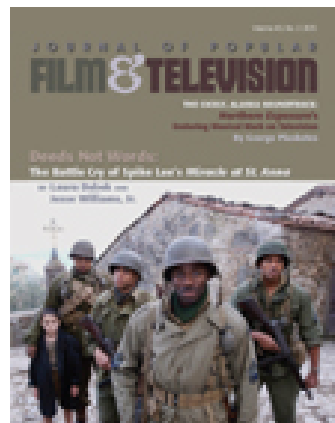


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### Fan Phenomena: Doctor Who. Ed. Paul Booth, Chicago: Intellect Books, 2013. 164 pp. \$22.00 paper.

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# BOOK REVIEWS

**FAN PHENOMENA: DOCTOR WHO**  
Ed. Paul Booth, Chicago: Intellect Books,  
2013. 164 pp. \$22.00 paper.

The study of popular culture often finds scholars wrestling with enormous texts. *Doctor Who* is one such colossus. The show celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2013, further flaming fan passions and academic interests. Over its lifetime, the series has regenerated about as often as its titular protagonist, morphing from a semi-educational children's adventure series into a cult series and then into a science fantasy melodrama. Not surprisingly, numerous diverse fandoms from all over the world have developed around this program. In this collection of essays, edited by Paul Booth, scholars have done an admirable job of representing and analyzing some of that variety.

The spirit of Henry Jenkins and his foundational fan study *Textual Poachers* looms large over this work, both as an oft-cited source and a clear, inspirational model for these scholars. Jenkins advocated an analytical position in which the scholar had one foot solidly in the academic world and the other in the fan world. In his forward remarks, Matt Hills describes different eras of fandom while acknowledging that the work must continue:

And though many of us might have moved with the times, we probably still have a fandom that most feels like *ours*. What is sure, however—and it's the point I really wanted to make via this conceit—is that in terms of fan phenomena, *Doctor Who* is vital, multiple, and open to renewal and rejuvenation at every turn. (6)

In this way, this international group of writers respectfully brings forward the perspectives of many fans while rightly maintaining a strong awareness of the impact of their own roles and experiences.

The book itself is divided into two parts. The first six articles explore the question: Who are *Doctor Who* fans? Ivan Phillips examines the assembled nature of individual fandom through the apt metaphor of the junkyard environment in which the Doc-

tor's fantastic TARDIS first appeared on the television series. Richard Wallace chronicles some of the fan efforts to rescue and present missing episodes, noting the close connections this may create between fan and production worlds. Craig Owen Jones admirably examines a challenging time for *Doctor Who* fandom, the years between 1989 and 2005, when the show was not regularly airing. This infrequency posed unusual barriers to establishing a fan identity. In perhaps the best article of the collection, Dylan Morris investigates the way American fans use the series to create a fantastical notion of Britain. Morris also argues for an interesting genre placement of the series as a British "rabbit-hole" fantasy akin to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Teresa Forde describes the ways that The Doctor Who Experience attraction, in Cardiff, Wales, encourages fans to co-create meaning with series producers. The editor, Paul Booth, rounds out the first section with a collection of narratives from fans about how they started their fandom of the series, which highlights the many entry points into the fandom of this massive cultural phenomenon.

The second section tackles the question: What do *Doctor Who* fans do? Fandom is ultimately an activity, and these seven articles describe some surprising directions of fan energy. Leslie McMurtry investigates the history of fanzines from early print to contemporary online versions and the ways female writers and editors brought out their interests in the show's emotional elements. Katharina Freund explores how "vidding" (97), the fan practice of editing textual material to highlight thematic elements, allows fans to emphasize emotional moments of *Doctor Who*. In a surprising chapter, Brigid Cherry reveals how knitters have textually poached elements of the series to enhance their crafting community. This notion of community is also central to Denise Vultee's analysis of the ways fans have created and shared their own written language systems inspired by the series' imagery. Karen Hellekson takes a challenging trip into the "what if?"-style stories of *Doctor Who: Unbound*, an audio series that, as she demonstrates, rewards deep knowledge of the many aspects of *Doctor Who*. In an intriguing article, Jeremy Sarachan questions if the expansion of the Internet has made entry into fandom too

easy. Like online slacktivism, such activity is so simple and effortless, it hardly qualifies as the kind of participation levels associated with fan activity in the past. Finally, Nistasha Perez examines *SuperWhoLock* and the online community of fans who edit GIFs and other imagery to create their own crossovers between *Supernatural*, *Doctor Who*, and *Sherlock*.

One of the particular difficulties in taking on the enormity of texts, like *Doctor Who*, is the challenge of providing supporting details. As scholar-fans, these writers know this series exceptionally well. However, the size of the book itself has created a certain economy of writing. This approach is neither fan-exclusionist nor intellectually Spartan, but it also does not allow many opportunities for an unfamiliar reader to catch up. In particular, details about the series might prove challenging for those completely new to *Doctor Who*. Each article does end with a "GO FURTHER" section. These bibliographies can be slightly frustrating for the academic reader because they break sources down by media types, and there is also a lack of page references for quotes. However, they do encourage the exploration that their title implores. Stylistically, this book appeals to general readers with color photographs and inserts. In some cases though, the images are hard to see or to read.

Overall, *Fan Phenomena: Doctor Who* is an ambitious exploration of the varied fandoms orbiting a fifty-year-old stellar force in popular culture. While not an introductory text, the collection's articles respectfully present this diversity in intriguing academic and fan-faithful ways.

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