

## Chapter 11

# Fan Fashion: Re-enacting *Hunger Games* through Clothing and Design

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Fans and gamers do more than just couch-surf. Popular culture demands an increasing degree of participation via social media and platforms. Our current participatory culture motivates audiences to rework existing material into creative products of their own (Uricchio 2004; Jenkins 2006; Deuze 2007). Contemporary audiences are best characterized as “producers” (Bruno 2008) who both produce and consume media. Media are increasingly lived and re-enacted, rather than consumed, Deuze (2012) even argues.

Fan cultures are pivotal example of these emerging cultural dynamics. These active audiences engage with quality television programs from different countries, such as the United States or Japan. They form communities that have been theorized as “fandom,” which describes the social and creative communities around popular culture (Alvermann and Hagood 2000; Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington 2007; Booth 2010; Stein and Busse 2012). Fans are characterized by their creativity, online and offline sociality, and their affect for the media text. Fan cultures are rich and thriving cultures, both online as well as offline, where different creative practices flourish that rewrite and subvert popular culture (Hills 2002; Lamerichs 2014). This chapter focuses on one aspect of fan practices, namely, fashion as a form of fan productivity and consumption.

The role of the body is crucial when expressing ourselves through media or participating in media content creation. However, researchers have rarely explored how embodiment shapes fan practices. For fans, the outward performance of fandom is fundamental. Dress functions as sub-cultural capital (Thornton 1995), and signifies a visual and social way of belonging. Clothing can signify fandom in many ways as it makes subcultures visible. In fandom, as in many music subcultures, fan fashion emerged in the context of costuming and appropriation. This DIY ethos of fans is still present, and the driving force behind practices such as cosplay, but in the past few years mainstream shops and catalogues have also started to sell geek clothing.

Fashion culture and geek culture have become more intimately connected in the past few years. This is evidenced in the work of Paul Booth (2015) who studied the playfulness of “digital cosplay”: a form of re-enactment which “appears to mimic fan practices by using a form of digital economy, enacting media play through both semantic pastiche and syntactic appropriation, and producing simultaneous uses of nostalgia and novelty as identifiable modes of user practice” (151). He studies the site Polyvore, where fans digitally create character outfits inspired by popular culture, but do not actually dress up in it, or embody it. He argues that: “These users enact

particular competencies that might be based more in fashion culture, constructing ‘looks’ and ‘outfits’ rather than ‘costumes’” (152).

I define three categories of fan fashion, which are crucial in this chapter: (1) as re-enactment or cosplay; (2) as pop-cultural apparel or casual clothing; and (3) as couture made by fans and inspired by fiction. I pay special attention to make-up as a way to embody, as well as commodify, existing stories. I argue that these different forms of fan fashion are not neutral expressions, but both highlight and subvert the values that are inherent in stories such as *The Hunger Games*. This complicated tension of both re-enacting and criticizing a deeply political and colonial universe such as *The Hunger Games* is central in this study.

First and foremost, fan fashion is perhaps most visible when we look at cosplay (or “costume play”). In this particular practice, fans construct and wear costumes that allow them to re-enact existing fictional characters or celebrities from popular culture (Lamerichs 2011). These outfits and subsequent performances are a physical manifestation of fans’ immersion into the fictional realms of television, games, and movies, among others. Cosplay can be understood as the culture of costuming that occurs beyond the institutional remit of the theatre.

Cosplay is commonly performed at fan conventions, which have thrived over the past few years. Large events draw countless visitors. San Diego Comic Con (2013) had 130,000+ visitors, many of whom attended in costume. The purpose of cosplay is to engage in identity play by dressing up as the look-a-like of existing fictional characters. Fans mimic the character not only through dress but also through the styling of wigs or hair, and make-up techniques. However, cosplay is not only an offline practice, but has also become connected to online media. Cosplaying props and costumes are not only sold but also performed online, through videos, photography, and in-character role-playing.

However, fan fashion is much broader than cosplay alone. Fan costumes also go hand-in-hand with other performances. Fan musicians often dress up authentically (Jenkins 1992, 250). *Harry Potter* fans have a long tradition of writing their own music related to the franchise, known as “wizard rock,” and wear outfits of witches and wizards (Williams 2014). Even wearing accessories, such as the house ties of Hogwarts, functions as subtle costuming which may not re-enact a specific character, but can remind us of a fictional universe, and suggest that we participate in it.

Over the past few years, fan clothing lines have become ever more professional, as demonstrated by the designs of Suckers Apparel, or Black Milk. The emerging phenomenon of fan fashion and streetwear is an example of how bodies, art, and fan identity interlace. There is a clear issue at stake here. Cosplay entered the creative industries as a form of precarious, fan-driven labor (Banks and Humphreys 2008). Fans are affected by the creative industries, and conversely, the professional field increasingly considers fan and geek culture a valuable market.

Finally, clothing lines and couture take inspiration from pop culture and cater to fans. Likewise, fan fashion shows (e.g., Her Universe) are becoming an important element of the convention landscape. In these shows, couture is emphasized as fans model in their own designs inspired by beloved fiction and characters.

Theoretically, fan fashion is exemplary of the changes in media culture where different technologies converge and content is “spread” (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2012) across platforms. Fans move betwixt and between fictional, visual, and corporeal texts. One way to view these media relationships is through the concept of transmediality. While fan practices are an organic, bottom-up example of transmediality, the media industry itself also increasingly uses transmedia designs. Examples of these processes are social media strategies, extensive websites, and tie-in series (Ross 2008; Gillan 2010). In studies on transmediality, few scholars pay attention to the merchandise and fashion which also mediates these existing stories and characters.

Importantly, clothing is a universal marker of fandom. Fashion and clothing express fandom to both insiders and outsiders, and allow fans to visualize their affect for certain texts. Clothing

evokes our connection to a story, and can even be a way of engaging in storytelling by re-enacting a specific character. Paul Booth's study on digital cosplay (2015) also demonstrates how online pictures and collections of outfits can remind one of a fictional character or universe, without them even being worn by a real-life model. Clothing has a powerful function. It is enough to see a specific outfit or set of clothing to remind us that a specific character is being mediated.

In this chapter, I examine a broad range of clothing inspired by *The Hunger Games*. This includes officially released clothing and streetwear, as well as fan-driven creations that are sold on the craft platform Etsy, the auction site eBay, and platforms such as Redbubble where artists sell their own designs on shirts and other products. I explore fan fashion both through the lens of the creative industries as well as fandom itself, and argue that fan fashion is an emerging phenomenon which is partly driven by the creative industries as well as fans themselves. It allows fans to visually perform their identity to insiders and outsiders, while partly subverting the original *The Hunger Games* novels and the famous movie franchise. By focusing on one unique case, this study traces the role of fashion in fan culture as a way to mediate and embody existing stories.

### Theorizing Embodiment and Fashion in Fandom

Fan fashion is a steadily growing phenomenon. Thus official and unofficial clothing is produced by or for fans. Within the creative industries, fan fashion is growing trend in need of analysis. Fan costumes entered the creative industries as a form of precarious, fan-driven labor (Banks and Humphreys 2008), but today fan clothing lines are becoming ever more professional, as demonstrated by the designs of Suckers Apparel, or Black Milk, and Hot Topic. Professional clothing lines and make-up lines cater to fans, but fans themselves are also creating original designs inspired by pop-culture. The Her Universe fashion show at San Diego Comic Con, for instance, showcases couture created by and for fans.

While fans themselves are clearly interested in fashion, few studies have been done on the connection between fashion, dress up, and fandom. That is striking, since fan costumes and embodiment have a long history and its predecessors include historical re-enactment (Kalshoven 2012), drag (Senelick 2002; see also Coppa's Chapter 12 in this volume) and gothic subcultures (Spooner 2004; Atkinson 2014).

Research on the role of the body in fandom is scarce, but much needed. The body can be used to signify fandom, for instance, through costumes, accessories or tattoos (Jones 2014). Embodying media is emblematic of our current consumer culture, where the body is part of a larger media network (Featherstone 2010). In other words, to fully understand the impact of media content, we need to see how our bodies are affected by these images and representations.

Fan culture and behavior, in other words, are deeply related to the body and representation. This has also been noted in a pivotal fan study by John Fiske. In his study "The Cultural Economy of Fandom" (1992), Fiske theorized in particular fandom as "textual productivity" that is characterized by the virtuosity and creativity of the audience rather than emotional or social investment. He also offers two other lenses through which we can analyze fandom: "semiotic productivity," which is integral to all audience behavior as a need to make sense of the text at all, and "enunciative productivity," which covers meanings that are shared and spoken and through which fans perform their identity to insiders and outsiders. According to Fiske, only textual productivity is specific to fandom, and this concept has received much attention in fan studies as a way to demarcate fans from other audience groups (Crawford 2012, 120–137; Hills 2013). This chapter can be read as an attempt to trace enunciative productivity. In other words, fashion and clothing functions as an outward expression of fandom for both insiders and outsiders.

There are three ways in which this chapter contributes to fan and media studies specifically. First, with a few exceptions (Winge 2006; Okabe 2012), phenomena such as fan costuming and clothing have hardly been studied. In media studies, fandom has primarily been studied as digital fandom and related to the emergence of online communities (Hellekson and Busse 2006; Booth 2010). I have, however, conducted several studies on fan costumes (e.g., Lamerichs 2013a, 2013b). The material dimensions of fandom have been studied, for instance, in relation to collecting practices (Geraghty 2014). More research needs to be done on how traditional spaces and material attributes allow for the performance of fan identity.

Second, this chapter draws new connections between popular culture and embodiment. Academic discourses on concepts such as the virtual give the impression that the body has become obsolete, transparent, or wired. The fan's body, however, is playful and present. In media theory, the body is often neglected, or discussed as an extension of our embodiment (McLuhan 2003) or a cyborg, enhanced by media technology (Haraway 1991). These theories neglect that the body is a medium in and of itself. Fashioning and embodying media are emblematic of our current consumer culture, where the body is part of a larger media network (Featherstone 2010).

Research on the role of the body in fandom is scarce, but necessary. The body can be used to signify fandom, for instance, through tattoos (Jones 2014). Central to this study is fandom as identity work and a narrative of the self (Hills 2014b) as much as a homage to popular culture. In a broad sense, this fashioning can also be a digital process. By customizing one's game character or avatar, gamers also engage in digital dress-up (Pearce 2006; Fron, Fullerton, Morie, and Pearce 2007; Wirman 2011).

Still, fan fashion is more than a form of play, and is not neutral. Like other forms of fashion, it is part of an economy and community. This clothing can be mass-produced by stores such as Hot Topic, or fans themselves create it and customize it. Even if the clothes are commercially produced, however, they cannot be seen as separate from fan expression. Fan fashion can be understood as a type of labor which is closely aligned with the creative industries as well as subcultures. With the growth of conventions and geek culture, the mainstreaming of fan fashion may be a growing trend.

The value of this study thus lies in its investigation of emerging subcultures, its discussion of the body in relation to different media, and its attention to developments in the creative industries. The social gain lies in the visibility and understanding of this subculture. Fan costumes, especially, are frequently misunderstood by outsiders, as well as fans. Especially costumed female fans are seen as attention seekers or inauthentic fans (Hernandez 2013). Understanding fan fashion and costuming is essential to avoid such gendered debates.

### *The Hunger Games*

The universe of *The Hunger Games* is set in a dystopian future of North America, Panem. This country consists of the wealthy Capitol and 12 districts in varying states of poverty. Every year, children from the districts are selected to participate in a compulsory, annual, televised death match called The Hunger Games. When all the other children are annihilated, the victor is hailed a hero. The main character of the series is 16-year-old Katniss Everdeen, a girl from District 12, who volunteers for the 74th Hunger Games in place of her younger sister Primrose. The other candidate from District 12 is Peeta Mellark, the son of a baker. The two are trained for the games by Haymitch Abernathy, District 12's only living victor.

*The Hunger Games* is a young adult series with many political themes—colonialism, terrorism, and oppression. The series consists of three novels by Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009), and *Mockingjay* (2010). The novels have all been developed into films, with the film adaptation of *Mockingjay* split into two parts.

When examining fashion itself, it is important to understand first that it also has a unique role in the novels and movies. Fashion is key to showing the privilege of the Capitol and the poverty of the districts. This is even more notable in the films, which have been praised for their designs. The photography book by Tim Palen (2015) captures the details of these designs with close-ups of the make-up, wigs, and outfits. In the movies, design and color mediate the intentions of the characters and their cultural history. In an interview with *Vogue* (Creeden 2012), costume designer Judianna Makovsky discusses the blue and gray miners' clothing of District 12, for instance, "which was inspired by coal mining districts from the turn of the century to the 1950s."

Makovsky also explains how she draws from high fashion and architecture to portray the rich and privileged citizens of the Capitol. Their clothing also mediates their villainy:

These are people who like to watch children beat each other to death in an arena. So it has to be a sort of—not meanness—but we looked a lot at Schiaparelli. She has a sense of humor but the stuff is beautiful and striking. We looked a lot at Italian fascist architecture that is very imposing. We used a lot of black to break such bright colors. I just thought it would be funny if these people, who have such a vicious streak in them, are sort of covered in flowers and ruffles.

The chaperone of Katniss and Peeta, Effie Trinket, is seen as exemplary of this Capitol fashion. The citizens had to be powdered and eyebrowless. "It makes it high fashion, but also a little scary. And also beautiful, funnily enough."

*The Hunger Games*, then, is visually interesting and well developed as a story world. It is important to note that fashion in *The Hunger Games* is not neutral, but evokes powerful political and cultural messages. This is mediated in clothing and couture related to the series. Since make-up, and, more broadly speaking, color, are crucial to *The Hunger Games*, it is not surprising that companies and fans have launched make-up lines inspired by the films. Different districts have their own unique styles of clothing, wear different colors, and represent different aspects of North American history. For fans, wearing or re-enacting this fashion means appropriating and embodying the signs of their beloved story worlds.

## Methodology

In this chapter, I explore the topic of fan fashion through various angles, often supported by traditional fieldwork and qualitative methods. I explore how fans mediate *The Hunger Games* in terms of embodiment and outward appearance. This is not limited to the direct re-enactment of characters and cosplay, but also includes streetwear, make-up, and other signifiers of fandom. I thus explore the visual culture of the fan fashion and its mediation at different online and offline sites through small-scale ethnography and close-reading.

This ethnography is not only characterized by its insider views, but also by its combination of online and offline data. Online spaces have specific implications for participation which require further unpacking. Online ethnographies, such as my own, have been explored under the headings of "virtual ethnography" (Hine 2000), "netnography" (Kozinets 2010) or "cyberethnography" (Ward 1999). Still, every concept has its own nuances and implications. I use the more neutral term "online ethnography" because I have drawn insights from all of these methods and do not want to enter ontological debates about the virtuality of the internet.

More importantly, I do not want to make online ethnography into something innately different from traditional ethnography. Although some would highlight the differences between internet spaces and traditional fields, I also want to be clear about the similarities. Annette Markham (1998) shows that, in online contexts, the body of the researcher facilitates social experiences.

**Table 11.1** Online platforms studied for *The Hunger Games* fashion

Fashion item	Online platform
Official apparel and beauty products	Websites of companies such as Primark
Unofficial apparel & beauty products	Etsy, eBay, Redbubble
Fan costumes	Cosplay.com for photographs of outfits Etsy, eBay,
Couture	YouTube and fashion websites

The Internet cannot easily be separated from one's habits or home. Like any other ethnographic undertaking, it involves journeying toward a field and taking notes on it. Studying the web is a journey with real consequences for the researcher.

In terms of sampling, I had to restrict the fan products that I focused on. As a type of productive fandom, fan fashion depends on the circulation and fabrication of objects. These include full attire, props such as weapons, and gadgets; all these can be commercialized, circulated, sold, and given. The transmedia culture of fandom is staged across all of these objects, narratives, and performances. However, media fandom has often been perceived as a gift culture as opposed to the commercial transmedia designs of the industry itself (Jenkins 2006). Fans gift each other art works, stories, and input for free to create affective bonds and kinship (Scott 2009).

However, fan fashion also grants insight in fandom and play as they are staged as commodity cultures and gain an additional dimension of labor over leisure. That is to say, productive play in fandom does not necessarily mean gifting, but can also imply lucrative activities through which budding or professional artists can support themselves. This serious leisure does not necessarily imply a trade by which the artists can live but can also mean that they earn enough to compensate their expenses.

To see how objects in fan fashion circulate, I focus on different online examples, found through textual research. This allowed me to find different fan products and official products on a wide range of websites to give a detailed overview of *The Hunger Games* fashion. For official merchandise, I visited the websites of companies such as Primark and Claire's, which produced *The Hunger Games* products.

However, for fashion produced by and for fans, I focus on the following online retail sites: eBay (since 1995), Etsy (since 2005) and Redbubble. The first is an online auction site that is commonly used for e-commerce by setting particular prices; the second is a site for handmade items, vintage, and crafting. Redbubble, finally, is a platform where artists sell their own designs on different products, such as shirts. In these cases, I have looked for the most popular results in the relevant *The Hunger Games* categories (e.g., "clothing"), and explored the first 100 items and their related comments and context. The categories are also explained in more detail below when I describe the results. I searched by "best match" (eBay) and "relevance" (Etsy) rather than "most recent."

Finally, I paid attention to the media architecture of these three different platforms, as one is structured as an auction site with fan-driven and official merchandise, while the other two are better described as e-commercial art sites. I relied on the search results of July 20, 2016 to obtain this preliminary data and suggest that these sites could provide key data on cosplay when observed for a longer duration of time (Table 11.1).

### Districts and Resistance in *The Hunger Games* Streetwear

Streetwear inspired by *The Hunger Games* has been sold in different shops. In general, many of the shops focused on the logo from the movies and novels itself, the Mockingjay symbol. With the release of several of the movies, Claire's launched jewelry lines with necklaces and pins that featured

the logo. Similarly, Primark has shirts which feature the logo as well (2016). Hot Topic's merchandise, inspired by the fourth movie, emphasizes the revolution and the districts themselves with printed shirts that feature texts such as "The revolution is about all of us" and "Revolution: the fire will burn forever."

Most official merchandise is based on the Districts rather than the Capitol, which allows fans to identify themselves with the marginalized groups depicted in the franchise. The merchandise of *The Hunger Games Exhibition*, for instance, features District 12 or 13 on baseball caps and belt buckles, or mediates the districts in a symbolic way. The Mockingjay may be placed on it as the logo of *The Hunger Games*, and a symbol of resistance. Equally interesting is some of their merchandise, such as a tote bag, which features the logo of Peeta's Bakery, allowing fans to express their love for Peeta as a character. More general items feature arrows or fire, signifying the importance of Katniss. By wearing this apparel, fans can relate to the books in general, or to the districts, but cannot side with the Capitol or lesser-known districts.

On a personal note, the lack of Capitol-related merchandise was obvious to me, since many of my favorite characters are in fact Capitol citizens, such as Effie Trinket and President Snow. While their political motivations are appalling, their culture and mannerisms fascinate me, and I expected at least to find more t-shirts saying "May the odds be ever in your favor." The lack of representation of this side of the story also strikes me as a peculiar for another reason: the fashion of the capitol is visually inspiring, and mediating it in streetwear could have resulted in classy and colorful designs.

The lack of representation of certain characters in the series, or its villains, can be contrasted to the streetwear of *Harry Potter*. For example, the collection at Primark from 2016 features shirts inspired by the different houses and characters in *Harry Potter*, including the Marauders. In 2015, they also released a shirt inspired by the fictional magazine *The Quibler* which included the text "how to identify a mudblood." Despite this diversity, though, true villainy is also not represented in official *Harry Potter* streetwear, where shirts portraying Voldemort or the death eaters also seem absent.

However, a wealth of unofficial *The Hunger Games* streetwear is also being produced by fans. The top categories on Etsy (July 20, 2016) feature 1,096 jewelry items, 421 accessories, and 382 clothing designs. As mentioned in the methodology section, I examined the first 100 most popular results of each of these categories. The jewelry section features 36 items which star Katniss' crossbow or arrows and symbolize her (36 percent). Some 28 items star the Mockingjay symbol, and a handful of items feature lines such as "always," "girl on fire," or "may the odds be ever in your favor." In general, there are few items inspired by jewelry which is featured in the films, other than the Mockingjay pin, which is amply featured in this category (Table 11.2). In other words, few items truly mediate the films or have a close diegetic relationship with the costumes and accessories featured in the film itself. In this category, there is little evidence of the importance of replicas for fan culture (Hills 2014a).

Streetwear can be found at Etsy, eBay, and Redbubble, which I will briefly compare for the purpose of this study. On Etsy and eBay, the first 100 items in the categories at both sites heavily

**Table 11.2** Overview of official *The Hunger Games* streetwear (2016) examined for this study

Source	Item of streetwear
Primark	Shirts with Mockingjay logo
Hot Topic	Shirts, fleece, Mockingjay pin
<i>The Hunger Games Exhibition</i>	Diverse apparel including baseball caps, leggings, belts and nightwear
Claire's	Pins, necklaces and other jewelry with Mockingjay logo

feature replicas and fan-made pins or jewelry. The crossbow and arrows, in particular, inspire many of the unofficial designs. Like the official streetwear, most items ignore the Capitol. There are, however, some items which echo Effie Trinket or other characters, signifying their importance to fandom. In general though, similar patterns emerge as in the official merchandise, with more attention to replicas, which I will discuss in a separate section on cosplay.

Streetwear, in other words, is important to *The Hunger Games* fandom and sold at different stores. Hoodies and shirts which feature the Mockingjay are immensely popular. Because the logo of *The Hunger Games* is so integral to the fandom and its franchise, this is printed en masse by fans and official companies. Other shirts echo characters and sentiments through printed shirts with quotes or images of characters. Sites such as Redbubble, however, where fans can upload their own designs, are more diverse. The first 100 results of this site show one design with a Capitol logo, various shirts inspired by the different districts, and 13 shirts with quotes from the books. A few shirts contain references to Peeta such as a print “the boy with the bread” or to Katniss such as “run, fire girl.” These shirts are more fannish, and seem to cater more to insiders rather than outsiders. Only an insider audience would recognize specific terminology or fan nicknames after all. Some shirts on Redbubble contain general remarks about fandom itself, such as “he may be fictional but my love is real.” A few shirts are cross-overs, including a shirt spelling “keep calm and Finnick on” or “adventure games,” starring Katniss and Peeta drawn in the style of the cartoon *Adventure Time*. These cross-overs of popular texts are quite common in fandom (e.g., in fanfiction) but are also a genre within fan fashion. These shirts, like the previous examples, cater perhaps more to a fan than an outsider.

Of the three platforms, then, Redbubble seems to contain the most appropriations and transformations. Its users not only use official signs (e.g., the Mockingjay logo), but also design shirts which reflect on fan culture itself.

### Glamorizing the Capitol through Make-up

Beauty products made by and for fans are also increasingly important as a form of merchandise. With the release of the second movie, CoverGirl launched a licensed makeup line, the “Capitol Collection.” Each District is represented by different products and colors, and features a model whose look girls can imitate. District 12 features a model who looks like Katniss actress Jennifer Lawrence, with a similar braid and clothing, and who wears fierce eyeshadow in orange and yellow. She literally is the girl on fire. District 1 portrays an Effie Trinket-like model with bright red lipstick.

As the website of CoverGirl explains: “The Hunger Games for CoverGirl—Inspired by the popular young adult science fiction series, ‘The Hunger Games,’ CoverGirl has created a special line of makeup evoking the districts of the world. The line includes twelve unique beauty looks ranging from themes like Power and Fishing” (“CoverGirl gets inspired by The Hunger Games for ‘Capitol Beauty’ Collection,” 2013).

In *The Guardian*, Heather Long (2013) criticizes the make-up line:

The capitol loves the superficial: flamboyant hair, makeup, clothes, lavish banquets, etc. The people who live there are so blinded by their lifestyle that they don't fully grasp that they're putting on “games” where children are killing each other. In fact, they're cheering it on like most people do sports teams. They make bets on who will die and laugh about it. That's what CoverGirl is worshipping. It's as if no one read the books or even saw the first movie.

She continues to state that the message that girls should look pretty and wear make-up is at odds with the movies as well, since Katniss herself is a very natural and down-to-earth protagonist.

The beauty industry, then, may sometimes misinterpret existing stories and franchises. Increasingly, fans also create and sell their own beauty products which may adhere to a different logic.

I examined the first 100 items in the “bath and beauty” category on Etsy, which include diverse products such as mascara, perfumes, and hair accessories. The products are very diverse, and therefore hard to categorize. Some of the most notable products are an Effie Trinket-inspired mascara “that is mahogany,” a “bright and bubbly” nail polish inspired by Effie Trinket by FanChromaticNails, a fierce, glittery nail polish inspired by *Catching Fire*, and Peeta-inspired lotion, bathing salts, and shower gels.

These fan products can be contrasted to the licensed “Capitol” make-up lines. They are more diverse and they pay tribute to the characters, rather than the politics of *The Hunger Games*. The “Capitol Collection” attempts to include all districts, but ends up glamorizing and misrepresenting them. This is less the case with the make-up found on Etsy, where fans more generally refer to characters or motives in the story, such as fire. Still, a similar criticism could apply here. Characters such as Effie are glorified even though they send children out to die.

Make-up, even more than streetwear, raises the question of what aspects of the story are mediated, and whether that is acceptable. Katniss hardly wears any make-up, while Effie and the Capitol citizens are defined particularly by their outrageous make-up, eyebrows, and eyelashes. Wearing make-up, in *The Hunger Games* universe, equals adhering to the logic of the Capitol. This theme is even featured in the third movie, when Katniss is shown wearing make-up for the recruitment videos shown to the Capitol. She is visibly uncomfortable wearing the make-up, and feels less like herself.

Thus, in this case study, make-up is not neutral. It raises critical questions in terms of embodiment, since it is thematically connected to colonialism, spectacle, and death. However, it is important to remember that *The Hunger Games* is a complex political story. The Capitol citizens are not always wrong and the districts not always right. It is a story in which some characters, such as Effie, also redeem themselves, while others, such as Coin, are darker than they first seemed.

However, for fans, these themes may not be as relevant as for critics. They probably do not interpret wearing make-up as a political act, in light of *The Hunger Games*. Speaking as an active fan, who also buys these products herself, I think that the joy of buying these beauty products is closely connected to our favorite characters and the story itself.

### Re-enacting *The Hunger Games* in Cosplay and Replicas

*The Hunger Games* inspires many fan costumers. To explore what type of characters the fans re-enact, I examined the first 100 best results on Cosplay.com. Most fans re-enact Katniss Everdeen in different outfits or Effie Trinket. One user, donttouchmymilk, has recreated Effie Trinket’s butterfly dress from the film *Catching Fire*. She writes:

This costume was a pretty big project with a lot of twists and turns, but it was a hell of a lot of fun to make and wear. There are over 560 feather or paper wings on this dress, over half of which were individually cut out (SO MUCH CUTTING). (donttouchmymilk, 08–16–2014)

At cosplay.com, fans often write how they produced the outfit as background information and to help other cosplayers. Effie Trinket cosplayer Adestra writes:

made the pattern from scratch. It took me ages to find a fabric I was happy with, after I found out, the original was sold out everywhere. The wig is made out of two, cutting one and adding the self made curls to the other. Adding a lot of spray to keep it in place. :) Shoes were white to start with. I painted them black and added the gold finish. (10–22–2014)

While some fans elaborate on the crafting of the outfit, others also explain their choice. User Lady Skywalker portrays the tribute Fox Face and writes: “I only made the jacket. It was pretty much thrown together for this group. Really, the trip was all about being on the filming location of the arena in *The Hunger Games*! I’ll probably remake the jacket to be better for another trip, though” (11–05–2012). Her outfit was part of a group cosplay, and she also admits that her motivation was partly media tourism. Visiting the film location, and shooting there with friends, was a main motivation for her to cosplay Fox Face. In this sense, she is less character-driven than some of the other costumers, and has a more social motivation to create and wear a Fox Face costume.

The importance of replicas and fan costumes is also apparent in the content analysis of items on Etsy and eBay. As I already noted, the articles featured on both sites are highly diverse. In terms of jewelry, for instance, both sites feature ample amounts of official and unofficial Mockingjay pins. Other replicas are surprisingly lacking at Etsy in the “jewelry” category.

This lack of replicas stands in stark contrast with the Etsy categories “accessories” and “clothing.” In the category “accessories,” fans sell their own designs. Some of these are based on Katniss’s scarf in the movies (24 percent). Effie Trinket’s flowers and head pieces are reflected in three items, and there are also several cowls and other pieces inspired by the mining district. Other items include scarves with arrows printed on them, buttons inspired by *The Hunger Games*, and more general designs.

In the “clothing” category, 19 designs of Katniss’s scarf are sold (19 percent). Other items include printed shirts or dresses with lines or the book covers printed on them. Few items are truly full-fledged fan costumes. Several fans specialized in recreating several of the dresses that Katniss wears, but these are hardly the top categories. A Peeta costume is also featured, but none of Effie Trinket’s outfits show up in the top categories.

In general, the “accessories” and “clothing” categories are more related to cosplay than the “jewelry” category and reflect an interest in dress-up and re-enactment. However, there are also many printed shirts and other items that can be worn in daily life.

A preliminary analysis of eBay reveals similar patterns. The first 100 most popular items in the category “jewelry and watches” feature 68 percent Mockingjay pins, including necklaces and earrings with this symbol. Only 13 percent feature an arrow (e.g., Katniss’s arrow in a small bottle on a necklace) or an allusion to the crossbow. The other items are diverse, and feature necklaces which say “Peeta” for the fans, or include replicas of items from the movies such as the “Catching Fire Finnick’s Shell Necklace Pendant” sold by one user.

In the clothing category, 48 percent of the most popular results includes costumes. This includes full attires of the training outfits, as well as replicas of the training shirt which Katniss wears in the films and the battle armor from the fourth movie. The outfits all relate to Katniss and Peeta, and District 12, while other characters are not represented. Several users also sell Katniss wigs or replicas of the gloves that she wears. These props remind us of iconic looks of Katniss—her hairdo and her most famous outfits. Overall, the site sells both specific props as well as full outfits which help cosplayers complete their look and performance.

## Couture

Over the past few years, fans have actively connected costuming and couture. This trend is also evident in the creative industries themselves, for example, in the fashion initiatives that are launched in relation to movies. For the recent *Star Wars* movie (2015), a fashion show was for instance held by Canadian designers during the Toronto fashion week. These types of initiatives are becoming more common.

An important step for the visibility of couture within fandom itself is the Her Universe Fashion Show (hosted since 2014) at San Diego Comic Con. They self-describe as “the ultimate runway for

fangirl fashion” (Her Universe, 2016). “The ultimate prize? The chance to win the opportunity to design a fashion collection with ground-breaking fangirl fashion company and lifestyle brand, Her Universe, to be sold exclusively at leading pop culture retailer, Hot Topic.” In this fashion show, a broad range of designs have been shown in the past years which included *Star Wars* and *Doctor Who* dresses, but also fashion inspired by *The Hunger Games*.

In 2014, Lauren Bregman participated in the Her Universe fashion show at San Diego Comic Con in her Effie Trinket outfit. Her dress is inspired by Effie Trinket’s popular butterfly dress but is longer, with a high slit. The site of Her Universe (04–08–2016) features a biography of the designer:

An award-winning designer from the renowned Castle Corsetry, Lauren Bregman has been a corset and costume designer for the past decade. After graduating from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising and training at Farthingales Corsets, Lauren broke through as a designer for the famous Trashy Lingerie. There, she created couture orders for superstars such as Kim Kardashian, Holly Madison, and Rose McGowan.

In the case of *The Hunger Games*, fashion projects were also launched. To celebrate the launch of *Catching Fire*, Net-a-Porter released a clothing line of *The Hunger Games* items, in collaboration with the film’s costume designer, Trish Summerville. This collection starred 19 ready-to-wear pieces as well as jewelry and leather goods. For these fashion items, prices started at £40 for a T-shirt. The different dresses, leather trousers and other items are clearly inspired by the Capitol, District 12 and the looks of the tributes in the arena. Overall, the items mediate the style of the films, but are still wearable in daily life.

The fact that the collection has been toned down also raised criticism in fandom. Writing for the geeky news blog *The Mary Sue*, journalist Rebecca Pahle is critical of the collection:

But my own personal opinion, speaking as a Fashion Expert (by which I mean ‘someone who wears clothes that have some sort of fashion to them’), is that these clothes are *far* too normal. What the hell?! I’d actually wear some of them if I had the money! And sure, technically they’re inspired by the films as a whole, not just the Capitol. But it’s called Capitol Couture and there’s *no neon*! I am disappointed [sic]. (Pahle 2013)

Overall, the fashionable style of the Capitol and the down-to-earth districts has inspired different designers and fans. It is interesting to see that fan couture is emerging more and more as a phenomenon in relation to different franchises. Still, it also raises questions. Can these designs truly mediate the story world? Should this fashion be akin to the original creation (similar to fan costumes) or should it be toned down to appeal to a wider audience, and to match the current fashion trends? Fan couture raises these and more questions, but will undoubtedly remain a trend to watch out for the coming years.

## Conclusion

Fan fashion is an important and growing phenomenon. In this chapter, I particularly focused on fashion inspired by *The Hunger Games*. This included small-scale ethnography on different platforms of both official and unofficial apparel inspired by the novels and films. By looking at other fandoms and franchises, we might be able to gather more insights into the growing trend of fan fashion.

The mediation of fan fashion is complex. What we see is that fans embody characters and signs to visualize their fandom, in order to identify more closely with a series. Similar to Paul Booth's study on digital cosplay (2015), I find that this mediation is always a tension between fidelity and transformation. I would argue, however, that *The Hunger Games* fans adopt rather than subvert or transgress the imagery of the universe. This could be related to how mainstream the fandom is and the related practices. "As fandom moves into a more mainstream identity, such disruptive play also changes from transgressive to pastiche," Paul Booth explains (2015, p. 163).

Though the fan expressions may be closely related to the source text, this does not mean that the fan fashion itself is neutral. In the deeply political world of *The Hunger Games*, drawing inspiration from characters can raise questions. What does it mean to portray young children who die? Should we glorify the values of the Capitol through make-up? Is the Mockingjay symbol understood only as a symbol of fandom, or as a symbol of resistance by *The Hunger Games* readers and viewers? Since I only examined *The Hunger Games* fandom online, through netnography, I cannot answer these questions at length.

More qualitative studies on fan fashion are needed to unearth how fashion, including apparel and beauty products, is understood by fans. While it is undoubtedly an expression of fandom, which solidifies fan identity, it is difficult to say whether a more political and subversive identity play is also at hand. While it may not be inherently subversive to fans, fashion is an important way to mediate favorite stories and characters, to connect with other fans, and to perform one's fan identity through clothing.

The sheer popularity of fan fashion, and the dedication with which fans create their own fashion, can be considered an important trend in its own right. Based on this study, I can conclude that fashion is an important and diverse way for fans to express their identity, and to embody the fiction that they love. The case study proves the widespread interest in fan fashion, and the desire to remediate fiction. The fans hardly critique the source text, but this might be for a reason. As fan fashion becomes normalized, the more subversive aspects of fandom might fade.

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