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Fandom Before "Fan"

SHAPING THE HISTORY OF ENTHUSIASTIC AUDIENCES

DANIEL CAVICCHI

These are interesting times for reception theorists, especially those who study fandom, an extraordinary form of audiencing that includes everything from emotional attachment to performers to obsessive collecting. In particular, the nature of fandom's extraordinariness has changed a great deal in the past several decades, thanks to the advent of the Internet and digital production. Previously "abnormal" fan practices have not only become more and more accepted but also explicitly supported and nurtured by new technologies and reframed by niche marketing. We live in an age when "following" a stranger because you "like" her or him represents a harmless form of networking. As Twitter encourages us, "Follow your interests."[1]

What has fascinated me most, however, is not the specific quality of these shifts but rather the ways they have begun to shape our understanding of fandom as a historical phenomenon. When I talk to my students about fandom, they often marvel at what it must have been like before the World Wide Web. "How did fans find out about things?," they ask. "Where did fan communities *exist* before Facebook?" As an ethnographer who did extensive fieldwork with popular music fans in the late 1980s and early 1990s—not that long ago—I was at first amused by the

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naïveté of these questions, but then I realized that there was something more going on. My research activities had, without my knowing, shifted in tone: my interviews had become oral histories; fanzines and tapes had become artifacts. Fandom had *developed a past*. Even more fascinating, fanzines and fan fiction, conventions and collecting, fan mail and pilgrimages—the core areas of focus in the burgeoning field of fan studies—had started to become the foundational past of fandom, its origin. If today's fans are seen as the result of social media and "narrowcasting," yesterday's, by default, should be seen as the result of the culture industry and "broadcasting."

At one level, this periodization is not surprising. Treating fandom as essentially a response to the rise of mass communications media in the twentieth century is an origin story that has been circulated in multiple popular fan-studies texts. In fact, the linking of fandom and media is emphasized by the general location of "fan studies" in communications and media studies departments in the United States and Britain. When most scholars outside of fan studies think about "fandom" at all, they likely associate it with the consumption of science fiction television or moments in pop culture (such as the Beatles' 1964 arrival in the United States), sensing that it has to do with technology, the star system, consumption, and the complexity of self-formation and intimacy in the modern era. As Nancy Reagin and Anne Rubenstein note in the recent issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures,* "The novelty of modern fan communities is often overestimated in research that sometimes seems to assume that fandom began with *Star Trek*."[2]

I have nothing against the linking of fandom and media, but we need to think carefully about how this conception of fandom implicitly limits our ability to think about it historically. Although much of what we call "fandom" is clearly mediated, I worry about the extent to which those of us who study fandom are missing behavior in areas not generally in the orbit of the mass media—museum going, for example, or concert listening, or even novel reading—which might point to a longer historical trajectory that includes the nineteenth and even the eighteenth century. I wonder whether scholarly work that is not explicitly about "fandom" but that nevertheless has addressed extraordinary reception practices—Robert Darnton's "Readers Respond to Rousseau" or Susan Stewart's *On Longing* are good examples—is fully included in scholarly discussion of fandom and its meanings.[3] On the whole, I worry about the disciplinary, institutional, and generational blinders we might be wearing when it comes to creating the history of fandom.

It is tempting simply to point to the emergence of the slang term "fan" in the early twentieth century as a clear indicator of fandom's beginnings. This, in fact, was my instinctive choice when I first started working on fan culture. I remember poring over the entries for "fan" in dictionaries in the early 1990s,

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hoping philology might help me move more confidently toward philosophy. But I did not get very far. As it is for much slang, the evidence for the evolution of the word "fan" is scant. We do not really know when it first caught on or exactly how it was used in different contexts. The generally accepted origin is "fanatic," from the Latin *fanaticus,* meaning a religious and later a political zealot, a term revived and shortened by American sports writers in the 1890s to gently mock baseball rooters. But "fan" also appears to have origins in "the fancy," a more benign English sporting term from the early 1800s indicating those who shared a preference for a competitor and appearing in everything from pigeon racing to boxing. If anything, the etymological evidence suggests that "fandom" was around long before the invention of the term "fan." Even though there were no "fans" before 1880, there *were* "amateurs," "beggars," "boomers," "buffs," "bugs," "connoisseurs," "devotees," "dilettantes," "enthusiasts," "fanatics," "the fancy," "fiends," "gluttons," "habitués," "heads," "hounds," "kranks," "lions," "longhairs," "lovers," "maniacs," "matinee girls," "nuts," "rooters," "Lisztians," "Wagnerians," and more.

In thinking about the history of fandom, then, rather than starting with use of the term "fan," we might do better to consider the patterns of behavior the term was meant to describe. But, of course, doing so is fraught with difficulty. Tracing instances of one particular behavior from the vast, disorganized, and incomplete record of everyday human experience in the past is always a bit maddening, but locating the history of fandom is particularly complicated by issues of definition. The etymology of "fan" suggests that it was a means for describing audience participation, especially in public leisure activities. But if not for people forming intimate relationships with media stars through their consumption, what are we looking for? Do the religious-minded "music lovers" of 1850s urban concert culture or the unruly "kranks" of post–Civil War baseball count as fans? Probably. But what about the weeping readers of *Charlotte Temple* in the 1830s? Do the nineteenth-century Americans who hung on every word of political oratory count? What about those involved in the "tulipomania" that swept Holland in the 1630s?

I have actually found the history of disease to be quite helpful in thinking through all this. I say "actually," because I hate to make such a connection, given the ways in which fandom, until fairly recently, has been negatively characterized as form of pathology. But I think it might be possible—even desirable—to recontextualize the analogy. Disease has functioned in the West as both a distinct, experienced condition of the body or mind and a rhetorical device—a powerful act of naming that organizes disparate symptoms into an identifiable category. In fact, Caroline Whitbeck has made the distinction between a disease, a specific medical case of illness, and a "disease entity," an abstraction that coheres similar cases into a "type." Which comes first depends on your

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worldview. Although physicians have long understood diseases as things that are "lodged" in, or invade, the body, Charles E. Rosenberg, the historian of science, has insisted that "in some ways disease does not exist until we have agreed that it does—by perceiving, naming, and responding to it." Likewise, critic Lennard J. Davis, calling for a less positivistic approach to the diagnosis of mental disability, has argued that diseases *always* first exist as "disease entities," not discrete objects but "ranges of bodily difference and reaction."[4]

The idea of a "disease entity" is fascinating to me because it has allowed some historians of medicine to challenge the prevailing understanding of disease as a thing that suddenly appears in the world and afflicts people. Disease may be understood instead as an "explanatory system," as Davis puts it, one that doctors, patients, and institutions use to make sense of the array of symptoms that afflict people's bodies and mental states. In terms of history, the development of any disease depends not only on a record of real suffering and "dis-ease" but also on the way a "space opens in a cultural field" that defines "dis-ease."[5] The two, in fact, are inextricably linked.

Fandom's complexity of definition is similar. Even though fans would certainly tell you that their fandom is "real," in that it encompasses specific feelings and practices, it is not easy to define universally. I have already discussed the ways in which the etymology of "fan" points to slightly varying definitions; scholars and fans themselves use the label descriptively and prescriptively to refer to diverse individuals and groups, including fanatics, spectators, groupies, enthusiasts, celebrity stalkers, collectors, consumers, members of subcultures, and entire audiences. Depending on the context, they also use it to refer to affinity, enthusiasm, identification, desire, obsession, possession, neurosis, hysteria, consumerism, political resistance, or a combination. The history of fandom, then, poses challenges similar to those posed by the history of disease in light of changing processes of diagnosis: it likewise entails identifying, connecting, and interpreting a discrete circumstance over time, which has itself existed as the result of repeated identifying, connecting, and interpreting.

I do not have the answer to this definitional conundrum. But we know that "fan" emerged as a term in mainstream discourse in the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth century. And to the extent that the term "fan" also emerged in the sports subcultures of that time to label varying kinds of audience participation (from rooters to the fancy), we can at least assert that the concept identified a reworking of shared expectations among cultural producers, performers, and audiences, particularly as those expectations circulated in the new contexts of commercial amusements associated with urbanization. In addition, we might try to work backward to recognize broad qualities in cultural participation before 1900 that were later associated with twentieth-century fandom: the tendency of those we might today call "fans" to stay in the "performance frame,"

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characterized variously by heightened emotion, enthusiasm, devotion, and attachment, sustained over long periods of time; their tendency to distinguish themselves from "nonfan" audience members, whether by language, clothing, or style; and their use of specific supporting practices, such as gatherings, pilgrimages, collecting, and writing.

We can use the historian's prerogative of hindsight to explore how fandom, in the words of Davis, "opens up in the cultural field" of the West before 1900.[6] How were various cultural audiences, from readers to spectators to listeners, changing in the nineteenth century, and how might we understand those changes as lending insight into what we now understand as "fandom"? What were the various ways in which values, beliefs, institutions, and discourses helped to cluster certain audience practices together before 1900? And how did that clustering help people, subsequently, to make sense of, and regularly to use, the term "fan"?

My field is music, which is an interesting field for starting to think about all this. At the forefront of both twentieth-century media technology (in the form of recording and broadcasting) and nineteenth-century urban entertainment (in the form of commodified performance and mass-published texts), music is a key link between what typically have been perceived as different eras of audience behavior. In particular, even though the advent of the phonograph was a revolutionary moment in music, in which new kinds of repeated listening or mediated intimacy with performers emerged, we can also see how those behaviors might have opened up a bit earlier, especially in continuities carried over from the culture of nineteenth-century "music lovers."

Music lovers of the mid-nineteenth century were young, middle-class, white men and women, often newly arrived in American cities, who, for the first time in history, focused more on hearing public concerts than on making music themselves at home.[7] For many Americans in antebellum cities, the chance to hear professionally performed music simply for the price of a ticket was astonishing, wiping away the necessity of having to learn an instrument, find sheet music, and practice. Indulging in its convenience was the mark of someone fully participating in the sophisticated culture of the city. But music lovers imbued their participation in this enterprise with unexpected enthusiasm. They did not just attend concerts; they depleted their savings to do so every night; they described their feelings about what they heard in diaries, and they waited, longingly, for their favorite performers to return so that listeners could hear those performers again and again.

Take Walt Whitman, who, as one of the earliest music lovers, developed a fascination with concerts while a journalist in New York City in the mid-1840s: on the "free list" for concerts, he was able to hear most of the major virtuoso

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performers who passed through the city in the late 1840s and early 1850s and would frequently rhapsodize about his favorite opera singers. Although Whitman never had any formal musical training and never learned to play an instrument, music affected him with such force that he described his listening experiences in poems, journal entries, and reminiscences throughout his entire life.

Nathan Beekley, a young clerk in Philadelphia, wrote in his diary of 1849 about regularly attending shows and concerts in at least six different establishments, from the Musical Fund Hall to the local Barnum's Museum. Beekley was not wealthy, and he regularly took himself to task in the diary for how much he was spending in his pursuit of amusements: "It won't do," he wrote. "Must stop going to places of amusement—it don't pay—particularly since losing so much money."[8] Of course, he kept going. He even sought out music four or more nights a week during concert season and, in addition, attended Anglican, Episcopalian, and Free Church services on Sundays in order to hear *more* music.

William Hoffman expressed his unhappiness at working as a clerk in Albany, and even at attending church services there, often writing in his diary, "Today has been very dull indeed."[9] But after encountering the Hutchinson Family Singers, he began to pursue popular amusements, taking in a performance at a local museum and listening to "bands of music" in the street. When he moved to New York City, he filled much of his diary with thoughts about the arrival of opera singer Jenny Lind in September 1850, copying newspaper reports about Lind verbatim, waiting with the crowd at the wharf on the day of her arrival, trying to catch a glimpse of her as she passed in her carriage, noting the announcements of the new hall that was to be built for her concerts, and commenting on the reviews for her initial performances.

Or take Lucy Lowell, the child of Judge John Lowell and a member of one of the first families of Boston in the late nineteenth century. Unlike other young women in polite society, she refused to sing demurely for male suitors, grousing in her diary in 1880, "I had to sing in eve'g. Bah!" But she thrilled at performances of Wagner's operas to the point where she "couldn't keep her mind on anything else afterwards."[10] In fact, as she noted in the seven volumes of her diary throughout the 1880s, she attended performances by almost every touring operatic and symphonic star who passed through Boston, as well as the opera, symphony concerts, musical society benefits, the theater, the circus, exhibitions, amateur performances, and dances—a rate of attendance that was certainly greater than that of most people her age.

There were many more such music lovers. Together, they marked a shift in the significance of concert listening in the musical ecology of the United States, something that had ramifications for how people understood musical

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participation and even “musicality.” My recent study of nineteenth-century music loving, *Listening and Longing,* examines in depth the behaviors and values of this developing culture. For now, I will quickly name a few characteristics.

First is a sustained interest in sensation. As the concert business grew in the 1850s, spectacle became one means of competition between promoters, especially in the form of the “monster” concert format that, at its extreme, put literally thousands of performers onstage at the same time and necessitated the building of huge, temporary performance halls, the size of several contemporary football fields to accommodate such ambitions. The novelty of these performances for most people was the overwhelming *physical* experience—a kind of sonic rush of instruments, crowds, and applause.

For music lovers, though, sensation was not a novelty but rather a desired ideal for all performance experiences, whether in a temporary coliseum or a “lecture room” at a dime museum. Music lovers were attuned to the power and quality of performed sound at a visceral, almost intuitive level. Voices had to “strike” or “move” them to be important. In response to opera, especially, music lovers often expressed an overwhelming visceral ecstasy, with music “filling their souls” to the point of losing composure, something that was excitingly dangerous and quite cathartic within the behavioral strictures of middle-class Victorian culture. Indeed, drawing on his own fascination with New York opera in the 1840s, Walt Whitman described music listening as a kind of sexual communion: “A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me / The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.” Music “convulses” him, “whirls” him, “throbs” him, “sails” him, and “wrenches unnamable ardors” from him. He is “licked” “exposed,” “cut,” and “squeezed” by waves of orchestral sound. Poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox had a similar response to Wagner: “A clamorous sea of chords swept o’er my soul / submerging reason. Mutinous desire / Stood at the helm; the stars were in eclipse; / I heard wild billows beat, and thunders roll; / And as the universe flamed into fire, / I swooned upon the reef of coral lips.”[11]

In practical terms, music lovers notably learned and compared the acoustic properties of various concert halls so as to position themselves to best hear the music coming from the stage. Henry Van Dyke, for example, characterized an acoustically optimal concert hall seat as a secret treasure: “The Lover of Music had come to his favorite seat. It was in the front row of the balcony, just where the curve reaches its outermost point, and, like a rounded headland, meets the unbroken flow of the long-rolling, invisible waves or rhythmical sound. The value of that chosen place did not seem to be known to the world.” Securing such a seat was not always possible, of course. Lucy Lowell was furious when she found that her tickets to an 1880 Wagner Festival put her in a remote section of Boston’s Mechanics Hall, far from the stage. On the other hand, Sarah Putnam, the Boston painter, noted that her second-row seats at a Wagner

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concert were too close for the "tremendous" solos of the vocalists and quoted her friend, Mrs. Sargent, who had wryly remarked, "Sitting so near them was like sitting under Niagara Falls."[12]

In addition to sensation, there was a new emphasis on celebrity and selfhood among music lovers. Virtuoso performers, the "stars" of the music world, suggested the power of self making for their middle-class admirers; they were each a testament to an increasingly influential bourgeois culture of possibility in which everybody could be somebody. As historian Leo Braudy quipped, "In a self-made country, who had not the potential to be self-made himself, with the help of an equally self-made audience?" In a time when people were striving to achieve what Lucia McMahon has called an intense "sharing of selfhood" in both friendships and romantic relationships, concert audiences often idealized a "bond of feeling" with performers, reporting strong and uniquely charged connections to a given performer's "inner" being."[13]

Music was especially suited for self making since it represented an intensely emotional and sensual experience that could create a heightened, vaguely erotic intimacy with another. By attending a public concert, people could have an experience they could find otherwise only through the labor of courtship, one that was heightened by its elusiveness: it was always temporary and, to some extent, illusory—audiences did not actually know Ole Bull or Jenny Lind personally and probably never would. Indeed, that each star existed as both ordinary person and world-class concert phenomenon was an intense and irresistible mystery.

Lucy Lowell, for example, was fascinated by opera singer Etelka Gerster. But Lowell wrote in her diary not about what Gerster performed but about how she transcended her roles: "In the mad scene she was perfect, never forgetting herself for an instant, even when she received flowers. . . . She is altogether, as I have said, many times, a perfectly charming, attractive, loveable women, you feel all the time a strong affection for her. Should like to know her, I'm sure she is charming, she must be, with her face + whole manner and bearing." Poet Anne Lynch had similar feelings for violinist Ole Bull, recognizing in his playing an explosion of feeling that mimicked her own desires. She was even moved to write directly to him: "I have never met a nature who could return to me the half of what I could give, and so my life has been one long famine and my heart the cannibal of itself. If I seem to you too enthusiastic in my expressions of friendship for you, remember that my heart has been frozen for a whole lifetime and it must naturally overflow on meeting one so large and so noble as your own. Ah, Ole Bull! If I could tell you the history of my life, so cold, so barren without and so volcanic within!"[14]

Finally, music loving contested the expected limits of consumption. The commercialization of concerts had brought extraordinary access to music for many Americans in the new wage economy and had woven music exhibitions

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and concerts more deeply into the middle-class social life of East Coast cities. However, such concerts, especially during the heyday of virtuoso performance at midcentury, were organized around the principle of audience anonymity and offered only a single ephemeral experience to each ticket holder, which limited music's ability to perpetuate continuing, deeply felt values and connections. Music lovers were those who refused to accept the limited and temporary musical participation afforded by the purchase of a concert ticket; they sought instead to creatively imbue their listening experiences with lasting personal connection and depth of feeling, to extend and sustain feelings of connection with music and performers, even as those feelings were revealed as only temporary and only part of the "show."

Some, as I have said, maintained an extraordinarily active audience life, attending concerts several nights a week and regularly seeking out two or more Sunday church services to experience music. Others pursued artists outside of the concert hall, waiting in front of hotels for a glimpse of their favorite star or going on pilgrimages to the homes of European composers and performers. Many concertgoers, especially after the 1850s, attempted to re-create their favorite concert performances by collecting and playing sheet music for the pieces performed. Others attempted to fix on paper every moment, every feeling during a concert, their diaries acting as stand-ins for the performances themselves. Dedicated concertgoers like Lowell could go on for five or more diary pages describing every moment in an opera they had heard.

None of the music lovers I researched called themselves "a fan." In fact, for music lovers, European audience practices—from the Society of Dilettanti to those of the Loges de Lions at the Paris Opera—were likely their most significant models for making sense of their own behaviors.[15] Most music lovers I researched mentioned keeping up with the latest news of European cultural life, especially though magazines. *Putnam's Monthly*, published in New York during the mid-1850s, for example, had regular "Art Matters" and "Editorial Notes" columns that surveyed "the foreign musical bulletins" for news of music in Europe. But in retrospect, a historian can see how midcentury music lovers and modern pop fans might be connected in their complex embrace of commodified participation. Even though the mechanisms and contexts may be different, the actions of music loving and music fandom are similar.

Now, as I have suggested, the other side of researching specific "fan entities" is the analysis of broader organizational discourses of audience in society. There is a bit of educated speculation in macroinvestigations of the past, of course; we cannot really know what people were thinking collectively then any more than we can today. But we can, through a thorough investigation of diaries,

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letters, newspaper articles, and images, start to see repetition of ideas and accumulate patterns of reference.

In this case, while a music-loving culture was developing, there was a fascinating and simultaneous stream of commentary, jokes, cartoons, editorials, tirades, and assessments of that culture among society wits, cultural critics, and social reformers. "Lind Mania" in the spring and summer of 1850 is a good example. Although much of the general public seemed genuinely excited that European opera star Jenny Lind would soon embark on a national tour of the United States, the increasingly outlandish actions of her supporters—deliberately provoked by the elaborately staged promotions of her manager, P. T. Barnum—generated a veritable industry of parodies.

Sporting weekly writer Thomas W. Meighan, calling himself "Asmodeus," wrote a parodic pamphlet, "The Jenny Lind Mania in Boston, Or, The Sequel to Barnum's Parnassus," which starts with his learning that Barnum has employed nearly the entire service industry of Boston, from bill posters to steamboat runners, to help him orchestrate Lind's arrival. When Asmodeus naively inquires whether he, too, might get in on the business, it becomes clear that this is no mere entrepreneurial venture:

> For two long weeks, did I hear nought in my rambles, by night or day, in barber shops and work shops, in beer shops and stables, in hotels and private domicils, from Beacon Street to the Black Sea, all the cry was, Jenny Lind and Barnum, Barnum and Jenny Lind! Soon I met my ancient and respected friend Pearce, so full of madness and music that he rushed through the streets with the fearful velocity of an escaped locomotive.
>
> Hold worthy friend, quoth I, whither so fast?
>
> He gazed wildly at me for a moment, then shouted as he run—Jenny Lind and Barnum! Barnum and Jenny Lind![16]

New York newspaper columnist Donald Grant Mitchell humorously compared the public's enthusiasm for Lind in 1850 to the Great Plague of the Middle Ages:

> It has only been by dint of the most extreme caution, in avoiding contact with infected persons, that I have been able to preserve my usual state of health. It has even been a serious question with me if it were not worth my while to retire for a short time into the country, out of the reach of the contagion; but on second thought, a sense

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> of duty prevailed over my fears, and has kept me firmly at my post. . . . It was really an awful exhibition to see thousands of these sufferers rushing along the streets, regardless of all ordinary proprieties, and sometimes screaming out at the very top of their voices. . . . Some carried huge bouquets of flowers, which they threw into the carriage of Miss Lind, and kissed their hands, and made all kinds of antics; after which they either grew melancholy, and slipped away through the back-streets, or quieted themselves with drink.[17]

The absurdly enormous scale of the 1872 World's Peace Jubilee and International Musical Festival in Boston, especially as experienced by the tens of thousands of listeners attending the city's coliseum, was satirized in the daily newspaper *Jubilee Days*. Its June 27th issue, for example, published a sketch of a disheveled and exhausted man, holding a pair of binoculars and sprawled on a seat, titled "A Faithful Listener, Who Has Not Lost a Single Rehearsal or Concert." Later issues poked fun at "types of listeners" in a series of images over the course of a week. The first featured "The Hungry Amateur, Who Came by an Early Train"; it gently mocked the notion that anyone might put music before food by depicting a single, skinny man leaning forward eagerly in his seat before the stage, eating a sandwich he had hidden in his hat. The second image, "The Man with a Musical Wife," showed a portly, sleeping gentleman, clearly not enthused about having to attend the concerts, seated next to a finely dressed woman, staring intently ahead at the stage. The nature of such a relationship was, evidently, widely recognizable.[18]

In the 1880s, after the work of Richard Wagner was first performed before enthusiastic audiences in the United States, skeptics quickly seized on the excessive reverence accorded his music. In fact, Wagnerians were one of the important sources of the slang term "longhair," a characterization that came to refer generally to overintellectual, bohemian lovers of classical music. Long hair was, in fact, a known characteristic of composer Franz Liszt, who was also Wagner's father-in-law, something that only reinforced the stereotype. Thus a reviewer in *Century Illustrated Monthly* humorously compared Wagnerians with Liszt followers, explaining:

> The genuine unalloyed Wagnerian wears long and rather matted locks, a long, spare, and untrimmed beard, and long untrimmed nails. The followers of Liszt, on the other hand, have their long hair carefully

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> combed and brushed behind their ears "with a touch of vanity." Moreover, these latter endeavor to remove every hair of beard from their faces, in order to do justice to the priestly connections of the illustrious abbé. . . . Liszt's worshipers also pay great attention to their hands, and, like the maestro, are fond of showing them, and from time to time raise them as if in blessing.[19]

These characterizations all derive their bite from a limited number of reference points:

1. Illness

It had been known for centuries that music could produce powerful psychological and physical effects, even healing powers, something that was behind the eighteenth-century fascination with the dancing mania tarantism, for instance. But in the early nineteenth century, excessive musical passion or ecstasy became increasingly medicalized. In 1810, French physician Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol promoted the controversial but highly influential notion of "partial delirium" or "monomania," in which one of the separate faculties of the brain could become diseased while the others remained intact, creating the possibility of abnormal obsessions or impulses in otherwise healthy people.[20] Although people had occasionally referred to various social fads as "manias" before that time, Esquirol's work steered such usage toward individual pathologies. Monomania quickly became a literary trope in the early to mid-1800s, beginning in European literature, where "fixated" protagonists proliferated through the 1820s and 1830s, and continuing in midcentury American literature, with monomaniacal protagonists such as Edgar Allan Poe's narrator of the "Tell-Tale Heart" and Herman Melville's Ahab in *Moby-Dick*. These characters established monomania as a quintessentially Romantic illness—an affliction not only of the hero but of the creative and eccentric genius.

The mania for monomania also gave birth to a parallel, new, compound word, "musicomania." In a chapter on "Artisans (Diseases of)" in the *Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine* (1833), John Forbes and his coeditors linked the new term to occupational disease. "Musicians and painters," they wrote, "are, in general, the most enthusiastic of all artists. We have seen musicians become deranged, and musicomania has been observed by many physicians." Robley Dunglison's *New Dictionary of Medical Science and Literature*, published a year later, included a specific entry for "musicomania" (he listed "muso-mania" as a variant), describing the condition more broadly as "a variety of monomania in which

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the passion for music is carried to such an extent as to derange the intellectual faculties."[21]

It is not clear that anyone was actually treated for "musicomania," but during the nineteenth century, the term found its way into everyday discourse as an alternative name for music loving, and references to the condition were sprinkled throughout novels and essays between 1850 and 1870. "Musical mania" was prevalent as a rather neutral description of a "love for music" in both English and American publications such as the *Musical World, Putnam's Magazine, Harper's Monthly Magazine,* and *Dwight's Journal of Music*. Music lovers sometimes even used it to indicate self-deprecating awareness of their own concert hopping. "My musical mania is at its height just now," George Strong wrote in his diary. "After church I rushed down to St. Peter's, and I reached it just as Mozart's 'Number Twelve' was in full blast. . . . I was just in a fit state to go into ecstasies at each individual note."[22]

The attempt among middle-class doctors, philosophers, and even music lovers to understand music loving in terms of psychology significantly located the power of music not in the mystical vibrations of musical sound or the shared social circumstances of audiencing, but rather in the individual's private emotional and intellectual responses to any performance of a work. This new focus was clearly part of a wider ideological shift among the white middle class in the relationship among the self, the body, and affect.

2. Associations of Audience Enthusiasm with Crowds, Class, and Irrationality

"Enthusiasm," from the Greek *entheos,* meaning possessed by God, started out as a religious concept, referring to powerful spiritual ecstasy or inspiration. But the concept also found more secular uses as a way to characterize the "overly radical" tendencies of political enemies. "Enthusiasm" became especially politicized during the religious civil war in England in the mid-1600s, where it became a catchall pejorative, used by Anglicans to smear Puritans and Puritans to smear Quakers and Ranters. From the mid-seventeenth well into the eighteenth century, British writers, including John Locke and Thomas More, contrasted religious enthusiasm with the Enlightenment values of reason and civility; this distinction increasingly took on class overtones, pitting refined elites against unruly lower classes, outsiders, and agitators.

The class condescension implicit in the historical discourse of enthusiasm in the eighteenth century carried over into new contexts in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Especially in a rapidly urbanizing nation like the United States, the concept of enthusiasm was often used by those in power to malign

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the anonymous masses of immigrants from Ireland, Britain, and Germany, as well as thousands of new migrants from the countryside, whose crowding in the streets raised the threat of mob rule to the more traditional framework of virtuous leadership. Camp meetings during the Second Great Awakening in the 1820s and 1830s, for example, were, to upper- and middle-class commentators, a representation of enthusiastic disorder and suggestibility among the poor. Likewise, depictions of theater and music crowds in the press, when not praising the beauty and refinement of middle- and upper-class attendees, tended to focus on the disorder of the lower classes, with an emphasis on crowd violence, lack of control, and metaphors of savagery or animalism.

Associations of class and music were further articulated by several social reformers after the Civil War, who linked the quality of a person's enthusiasm to taste and character. For example, in a long essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1879, classical music reformer and critic William Apthorp specifically used the language of class to compare the approaches of "refined" musicians and "ordinary" music lovers:

> A musician, after listening to a great work, does not, as a rule, care to have it immediately repeated. . . . But when the ordinary music-lover hears a piece of music that particularly pleases him, he generally wishes to hear it over again; he will listen to it day in and day out, until he gets thoroughly sick of it, and never wishes to hear it more. He sucks and sucks at his musical orange until there is nothing left but the dry peel, and then throws it away.[23]

Through metaphors that provide cues of social class, Apthorp was careful to associate excessive musical behavior with lack of discipline and education and to provide his readers with an alternative position. He associated the musician with connoisseurship, deference, and judgment and the music lover with sensualism, immediate gratification, and boorishness. Listening to music, the musician is intellectually pleased, whereas the music lover engages in unrestrained bodily pleasure; the former has taste, and the latter does not.

3. A Gendering of Cultural Participation as Passive and Feminine

Another discourse at work involved gender. Musicologist Ruth Solie has argued that both nineteenth-century male reformers and female patrons were part of a "form of romanticism that idealized and sentimentalized women at the same

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time that it idealized and sentimentalized the aesthetic experience, creating a natural link between them."[24] Of course, this linkage had political implications. Even as women were encouraged to develop an aesthetic sensibility, they were vulnerable to accusations of overemotionality. You can see this double standard clearly in public debates about the "feminization of culture" in the 1890s. Many middle-class men felt that cultural activities involving literature, art, and music were the foundation of any great civilization, but, for them, the fact that culture had become the domain of women meant that it was also inadequate, a frail and pale imitation of civilization's promise.

Reconciling "manly" responsibility in the public sphere with a love for music increasingly became fraught with difficulty. Derek Scott recounts that when classical pianist and conductor Charles Hallé, visiting London in the late 1840s, "asked any gentleman belonging to society, 'Do you play any instrument?' it was considered an insult." Such disdain for musical life was why a young Henry Higginson, having to eschew his studies of music in Vienna in order to join his father's stock brokerage in Boston, noted to friends in the 1880s that he never walked into 44 State Street without wanting to sit down on the doorstep and cry.[25]

And despite middle-class women's increasingly active role in the world of concert management and the sense of the malaise of modern urban life they shared with men, the world of concert going became associated with women's alleged emotionalism and passivity. The subject of "women in music" was a regular theme of editorials, letters to the editor, and other public forms of debate in the 1880s and 1890s. Edith Brower, for example, caused a great deal of controversy by asserting in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1894 that, despite open access to music, women had never produced much of value because they lacked abstract imagination. "Woman ventures timidly," she wrote, "ofttimes boldly, into the shoreless deeps of the abstract. For a while she may disport herself prettily there—in the shallows, so to speak; but she is never quite happy nor at ease unless the terra firma of the concrete be at least within reach."[26] Brower's traditional message was clear: men create and produce great music, and women can only receive and consume it because that is just how nature intends it.

On the whole, music loving was an especially visible example, or symptom, of America's growing marketplace of culture. The behaviors of new listeners—whether characterized as monomaniacal, rowdy, or passive—were all transgressive, violating and implicitly questioning the carefully inscribed borders of middle-class life. Such violations had even more particular meanings in the context of rapid change during an era shaped by industrialization and urbanization. Passion, which had previously been interpreted in terms of European religious debates, acquired new meanings amidst the mechanization and rigidity of modern industrial life. The irrationality of mobs, previously associated with political expression, became indicative of uncontrolled

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overcrowding in cities and the alleged dangers of foreign immigrants and worker revolts. Women's cultivation of "sensibility" became central to debates about the value of production and consumption, agency and passivity.

All of these developments laid the groundwork for how fandom would emerge as a subsequent explanatory system in music. Although these discourses had circulated around music audiencing since the mid-nineteenth century, they were not consistently applied by critics and reformers until later in the century as part of what Lawrence Levine has identified as "sacralization" and John Kasson as "disciplining spectatorship." I think Levine's and Kasson's theories work better with theater than music, where I prefer to use Philip Ennis's sociological concept of "institutionalizing ecstasy," but there is clearly a movement toward reading concert audiencing in terms of commercialization, where it is less about passion and love than about manipulation and agency in modern life.[27] It is no coincidence that the earliest instance I can find of the term "fan" with reference to music comes not from older music lovers but from "how-to" articles in player-piano trade magazines, beginning in 1914, which encourage sellers to reach their buying public by framing the player piano as a means to help men to become "interested in music again," and become "player fans."

The complex part of historicizing fandom as a general concept is expanding it to compare and connect a range of "fan entities" with one another and then, in turn, exploring the relationship of past practices of cultural engagement to those in the present. An 1873 *Galaxy Magazine* article, for instance, outlined a wide range of cultural enthusiasms going back to ancient Greece, many of which are lost to us now, including "a rosy glow" about mathematics, alchemy, the Holy Land, South Seas speculation, and tulips—or Jenny Lind, Dickens, croquet, baseball, oratory, steamboat racing, silkworms, and hens in the United States We may see some of these as short-lived social "fads" rather than more significant forms of fanlike enthusiasm, but recognizing that distinction has itself helped shape the broader concept of "fandom."[28]

I argued earlier that music was particularly suited for thinking about the history of fandom because, being at the forefront of both twentieth-century media and nineteenth-century urban entertainment, it provided a link between what typically have been perceived as different eras of audience behavior. That is true, but I think the case might also be made that sports, literature, and theater, together with music, form the most promising realms through which to historicize fandom. What might we begin to say about these forms of culture?

The culture of American baseball kranks is a good example. In the ball "clubs" of antebellum America, kranks were as important as players on the field. They understood any baseball game as part of a wider social event in which they had a strong participatory function (sometimes called

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“rowdyism”); kranks’ “rooting” was as competitive as the players’ batting and fielding. The competitive and communal nature of krank culture gave it a feel significantly different from that of music loving, although rituals of display and the politics of gender worked in much the same way for both. And just as music lovers by 1900 were disciplined into reverent silence before the majesty of performed works, so kranks by 1920 were moved away from the field and into stands, where they could be policed as “consumers” and kept from “interfering” with the primary spectacle of the game.

There is much significant work on the historical experience of reading that reveals interesting connections with passion, gender, and consumption in music. I am thinking of all the work on sentimental fiction or, more recently, on reading in nineteenth-century bachelor culture, including Lisa Spiro’s on “detached intimacy” and Thomas Augst’s on reading as a “technology of self.”[29] Scholars are starting to study readers’ letters to authors, an area that is also quite exciting in terms of evidence, although there is much more work to be done, provided more letters can be found.[30]

Theatrical enthusiasm in the United States begins with working-class followers of actors in cities. There are, for instance, the New York “Bowery b’hoys,” who supported a “rowdy” culture of interference and manipulation of performances, giving way to the late nineteenth-century “matinee girls,” who were more focused on imaginative interactions with stars.

These are just hints of the wider world of fan entities in the nineteenth century. In addition to mapping these and other specific audience practices and developments, we need to work out the explanatory systems of audiencing that arise *across* them. For example, the use of medical discourse to characterize various enthusiasms was widespread from the mid to the late nineteenth century. At first, this practice involved just humorous analogies, with no real harm intended. Louisa May Alcott in 1868, for example, playfully summed up the fans of the antebellum era as afflicted youth:

> Once upon a time there raged in a certain city one of those fashionable epidemics which occasionally attacked our youthful population. It wasn’t the music mania, nor gymnastic convulsions, nor that wide-spread malady, croquet. Neither was it one of the new dances which, like a tarantula—bite, set every one a twirling, nor stage madness, nor yet that American lecturing influenza which yearly sweeps over the land. No, it was a new disease called the Art fever, and it attacked the young women of the community with great violence.[31]

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Alcott does not even include "baseball fever," which in 1867 was the subject of a popular song:

All 'round about we've queer complaints,
Which needs some Doctors patching;
But something there is on the brain,
Which seems to me more catching,
'Tis raging too, both far and near,
Or else I'm a deceiver,
I'll tell you what it is, now, plain,
It is the Base Ball fever.[32]

In the 1870s, commentary was still playful, but with increasing hints of middle-class anxiety about individual sincerity and moral culpability. The 1873 *Galaxy Magazine* article mentioned earlier, for example, poked gentle fun at the "absurdities of enthusiasm" by saying, "Enthusiasm seems to me a kindling of the soul toward a favorite object or idea, to almost the entire controlling of our thoughts and purposes and emotions. By its very nature it is uncalculating and unselfish. *In this, you can distinguish true from false enthusiasm.* But this effervescence of the imagination often leads to mental intoxication, and the understanding reels and totters. Hence the element of absurdity." Still, as the writer concludes: "enthusiasm is a good thing. If you have it, be thankful. You will need it all before you get through life."[33]

By the 1890s, medical analogies started to take on a more worried, ominous tone. Thus social psychologist Gustave Le Bon could characterize all mass audiences in 1904 as devoid of individual reason and susceptible to the "emotional contagion" of suggestion. Le Bon directly equated crowds with "religious sentiment," something he explained as a condition in which a person "puts all the resources of his mind, the complete submission of his will, and the whole-souled ardour of fanaticism at the service of a cause or an individual."[34]

These characterizations, however, barely skim the surface. We must remember that nineteenth-century American urban culture was what Kathy Peiss called "homosocial," though within separated spheres of race, ethnicity, and class.[35] Although diverse Americans were starting to participate together in new forms of centralized commercial leisure by the 1880s, the recovery of the specific practices and values of such audiences before that time is an enormous task that involves hundreds of potential "fan entities." No one can do this kind of research and comparison alone—individuals do not have enough years in their adult lives. And, of course, the challenge is exacerbated by contemporary disciplinarity, which tends to limit scholars' perspectives.

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The only way I see the historicizing of fandom proceeding with any legitimacy is through individual research of pre-1900 audience practices in all their diversity as part of a much larger scholarly project of comparison, conversation, and collaboration. The 2011 issue of *Transformative Works and Cultures* on historical fandom was a good start. But I think we can take it even further. Call it the "Fandom History Initiative" or the "Historical Avidity Project" or something like that. Fan studies has matured enough now as an interdisciplinary field that it truly should find a place and a need for historical scholarship. Fan scholars, to best do their work, ought to become more deeply aware of how the past figures not only in the definition of the field but also in their valuing of fandom itself. Recovering the experiences of early consumers or exploring how ideas of mania, unruly crowds, and gendered passivity shaped discussions about audiencing may not definitively extend "fandom" into the nineteenth century. However, those lines of research will provide clearer parameters for how Americans talked and thought about avid engagement with cultural forms and, in turn, how historical fan studies might proceed from a stronger foundation of shared inquiry.

NOTES

1. A slightly different, earlier version of this essay was presented as the keynote address at the Reception Study Society Conference, September 8, 2011.
2. Nancy Reagin and Anne Rubenstein, "'I'm Buffy, and You're History': Putting Fan Studies into History," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 6 (2011): para. 5.3, http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/272.
3. See Robert Darnton, "Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity," in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage, 1984), 215–56; and Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).
4. Caroline Whitbeck, "Causation in Medicine: The Disease Entity Model," *Philosophy of Science* 44 (1977): 619–37; Charles E. Rosenberg, "Introduction—Framing Disease: Illness, Society, and History," in *Framing Disease: Studies in Cultural History,* edited by Charles E. Rosenberg and Janet Golden (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992). xiii; and Lennard J. Davis, *Obsession: A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 22.
5. Davis, *Obsession,* 51.
6. Ibid.
7. Portions of this discussion of music lovers appeared in my book *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2011). I wish to thank Wesleyan University Press for permission to reuse this material.
8. Nathan Beekley, January 27, Diary, 1849, octavo vol. B, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA.

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9. William Hoffman, September. 4, 1848, Diary, 1847–50, BV Hoffman, William (MS 1543), New York Historical Society, New York City.
10. Lucy Lowell, January 1, Diary, 1880, Lucy Lowell Diaries, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston; and Lowell, April 19, Diary, 1884, Lucy Lowell Diaries, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
11. Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," *Leaves of Grass,* in *Walt Whitman: Complete Poetry and Collected Prose,* edited by Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 54–55; and Ella Wheeler Wilcox, as quoted in T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 172.
12. Henry Van Dyke, *The Music Lover* (New York: Moffat, Yard, 1909), 5–6; Sargent, as quoted in Sarah Putnam, April 17, Diary, 1884, Sarah Goodman Putnam Diaries, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
13. Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Lucia McMahon, "'While Our Souls Together Blend': Narrating a Romantic Readership in the Early Republic," in *An Emotional History of the United States,* edited by P. N. Stearns and J. Lewis (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 66.
14. Lucy Lowell, May 8, Diary, 1882, Lucy Lowell Diaries, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston; and Anne Lynch, as quoted in Mortimer Brewster Smith, *The Life of Ole Bull* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 67.
15. The Society of Dilettanti was a London-based gentlemen's club, founded in 1733 to support its members' amateur delight in the arts. The Loges de Lions were a new generation of *dilettanti* who sat in a special "loges de lions" to better see the lions of the stage performing at the French Opera in the 1830s.
16. Thomas W. Meighan (Asmodeus), "The Jenny Lind Mania in Boston, Or, A Sequel to Barnum's Parnassus" (Boston: n.p., 1850), 12.
17. Donald Grant Mitchell, *The Lorgnette: Or, Studies of the Town; By an Opera Goer* (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1851), 231–34.
18. Augustus Hoppin, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and William Dean Howells, eds., *Jubilee Days: An Illustrated Daily Record of the Humorous Features of the World's Peace Jubilee* (Boston: Osgood, 1872); see illustrations from June 27, July 1, and July 2, 1872, on 44, 56, and 60, respectively.
19. "French and German Books: Wagner," *Scribner's Monthly* 13, no. 5 (1877): 728.
20. Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol, *Mental Maladies: A Treatise on Insanity,* translated by E. K. Hunt (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1845), 200.
21. John Forbes, Robley Dunglison, Alexander Tweedie, and John Conolly, eds., *The Cyclopaedia of Practical Medicine,* 4 vols. (1833–35; Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1845), 1:180; and Robley Dunglison, *A New Dictionary of Medical Science and Literature* (Boston: C. Bowen, 1833), 64.
22. George Strong, as quoted in Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music,* vol. 1: *Resonances, 1836–1849* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 182.
23. William Apthorp, "Musicians and Music Lovers," *Atlantic Monthly* 43 (1879): 150.
24. Ruth Solie, *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 92.

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25. Derek Scott, "The Sexual Politics of Victorian Musical Aesthetics," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 119, no.1 (1994): 93. On Higginson's response, see Bliss Perry, *The Life and Letters of Henry Lee Higginson* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1921), 267.
26. Edith Brower, "Is the Musical Idea Masculine?," *Atlantic Monthly* 73 (1894): 333.
27. See Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1990); and Philip H. Ennis, "Ecstasy and Everyday Life," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 6, no. 1 (1967): 40–48.
28. "The Absurdities of Enthusiasm," *Galaxy Magazine* 16, no. 1 (1873): 141–45.
29. See Lisa Spiro, "Reading with a Tender Rapture: *Reveries of a Bachelor* and the Rhetoric of Detached Intimacy," *Book History* 6 (2003): 57–93; and Thomas Augst, *The Clerk's Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
30. See, for example, Courtney A. Bates, "The Fan Letter Correspondence of Willa Cather: Challenging the Divide Between Professional and Common Reader," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 6 (2011): n.p., http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/221; Jennifer L. Brady, "Loving *The Wide, Wide World*." *Common-Place* 12, no. 1 (2011): n.p., http://www.common-place.org/vol-12/no-01/brady; and Emily Satterwhite, *Dear Appalachia: Readers, Identity, and Popular Fiction Since 1878* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011).
31. Louisa May Alcott, *Psyche's Art* (Boston: Loring, 1868), 3.
32. "The Base Ball Fever" (Philadelphia: Marsh & Bubna, 1867).
33. "The Absurdities of Enthusiasm," 144.
34. Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: Unwin, 1903), 33–35.
35. See Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 6–7, 11–33. Peiss used the term "homosocial" to refer to social life organized around one sex.

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