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12

The Lives of Fandoms

DENISE D. BIELBY AND C. LEE HARRINGTON

Death ends a life, not a relationship.
—Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie* (tweet from actor Cory Monteith's former agent following Monteith's unexpected death; twitter.com/slimyagent)

Death is not uncommon in the lives of fandoms. Although fandoms typically form around an interest that is present and ongoing, endings do occur: actors pass away, television series conclude, and film franchises run out of story, at which point fandoms are confronted with the reality that their central focus has ceased to be. While not usually anticipated by fans when they form a fandom, the fact of absence, as in many other realms of life, does not go unacknowledged. In their introduction to the first edition of this anthology, Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington observed that while research reveals the ways fandom is now integrated with modern life, there remains a need for scholarship that "further[s] our understanding of how we form emotional bonds with ourselves and others in a modern, mediated world" (2007: 10). We know a lot about what fans gain through participation in fandom because of analysts' near-singular focus on fans' enjoyment and pleasures (including pleasure as antipathy). In contrast, we know far less about how fans interrelate with one another or their community as a whole when the basis for their enjoyment disappears.

Our particular interest here is understanding how fandoms experience loss and grief, and practice commemoration. Our focus is not on fandoms that have ceased to exist, or on how fan communities dissolve following a loss, although that would be a logical next stage of inquiry. Rather, we are interested in how a fandom's loss is acknowledged and incorporated; in short, how the loss is processed and understood by fans

as members of a social community. If shared interests bring fans together, how does disruption of those interests affect the life of a fandom?

To explore this question, we examine the effect of loss that is traumatic for fandom: the unexpected death of a well-liked actor in a popular, ongoing franchise. Celebrity deaths regardless of cause are not insignificant fan cultural events; for example, they dominate Google's year-end lists of top searches (Kelly 2015). We selected actor deaths as the means for examining fandom disruption because, of all the possibilities for exploring the aftermath of absence, an actor's unexpected passing is particularly profound due to the multiple ways the absence can rupture the storyworlds and communities in which the actor is embedded. To examine the impact of this kind of loss on fandom, we chose to focus on actor Cory Monteith from the Fox TV show *Glee*. His recent death generated intense media coverage, he was in the midst of a long-term narrative arc within his storyworld, and the narrative resolution of his reel- and real-life death was perceived as unsatisfying by *Glee*'s fandom. The reasons for this outcome comprise our analysis. We recognize that loss can result in other kinds of outcomes, as we see among US soap opera fans grieving the slow death of a beloved genre or online gamers whose fan objects can be "forever deleted not with a bang, but an error message" (Lowood 2009: 121). We take these differences into account, and our interest is in achieving a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of the experience of loss and adaptation in the lives of fandoms.

Below, we briefly review scholarship on loss, grief, and collective memory. Next, we examine Monteith's death to better understand fan communities' response and adaptation to tragic loss; as will become clear, we are particularly interested here in fans' commemorative practices. We conclude by addressing implications of loss to the persistence of fandom.

Change in the Lives of Fandoms

I'm still tremendously bitter; I probably always will be.
—*Glee* fan commenting on the show's finale (cometsweepandleonidsfly.tumblr.com)

Scholars have increasingly taken note of the relevance of *change* to fans' lives. We raised this as a core issue in our discussion of the impact of

age-related structures on the development of fan identities, practices, and interpretive capacities (Harrington & Bielby 2010). By emphasizing that lives are embedded in developmentally and socially determined life stages, we clarified the relevance of the life course to how fans experience fandom. Other work contributes to this emergent conceptual framework, such as Katz's (2014) auto-ethnography exploring the generation-defining relationship between aging adults and their music, and Hills's (2014b) analysis of the significance of becoming-a-fan stories to age-related self-continuity as a fan. This nascent scholarship considers personal change within the larger context of aging and the life course. Still other scholars have noted the relevance of changing social contexts to fan experiences: Click (in this volume) observes shifting affiliations among Martha Stewart's fans after her legal troubles; Williams (2015) explores how TV fans discursively accommodate the cancellation of a series; and Deller (2014) studies the impact of evolving technologies on online fan communities. Yet even as these works highlight change, we need to better understand how fans respond *emotionally* to change. How are we to better understand the effect on a fandom of the loss of its interest object?

Understanding Personal Loss

Personal loss is best understood through the expression of grief, defined as "the term that applies to our *reactions* to loss, to all of those reactions whether they are physical, behavioral, psychological (cognitive or affective), social, or spiritual in nature" (Corr & Corr 2007: 131, emphasis added). Mourning, often confused with grief, is the personal, interpersonal, and "social, public, or ritualized *responses* to loss" (2007: 131, emphasis added). Grief and mourning have in common the experience of absence; they need not include the permanency of death. When absence does stem from death, shifting epistemologies have generated new understandings of healthy grieving (Staudt 2009). The twentieth century was dominated in the West by a neo-Freudian "get over it" model, wherein the purpose of grief was to move past the loss. The emergent twenty-first-century epistemology emphasizes maintaining connections with the object of loss, with the process of grief understood to be negotiating loss over time (Klass, Silverman, & Nickman 1996).

This emergent approach offers opportunities to redefine the self, redefine social roles, and reconstitute communities.

Grief has been characterized as a "pining," the emotional urge to search for a lost object (Parkes & Prigerson 2010: 6, 50). The "highly specific 'search' component" of pining shows grief "to be an inevitable part of love" (2010: xv). This clarification is especially relevant to fandom in light of Grossberg's (1992) foundational research that recognized the essence of fan behavior as based in *affect*. Fandom is socially constituted by fans' emotional investments determined according to their sensibilities. Fans' personal "mattering maps" (1992: 82) differentiate one fan's interests from another's and reveal fans' emotional investments to themselves and to others. For observers, mattering maps thus present not only the terrain of fans' interactions with one another but also how that landscape constitutes the social community whose activity collectively defines a fandom.

Loss, Grief, and Collective Memory

Loss and grief at the collective level are important to social memory as a constituent of communities. Collective memory "defines the relationships between the individual and society and enables the community to preserve its self-image and transfer it over time" (Zandberg 2015: 111). Research on collective memory has come to serve many purposes, including affirming identity within nations and delineating the boundaries of middle-range collectivities like social institutions and communities. Within each context, the temporality of the human experience "of pastness" (Wallerstein 1991: 78) is essential. "Communities [. . .] have a history—in an important sense [they] are constituted by their past—and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a 'community of memory,' one that does not forget its past" (Bellah et al. 1985: 153). So important is memory to community that communities actively and presently engage in origin stories: "In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative" (1985: 153).

Scholars of collective memory typically address societies writ large, but their principles apply equally to the social communities constituted by the mattering maps of fandoms (see Garde-Hansen 2011: 123). For example, Kuhn's (2002) study of the first "movie-made generation"—the men and women who grew up in the 1930s—reveals the crucial role of memory in defining the existence of a film-going fandom and in shaping the self-narratives that identify one as a member of that community. Her scholarship (alongside that of others) underscores the important role of personal *and* group memory against the backdrop of larger sociocultural narratives to the shared experience that defines a fandom as a collective identity that exists over time. Underexplored, however, are the ways in which the collectivity of self-narratives that constitute fandom are socially constructed, and how that, in turn, forms the fabric of social memory that sustains fandom across time. Hills (2014b), in his research on "becoming-a-fan stories," raised an aspect of this when he considered the effect of a fandom's *pre*existence on the dynamics of fandoms. In observing the downside of scholars' failure to recognize the capability of fans to transfer their interest from object to object, Hills called attention to "an insistent academic focus on identifiable, established and habituated fan communities" (2014b: 15). Although his focus was the scholarly blind-spots that constrain our ability to recognize fans' capacity for developing new interests, their aptitude for variation in intensity and focus over time, and their ability to cycle through object attachments, our interest is in the *reverse*—the factors that account for the effect of change in an object of interest on the continuity or discontinuity of fan engagement at the group level.

To clarify the reciprocal dynamic we bring into play here, we rely upon work by Bellah and his colleagues (1985) that emphasizes the necessity of attending to a social community's collective expression of its personal and social memory—its commemorative actions, practices, and forms—to better understand the constitutive elements that sustain a fandom over time. How are individual expressions of grief expressed, and how do those individual expressions interrelate at a collective level?

Fandom Disruption: Celebrity Death

Experience: that most brutal of teachers. But you learn, my God you learn.
—C.S. Lewis. R.I.P. Cory [Monteith], you are forever missed. (Fan post at this-is-an-open-letter-tumblr.com)

What types of loss or absence cause the most trauma for fandoms? Recent scholarship on death and media emphasizes Western expectations for a satisfactory textual death, the expectation of not just an *ending*, but a *closure* that achieves coherence, finality, and narrative resolution (e.g., Harrington 2013; Mittell 2015). We argue that the type of celebrity (actor) death explored here has the potential to complicate survivors' (fans') grief in several specific ways. First, it entails multiple deaths or endings—at the very least, that of the actor and (separately) that of the character she or he portrayed on-screen. Second, there is a temporal lag between real- and reel-life endings, problematizing fans' grieving process in that they are simultaneously experiencing grief for the real-life death and anticipatory grief for the expected reel-life ending (Corr & Corr 2007), which extends the pining process discussed earlier (i.e., searching for a lost object). Finally, the reel-life death is necessarily mediated, in the hands of a creative team tasked with the unwelcome responsibility for narrative (and ultimately real-life) closure for a grieving public.

The recent death of Paul Walker (1973–2013) offers an instructive (albeit brief) example of a loss widely considered to be well-handled by a creative team, and widely perceived as satisfying by fans. Walker ("Brian O'Connor") costarred with Vin Diesel ("Dominic Toretto") in *The Fast and the Furious* film franchise, which takes viewers inside the world of Los Angeles street racing and its criminal elements. Walker died in a car accident before the latest installment of the franchise was completed, challenging the production team for how to incorporate his death into both the installment and the overall narrative of the franchise. By all accounts, the resolution was brilliant. From a production perspective, the creative team used flashbacks, body and stunt doubles, and CGI to complete the movie and memorialize Walker. From a narrative perspective, the film's ending—which had O'Connor deciding to spend more time with his family—was a fitting tribute to both Walker and O'Connor. The last scene of the film was an extended driving-into-the-sunset, with aerial shots indicating the together-then-divergent paths of Diesel/Toretto and Walker/O'Connor, with Diesel's car headed down one road (life?) and Walker's another (death?). The film resonated with fans (Griggs 2015) and with critics (DeFore 2015), earned record profits (Box Office Mojo 2015), and allowed for the franchise to continue with Walker/O'Connor still "alive" in the fictional community.

In contrast, the passing of Cory Monteith (1982–2013) has been broadly perceived by both critics and fans as poorly handled, thus potentially generating greater trauma among Monteith/*Glee* fans than seemingly experienced by fans of Walker/*The Fast and the Furious*.[1] A more complicated death than Walker's—in that it represented the death of Monteith, the death of his character ("Finn Hudson"), the death of "Finchel" and "Monchele" (the monikers given to his reel- and real-life romantic relationships with *Glee* costar Lea Michele), and the finale of *Glee*—Monteith's passing held potential for an even more problematic grief process for fans. As *Glee*'s lead male, Monteith's character was the window into the social dynamics of a midwestern (US) high school and its collection of social outcasts and rebels who composed the school's musical glee club. Along with costar Michele ("Rachel Berry"), Monteith was the center of the storyworld cast around which subplots of aspiration, defeat, and social difference played out. Finn's appeal was his "everyman" journey of self-discovery after being blackmailed into joining the club. The foundation Monteith (and Finn) provided the show collapsed when Monteith died, leaving the trajectory of Finn's (and of Finn and Rachel's entwined) story arc unresolvable. Subsequent efforts by the show's creators to redirect the narrative away from Finn and Finchel were poorly received by fans and industry critics, and the series limped its way to a finale after six seasons. We examine this outcome in more depth below.

Adaptation in Fandom

Forever remembering Cory Monteith and believing that his
legacy is more important than celebrity.
—Fan comment on rosesandcynicism.tumblr.com

Monteith's death left a complicated story both on- and off-screen due to *Glee* producers' poorly received narrative choices, the significance of Monteith's death to his real-life girlfriend and costar, and the unpublicized reasons for his (relapse back into) substance abuse. While any one of these factors could be the basis for an individual fan's pining, in the aggregate something else can come into play that is brought about by the social dynamics of a fan community—the effect of compound factors

upon the fandom as a whole, which then layers onto an individual fan's personal reaction. Each factor, alone and in the aggregate, left most of the fandom (at both individual and group levels) bereft in different ways for how to find (much less achieve) resolution, revealing the powerful importance of adequate narrative closure for audiences.[2]

A little background: the entire run of *Glee* (2009–15) revealed little apparent set-side drama. When show leads Monteith (Finn) and Michele (Rachel) became an item off-screen, they were quickly consecrated as one of Hollywood's golden couples, trailed by paparazzi recording their every move. During the early months of their relationship in 2011 the actors kept their romance under tight wraps, but the possibility was shipped hard by Finchel fans and watchfully anticipated by industry insiders and savvy viewers.[3] Once firm evidence of a rumored real-life Finchel leaked out (dubbed Monchele), Twitter and Tumblr exploded.[4] Before Monteith confirmed the romance in 2012 the couple's fans reveled online in what they called "Monchele riots,"[5] visual celebrations that accompanied their "retweets" and "likes" and often trended in the (unsponsored) most popular Twitter topics whenever evidence of the couple was posted. Then, after a year and a half of coupledom, and in the context of Monteith's past struggles with addiction and seemingly successful rehabilitation (Malcolm 2011), Monteith died in a Vancouver hotel room from "mixed-drug toxicity involving heroin and alcohol" (British Columbia Government 2013).

Both Monteith, by himself, and Monchele, the couple, were enormous fan favorites. Monteith was well-liked by fans, the industry, his fellow cast members, and production staff, and was regarded as the "glue" of *Glee*.[6] The loss of Monteith and Monchele simultaneously compounded the effect of each loss separately. Michele's tweet acknowledging Cory's passing was the single most retweeted message of 2013 (Conniff 2013), followed in second place by retweets of the message confirming Paul Walker's death. While Lea Michele's personal loss and grief were even further devastating to fans (Nahas 2013), our focus here is not on her. Rather, it is on how fans' shock following Monteith's death was exacerbated by their perception of *Glee* producers' erasure of his character from the show's canon and, because of that, of Monteith's contribution to the show's success. Because of the importance of Monteith, of the character of Finn, and of Monteith's portrayal of the character to the overall architecture of the show, what

follows underscores how the depth of the cultural imperative for satisfactory narrative resolution applies equally to unexpected disruptions of the unfolding narrative, and also the degree to which fans hold show creators accountable to that standard. In Monteith's case, the show's fandom perceived that *Glee*'s creators failed to fulfill their tacit contract with its audience—that of honoring fans' sense of affective ownership (see Ford 2015)—in ways that could have better aligned the double real-life loss of Monteith and Monchele with the show's canon for Finn and for Finchel. In short, in the case of *Glee*, and in the minds of the fans, the show's creators failed to facilitate adequate closure.

From the pilot onward, the show's narrative had established Finn as a tent-pole character. However, fans perceived that after Monteith's death the producers essentially erased Finn from the canvas and deleted him as a crucial propellant in the canon of Finn's romantic partner, Rachel (played by Michele).[7] Here's how: when the show returned for its fifth season, following Monteith's death, it aired a two-part tribute to The Beatles that had begun production after his passing. This was followed by a single tribute episode to honor Monteith and Finn by having Finn (inexplicably) die off-screen, with the glee club gathering to mourn his death. After this, Finn was not mentioned until a brief inclusion in the sixth season (and series) finale, an episode that—according to fans— conclusively revised the narrative canon. The integral story arc Monteith had shared with Michele was retroactively rewritten by having Rachel omit recognition of Finn's contributions to her career success and having her marry a former antagonist who had been dropped from the narrative three years earlier. Only a few professional critics marked the demise of this once-lauded series, most expressing relief that it was ending rather than mourning its departure. But even then, they invariably praised Monteith's portrayal of Finn as *Glee*'s core:

> [W]hen Monteith tragically passed away during the summer of 2013, "Glee" lost its heart. And that's when I stopped watching. [. . .] Because without Finn, there was no "Glee." That's how good Monteith was at his job. (Bell 2015)

That the show's producers inadequately (in fans' eyes) acknowledged the importance of Monteith's death to the narrative only rankled the fandom

even further. With this core aspect unsatisfactorily resolved, the fandom expressed anger, bitterness, and betrayal in ways familiar to grief experts (Parkes & Prigerson 2010: 91–92). However, this loss is more complicated than most real-life losses—again, it's the loss of an actor, a character, and on- and off-screen relationships, all simultaneously. Fans attribute their dissatisfaction to *Glee* creator Ryan Murphy—in the minds of some, he "murdered" the fan community:

> You just thought *Glee* was an inspirational show about the inherent worth of all people. [. . .] But nope. It wasn't. It was a six season long revenge fantasy. The "special" characters Ryan identified with—those who were labeled high school losers—end up as winners the world revolves around. [. . .] Glee: where high school losers become winners and high school winners become irrelevant or overlooked; left out or left behind. In the end all the masks come off. (cometsweepandleonidsfly.tumblr.com)

Mused another:

> People expected what after these last two seasons? [. . .] I'll always be glad I met wonderful people here, I'll always be thankful for Cory who brought me joy when I very much needed it [. . .] from now on I live by the rule: anything RM productions = run away and don't look back. (twitter.com/micro_tats)

Dissatisfaction with the narrative also left some fans wondering how much the show's increasingly negative portrayal of Finn contributed to Monteith's drug relapse. This speaks to the significance of pining and suggests its relevance to the importance of adequate closure, which here entails searching for a reason for the relapse and looking for someone to blame in order to achieve resolution. The fact that the cause is unknowable (read: unpublicized) to many fans only magnifies their search for attribution:

> [I]t's like Ryan meant from the very start to make [Finn] the icon of "some will lose" and [Ryan] never waivered from piling it on as high as it could go. They forced him into a relentless and non-stop drum beat of acting out LOSER-LOSER-LOSER-LOSER-LOSER for his entire period

on the show. I will wonder forever how much that fucked with his mind, especially knowing RM always says he writes characters based on his impressions of who the actors are as people. (cometsweepandleonidsfly. tumblr.com)

Here, because fans are dealing with an inexplicable and unresolved loss in both reel and real life, memory and commemoration play crucial roles in finding a semblance of narrative closure:

> All I wanted from the last day of Glee filming was for someone . . . anyone . . . to acknowledge Cory and the fact that, gone for a year and a half or not, he was a big part of the show (and really, the *heart* of the show). (breathofmidnightair.tumblr.com)

Lacking adequate closure, ongoing reminiscences and commemorations remain active on social media.[8] Although professional critics haven't been targeted by fans, no amount of discussion about *Glee*'s finale has lessened the intensity of this fandom's bitterness. Instead, fans remain in close contact via social media and mark the contribution Monteith made to their lives through creative GIFs (fan edits) of his sense of humor, his scenes on *Glee*, or his scenes in his films, with AU (Alternate Universe) GIFs and fan fiction that rewrites the show's finale to portray Finn and Rachel in the show's canon, to recapture Finn and Rachel as they were, or to celebrate Monchele and Finchel. Particularly poignant forms of commemoration have been fans' donations to Monteith's favorite charities and outreach to his grieving mother, who, in response, posted her appreciation.[9]

Conclusion: Closure, Commemoration, and Collective Memory

We have examined how a fandom responded to the loss of an actor pivotal to the text in which he was embedded. Although anchored in distinct circumstances and reflecting particular frames of accommodation, Monteith's death reveals in clear ways the importance of con/textually related aspects of loss to fandom adaptation. After Monteith's death, the fandom's loss(es) were perceived (by most fans) as mishandled by the show's creators. By revising *Glee*'s narrative canon and that of its central couple as they did, the show's creators seemed to

exacerbate fan trauma rather than facilitate narrative and psychological closure. Because this outcome left the fandom with inexplicable and unresolved losses in reel and real life, fans' expressions of memory and commemoration—which might be thought of as "banal commemoration" (see Hills 2014a; Vinitzky-Seroussi 2011)—have come to play an important recuperative role in their adaptation to Monteith's death and to the creative choices made by the show's writers and producers. These commemorative efforts validate fans' emotional investments in what was once (they felt) a text worth committing to, and memorialize a valued life lost. But these expressions have also grown to accomplish something else. As they increasingly emphasize not only the relationship the fandom once had with Monteith when he was alive but the one it *continues to have* with him now that he's gone, their meaningfulness has deepened in the two years since Monteith's passing, because they now also express a relationship that has become temporally restructured—one rooted in a past that brings significance to the present. The emerging temporality of the fandom's relationship with Monteith is reinforced by anniversary remembrances from his former cast mates, industry colleagues, and Lea Michele herself, and its growing strength was revealed when #2YearsWithoutCory trended in second place on Twitter World Wide on the anniversary of his death (Yagoda 2015).

For Paul Walker, in contrast, the loss of his popular character was perceived by critics and fan audiences as satisfactorily integrated into the film franchise's narrative, in part due to the director's responsiveness to the desires of the fandom to keep Walker's character intact and grant him a respectful send-off. Although Walker's death altered production of *Furious 7*, the film's director (James Wan) shared the intense pressure he felt for a satisfactory resolution and reached out to the fandom to accept the creative license he took to complete the film. Vin Diesel has spoken publicly of how emotionally satisfying he finds the *Furious 7* installment. In contrast, it took a full year after Monteith's death for *Glee* creator Ryan Murphy to admit what was perceived by many fans—that he had "stepped away" from the show following Monteith's death, a revelation underscored after the show's finale by cast members who offered postmortems on the series (Bacardi 2015; Barnes 2014). Murphy's belated comments (Ausiello 2014) about the creative difficulties Monteith's

death presented only deepened fan discontent over final canon revisions for Finn and Finchel.

While every celebrity death is a tragedy on its own, the outcomes for fandoms can be very different. Indeed, the contrasting grief trajectories surrounding Walker's and Monteith's deaths reveal that the particulars of how each loss was resolved *textually* have been crucial to whether the fandom has accepted or rejected the revised narrative outcome. To more fully understand the importance of fans' textual memories to their adaptation to loss, we return to our earlier discussion of the interplay between social history and community for insight into how collective memory operates at the communal level, and how it can be shaped under divergent circumstances. In the case of traumatic loss, acknowledging what came before matters centrally to a community's identity, and the erasure of an important presence does not translate into "it never existed" or "it should be minimized," as was seemingly attempted by *Glee*'s creators. Just as Walker's widely applauded narrative closure can account for his fandom's continuing interest in the *Furious* franchise, the on-screen handling of Monteith's passing may account for the fact that while *his* fan community remains, the *show*'s fandom has dissipated now that the series is over. Long-term consequences for *Glee*'s legacy are unclear at this point. Commemoration of positive events reinforces desirable images of collective identity, but commemoration of difficult pasts complicates commemoration by foregrounding the trauma and embedding the disruption in cultural memory that cannot be ignored (e.g., Saito 2010).

Two decades ago, Dayan and Katz (1992) observed that mass media play a decisive role in generating collective memories at the national level. But there is an important difference in the basis for collective memories that emanate from social communities that are fandoms compared to those that are not. Fandoms consist of media consumers entrusting aspects of their emotional selves to an artistic creator, and they are thus partly at the mercy of his or her creative logics, impulses, whims, and sensibilities. As fandoms become more central to the experiences that constitute our lives in a mediated society (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington 2007), the expectations of fans have become more sensitive to the boundaries of the tacit contract between cultural consumers and producers:

Television shows don't have to make us happy to be wonderful. [. . .] But if there is going to be pain, it has to feel warranted. It must be necessary to the story that is being told. [. . .] The relationship between fans and the powers-that-be is a tricky one. [. . .] Is there, however, a certain amount of respect and consideration that is due to the millions of people to make a show possible? (Barbash 2015: n.p.).

Finally, there is little scholarship to guide our understanding of how fans' experience of loss at the individual level and that of fandom at the collective level are linked. This chapter suggests the relevance of studying local or group-level dynamics that result from triggering events that instigate recognition of a collective experience (Fine 2010). In that regard, our work raises issues associated with the complex and dynamic relationship between fans and creative personnel, who are increasingly called upon to negotiate responsibility and control not only with those for whom they work in the industry but with audiences' interests, tastes, preferences, and, most important, affective investments as well.

NOTES

1   We note that the fandoms for *Glee* and *The Fast and the Furious* are likely to be quite different from one another. While our analysis focuses on how production (creative) decisions engendered a particular response within the *Glee* fandom, an alternate analysis might reasonably focus on the nature of the text itself in shaping fan response to an actor's death. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this insight.

2   Due to space limitations we are able to present only the dominant response of the fandom; there are, of course, alternative (more positive) perspectives and reactions among *Glee* fans.

3   See, for example, a post at moncheles.tumblr.com in response to an anonymous "ask" about when Cory and Lea "briefly dated in early glee days." Moncheles. tumblr sent in reply this link from a year earlier: moncheles.tumblr.com.

4   See the *E! News* clip of Monteith trailed by a reporter probing about his rumored relationship with Michele, posted November 30, 2011, with reader replies at allcory.tumblr.com. See this reply post for exuberant reaction to the news: nohappyendingtheresjustnothing.tumblr.com.

5   Example of a typical image used by fans to signal their celebratory mood at a sighting: glee.wikia.com.

6   See, for example, celebrities' tweets in coverage by CBS News (Moraski 2013), and the quotations from *Glee* director Adam Shankman to CNN (Almasy 2013) and from Monteith's now-disgraced costar Mark Salling to *People* (Miller 2014).

7   Fans regarded Finn as the core of the show: "There has been a continuous and concerted effort to attempt to convey that Finn's death didn't change anything in the story at all: that everything within the narrative and the narrative world is exactly the same and fine and no different than it would be if the character was still there. . . . Telling the story in [this way] unravels the integrity of the fabric of the fictional story, leaving it tattered and torn" (cometsweepandleonidsfly.tumblr. com). Writing about the impact of Monteith's death, one critic said, "And he was Finn Hudson, Glee's main testament to the life-changing power of music, arguably the show's primary message" (Hoffman 2013: 13).

8   For examples, see "A Finchel/Monchele blog because I simply love them. . . . Cory, I'll miss you forever" (allcory.tumblr.com); "This tumblr is All Cory Monteith. I am currently in celebration of Cory's life, his work, and his humanity. You can send me any messages you want to share. I can't promise that I'll answer every anon message but I can faithfully promise that I will sincerely read all of them. If you come unanon, we can talk more. Or you can tweet me at twitter.com/ AllCory" (savethedateforourwedding.tumblr.com); "Cory Forever: remembering, missing and loving Cory Forever!! I reblog just about anything having to do with Cory Monteith . . . STILL MISS CORY SO VERY MUCH. BE WELL ALL!!!" (smk0057.tumblr.com); "It doesn't matter if we are 'moved on' or not, or whenever we have kids. They're going to know about the Awkwardly Tall Canadian Drummer who stole our hearts and have a place for him in our hearts. Because we're going to keep reblogging photosets, and make posts every May 11th and July 13th. Because no matter how much we fought to see which ship is the best or who is the better character, etc. We have one thing in common, we all miss him" (morrteithrps.tumblr.com).

9   "I didn't think I could bear another birthday without Cory buzzing up to my condo . . . as a pizza delivery man, Chinese food delivery man, UPS delivery man, police, management . . . you name it . . . but today he sent all of you. Thank you for all your support and love today . . . and always. He is certainly is [sic] in our hearts" (Ann Mcgregor post on moncheles.tumblr.com).

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