

Transmedia Trajectories of Comic Book Fandom in an Era of Blockbuster “Cinematic Universes” and Franchise “Expansions”: Logics of Distinction or Conciliation?

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Work on comic books has traced the emergence of Bourdieusian distinctions around them (Lopes 2009; Beaty 2012), whilst work in fan studies has examined what are often anti-mainstream and anti-commercial distinctions of fan status (Jenkins 1992; Hills 2002). But in an era where fan-consumers and blockbuster superheroes alike may both be "sovereign" (Curtis 2016; Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington 2017), how do comic book fandom and media fandom intersect and interact? Scholarship has previously explored historical and stylistic connections between film and comic books (e.g. Gardner 2012; Davis 2017; Jeffries 2017), but here I want to focus on inter-fandom connections. Do 'purist' comic book fans devalue movie blockbusters and their cinematic universes (Flanagan, McKenny and Livingstone 2017), or view these as a legitimization of niche comic book tastes? Do fans of film and TV franchises who follow favoured storyworlds transmedially into comic book form treat such comics as a 'lesser' or secondary form? Contra well-established arguments assuming logics of fan distinction -- e.g. where Comic-Cons are denigrated as excessively commercial (Coppa 2014; Gilbert 2017) -- I will consider the extent to which fans following different trajectories of comic book consumption and appreciation may actually display logics of conciliation, viewing comic books not as a 'pure' medium (to be celebrated/devalued), but instead as part of an imagined superseding of medium specificity in favour of storyworld integrity (Barker 2012).

Biography:

Matt Hills joined the University of Huddersfield as Professor of Media and Journalism in July 2016. With Professor Cornel Sandvoss he is co-director of the Centre for Participatory Culture. Prior to joining Huddersfield he was Professor of Film and TV Studies at Aberystwyth University, and before that he worked for more than a decade at Cardiff University, beginning as a Lecturer and leaving as a Reader.

He has written six sole-authored research monographs, starting with *Fan Cultures* in 2002 and coming up to date with *Doctor Who: The Unfolding Event* in 2015, as well as publishing more than a hundred book chapters and journal articles in the areas of media fandom, cult film/TV, and audiences in the digital era.