

Cinephilic Fandom

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Using Luca Guadagnino's 2017 film *Call Me by Your Name* as a case study, this essay investigates the phenomena of cinephilic fandom and cinephilic fan art. It argues that cinephilic fandom represents a specific form of film spectatorship, characterized by an engagement with cinephilic debates through practices that are usually associated with fandom. Cinephilic fan art is defined as the drawings, videos, and self-made merchandise that are inspired by "cinephiliac moments." As such, this essay argues, cinephilic fandom has the potential to introduce new voices, practices, and interpretations into debates of cinephilia.

280 In Luca Guadagnino's *Call Me by Your Name* (2017), toward the middle of the film: 17-year-old Elio (Timothée Chalamet) steps from a dark corridor into his bedroom, which is currently being loaned to his family's house guest, Oliver (Armie Hammer), a 24-year-old graduate student from the United States. He softly closes the door, careful to make no sound, looks around, and begins snooping through Oliver's belongings, which are spread across the room. Elio picks up Oliver's drying red swimsuit from the bed frame and sits down on the squeaky mattress. Only his naked back is visible, but the sound of the synthetic material and the slight tilt of his head and subsequent inhalation presents him exploring the bathing suit with all of his senses. He throws the shorts on the bed, turns around, gives them a brief pensive look, and puts them over his head. Spreading his legs and pushing his upper body up so that he is on all fours, he arches his back and gently moves back and forth until the trunks fall off his head. For these short 10 seconds, Elio's growing love and lust for Oliver is captured by his fleeting body movement, the crackling noise of synthetic fabric, and the rustling of wind in the trees outside the room.

Interpretations of this scene have circulated in different forms and formats online, demonstrating the impact that it has had on many viewers. For instance, a drawing named "Lust" depicts in warm colors Elio's sexual arousal when his head is immersed in the smell and feel of the swim trunks.¹ Despite the painting's stillness, it provides the impression of a continuous time span in which Elio moves on the bed tenderly, but with determination. Other works take more liberty with their depictions of the scene. One Kawaii Chibi-style sticker, available for purchase on Etsy, shows Elio with the trunks on his head and provides a glimpse

1 See: Aloysius J. Gleek, "Re: Armie Hammer & Timothée Chalamet find Love in *Call Me by Your Name* (November 24, 2017)," *BetterMost* (forum post). Accessed February 14, 2020, <https://bettermost.net/forum/index.php?topic=53351.540>.

of how he might have blushed while on all fours.² Finally, the red shorts are featured on a poster with more than sixty objects from the film, also sold on Etsy. Even if the objects are devoid of their diegetic contexts, they evoke memories of concrete scenes, such as Elio's trip into Oliver's room, or the film's aesthetic and atmosphere of 1980s' Italy as called forth, for instance, by more marginal props such as a cigarette pack, newspaper, and bus ticket.³ These different examples all enable one to (re)experience *Call Me by Your Name* beyond the moving image through their attention to minute details.

The artistic responses to *Call Me by Your Name*, this essay argues, are the result of *cinephilic fandom*, a specific disposition of film spectatorship that cannot be reduced to either cinephilia or fandom. Neither of these concepts remains productive in and of itself for the analysis of cinephilic discourses that are strongly influenced and driven by practices usually associated with fandom. Consequently, the analysis of the phenomenon of cinephilic fandom requires film and media scholars to combine theories and methods from cinephilia and fan studies. By bringing together the two subfields, this essay follows the idea that "just as there have been many 'cinemas' over the course of the history of the medium, there have also been many 'cinephiliias,'" and that there is a need to "multiply a diversity of voices and subjectivities, and a plethora of narratives about cinephilic life and experience" (Shambu 2020, n.p.). The aim of this argument is to assign new value and use to ideas, methods, and voices that have been excluded from discussions of cinephilia

- 2 See: MewtantArt, "Call Me by Your Name Kawaii Chibi Stickers Set of 11," *Etsy*. Accessed September 18, 2020, https://www.etsy.com/listing/781338717/call-me-by-your-name-kawaii-chibi?ga_order=most_relevant&ga_search_type=all&ga_view_type=gallery&ga_search_query=call+me+by+your+name+stickers&ref=sr_gallery-1-20&organic_search_click=1.
- 3 See: JordanBoltonDesign, "Call Me by Your Name Poster, Artwork by Jordan Bolton," *Etsy*. Accessed September 18, 2020, https://www.etsy.com/ca/listing/694768656/call-me-by-your-name-poster-artwork-by?ref=shop_home_active_15&cr=1.

282 because of their impulsive subordination into the categories and norms of fandom. This subordination is caused by predetermined categorizations of cinephiles and fans, based on cultural hierarchies that draw artificial but nevertheless sharp lines between high art (cinephilia) and popular culture (fandom) without examining in more detail the kind of debates in which fans and cinephiles engage.

Moreover, cinephilia is defined by “watching but also thinking, reading, talking and writing about cinema in some form, no matter how unconventional” (Shambu 2020, n.p.). Yet the plea for unconventional practices is rarely extended to the production of creative content beyond the written word. While video essays have found their place in discourses about film, allowing for more leeway for visual and formal experimentation (Smith 2011; Keathley, Mittell, and Grant 2019), written criticism continues to be considered the backbone of cinephilia.⁴ In turn, transformative creative works that take more artistic freedom and (re)interpret, expand, and mash up films with other media content—often acting outside the intended meanings of film and media producers—remains neglected if not shut out from discussions on cinephilia. At best, such works are labeled as “fan cult cinephilia” (Elsaesser 2005, 36) but without considering questions of what motivates and characterizes fandom or what fan studies can offer to the study of cinephilia. The idea of cinephilic fandom is an attempt to overcome these theoretical and structural barriers of cinephilia and fan studies; it is also an attempt to widen perspectives on who can say something about film and cinema, what they can say, and how they can say it.

As the first section argues, the cinephilic fan is both fluent in subcultures and characterized by thinking about cinema and engaging with cinephilic discourses through activities and media

4 For examples, see: “Video Essays,” *Project: New Cinephilia* (blog post). Accessed October 27, 2020. <https://projectcinephilia.mubi.com/resources/video-essays/>.

production associated with fandom; fandom and cinephilia can be seen as two ideal positions on a spectrum of film spectatorship that are united by affect and productivity. The second section defines the appropriations and reinterpretations of film into other media as a form of cinephilic fan art: works that translate cinephiliac moments (Keathley 2006) into media ranging from videos to drawings, posters, mashups, or self-made merchandise. Finally, the third section maintains that the cinephilic fan is themselves evidence of the continuous transformation in the way film, cinema, and knowledge is discussed and diffused through diverse practices among different communities.

Cinephilic Fandom

Asked in an interview what distinguishes cinephilia from fandom, Henry Jenkins concludes that at “the end of the day, they’re doing exactly the same thing” and “the line [between fandom and cinephilia] blurs very quickly” (Jenkins 2015, n.p.). Jenkins is certainly not the only scholar who questions the “too-tidy division of fan and cinephilic discourses into separate camps” (Keller 2020, 77). Discussions about new configurations of cinephilia in the age of digital reproduction and a growing love for cinema beyond the structures established in pre-war and post-war France have diversified the concept (de Valck and Hagener 2005; Balcerzak and Sperb 2009; Balcerzak and Sperb 2012). Research on queer and feminist cinephilia (Hallas 2003; Kim 2005; White 1999), techno-centric cinephilia (Klinger 2006; Hudson and Zimmermann 2009), and globalized and transnational forms of cinephilia (Rosenbaum and Martin 2003; de Valck 2007; Bhattacharya Chairs 2004; Trice 2015; Vidal 2017) are only a few examples that broaden the definition of cinephilia as cultural practice and theoretical concept to varying degrees and question its assumed universalism by underlining the multiplicities and approaches that it constitutes. Still, even though similarities between fandom and cinephilia are stressed regularly, the differences seem to

284 outweigh them to the effect that a tidy division between fans and cinephiles continues to be made in film and media scholarship.

Of course, there are considerable differences between cinephiles and fans as well as cinephile and fan studies, both historically and today. The notion of being a fan refers to a much broader field of culture than cinephilia, with its narrow focus on film and cinema. One can be a fan of television, video games, sports, comics, literature, opera, dance, theatre, celebrities, politicians, toy lines, themed environments, or animals, for example. As such, fan studies can be applied to a much wider field of discourse and practices (Booth 2018; Click and Scott 2018; Sarver Coombs and Osborne 2022). Even if we consider research on home entertainment and digital technologies (de Valck and Hagener 2005; Klinger 2006; Hudson and Zimmermann 2009; Balcerzak and Sperb 2009; Balcerzak and Sperb 2012), film and cinema remain at the core of cinephilia scholarship, whereby practices that deviate from it, such as cosplay or fan-made art and merchandise, get neglected.

Additionally, there are different dynamics among academics and non-academics, even though scholarship on both cinephilia and fandom habitually connect personal and theoretical perspectives (Hagener and de Valck 2008; Hills 2002). Whereas theories on cinephilia have always had a strong presence in public discourse outside of universities, with the effect that the concept had lost its bite for many academics for a time (Keathley 2006), fan studies does not receive similar interest and acknowledgment among fans themselves. “Aca-fans” have shaped the sub-field since the 1990s and collaborated with fans, but there are also fans who mistrust academics and dismiss their analyses and theories in their own discussions and writings (Neville 2018; Pignetti 2020; Hills 2002). Moreover, cinephilia and fan studies have dissimilar relationships to the study of the history of their object of study. Scholarship on cinephilia demonstrates great interest in theories and practices before the 1950s, such as the notion of “protocinephilia” and *photogénie* in the 1920s (Keathley 2006), whereas historical fan cultures and practices dating from before the second

half of the twentieth century continue to be unrepresented in fan studies (Reagin and Rubenstein 2011). 285

Furthermore, fandom has different forms of institutionalization than cinephilia, therefore impacting the traceability of works and ideas and theories connected to them. Although they have similar infrastructures in the form of clubs, journals, magazines, blogs, and zines, many fans do not achieve the same name recognition as cinephiles. Whereas written criticism is more likely to tie specific ideas to identifiable authors, most notably in magazines like *Cahiers du cinéma* or *Senses of Cinema* or in the form of popular blogs, many fan writers and artists are often known only by pseudonyms, and works frequently circulate online without any reference to their makers.

Finally, although both are a global phenomenon, cinephilia as a practice and way of thinking about cinema began in France, whereas fandom and fan studies emerged in scholarship from the United Kingdom, the USA, and Japan. Add vernacular clichés and prejudices of high and low culture—the fan as a cultural dupe and cinephile as cultural elite, the former as someone who mindlessly consumes everything and the other a connoisseur of one art form—and the boundary between cinephiles and fans seems to reappear.

Yet, these differences often say more about scholars' attempts to establish universalized and naturalized categories about fans and cinephiles than about how individuals are inspired by film and cinema and participate in debates about it. Both cinephilia and fandom suffer from scholarly definitions that limit them to archetypes that are simultaneously too broad and too narrow. Definitions of cinephilia are broad in the sense that it is defined as a love for film and cinema as a whole, but narrow in the sense of which debates belong to the phenomenon and how they can be expressed. In fandom, definitions are narrow in the sense that fans are often reduced to one specific fandom and broad when it comes to the ways they engage with their object of fandom. To

286 put it pointedly, one is either too dedicated to one medium or too indifferent to medium specificity. However, archetypal conceptions of fandom and cinephilia should be considered two ideal positions on a spectrum of interpretations of film spectatorship and the productivity of film spectators. This spectrum is united by two aspects that differentiate fans and cinephiles, and everyone in between, from regular audiences. The first common denominator is affect. Consider Sarah Keller's definition of cinephilia:

First, *cinephilia is an affect*, something that derives from feeling and is therefore personal and subjective. Second, *cinephilia is an extension of affect into actions*: it manifests itself (makes itself visible) in such actions, especially through but not limited to writing. Third, cinephilia depends on displacements in time and space. As a partial result of this dependence, it tends to be nostalgic. Another result is that it is interested in relationships between past and present. Finally—the thing that undergirds the three previous categories — *cinephilia is fundamentally anxious*. (all emphases by Keller 2020, 15)

Her description of cinephilia resembles the emphasis put on the affective qualities of media fandom (Grossberg 1992), fans' participation and productivity (Jenkins, 1992), the complex relationship between past and present (Geraghty 2014), as well as the anxiety over loss that shapes fandom and some of its expressions (De Kosnik 2016). This also becomes evident in Jenkins's early definition of fandom as "a particular mode of reception ... set of critical and interpretive practices ... base for consumer activism ... forms of cultural production, aesthetic traditions and practices [and] alternative social community" (Jenkins 1992, 284–87). These observations resonate with Keller's evaluation that cinephilia "often depends on a sense of other movies ... inspires a drive to connect to other things and products ... is interested in the material, technological, aesthetic, social, or other qualities specific to itself ... and fixates on strong feelings, frequently mixed between good and bad" (Keller 2020, 15).

Definitions of cinephilia and fandom also highlight the spectrum's second common denominator: productivity. Fans and cinephiles are both "undisciplined spectators" as they easily switch between being immersed in a film's narrative, as the filmmaker intends, and a "panoramic perception" (Keathley 2006), with which they look at the screen with more distance and their own agency in determining what is of most interest to them. The result is the discovery of details that have minimal or no narrative purpose, but nevertheless capture their attention and interest. Fans often explore these details in their own fanfiction, to name only one example, in which they develop the backstory of minor characters or explore parts of the hyper-diegeses not depicted in the film (Hills 2002). Among cinephiles, the fetishization of moments that are visible for all but only provocative to a few are described as "cinephiliac moments" (Keathley 2006). When encountered in a film, Christian Keathley explains, expanding on Paul Willemen's concept, cinephiliac moments "spark something which then produces the energy and the desire to write, to find formulations to convey something about the intensity of that spark" (2006, 140). Writing represents a means to share and extend these experiences as "cinephiliac anecdotes," personal recollections of cinephiliac moments, and the sensation when something captures your interest (Keathley 2006, 140–52). In the case of the cinephilic fan, however, writing is only one of many media interpretations into which this energy is channeled.⁵

5 Adapting Willemen's terminology, Keathley uses the term "cinephiliac" over "cinephilic" in order to stress the overtones of necrophilia in cinephilia. However, even though a complex relationship to the past is evident in both fandom and cinephilia, this essay does not consider necrophilia to be a defining aspect of cinephilic fandom. While some individuals may engage with themes of death, the overall dynamics of cinephilic fandom demonstrate more diverse dynamics.

Cinephilic Fan Art

Cinephiliac moments are “a reminder that films are themselves made up of fragments” (Keathley 2006, 38), and cinephilic art, much like cinephilic writing, also reflects the fragmentary nature of filmmaking. Consider the following three drawings. Elio is lying on his back with the red shorts, first all over his face, and then, in the second picture, with them covering his mouth. Finally, the last drawing shows him taking them nearly off of his face completely.⁶ These three drawings make direct reference to the film and to Elio playing with Oliver’s shorts, although the artist took the liberty of presenting an alternative version of the film scene. In the drawings, Elio is wearing the same shorts and no shirt, but he is resting on his back instead of being on all fours. With Elio’s relaxed body posture and flushed cheeks, this image depicts an idea of how the scene of Elio with the swimsuit can be read as a post-masturbation blush. Although more consequential than how Elio is shown to act on his fantasies in the film, the drawings retain the same narrative in suggesting his longing for Oliver. Yet, by offering a different perspective on Elio’s actions, rearranging how he moves in space, and implying that he lingers longer on Oliver’s bed than he does in the film, the drawings emphasize that Guadagnino’s directorial choices for framing and editing represent only one possible way to tell the story. Cinephiliac moments, and the art inspired by them, therefore enable awareness of the restrictions imposed upon them by framing and editing, always limiting the visible to what the filmmaker has chosen (Keathley 2006).

This extends not only to aesthetic and narrative questions, but also points toward criticism of the film for teasing audiences

6 See: Paolacostette Vica, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/249246160613294791/>; Madeline Bass, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/249246160613294794/>; Paolacostette Vica, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/249246160613294801/>.

with several scenes of uninhibited kissing and foreplay but ultimately shying away from showing explicit images of the couple having sex—even though Elio is shown having sex with a girl. For instance, some drawings frame the scene differently and show Elio’s backside or partly reveal his penis while they are having oral sex. They foreground Guadagnino’s complicity with directors of other mainstream gay-themed movies by “limit[ing] the visibility of gay male sex, whose depiction is scrupulously kept from approaching the explicitness reserved for hetero-consummations” (Miller 2018, n.p.). Other examples go even further, such as re-edits of the film that integrate pornographic scenes, mix stills from the film’s non-explicit sex scenes with porn shots, place sex noises over shots from the film, or play the film’s soundtrack over animated porn.⁷ While D.A. Miller argues in his review of the film that Guadagnino uses the beauty of Italy to distract from the physical aspects of gay relationships, the added images and sounds of the porn versions provide an explicitness that the film denies its audiences. Cinephilic fans create those scenes that the director chose to exclude from the script;⁸ or, as Miller puts it, “the gay sex scene that [the film] spent well over an hour making everyone anticipate, a scene that might have taken our breath away for real” (2018, n.p.). In other words, cinephilic fandom is

- 7 See: Rob Gee, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/784330091336821122/>; Rob Gee, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/784330091336820956/>; Rob Gee, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/784330091336822189/>; “Call Me by My Name Gay Sex Scenes,” *Cloudy Girls*. Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.cloudygirls.com/porn/call-me-by-my-name-gay-sex-scenes.html>; “Elio and Oliver Part 2,” *Pornhub* (video). Accessed September 18, 2020, 03:37min, https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5e2d19c6f1ac4&utm_source=PBWeb&utm_medium=PT&utm_campaign=PBWeb; “Call Me by Your Name-Porn Version,” *Pornhub* (video). Accessed September 18, 2020, 04:53min, https://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ph5e8e3db63e5ee.
- 8 Screenwriter James Ivory criticized the lack of nudity and camera pans away from the lovers (Brockington 2018) and the removal of much more suggestive scenes from the original script than those featured in the film (Wheeler 2018).

290 expressed in the production of new scenes that are inspired by the film and that fans would have liked to see in the original version.

The selection of cinephiliac moments is as subjective as their reinterpretation into other media, and cinephilic fan art brings the active eyes of different spectators together and makes these moments perceivable. By definition, cinephiliac moments may not be intended to be memorable and therefore escape the attention of the general audience, but this does not mean that several individuals cannot share one and the same fascination (Keathley 2006). Two kinds of questions need to be asked when talking about the cinephiliac moment: “what” has one seen and “how” have they seen it? Just as critical writing on cinephiliac moments is one means to establish connections to the personal, fan art provides “information about how [the artists] read, interpret, and use the text” (Cherry 2016, 39). Aquarelle paintings, pencil drawings, comics and manga, stickers, and abstract posters all show subjective approaches to a scene. Crucially, fan communities have always had the “centrifugal” approach to cinema (Shambu 2020, n.p.), and built contact zones for remixing (Hudson and Zimmerman 2009) all forms of culture that conceptions of cinephilia in the digital age aim to institute. Cinephilic fan art establishes connections beyond film culture and history, drawing from a much broader intertextual repertoire: it reimagines scenes from *Call Me by Your Name* as a Studio Ghibli production, places shots of Oliver and Elio in impressionist paintings, produces mash-up trailers to foreground homoerotic subtexts in contemporary television shows, sketches images of the couple in the style of manga or Young Adult fiction cover art, materializes them as puppets, draws them as Furrries, or recreates dialogues from the films by creating playlists with songs whose titles match the words spoken in certain scenes.⁹ If cinephiles build on their

9 See: @bibbongtsubibo, *Twitter*. Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://twitter.com/bibbongtsubibo/status/961539447874404352>; Rachel Thompson, “Genius Instagram account merges ‘Call Me by Your Name’ Scenes with

personal preferences and memories of their previous cinema-going experiences, always analyzing the place of individual films in film history, cinephilic fans establish connections across media. Such cross-media cinephilic fan canons are highly personal and individualized, and challenge those engaging with cinephilic fan art to constantly test their pop cultural knowledge, researching references they may not yet know as they are “moving across different fandoms... moving across these different forms of fan knowledge” (Hills 2015, 158–59). Resistance to medium-specific canons, especially in a time of media convergence, participatory culture, and transmedia storytelling (Jenkins 2006), bears the potential to rethink earlier cinephile canons and to bring them into dialogue with the popular culture of their time.

The intertextuality of cinephilic fan art also redirects attention away from questions regarding film’s ontology, which have been central in cinephile debates and scholarship (Keathley 2006; Keller 2020). Although there have been prominent claims about

Monet Paintings,” *Mashable*. Accessed March 15, 2018, <https://mashable.com/2018/03/15/call-me-by-monet-instagram/?europe=true>; Robazizo’s Tumbblings, *Tumblr* (post). Accessed September 21, 2018, <https://robazizo.tumblr.com/post/178316216644/call-me-by-your-name-manga-illustrated-by-yamimaru>; “Great Showdowns by Scott C.,” *Tumblr* (post). Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://greatshowdowns.com/post/174601335819/call-me-by-your-name-and-ill-call-you-by-mine>; Mediodescocado, “Elio & Oliver / Call Me by Your Name.” *Flickr* (post). Accessed April 10, 2018, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mediodescocado/26507452597/>; StarFromPhoenix, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://fi.pinterest.com/pin/585679126520889193/>; Grace Pagdanganan, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.pinterest.it/pin/480407485253228641/>; Baranorgi, “Fan Art/ Call Me by Your Name,” *Furaffinity* (forum post). Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.furaffinity.net/view/31737877/>; planetvcr, “So Call Me by Your Name-,” *DeviantArt*. Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.deviantart.com/planetvcr/art/so-call-me-by-your-name-829882093>; Jindo K, “Call Me by Your Name (but it’s The Office),” *YouTube* (video). Accessed September 20, 2020, 02:09 min, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09cIKg00Yc&t=31s&ab_channel=Jindok; See: Dark Alex. “Call Me by Your Name TikTok Compilations,” *YouTube* (playlist). Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxa5Tgk6fZYFQ1nLrTegSSO4liTeaWC>.

292 film as a photographic medium having a privileged relationship to reality, others have begun to reexamine if this was ever really the case (Keathley 2009). Indexicality also only plays a minor part in cinephilic art, but connections exist nevertheless. This becomes especially evident in the many forms of fan tourism and pilgrimages (Williams 2017) to Italy, shared in the form of videos, slide shows, or individual photographs. One of the most popular endeavors of this kind has been a photo project that matches film stills from *Call Me by Your Name* to their original shooting locations, merging stills from the film (shot on 35mm) with the fan's own (digital) photos taken at the shooting locations.¹⁰ A more abstract take is represented by art engaging with the depiction of landscape and nature in the film. Landscape and nature "have long been sources for cinematic splendor and cinephilia" (Keller 2020, 130) and this becomes evident in collages pairing photographs from the film together with impressionist paintings. By placing Elio and Oliver in paintings by Monet, among other painters, the collages emphasize—as well as replicate—the excessive use of rustling trees, whipping grass, and splashing water to represent the inner tension of the characters.

Crucially, however, fans document their own moments of film reception and art production. In regards to the former aspect, some fans record videos of themselves watching trailers of or scenes from the film, thereby capturing ephemeral and fleeting moments of the affective film experience.¹¹ In terms of the latter,

10 See: Jacob Shamsian, "A Fan Flew to Italy to Seamlessly Match the Most Romantic Scenes in 'Call Me by Your Name' to their Real-Life Places," *Insider*. Accessed January 18, 2018, <https://www.insider.com/call-me-by-your-name-real-life-italy-vs-movie-photos-2018-1>.

11 See: Winchester Twin, "We Watch Call Me by Your Name for the First Time," *YouTube* (video). Accessed June 6, 2023, 20:39 min, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jK2GW4Ncokc&ab_channel=WinchesterTwins; Sue 101, "Call Me by Your Name Best Moments: Reaction," *YouTube* (video). Accessed June 6, 2023, 14:39 minutes, [YouTube \(video\).](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkhrrffTyDdk&ab_channel=Sue101; ZZAVID,)

they document the making of their fan art, in some cases with the film or its soundtrack playing over the video.¹² These videos make transparent the decisions that were made and methods used to produce the final work, preserving affective reactions to the film turned into actions, and making them accessible in the present and future for additional reflection in the form of comments and appreciations about the impact the film had on viewers. In this regard, cinephilic fan art is shifting attention from what happened in front of the camera to what happens in front of a screen and during a screening respectively.

By trying to capture the uncapturable—time and affect—cinephilic fan art brings out the fraught relationship between past, present, and future. Home entertainment caters to the desire of the “fetishistic spectator” to “stop, hold and to repeat” a film (Mulvey 2006, 173). Cinephilic fan art is the result of a viewer’s in-depth scrutiny of images, characters, and storyworlds that circulate cinephiliac moments across media in a more flexible manner, as well as a reading of them against the grain. They can be experienced as desktop background or screen saver, inserted in notebooks and calendars, or hung up on walls as posters and prints. Moreover, if DVDs, Blu-Rays, or digital files are some of the many ways that film can be owned and integrated into the home (Klinger 2006), cinephilic fan art provides fans the opportunity to have *Call Me by Your Name* and the particular scenes that are dear

Accessed September 20, 2020, 31:05 minutes, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obXc72nxwCo&ab_channel=ZZAVID.

- 12 See: Jellyfish Tea, “Call Me by Your Name Fan Art,” *YouTube* (video). Accessed September 20, 2020, 03:06 minutes, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-cr-JEIT_iw&ab_channel=JellyfishTea; mgxaz, “Call Me by Your Name Fanart,” *YouTube* (video). Accessed September 20, 2020, 04:10 minutes, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5hV_E4_Qgc&ab_channel=mgxaz; koikawas, “Call Me by Your Name Speedpaint Except You Can Hear Elio Crying in the Background,” *YouTube* (video). Accessed September 20, 2020, 06:08 minutes, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkoW6vke1nw&ab_channel=koikawas; blubibo, “Call Me by Your Name Fanart || Paint with Me,” *YouTube* (video). Accessed September 20, 2020, 07:17 minutes, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDsIj8c_z6s&ab_channel=blubibo.

294 to them in a vast variety of objects, given that fan art is available for purchase on sweaters, shower curtains, mugs, and mobile phone cases, among other products.¹³ They allow their makers and owners to express their appreciation for the film and engage with the characters and storyworlds in all aspects of their everyday lives and routines, be it in their homes, at school, or in their office (Geraghty 2014; Affuso 2018; Santo 2018).

The dynamic between past, present, and future that emerges out of this availability is also crucial to understanding how a feeling of collectivity can emerge out of subjective and personal selections. Although new technologies always provide different opportunities for watching a movie over and over again, any expectation of experiencing it in the same way as the first time will be unfulfilled. Every time one watches a movie the reception differs, be it the result of personal developments or the setting and contexts in which the film is re-watched. Cinephilic fan art balances the old and the new, as the discoveries of new fans allow established fans the opportunity to recollect their previous film experiences while also seeing the film with new eyes because of a different form and format. This process combines what is already known with the anticipation of new interpretations. As sites on Pinterest and Tumblr dedicated to *Call Me by Your Name* indicate, cinephilic fans are collectors of their own cinephilic anecdotes as well as those of others—in the literal sense that freely available fan art can be downloaded and archived and in the metaphorical sense that they create new affects that may lead to further actions. In short, the making, watching, and collecting or curating of fan art counteracts anxieties about the loss and disappearance of, the affection for, and one's personal memories of a film.

13 For example, see the *Call Me by Your Name* products offered on Etsy and Redbubble.

Cinephilic Fan Criticism

Although a critical and box-office success, *Call Me by Your Name* was also criticized as being an inauthentic, apolitical, and historically unlikely depiction of gay life and sex. In addition, critics voiced concerns about the romanticized sexual relationship between a teenage boy and a man seven years his senior, as well as the celebration of white masculinity in its stylized and bourgeois depiction of 1980s Italy (Galt and Schoonover 2019; Branciforte 2022). Following these concerns, some of the fan art discussed in this essay could also be criticized as reinforcing youth and whiteness as the ultimate in desirability in gay culture (Tortorici 2008) or as being complicit with “gay mainstream” cinema and its normative depiction of queer lives. Still, other examples could be interpreted as actually highlighting the whiteness and tamed depiction of gay sex in *Call Me by Your Name* by positioning and connecting Elio and Oliver to queer culture beyond the mainstream. Neither completely transformative or affirmative, or progressive or regressive, art about *Call Me by Your Name* reflects the many possibilities and conceptions of what it means to be queer, which results in works that can conform but also challenge dominant formulas and canons. As such, neither fandom nor cinephilia—and hence also not cinephilic fandom—is neutral but instead resonates with the social, cultural, and political contexts in which they are practiced and the subjectivities of their practitioners.

No matter how the politics of these artworks are interpreted, however, by acknowledging fan practices as cinephilic, new “perspectives on what qualifies as *valuable* or *useful* criticism” (de Valck 2010, 134, emphases in original) also emerge. Cinephilic fan art can challenge what participation in cinephilia looks like and what forms it can take, placing the creation of drawings and mash-ups alongside written or video criticism. In some cases, cinephilic art seeks connections to established film canons. For instance, Studio Ghibli-style drawings of Elio and Oliver pay

296 tribute to both Luca Guadagnino and Hayao Miyazaki, celebrating the style of both filmmakers by bringing them together in art and imagining a collaborative approach by two prolific directors. But not every juxtaposition of films, styles, and directorial sensibility is celebratory. Consider the example of the mash-up trailer of *Call Me by Your Name* and the comedy *Stepbrothers* (Adam McKay 2008).¹⁴ Here, the soundtrack of the former is used to reimagine the latter, a goofy comedy, adding sensitivity where brute humor previously set the tone. The mash-up trailer can be seen as a reinforcement of the division of filmmakers into *auteurs* and *metteurs-en-scène* (Sarris 1963). Hence, even if fan art depends on preexisting images, narratives, and characters, it is crucial not to confuse it with the uncritical embrace of an object or a filmmaker's oeuvre; on the contrary, cinephilic fan art often transforms the content and style of a film and must therefore be seen for its critical potential that defies hierarchies between director and spectator.

Although auteur theory is less fundamental to contemporary cinephilia than it was in the past, the attention given to film directors as key indicators of value still shapes canons, festival programming, and the catalogues of boutique distributors. The rewriting and re-editing of scenes, or the remediation into other forms and formats, point to a different and shifting power dynamic between filmmaker and spectator. Traditionally, cinephiles appear as critics and are less inclined to create transformative content such as writing alternative endings, "shipping" characters, or creating crossovers between different media texts, thereby challenging the interpretative authority of the filmmakers over their work. In the tradition of cinephilia-as-criticism, hierarchies between directors as the makers of a film and the audience as critics of them remain intact. Fandom, in turn, is built to a great extent on individuals challenging filmmakers by

14 See: Alex Langosch, "Step Brothers/Call Me by Your Name Trailer Mashup," *YouTube* (video). Accessed September 20, 2020, 02.09 minutes, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSrcu3l4Uag&t=30s&ab_channel=AlexLangosch.

producing their own works based on their favorite characters and storyworlds. If they do not like an aspect of the film, they correct what they deem to need improvement by producing their own media. Indeed, many fans consider themselves to be equal owners and co-producers of a storyworld whose interpretation of and playing with a text matter as much as the filmmakers' ideas (Fiske 1992). In other words, fans give themselves as much authority as the director over a film's narrative and style.

This struggle over authority becomes evident in the creation of explicit sexual content. Cinephilic fan art that focuses on Elio and Oliver's sex can also be understood as a critique of the film for shying away from more explicit depictions to meet the demands of rating systems, as well as the film's homonormative characters that seem to be detached from the queer culture of their time well as from the homophobia of the 1980s. Arguably, this art provides more mature access to the men's sexuality than the hyped scene (as well as some fan art) of Elio masturbating and eventually ejaculating into a peach, a scene that reduces his mature sexual desires to a whimsical act one might associate with high-school comedies. Moreover, by translating the characters into drawings in the style of *Boys' Love* or the covers of YA queer fiction, the cinephilic fan art positions the film firmly in queer culture and similar narratives that deal with non-heteronormative sexualities and explicitly address the continuing discrimination of queer youth.¹⁵ Finally, the transformation of Elio and Oliver into drawings is of importance here, as many of them detach these characters from the heterosexual star personas of Armie Hammer and Timothée Chalamet. Among the fan art, one finds many examples in which the characters, but not the actors, are recognizable.¹⁶ *Call Me by Your Name* followed the example of

15 The Tumblr blog-to-graphic novel-to-Netflix series *Heartstopper* (2022) is a recent example of YA fiction that addresses the effects of bullying and discrimination on queer youth.

16 See: Cam's art, "Call Me by Your Name//Fanart Speedpaint," *YouTube* (video). Accessed September 20, 2020, 03:53 minutes, <https://www>.

298 previous arthouse blockbusters, such as *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee 2005), that cast straight actors in queer roles, and reinforced the actors' straight personas in promotional campaigns. By detaching the characters from the actors, and by visualizing their sexual encounters with less restraint, the artworks confront the media industries and their production schemes that determine what can and cannot be seen, always keeping in mind how to maintain the widest possible audience.

At the same time, the global digital circulation of fan works related to the film has the potential to create awareness for media productions beyond North America and Europe. For example, a drawing depicting the protagonists of the Filipino web series *Gameboys* (2020) in the style of the official *Call Me by Your Name* poster directs attention to non-western queer media as well as to a community and their fight for equality and civil rights.¹⁷ As such, cinephilic fan art carries the potential to give voice to marginalized and underrepresented groups in a film culture dominated by white, straight men from Europe and North America (Shambu 2020, n.p.). Another example is the circulation of films on websites dedicated to porn such as xHamster.com. Alongside alternative fan-edits of films like *Call Me by Your Name*, users of streaming platforms upload select scenes or complete files of films such as *Hawaii* (Marco Berger 2013), *Fanatic Love* (Tingjun Du 2016), or *Phor lae lukchai* (Sarawut Intaraprom 2015). Some of the uploaded films may be programmed at festivals or distributed commercially, but it is through the labor of fans that they become available to a wider audience online and provide

youtube.com/watch?v=cmsq6rgGc5o&ab_channel=cam%27sart; Madeline Bass, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/249246160613304359/>; Madeline Bass, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 20, 2020; <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/249246160611548405/>; Madeline Bass, *Pinterest*. Accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/249246160613294779/>.

17 See: geloxarts. "Gameboys The Series x Call Me by Your Name." *DeviantArt* (forum post). Accessed October 28, 2020. <https://www.deviantart.com/geloxarts/art/Gameboys-The-Series-x-Call-Me-By-Your-Name-857024749>.

access to queer films with limited or no international distribution. Both of these examples demonstrate that social media and video sharing platforms give audiences a certain degree of independence from release schedules and distribution strategies of the media industries, allowing audiences to seek content and establish connections between *Call Me by Your Name* and queer cinema, television, and porn.

However, cinephilic fans are not operating completely outside of, or in opposition to the media industries. Even the more critical examples of fan art serve as publicity for *Call Me by Your Name*, keeping the film fresh in the public's memory because of the unpaid labor fans perform in their free time (Stanfill 2019). But as the commodification of some fan art demonstrates, cinephilic fandom can also be considered an economic activity that creates an "alternative economy" and "a grey market, where produced artefacts are exchanged as gifts and/or commodities" (Carter 2018, 13). For Carter, alternative economies are defined by three features:

firstly, the advancement of digital technologies enables audiences to become workers and entrepreneurs; secondly, produced texts are instead artefacts that are exchanged as both gifts and/or commodities; and finally, rules and regulations, such as intellectual property laws, are commonly circumvented, manipulated, and countered to allow enterprise to take place. (15)

The first two features are of particular interest here, as they point to questions of availability, accessibility, and participation in fandom, cinephilia, and cinephilic fandom as well. Although digital technologies offer new opportunities for many, not everyone can afford the technologies to access the Internet or produce their own media. Moreover, even if access to the Internet is available and images can be accessed and saved, not everyone can afford to spend money on merchandise and shipping costs. Neither should the time that goes into the making of fan art be

300 underestimated. The time to create content and “lovebor,” the act of visibly loving a fan object (Stanfill 2019, 165–66), is not available to everyone. Digital technologies and associated practices therefore provide *more* availability and accessibility to the film and cinephilic fan communities, although participation nevertheless remains restricted and not as inclusive as it may seem at face value.

Despite these exclusionary socio-economic dynamics, cinephilic fandom does provide *more* diversity and a different set of voices to cinephilia and can further problematize default notions of universal cinephilia that operates on exclusion rather than inclusivity. Again, the emphasis is on *more*, as fan communities themselves have a long history of racism, homophobia, sexism, and xenophobia. Fan communities are not categorically progressive and liberal. They replicate societal and cultural hierarchies and power inequalities. Even if this is not always perceptible in fan-made art, interaction among fans can be toxic in interpersonal as well as online interactions (Fiske 1992; Pande 2018; Busse 2013). While the examples of fan art discussed in this essay may celebrate the love between two men, homophobic tendencies may come to light in other forums. Moreover, fan art cannot provide empirical insights into who stands behind the abstract conceptions of fan and fandom. Reaction videos, video criticism, and other fan-made videos shared on YouTube and TikTok, however, provide insights into how fans engage with the film and connect it to their lived experiences. Their makers are young, queer, international, and racially and ethnically diverse, showing an equally diverse range when it comes to the expression of their ideas and emotions about the film through remakes, remixes, and commentaries. They operate outside international film festival and art house cinema circuits associated with classical cinephilia, displaying film culture as it is practiced in private and public spaces, alone or with peers, led by affect or critical thought. These videos show a generation that grew up with digital technologies as a means for media reception and production, and

a transmedia culture in which cinema has always been thought of as being in dialogue with other media forms and formats, and the consumption of transformative fan-made works and criticism occurred alongside the consumption of legacy media.

Conclusion

In 1996, Susan Sontag famously claimed that if “cinophilia is dead, then movies are dead too,” fueling premillennial debates about the death of cinema at the hand of digital technologies. Since then, cinema and cinophilia have continued to change, but neither has died. Indeed, alternative interpretations of cinema and cinophilia have emerged. The makers of the works discussed in this essay are a new generation of cinephiles rather than the living dead. Their practices redefine what it means to love and engage with film and cinema beyond moving images and medium specificity, echoing as loud reminders that audiences should not be forced into existing categories of either cinophilia or fandom, but that definitions of cinophilia and fandom change with the times and also merge. In the case of the cinephilic fan, this refers not only to new modes of production, distribution, reception, and criticism of feature films. It also reconceives cinephiles as creative producers, who extend and expand the films they love and criticize across media. Not only do they love to make films and other media themselves, as did cinephiles before them. Cinephilic fans love to (re)make the same film all over again across various media and formats. It is up to film and media scholars—and those interested in fandom, cinophilia, and audiences in general—to further examine how these works shape cinophilia.

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