Argento, 1975), for example, Freud's primal scene is used to explain the motivations of the film's serial murderer. This might explain why the majority of academic enquiry into the *giallo* has focused on psychoanalytical readings of the work of *giallo* auteurs such as Argento and Lucio Fulci¹⁶. Having identified that serial killing is a key element of many *gialli* and that murder is represented in a particularly graphic, sexualised manner, I want to consider how fan communities might and do engage with these narratives of serial killing. To this end, I will examine in detail the production of the *Fantom Kiler* series as a form of 'slash production'. But, first, I define the term.

From 'slash fiction' to 'slash production'

For my purposes, slash production can be defined as a form of amateur fan produced film, or other fan produced text, that is primarily concerned with serial murder and scenes of extreme violence. I wish to use the term as an extension of 'slash fiction', though it is significantly different in terms of its topic and concerns. According to Henry Jenkins, slash fiction is a form of fan writing that "refers to the convention of employing a stroke or slash to signify a same-sex relationship between two characters and specifies a genre of fan stories positing homoerotic affairs between series protagonists"¹⁷. Well established examples of slash fiction are the homoerotic relationship between Spock and Kirk from the *Star Trek* television series¹⁸, Xena and Gabrielle in *Xena: Warrior Princess*¹⁹ and, more recently, the characters in Harry Potter have been the subject of many online slash writings²⁰. As we can see from these examples, a large amount of academic enquiry has been devoted to homoerotic slash fiction. Slash fan fiction, whether it is written or visual, offers alternative interpretations to the sanctioned, legitimate storylines and character relationships offered by scriptwriters. The difficulties in defining slash fiction are highlighted by Cheryl Harris who identifies not only the sexually explicit and politically conscious nature of the genre but also sees it as both "complex and constantly evolving"²¹. For example, online searches for fan fiction will not only find homoerotic re-imaginings involving popular television and film characters. It will also locate fan writings that can offer extreme sexual or violent reinterpretations of popular media. However, unlike typical homoerotic slash fiction, this form of slash appears to lack a strategic political dimension; it is merely a deviant reinterpretation of a popular media text. An extreme example from a rather innocuous sector is a fan written script for the Australian soap opera *Neighbours* that can be found online. This script focuses on the kidnap and subsequent sexual torture of a character from the show, providing a graphic detailed breakdown of the scene. Though potentially disturbing it provides an example of the diversity of slash fiction and how fan audiences can produce new meanings, no matter how deviant, from the media they consume. It also highlights how the ease of online publishing allows for a greater proliferation of slash fiction and makes it accessible to a wider audience. Usually confined to fanzines obtained through grassroots fan networks, slash fiction can now be easily located through a simple *Google* search or on sites such as *fanfiction.net*. By looking at the wealth of categories on *fanfiction.net*, one can see both the variety and sheer abundance of fan written material that offer all sorts of fan interpretations of popular media.

Camille Bacon-Smith believes that slash-fiction contains a number of sub-genres. In the "genre of pain", she notes that slash fiction can be violent, focusing on both pain and suffering²². This not only shows the diversity of slash fiction, but also how extreme the content of fan production can be. Therefore, I present 'slash production' as a sub-genre of slash fiction, a sub-genre that offers fan interpretations of serial murder through varying forms, such as fan film production. The term employs the literal interpretation of the word slash (to cut in a violent manner) and is primarily found within horror fan practices. Anyone familiar with the specialist fan publications devoted to horror films, particularly those originating from the 1990s, such as the US publications *Fangoria* and *Deep Red*, will have noticed that they gave a significant amount of attention to violent murder and the amount of gore contained in horror films. One can see this association is clearly evident in

the titles of these publications, with *Fangoria* containing the syllable ‘gor(e)’ and *Deep Red*, producing connotations of blood and sharing its name with the co-incidental international release of Dario Argento’s *giallo Profondo Rosso*. Guins has noted how fan writings on Italian horror films, such as *gialli*, in the pre-DVD age would be viewed as “gore objects”²³. These fan publications would place specific attention on the serial killer as part of their fascination with blood and gore. In Britain, horror film fan publications would have a similar focus, but adopt a more bawdy style of writing that is not too dissimilar to the tone of the Benny Hill television series or the Carry On films. They would also give a large amount of coverage to film and video censorship²⁴. The British fanzine *Is it Uncut?* is one of many that explores the censorship of horror films and identifies the most uncut version available on DVD or VHS. This suggests that fan publications can be important mechanisms in the shaping of reception of horror films.

Linda Badley’s research into horror cinema and video culture makes mention of the American underground horror scene and the fan produced horror films that circulate amongst that community²⁵. Badley suggests “underground horror appeals to people who want something ‘real’, raw or extreme”²⁶. She refers to these as direct to video films (DTV); films primarily produced by and for the horror community. As the term DTV is somewhat limited, due to it being applied to any film that does not receive a theatrical release, I suggest that it is better to understand them as amateur fan produced horror films that have professional aspirations. I use the term ‘amateur’ to reflect their low production values, such as the use of consumer video production equipment and unknown casts. Low budget, amateur produced horror films were a feature of the American VHS boom of the 1980s where a consumer demand for product created a market for horror films, especially those from the ‘stalk and slash’ sub-genre. Badley suggests that this movement of filmmaking shares some similarities with the DIY punk ethos of the 1970s and 1980s²⁷. The availability of video camcorders and home editing equipment meant that anyone with access to the technology could produce a homemade film. Kerekes and Slater identify early examples of this form of fan production that were distributed in the US in the mid- 1980s²⁸. For example, they establish that in films such as *The New York Centerfold Massacre* (Louis Ferriol, 1985), “nothing happens but the torture of girls”²⁹. Before the ubiquitous capacity of the internet was available these films were distributed through mail order, fan networks and conventions, but they have now become more noticeable in the internet age where fan word-of-mouth has allowed them to find a larger international audience.

There have been a number of recent amateur produced horror films that have offered extreme representations of serial murder; these can be seen as examples of slash production. Films that are comparable to the *Fantom Kiler* series are *Murder Set Pieces* (Nick Palumbo, 2004), which tells of a fashion photographer who is also a serial killer who tortures and murders women in his basement; the *August Underground* series of films that follow serial killers who film each other committing murders to produce snuff films; and *Scrapbook* (Eric Stanze, 2000), in which a serial killer tortures a woman for the duration of the film’s running time. While even more extreme in their representation of serial murder than the *Fantom Kiler* series, they have found niche audiences. This is largely due to their graphic interpretations of serial murder, coverage given in fanzines and online reviews that have awarded attention to their strong content.

Alongside these films there has also been a recent spate of low budget films that have paid attention to the crimes of infamous serial murderers such as Ed Kemper - ‘The Coed Killer’ (*Kemper*, Rick Bitzelberger, 2008) and Gary Ridgeway – ‘The Green River Killer’ (*Green River Killer*, Ulli Lommel, 2005). One online reviewer has labelled these films as ‘serial killer fan fiction’ due to the way in which the narratives of the films deviate from the case files³⁰. I also include these under the rubric of slash production as they reproduce the serial killer as a fan object. These low budget, digitally shot films are aimed at those with an interest in true crime and, more specifically, the serial killer. Having little budget, slash production has been filmed using digital production techniques

because of its affordability. The relatively low cost of digital camcorders and availability of digital editing software makes this an accessible pursuit for fans who are willing to devote the time required to make a movie. Despite having low budget origins, slash producers attempt to mirror professional production practices. For instance, special effects and make-up are an integral part in making the murder set piece, a drawn out sequence devoted to the stalking, torture and murder of a female, as realistic as possible. This might involve the use of props, prosthetics and fake blood. It is these murder sequences that are awarded the most attention; much like pornography, the acting and storyline are of less importance.

Because of the relaxed laws for producing and distributing amateur produced films in the United States, slash production tends to be primarily an American phenomenon. When distinguishing the differences between American and British film classification, the British Board of Film Classification website (BBFC) highlight that classification in the United States is entirely voluntary that film makers do not have to go through and, unlike the United Kingdom, there is no specific classification process for videotape³¹. Therefore any film can be distributed in US, providing that it does not breach copyright or obscenity laws. As 'slash production' contains extreme representations of serial murder they may not be available in countries that have strict film censorship policies and can only be obtained via specialist online retailers or purchased at specialist horror conventions. Unlike in the US, tighter regulatory laws in the UK and the need for certification by the BBFC discourages slash production in the United Kingdom. Submitting a film to the BBFC for classification incurs a considerable fee. A 90 minute English language film costs approximately £730 plus VAT to be certified by the BBFC. In addition there is the risk of having your film censored or, more likely, rejected. For instance, the film *Murder Set Pieces*, which I identified earlier as being an example of slash production, was rejected by the BBFC for DVD release because the Board had:

“...serious concerns about the portrayal of violence, most especially when the violence is sexual or sexualised, but also when depictions portray or encourage: callousness towards victims, aggressive attitudes, or taking pleasure in pain or humiliation³².”

Unlike in the US, where it possible to bypass the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and release a film without a rating, distribution of unclassified material in the UK can result in a fine or a prison sentence. Therefore both the production and trading of slash production in the UK is very much an underground activity. Fans who wish to view slash production will either have to import DVDs from outside of the UK, and risk potential seizures from customs, or download it from a file-sharing website.

As a contextual examination of *Fantom Kiler* demonstrates, there is also an important economic dimension to the production of slash fiction. One possible explanation for slash production is that it gives fans an outlet to express both their passion and knowledge of horror films to the fan community, drawing on already established textual features as a form of homage. However, the amount of investment, in both time and money that goes into producing a film cannot be ignored. Will Brooker has suggested that fan films are often produced to be “calling cards”, acting as potential “springboards” to a professional career in filmmaking³³. This is also emphasised in the book *Homemade Hollywood* by Clive Young (2008)³⁴. Using the example of Dan Poole’s fan film *The Green Goblin’s Last Stand* (1992) and an interview conducted with the director, Young discusses how Poole attempted to use the film as a calling card, sending copies to director James Cameron and Spider-Man co-creator Stan Lee³⁵. There is, however, a greater economic incentive to slash production. The existence of slash production from the 1980s onwards suggests that the serial killer is a marketable cultural product. Both Ian Conrich³⁶ and David Schmid³⁷ have made mention of the “murderabilia” industry, which Conrich has defined as the “marketplace for serial killer-related products, which fetishise a murderer or allow for a particular private association”³⁸. This not

only highlights the fandom that surrounds the serial killer but also emphasises how they are entertainment figures and awarded celebrity status. The fictional serial killers of many horror films also demonstrate the existence of this market. Schmid uses the examples of fictional serial murderers Freddy Krueger, Jason Voorhees and Michael Myers who have featured in numerous slasher movie sequels as evidence of the “celebrity of the filmic serial killer” and how they have become stars of “extremely profitable” movie series³⁹. Therefore, the slash producer is not driven purely by homage; it is a potential profit making activity that exploits an established market. The conditions for slash production, such as the low budgets, lack of named talent, small crews, inexpensive equipment and independent distribution, further highlight how it is possible to make money from producing films that make the serial killer, and serial murder, the primary focus. The following case study of *Fantom Kiler* highlights this economic dimension of slash production.

Reimagining the serial ‘kiler’

An exploration of the production, distribution and consumption of the *Fantom Kiler* series demonstrates the ways in which it can be understood as slash production. The majority of information contained here was sourced from a semi-structured interview I conducted in December 2009 with ‘Roman Nowicki’; the named director of the *Fantom Kiler* series. Speaking to the author of these texts allowed for a greater understanding of their production and distribution context. Using information obtained from online fan discussions I approached Nowicki and was surprised to find how forthcoming he was about his involvement in the production of the films. I would like to indicate that this chapter does not intend to be an exposé of the true identity of the director, and because of the potential legal ramifications of producing and distributing such films in the UK, his identity, and production company name, will not be used. When referring to this individual I will be using his pseudonym, Roman Nowicki.

Firstly, in order to understand the context in which *Fantom Kiler* operates as slash production it is important to take into account Nowicki’s background as a producer of Euro-Cult inspired fan produced texts. Not initially a fan of horror cinema, Nowicki came to have an interest in the genre through owning a video recorder and renting VHS tapes. Even though the *Fantom Kiler* is renowned for its graphic representation of sexual serial murder, Nowicki ironically notes that he found films like *Conan the Barbarian* (John Milius, 1982) and *Creepshow* (George Romero, 1982) to be “a bit strong” in terms of their violent content. As his interest in horror cinema grew, he began to import photocopied fanzines from America, such as *The Gore Gazette*, as horror fanzines were uncommon in UK at this time. Finding himself unemployed and claiming jobseekers allowance, he was encouraged to enter the Enterprise Allowance Scheme and become self-employed. By entering this Conservative government supported scheme, claimants were able to receive £40 a week in order to assist the development of a business. Using knowledge he had gained from earlier employment, he started a printing company with an intention of producing publications devoted to horror cinema. Unwilling to put the word ‘horror’ in the company named because of the negative connotations the genre had in 1980s Britain, mostly due to the on-going moral panic surrounding ‘video nasties’, he decided to give the company a vague title so as not to draw unnecessary attention. His company released a number of amateur produced publications purely aimed at the growing UK horror fanbase, focusing mainly on Euro-Cult cinema, the most popular example being the fanzine *Delirium*. The iconography of the serial killer is evident in many images found in these fanzines, reproducing images taken from Euro-Cult films that often feature the murder act.

Secondly, the positive response to the fanzines from the community led to Nowicki establishing a festival that would feature Euro-Cult directors and personalities such as Paul Naschy, Jean Rollin and Jess Franco. Rare films were screened, fans could purchase memorabilia such as fan publications and films, and they had the opportunity to meet their idols in person. The company made a profit, mainly through the sales of the publications, and this allowed him to employ two

people to assist in the running of the company. By the late 1990s, fan produced publications had little resemblance to the traditional photocopied fanzines that had circulated amongst the community. The growth of home computers and basic desktop publishing software had allowed for fanzines to become “prozines” because of their more professional appearance⁴⁰. While the unique style of fan writing remained the same, the presentation was now akin to a professionally produced magazine. Prozines are often bound, use high quality paper and have full colour front covers and colour inserts. Now having access to a large mailing list of around 2500 reliable customers, Nowicki perceived that there was a market for a modern day interpretation of the *giallo* that could be targeted purely at the Euro-Cult fan community. This sequence of events lead towards *Fantom Kiler* going into development.

As the central figure within the vast majority of *gialli* is the serial killer it was inevitable that the antagonist within the *Fantom Kiler* series was going to be a serial murderer. The original working title for the first *Fantom Kiler* film was *A Town Called Hate*. Nowicki’s initial idea for the plot of the film was to have a town occupied by misogynistic males; one of these male occupants, possessing so much hatred towards women, that it leads him to murder. This title was rejected on the basis that it might lead people to believe that it was a Western film rather than a *giallo*. The initial inspiration for *Fantom Kiler* was *fumetti* rather than *giallo*. *Fumetti*, also known as *fumetti neri*, are Italian comic books aimed at an adult audience. Their violent storylines and antiheroes, such as the Diabolik character who would be popularised in Mario Bava’s *Danger: Diabolik* (1968), would become influential to those directors commonly associated with Italian cult film⁴¹. Nowicki told me that it was the “outrageousness” of the *fumetti* that had inspired him and that no film he had seen matched the general “craziness” of the *fumetti*. He also pointed out that when setting out to make the film, he did not intend for it to be a *giallo*. However, the idea of making a modern day film inspired by *the giallo* was appealing as there was growing fan demand for *gialli* to be released on VHS and DVD. Nowicki’s awareness of this significant fan based market surrounding Euro-Cult came from him being part of this community.

The first *Fantom Kiler* film was produced in 1998. Nowicki self-financed the films and estimates that the budget for the first *Fantom Kiler* film was “anywhere between £2,000 to £3,000”. It was filmed using a Sony VX1000 digital video camera, a popular camera that was used by both professionals and semi-professionals in the late 1990s. The major difficulty encountered was the editing of the film, taking “well over a year to complete”. Not only did Nowicki find software and hardware for editing expensive, it also took a long period of time to familiarise himself with the Ulead Media Studio Pro software. The difficulties encountered can be seen in the final edit of film where the aspect ratio changes on a number of occasions, again reminding the viewer of the amateur origins of the film and signifying *Fantom Kiler* as slash production. The storyline, albeit rather thin, focuses on a series of murders that are being committed in a small, Polish village. It transpires that the men share such a hatred of the attractive women of the village that the hate manifests itself into an energy which results in the creation of the supernatural *Fantom Kiler*. The director maintains that the film is not about a masked serial murderer, but instead is a comment on misogyny and how religion can create repressed individuals. Defending his film, Nowicki believes that it has “more storyline” than the original *Friday the 13th* (Sean Cunningham, 1980) and cites the influence of psychoanalysis to explain the killer’s motivations, particularly the drive of the id and the repressed sexuality of the villagers. Despite these high claims it is hard to see past the fact that this film devotes the majority of its running time to scenes of women being stalked by the *Fantom Kiler* and murdered in varying sexually violent ways.

Many of the prolonged murder set pieces will feature a woman, conventionally attractive with oiled bodies and silicon-enhanced breasts, walking through foggy woodland. Contact with the branches of woodland trees and barbed wire help to remove her clothes so that she is completely naked. The *Fantom Kiler* appears and informs the women of their forthcoming ‘punishment’, in one scene

uttering the following dialogue (please note that the spelling mistakes are intentional and are found in the actual subtitles):

“It’s not safe to be in the woods after dark especially dressed only in a pair of hi-heels, you might catch a cold or something. You have such a pretty body, it would be a shame if something happened to it wouldn’t it? Soft flesh...so delicate...what could be the worst thing that could happen to it? I wonder if you could even begin to image can you? Is that why you are here? To be punished? Do you feel the need to be punished? Why else would you be here? Defenseless and naked, you’re a lady of expensive tastes, only the best is good for you: the best furs...the best jewellery but where are they now? Do you miss them? Has the lust for fine things been replaced by a more basic lust? A lust for excitement, forbidden sexual desire? You’ve never felt this way before...my steele blade caressing your tender skin creating the ultimate sensation...the ultimate...orgasm...and death.”

Rather than instill fear, this dialogue appears to arouse the woman and the killer finally vaginally assaults the female victim with a phallic replacement, either a knife or broom handle. In between these murder sequences we have scenes that feature inept police and two misogynistic janitors who offer nothing more than a crude commentary and serve as potential suspects for the murders. It is also worth pointing out that much of the humour offered by these two characters bears many similarities to the jovial misogyny contained in the fanzines previously produced by Nowicki and common within the British horror fan community. Jenkins recognizes that many producers of fan videos have often had experience in producing fanzines, and that it is no coincidence that the content of the fan produced texts share many similarities⁴².

As with *gialli*, it would be easy to label *Fantom Killer* as misogynistic due to the sexual punishment of the female victims. Nowicki intentionally chose a “special look of girl” for the role. The women used are not actresses, but glamour models with heavy make-up, many having surgically enhanced breasts. None of the actors or actresses used in the production are professionals, many being friends or family of the director. Whilst the film may not be as gory as the slash production I identified earlier it is the textual specifics of these representations of serial murder and sexual violence that have the potential to disturb viewers; here sexual violence towards women is presented as an exciting spectacle. Defending these scenes, Nowicki believes that because of their excess they border on the ridiculous, believing they should be seen more as black comedy. Nowicki claims that his intention was that the murder sequences should be regarded as fantastical set pieces and be as “unrealistic” as possible. Nowicki might be suggesting that his films are an antidote to other slash production such as the *Murder Set Pieces* series of films, which are too violent for his liking. Nonetheless, fans of *Fantom Kiler* contacted him asking for more rather than less gore in his future productions. It is also quite easy to notice the similarities *Fantom Kiler* shares with pornography. The models are reminiscent of porn stars because of their artificial bodies, extended murder set pieces replace sex scenes, the act of penile penetration is replaced by phallic objects such as knives and wooden spoons and the ensuing ‘money shot’ is the death of the victim. All of this is intercut with narrative ‘filler’. While the first *Fantom Kiler* film does not involve genital sex, the acts of vaginal penetration with phallic objects and much of the spread-legged female nudity moves this beyond the category of softcore. In *Fantom Kiler* the serial killer is being portrayed as an excessively sexualised figure. These victims are seduced before they are murdered, sharing many similarities with the common cinematic representation of Dracula; an antagonist that that is both feared but also desired. In the ensuing sequels, the eroticisation of the *Fantom Kiler* progressively moves towards presenting the character as a rapist, as well as a sexual sadist, as the content moves further towards hardcore pornography.

The appearance of the titular character, the ‘Fantom Kiler’, shares many similarities to the masked serial killer of Mario Bava’s *Blood and Black Lace*. They are both adorned in black trilby hats, long

black coats, black gloves and the faceless gauze mask. Surprisingly, given that this is a fan based production, Nowicki claimed that the similarity was entirely unintentional. This would appear to suggest that the 'look' of the masked serial killer, as pioneered by Bava, has become so embedded within the iconography of the horror genre that it has become a recurrent stylistic trope for filmmakers. There are a number of other stylistic touches present in the film that are reminiscent of many *gialli*. The gels and colour filters used in the lighting, according to Nowicki, were intentionally employed to resemble the lighting used by Bava and Argento and to add to the overall fantastical nature of the film. The opening close-up of an eye is yet another nod to Italian cult cinema; the eye, and particularly the destruction of the eye, has been identified as playing an "important role in Argento films"⁴³. These intertextual references to the *giallo* are seemingly being employed to position fans to contextually read the generic signifiers - the black-garbed serial murderer, the close-up of the eye and the use of lighting - to encourage fan pleasure.

The village setting of the film and its marketing would lead one to believe that it was produced in Poland when it was, in fact, filmed in a warehouse in London that belonged to Nowicki. His links to Poland enabled him to film some exterior shots in order to add to the 'authenticity' of the films supposed location. Friends helped to construct the woodland sets and the warehouse offices were used for several scenes. Such detail went into hiding the true location of filming that the cars shown in some of the exterior shots had their British license plates covered with Polish license plates. Originally shot in English, the film was dubbed into a combination of Polish and Russian during post-production, and English subtitles, containing intentional spelling errors, were added. Presumably this was done in order to create the myth that the film was produced in Poland rather than the UK. Much of the fan debate surrounding the *Fantom Kiler* series has been centred on trying to uncover who was responsible for their production and why a pseudonym was required.

Speculation in online communities such as *AV Maniacs*⁴⁴, the *Cult Movie Forums*⁴⁵ and *IMDB*⁴⁶ forums results in a range of possibilities to explain the shroud of secrecy around the production. These can be summarised in three points:

- An effort on the part of the director to maintain artistic distance from the film
- That the producer was not happy with the finished product, or,
- A marketing ploy to incite rumour and attract attention.

According to Nowicki the actual explanation is very different. The name Roman Nowicki was chosen as it is a common Polish name. He believed that if he had attached his real name to the film many people would instantly think that it was a poor quality film regardless of the effort that he had put into the production. He also believed that there were a number of people in the community that would have been happy to see him get in legal trouble for producing and distributing a film that had not been certified by the British Board of Film Classification. Regardless of Nowicki's genuine reasons, the debate about the film's origins in the Euro-Cult cinema fan community did help to create awareness of the film.

In another effort to anonymise the films production background the film was produced and distributed under the Teraz Films label; again purposely created to be in keeping with the supposed Polish origins. *Fantom Kiler* received a lot of coverage in one of the fanzines produced by the Nowicki, even featuring a self-conducted 'interview' with himself, on his company's website and in the catalogue distributed to the people on his mailing list. The director also produced the cover art and blurb for the DVD and VHS release, maintaining the DIY production ethos of the film. The film was available for purchase on VHS and DVD formats through the director's website and other online retailers specialising in the sale of cult horror films. It could also be found for sale at some fan conventions.

The popularity of the film led to the making of three sequels, *Fantom Kiler 2* (1999); *Fantom Kiler 3* (2003) and *Fantom Kiler 4* (2008), which followed the identical formula of the first film yet becoming more sexually graphic; moving further towards hardcore pornography. The same production processes were utilised until the fourth installment of the series where higher quality camera equipment was used. The popularity of the films has led to Nowicki ceasing to produce fanzines; film making is now his primary pursuit. Nowicki suggested that the reason for his sole devotion to film production is that DVDs are both cheaper and easier to distribute than magazines, requiring less packaging and having less chance of superficial damage. Also, the content that would make up a fanzine can now easily be sourced online at no cost, meaning a declining demand for printed publications. This is evidenced on the director's website where DVDs have replaced fan publications as the main items for sale. This illustrates that there is an economic incentive to this form of fan production. The *Fantom Kiler* series stands out from the other numerous other fan films that are in existence, such as the *Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001) fan film *Born of Hope* (Kate Madison, 2009), which are produced purely as homages and are intended for distribution online. Nowicki instead produced these films as a way to take advantage of the renewed attention the *giallo* was gaining thanks to the DVD revolution and to offer his strong mailing list members something new to purchase. With the number of films Nowicki has now made, it would be safe to assume that there is both a market for them and also some form of financial reward. This is about the exploitation of a market rather than purely being an expression of fandom.

Conclusion

Slash production, defined as a sub-genre of slash fiction, offers extreme representations of serial murder and objectifies the serial killer. These texts are motivated by (and towards) the presentation of spectacular, eroticised murder set pieces, often at the expense of narrative coherence. In opposition to fan films produced in other genres,..... slash production has a greater economic incentive. These are not mere expressions of fandom but are commodities that are intended to be sold to a fan community on DVD through both online and offline outlets. The *Fantom Kiler* films, as an example of slash production, are, unlike the majority of amateur fan produced horror films, produced in the UK and not the US by a key figure in the development of Euro-Cult cinema fandom. The *Fantom Kiler* series draws inspiration from the *giallo*, referencing both its style and general conventions, but they are interpreted in such a manner that extends the core pleasures found in *gialli* to extreme levels. Here the serial killer is presented to us a highly sexualised figure that is both feared and desired by his victims. Stills present on the DVD covers for each of the *Fantom Kiler* series further emphasising how the scenes of sexualised serial murder are the main selling point for the films. Nowicki created a myth that the film was made in Poland, as a way to detract attention from its British origins. In turn, this helped to attract attention to the film from the Euro-Cult cinema fan community who were eager to uncover its true origins. It could also be seen as way to circumvent the regulations imposed by BBFC on the distribution of unclassified material in the United Kingdom which prevent slash production and, to a larger extent, a thriving amateur film industry.

There is an interesting coda to the *Fantom Kiler* story. A fan of the *Fantom Kiler* series that worked for a well-established European pornography company contacted Nowicki and asked if he would be interested in producing hardcore pornographic versions of the *Fantom Kiler* series. The *Fantom Kiler* became the *Fantom Seducer* (Roman Nowicki, 2005) in two full-length pornographic features. The films follow the same themes found in the *Fantom Kiler* series and continue to show the sexual degradation of women, merging the genres of pornography and horror. Nowicki explained that the sexual violence had to be toned down, as there were limitations on what could be performed. This is just one example of the ways in which fan production can become commodified, moving from the amateur to the professional. The relationship with the company was short lived as Nowicki found the experience of working for the pornography company difficult due to a number of

constraints that were placed upon him, both political and economic. Rather than work under these conditions, he decided to move back to slash production and continues to make films that reinterpret Euro-Cult cinema and objectify the serial killer as a highly sexualised figure.

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Author

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APPENDIX D

Published in the chapter '*Sharing All'Italiana – The Reproduction and Distribution of the Giallo on Torrent File-Sharing Websites*' from the forthcoming book *The Piracy Effect* (Braga and Caruso, 2013).

Sharing All'Italiana -

The Reproduction and Distribution of the *giallo* on Torrent File-Sharing Websites

Introduction

Online file-sharing communities became easily accessible locations for fans to collectively share, access and archive digital files converted from old VHS video releases or recorded television broadcasts. This chapter focuses on how the *giallo*, a particular form of Italian cult cinema, is shared, reappropriated and recirculated on an invite only file-sharing community that I refer to as *CineTorrent*. Drawing on a virtual ethnography of this community and engagement with its members, I consider how rules and regulations instigated by the moderators of the site both encourage and reward member creativity. This has led to the generation of a comprehensive archive of cult film, in which Italian cult cinema plays a significant role. I argue that fans are responding to the current limitations of commercially releasing *gialli* on DVD by taking it upon themselves to make them available and in doing this they create what I refer to as an amateur archive of *gialli*.

CineTorrent was established in 2007. Unlike the vast number of BitTorrent communities available on the World Wide Web it has a particular niche, specialising in the sharing of cult film. Having a membership capped at 20,000, *CineTorrent* is a sought after file-sharing site that offers the cult film fan access to a catalogue of cult film, many of which are commercially unavailable on a digital medium. Discourses on file-sharing that circulate in the media would have us believe that file-sharing communities are sites of lawlessness. However, the irony is that sites such as *CineTorrent* are bound in their own strict laws, policies and regulations. Like a typical business organisation, *CineTorrent* operates a typical top-down institutional hierarchy in order to ensure that the website has structure and a mission of intent. The moderators have introduced a number of rules that dictate what can and cannot be shared, ensuring that anything that is regarded as being mainstream is excluded from being shared. These rules are aggressively enforced. This approach has a dual purpose. Firstly, it creates a set of boundaries that guide user collaboration, secondly, as most of the material shared is commercially unavailable and cult, they reduce the possibilities of prosecution and legal activity that they would attract from sharing 'popular' cinema. I wish to focus on one of the policies that the site adopts to encourage users to construct exhaustive archives of obscure cinema, which are referred to as 'Projects'

CineTorrent and the Constructing of an Amateur Archive

In his auto-ethnography of horror fandom, Mark Kermode (2001) believes that the watchword of the cult film fan is "completist". The completist nature of the cult film fan can be further evidenced on *CineTorrent*. One of the outcomes of *CineTorrent's* rules and regulations is that they guide member activity in a particular direction. By creating a system that ensures specific content is being regularly uploaded to the site, I suggest that it leads to the creation of an archive of cult film, or as I refer to it, an 'amateur archive'. To further clarify, by referring to it as an amateur archive it highlights the crowd-sourced nature of the collection and how the boundaries of the archive are set by fans themselves rather than a typical curator. In her study of a media pirate, Abigail De Kosnik

(2012) uses a case study of 'Joan', a female fan of film who uses file-sharing to extend her film collection. De Kosnik presented Joan as an "archivist" of film, collecting and storing content that is often ignored by media institutions and museums. It is Joan's "mistrust of museums and rights holders" that sees her take on the role as archivist (p529). This mistrust is also apparent at *CineTorrent*, members taking it upon themselves to preserve films that remain commercially unreleased and can be hard to locate.

For a legal archive comparable to *CineTorrent* to legally exist in the offline world would require an extensive change to current copyright law, particularly rights ownership. As *CineTorrent* operate outside of the law they are able to break these rules and overcome this obstacle. An archive comparable to that found on *CineTorrent* that legally and physically exists would be The Cult Film Archive, currently located at Brunel University in the United Kingdom. According to its director, Xavier Mendik, "the archive consists of an estimated 3000 audio and visual resources that are available in a variety of different media formats". Many of these resources have been donations from collectors or those involved in the film industry. Two key limitations prevent The Cult Film Archive from being as exhaustive as *CineTorrent*. Firstly, if we take the physical aspect, the storage of 80,000 texts would be costly, both in terms of space and in management. Secondly, if the archive were to take the form of a digital repository, the costs of hosting material that is only available in digital format, which makes up all of the content available on *CineTorrent*, would be unsustainable due to the amount of money it would cost to host such a large amount of data. By transgressing intellectual property laws, *CineTorrent* is able to serve as an amateur archive for both fans and also scholars of cult cinema.

CineTorrents and Projects

The drive towards completism is most explicitly evident on the Projects section of *CineTorrent*. Projects seek to collect the complete work of a particular actor, director, studio or genre. There are strict guidelines that constitute whether a Project is deemed worthy for inclusion by a staff member. *CineTorrent's* rules for what constitutes a suitable Project are as follows:

- Must be hard-to-find/obscure movies that are themed in the spirit of the site.
- The contents of the project must be difficult to find (it must be time consuming)
- Must contain a minimum of 10 movies
- Must be approved by staff.

Any member can choose to start a Project but they must first propose their intentions in the 'Collectatorium' forum that is found on the community. Providing that the idea for the Project meets the above requirements and has been approved by *CineTorrent* staff it can be added to the site. Projects also take the form of Wikis that can be edited by any member who wishes to add content. Once a Project is started, the 'Project Leader' will have to compile a list of all the films that are appropriate and need to be obtained in order to complete it. These lists might be drawn from books, fanzines or websites such as the *Internet Movie Database*. Members are encouraged by the community to upload absent films in order to complete the projects. Uploads to collections are usually given 40% 'seeding bonuses' to attract contributions. Regular uploads to the site are not given such awards. For example, if a member uploaded a 1GB sized movie file to a Project, they would receive a 40% bonus, which would work out at 400mb, as a payment for their labour. This bonus would also be extended to any other member who has downloaded the file and reseeds it back to the community, further signifying their rarity. Members of the site are not simply sharing content, they are acting as if they are workers, investing their time to capture material from VHS tapes, DVD and television broadcasts and make it available on the site. This requires a considerable investment of time but also knowledge of how to reappropriate media content. It also indicates the collaborative nature of the site, crowd-sourcing from a global network of members

rare titles that are often unavailable commercially. Some of the content uploaded to Projects might be taken from rare 16mm prints, international VHS releases and even director workprints that were not intended to be viewed by the general public. If a better quality version of a film is uploaded to a Project it does not replace the one that is already in existence of the site. Instead it takes place alongside all of the other versions of the film. Whilst it is evident that members strive to obtain films in the best visual quality possible, they do not abandon lesser quality versions. It is all about strengthening the amateur archive.

The Giallo Project

For the remainder of this chapter, I intend to focus on a specific Project: ‘*The Giallo Project*’. The reasoning for focusing on this specific Project is that it best demonstrates how *CineTorrent* members work collaboratively to produce an amateur archive. It shows further evidence of amateur archiving in the constructing of an exhaustive list of *gialli*, many of which are commercially unavailable but also demonstrates how specific members engage in forms of media production. Also, judging by the amount of downloads content from *The Giallo Project* receive it is evident that *gialli* is very popular amongst many of the members of *CineTorrent*. Much of the evidence presented here was obtained through an interview conducted with the curator of this project, a highly respected member of the community who I will refer to as ‘profondorosso’; his username immediately connoting his passion for the *giallo*. Browsing through the Projects section it is evident that European Cult Cinema is of importance to the *CineTorrent* community. There are a number of Projects that are directly devoted to different aspects of European Cult Cinema. However, *The Giallo Project* stands aside from these other examples, not just because it has deemed to be 100% complete by the curator, but because of the different user practices that can be identified within.

The primary intention of *The Giallo Project* is to create a definitive archive of *gialli*. It is at this point that I will define the term *giallo* as it holds a different significance to film audiences outside of Italy. The *giallo* film was based on pulp crime novels that were popular in Italy during the Second World War. They were often Italian translations of English books, authored by Agatha Christie, Edgar Wallace and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, published by Mondadori, a Milan-based company. These novels had distinctive yellow front covers, hence the Italian term *giallo* which translates into English as ‘yellow’. The early box office success of *gialli*, such as Dario Argento’s *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo* (1969), led to a number of imitations that attempted to exploit this sudden popularity. From the mid-1980s onward British and American horror film fans learned about the *giallo* in fan publications such as *Giallo Pages* and *European Trash Cinema*. This created interest and led to the forming of a European cult cinema fan economy that centred around the *giallo* and other cycles of Italian cult cinema, such as the *poliziesco* and spaghetti western. In the UK, film festivals and video labels were set up that focused specifically on Italian cult cinema. The growth of this fan economy can be evidenced further in the early 2000s with the advent of DVD. A number of independent labels from the United Kingdom, United States, Germany and France all released *gialli* on the new digital format.

However, in the late 2000s, releases of *gialli* on DVD began to slow. According to interviews I have conducted with proprietors of independent DVD labels, there are four explanations for this downturn:

1. The global recession
2. The advent of new home video formats, such as HD-DVD, Blu-Ray and online streaming
3. The impact of file-sharing
4. The high costs involved in releasing Italian cult cinema on DVD

Though I have established that there is a fan economy surrounding European cult cinema, I must indicate that this is somewhat small when compared to other fan economies, such as the one surrounding *Star Trek* or the *Star Wars* franchises. Therefore, there is a limited market for *gialli* on DVD. The next problem independent DVD labels face is the high costs involved purchasing the rights to be able to release *gialli* on DVD or even Blu-Ray. One particular owner of a DVD label informed me: “the reason why many *gialli* remain unreleased is because the Italian companies who own the rights demand anywhere between €10,000 and €15,000. As there is a small market for these kinds of films there is no way that we would be able to recoup our production costs”. In addition to purchasing rights, labels might have to pay for the production of a new master from the original film negative, remastering costs, subtitle production, DVD authoring, cover art design, replication, promotion and sales agents. Factoring in all of these costs, I was told that it would cost approximately between £15,000 and £20,000 produce 1000 copies of a currently unreleased *giallo*, such as *L'assassino ha riservato nove poltrone* (Giuseppe Bennati, 1974), on DVD in the UK. In order to make a profit, these would have to sell at above either £15.00 and £20.00, which is above the typical price (£14.99) of a new DVD release in the UK. The label owner believes that the market for *gialli*, especially in the UK, is not strong enough to justify such high production costs. This has presented a problem for *giallo* fans who have decided to respond to the lack of recent DVD releases by making available commercially unreleased *gialli* available to the wider fan community. An example of this is *CineTorrent's The Giallo Project*.

Constructing an Archive of 'gialli'

The mission of *The Giallo Project* was to create an exhaustive archive of *gialli*, many being commercially unreleased and only existed as obscure European VHS releases from Holland, Scandanavia and Greece or bootleg DVD-Rs taken from these sources. Before the Project began the only ways that fans could obtain these titles would be to obtain the original video, locate them on other file-sharing websites or purchase bootleg DVD-Rs on auction sites such as *eBay*⁹⁰ or *iOffer*⁹¹. The list of *gialli* found in the Project was predominately drawn from the book *Blood and Black Lace* (Adrian Luther-Smith, 1999), a text regarded by fans to be the definitive guide to the *giallo*, and with additions from other members of the community. A scan of this book exists as a torrent on the site, being downloaded 1164 times, indicating its value to the community. At the top of the Project page is a user created banner for the Project which draws on colours and iconic artwork taken from posters of different *gialli*. The remainder of the page is effectively a table that is separated into different decades from the 1950s onwards. Within each of these decades can be found lists of films produced within this time period in chronological order. Some films in the Project are organised outside of this structure. For example, there are sections for uploads to the collection which are only have Italian audio and another section for those films which fall outside of what is considered to be the 'golden age' of the *giallo* by fans. Each film will feature a small scan of the original Italian locandina poster art (a common form of movie poster used in Italy), the title of the film in the form of a hyperlink to films *Internet Movie Database* page and finally a link to download the torrent. Members of *CineTorrent* are invited to add to the list in order to pool together the best quality versions of the films available. A thread devoted to *The Giallo Project* can be found in the Collectatorium forum where members discuss future uploads and also debate what other films might be worthy of addition to the Project. This helps members to indicate which films they will be contributing to avoid duplicates appearing on the site. This demonstrates how highly organised many of these Projects are, moving beyond the simple practice of uploading a film to be shared.

⁹⁰ www.ebay.com

⁹¹ www.ioffer.com

Curator of The Giallo Project, profundorosso, has had an interest in European Cult Cinema since he was a teenager. His interest was generated by renting VHS tapes from his local video store leading to him becoming a collector of VHS tapes, many of which he would trade through the classified sections of British magazines that were devoted to horror cinema, such as *The Dark Side*, *Samhain* and *Fear*. The late 80s and 1990s was a time when it was difficult to obtain copies of European Cult Cinema mainly because of the BBFC's strict censorship policies. The classified sections of magazines such as these served as precursors to sites such as *CineTorrent* where fans could share films, which were usually bootlegged tapes, amongst one another. Like other unfortunate fans who engaged in this activity, profundorosso had his collection confiscated by Trading Standards. "At this point", he stated, "it was all about money", attesting that this was a way he made money from his fandom during this period. However, it was this experience that led him to stop collecting originals and to "appreciate the movies again". Though profundorosso cannot remember what led him to join *CineTorrent*, he joined the site in late 2007. He was quick to indicate that he was not the primary instigator of *The Giallo Project*: "I was asked to take charge as I started to take an interest, making lists, setting the Project guidelines etc". Due to his effectiveness in managing *The Giallo Project* to completion, profundorosso found that his membership status was upgraded by the moderators of the site as both a reward for his efforts and to indicate his value to the community.

Films included *The Giallo Project* have been taken from a variety of media forms. There are media files that have been compressed from DVD releases, captures of television broadcasts and DVD structures that can be burned to DVD for playback on DVD players. However, out of all of the 217 films featured in *The Giallo Project*, 115 of these are taken from VHS. This means that 53% of the films on this list still only exist in VHS format, remaining the only medium on which they are currently available outside of *The Giallo Project*. The VHS format is clearly of great importance here as it remains the primary format on which many *gialli* were made available for home viewing. Even though the torrents are digital conversions of VHS video, the picture quality is either the same or more likely is of lesser quality than the original VHS source. However, when viewing one of these digital files, one cannot escape the fact that they are viewing video taken from a VHS source. Imperfections such as video noise, pan and scan cropping of the frame, burnt-in foreign subtitles and print damage will still be present. I would argue that this enhances the cultural value of VHS to this particular community and further signifies their status as rarities. For example, the degradation in video quality when compared to that of DVD or digital video captured from a television broadcasts further highlights the overall scarcity of the film. By capturing VHS in a digital media file it suggests that original is of importance and is worthy of preservation. Original VHS releases of *gialli* are becoming increasingly hard to locate and, as VHS tapes have a finite life before they begin to degrade and ultimately become unusable, *The Giallo Project* serves as a valuable digital archive for future consumption of these films.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have used the example of *CineTorrent*, a torrent file-sharing community centred around the sharing of cult film, to demonstrate how their adopted policies, rules and regulations have encouraged their membership to collaboratively produce an exhaustive amateur archive of cult film. I focused on one specific area of the site, *The Giallo Project*, where members have responded to declining DVD releases by taking it upon themselves to locate commercial unreleased *gialli* and make them available for sharing on *CineTorrent*. I suggest that the activities of these members cannot simply be described as acts of piracy, there is something far more complex that is occurring here. Instead there are film fans who are engaging in the act of film preservation, where they are preserving VHS tapes, television broadcasts and other obscure media in a digital format to ensure that they remain accessible. Here file-sharing is a political act that has purpose and is a direct response to the difficulties independent DVD labels currently face in trying to make money out of obscure products that have small followings. Therefore, *CineTorrent* acts as if they were a

distribution label, rewarding their members with credits and bonuses for their hard work in seeking out, digitising and making available cult film. It is, however, easy to paint a utopian picture of *CineTorrent*, suggesting that it presents the perfect solution to archiving cult film that could not be achieved in the physical world. It should not be forgotten that *CineTorrent* is transgressing copyright law and the property of independent DVD labels, making it increasingly difficult for them to sustain business. It has not been the purpose of this chapter to draw conclusions on the morality of file-sharing, but it does further highlight the difficulties of intellectual property ownership in the digital age.

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