HENRY JENKINS AUDIENCES, POACHING AND PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

Henry Jenkins, a founding figure in the study of media fandom, was informed by John Fiske's mentorship and the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies.

(1) Fans as Textual Poachers

Jenkins applies Michel De Certeau's concept of "poaching" to media fans.

"Far from being writers [...] readers are travelers, they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves." -- Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984: 174).

"Consumers are selective users of a vast media culture whose treasures, however corrupt, hold wealth that can be mined and refined for alternative uses […]. [Fans] constitute a particularly active and vocal community of consumers whose activities direct attention onto this process of cultural appropriation." Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* (1992: 26-27).

Fans write original stories set in a shared fictional universe (fan fiction), make videos remixing borrowed footage (vidding), create and perform in costumes (cosplay), paint pictures or digitally manipulate images (fan art), or compose music (filking, Wizard Rock).

For further resources on appropriation, see:http://scalar.usc.edu/anvc/flowsofreading/index

(2) Fandom operates on multiple levels for its participants.

Jenkins's conception of fandom has five levels of activity:

1. A "particular mode of reception" (close and undivided attention, repeated viewing, emotional closeness)
2. A "particular set of critical and interpretive practices" (open debate, speculation, a shared understanding of the fictional universe)
3. A "base for consumer activism" (defending fan interests)
4. "Particular forms of cultural production, aesthetic traditions and practices" (fan fiction, vidding, etc.)
5. An "alternative social community" (an alternative affiliation/membership)
   --Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* (1992: 277-280).

Example: Many young Harry Potter fans reread the books (reception); debated online via a range of platforms (interpretation); may have joined the Harry Potter Alliance (activism); read and perhaps wrote fan fiction (expression); and developed strong bonds within their "House" (Griffindore, Ravenclaw, etc.) (community).

(3) Participatory Culture practices became more widespread in the digital age.

Jenkins broadened his definition to encompass bloggers, crafters, modders, hackers, etc.

"A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices. In a participatory culture, members also believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another." -- Henry Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges of a Participatory Culture* (2009: xi).

For a general overview, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFgeYeTSn0g

(4) But, opportunities to participate are unequally distributed.

"It would be easy to assume that I'm saying that we already live in a fully participatory culture […]. There are both social and technological obstacles to full participation at the current moment." -- *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era* (2016: 22).

The digital divide refers to issues of access to technological resources and infrastructures; the participation gap refers to cultural and social obstacles.

(5) Skills associated with participatory culture are increasingly deployed for political purposes, constituting participatory politics.

"The participatory skills, norms, and networks that develop when social media is used to socialize with friends or to engage with those who share one's interests can and are being transferred into the political realm." -- Cathy J. Cohen and Joseph Kahne, "Participatory Politics: New Media and Youth Political Action" (2012: 3).

For examples from a range of social movements, see By *Any Media Necessary*:http://byanymedia.org/works/map/index

(6) Popular culture functions as a shared resource we use to share hopes and fears for the future.

"Put bluntly, one cannot change the world unless one can imagine what a better world might look like […] One also can't change the world until one can imagine oneself as an active political agent." -- Henry Jenkins, *By Any Media Necessary* (2016: 29).

See Henry Jenkins, "Important Reminder: Superman Was an Undocumented Immigrant," *Fusion*, http://fusion.net/video/103908/superheroes-are-undocumented-immigrants-and-the-other-way-around/

Useful Terms

Textual Poachers -- fans and others who actively appropriate resources from mass media.
Participatory Culture -- any culture that empowers people to contribute in meaningful ways to their community.
Participatory Politics -- ways political movements draw on skills and practices associated with participatory culture
Civic Imagination-- the images and language people use to articulate a shared vision for social change.

For Further Reading:

Cohen, Cathy J. and Joseph Kahne (2012), "Participatory Politics: New Media and Youth Political Action," https://ypp.dmlcentral.net/publications/107

De Certeau, Michael (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Jenkins, Henry (1992) *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge)

Jenkins, Henry with Ravi Purushotma, Margaret Weigel, Katie Clinton and Alice J. Robison (2009) *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press).

Jenkins, Henry, Mizuko Ito, and danah boyd (2016) *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era* (London: Polity).

Jenkins, Henry, Sangita Shresthova, Liana Gamber-Thompson, Neta Kligler-Vilenchik, and Arely M. Zimmerman (2016) *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism* (New York: New York University Press).

Henry Jenkins (2017)