Book review

Hines, C. 2015. *Fan phenomena: James Bond*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 152 pp.

Piatti-Farnell, L. 2015. *Fan phenomena: The Lord of the Rings*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 120 pp.

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These two volumes are part of the Intellect series *Fan phenomena*, a collection of books focusing upon the fascination for cultish media products. The series now counts more than fifteen books on such phenomena as *Batman*, Marilyn Monroe, *Star Wars*, *Dr Who* and *Twin Peaks*, and it concentrates on how particular films, television shows, film or television characters become cultural icons with an often world-wide fan community. The series positions itself firmly in the vibrant interdisciplinary field of fan studies, but it also targets a wider audience. At least in terms of look and feel, the volumes massively tap into the visual appeal of attractive colours, shapes, layout, typeface linked to particular fan communities – understandably, as they deal with fan art work, memorabilia, merchandising and branding that is part of the immersive world that extends beyond cultish phenomena. Different from most academic work on fandom, both volumes contain interviews with fans and representatives from these communities like interviews with a Bond collector, the owner of a ‘Bond museum’ in Sweden, and with two cross-gender ‘costume playing’ (or ‘crossplaying’) Bond fans.

Although I was not impressed by what these interviews revealed in terms of our understanding of fan experiences and practices, both volumes are a good read. Besides four interviews, the volume on the *James Bond* franchise (edited by Claire Hines) contains eleven articles which altogether illustrate the multiple perspectives which can be applied to fan phenomena like the one created around the world of Ian Fleming’s super-spy. *Fan phenomena: James Bond* contains chapters on the history and complexity of Bond as a transmedia phenomenon with articles on the books and the film series, but it dwindles into other parts of it as well, with chapters on games, comic books, and fan edits (e.g., the chapter by Joshua Wille). Other chapters explore more explicitly fan engagement, with interesting texts on the experience of watching a Bond film (Lucy Bolton’s reading of Bond through the lens of phenomenology) and on gendered readings of the Bond franchise (Lisa Funnell’s chapter on Bond and feminist scholarship). An interesting aspect of Bond as a fan icon touches upon the fact that it is probably the longest-running and most profitable film fran-

chise, creating a powerfully engaged fan culture of more than sixty years. Two chapters deal with the fact that this brings in a perfume of nostalgia. Matthew Freeman, for instance, writes how nostalgia is “a central device used by video game developers when encouraging Bond fans to cross multiple media”. They keep “Bond in a constant present”, allowing “fans to preserve their memory of their own past Bond” (p. 33, see also the chapter by Karen Brooks and Lisa Hills).

The other volume in the series, on *The Lord of the Rings* (LOTR, edited by Lorna Piatti-Farnell), also illustrates the multiperspectivist approach to contemporary fan phenomena. Besides one interview (with the president of the Tolkien Society, Shaun Gunner), *Fan phenomena: The Lord of the Rings* comprises ten chapters which explore the world of, and the fan culture around, J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* and Peter Jackson’s film adaptations of this best-selling, quintessential epic fantasy novel. Although the volume contains analyses of the book and the movies as part of the literary and film canon, most contributors fully engage with understanding other territories of LOTR fandom. This comprises chapters on tourism in New Zealand and in the UK, but as other articles illustrate, fan interactions can be much more engaging, interactive, and creative. Interesting chapters in the volume are those dealing with fan edits, amateur or fan films, and the practice of writing fan fiction (poems, short stories, etc.). The formation of these ‘tertiary’ fan texts fully engages with what Miguel Angel Pérez-Gomez in his article describes as a double canon around LOTR, with Tolkien’s novel being the primary canonical ‘Ur’-text and Jackson’s adaptations as the secondary canon. Whereas quite some scholarly work has been done on this double canon, few have worked on the complexities of fan productions, or on how an aesthetic and cultural canon is transformed into fan texts (‘fanon’). What is interesting in *Fan phenomena: The Lord of the Rings* is that it also includes more critical perspectives on fan management, the strategies behind star narratives (chapter by Anna Martin), and copyright battles around potential problems encountered by fans when using the LOTR mythology for their work (see Paul Montfort’s chapter).

Although both volumes do not produce completely new concepts or insights into contemporary fandom, they fully illustrate how fan culture is to be understood today. Both *Fan phenomena: The Lord of the Rings* and *Fan phenomena: James Bond* underline how cultural and technological developments such as those around the internet, DVD, digitization and the development of celebrity culture have fully changed the complexities of contemporary fan practices and strategies.