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Fan Studies and the Celebrity Serial Killer

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CHAPTER 1

Fanlike Engagement before Fan Studies

Personators, Collectors, and Groupies

Most famous serial killers have had fans. Of course, the term "fan" here is immediately complicated by the fact that it now evokes the whole field of fan studies and a range of definitions around what fans are and do—not to mention the fact that prior to online fandom, information on people's engagement with serial killer media is less reliable. Nonetheless, I have noted distinct patterns of behavior, ways of writing, and modes of reception around serial killer media dating to at least Victorian England that I recognize as forms of fannish engagement. In this chapter, I'll look at some of these patterns, and while bearing in mind that the application of academic lenses retrospectively is always complicated by context, consider what can be learned about what one might call the "pre-fan studies fandoms" of serial killers, in order to carry these insights into my analysis of serial killer fandom today. I will bring to bear the major concepts outlined in the introduction (textual poaching/media convergence, affective community, (sub) cultural capital building, and fandom as play), offering supplemental insights from other fan studies theory where appropriate. Most of this supplemental

theory applies best in a pre-digital or extra-digital context, for it concerns the collection of material artefacts, fan tourism, and cosplay; but all of these processes have digital manifestations and continuities. For the purposes of this pre-history, we will have to look beyond explicitly self-identified serial killer fans—largely because these are much, much harder to identify before the internet, and would yield only idiosyncratic results. For the sake of establishing a broader and more substantial basis for the theoretical insights we will bring to the next chapters, we will investigate fannish behavior around nineteenth and twentieth century serial killers, for which there is a wealth of data. Of course, it won't be possible to cover examples from every popular or famous serial killer. Therefore, after opening with the emblematic Jack the Ripper and H. H. Holmes cases, I have focused these examples around four of the most popular serial killers with online fans: Ted Bundy, Richard Ramirez, Jeffrey Dahmer, and Aileen Wuornos. This particular cross-section also allows me to make some instructive comparisons regarding responses to serial killers of different genders and sexualities, a theme that will extend to coming chapters.

According to Alexandra Warwick, "the Whitechapel murders [of Jack the Ripper] represent both the inaugural event in serial killing and the narrative accounts of it" (2007, 74). The corpus of "fictional and non-fiction literature devoted to the murders" is vast enough to have gained the portmanteau "Ripperature" (Irwin 2014). Some excellent work with both primary and secondary sources has documented fannish engagement with the unknown killer popularly called "Jack the Ripper," from the contemporary media frenzy and the fashion for Ripper "personation" continued in cosplay to this day, to the "sensationalized television documentaries and tacky memorabilia sold in East End pubs" up to the present (Curtis 2001, 259). Peculiarly, "Jack the Ripper" is both an exemplary and an exceptional serial killer. He is exemplary because his are the crimes to which pretty much every serial killer of women has been compared since. He is exceptional because he is anonymous: a "floating signifier" (259) to which fantasies around killing—and race, and sexuality, and gender, and class—can be attached and detached with far more flux than they can around killers with a face and a real name. The press speculated broadly that he might be one of three "types" metonymically representing *fin de siècle* fears: a vicious aristocrat (symbolizing the power and perversion of the upper classes); a mad doctor (symbolizing fears around the relationship of a bestial human nature to a veneer of civilization and modernity); or a foreigner, usually a politicized

Jew (see Frayling 2007). His crimes have particular multi-accentuality, of which the London press took full advantage. In John Fiske's terms, I would call this a "producerly text" (1989, 104).

The construction of Jack the Ripper needs to be understood in the context of the "New Journalism" associated with 1880s Britain. At this time, basic literacy was increasing rapidly; cheap, readable, and disposable papers were a booming industry. According to L. Perry Curtis Jr., "the advent of the penny paper enabled workers to buy a daily or weekly paper on a regular basis without having to forego their pints of bitter or plugs of tobacco" (2001, 56). In these texts, scholars observe the rapid expansion of features now associated with tabloid or popular journalism, including "a heavier emphasis on crime, scandal, disaster, and sports along with bolder and more lurid headlines and subheads" (61).[1] In his extended study Jack the Ripper and the *London Press*, Curtis analyzed the ongoing contemporary coverage of the murders—and the social effects associated with them—across fifteen London newspapers, including three East End weeklies, "chosen with an eye to striking a rough balance between the morning and evening, the daily and weekly, and the Tory, Liberal and Radical Press" (2001, 16). Papers across this spectrum contained "clinical details of bodily injuries that Victorian newspapers served up to readers in an almost pornographic manner" (cf. Murley 2008 on crime porn). Curtis quotes Joseph C. Fisher on a "synergistic response to the Whitechapel murders in the press as well as the metropolis," akin to the triadic relationship between "the public's insatiable desire for news, the media's commercial interests in providing it, and the [serial] killer's need to publicize his invincibility" (7).

It is tricky—and probably not particularly valuable—to speculate on the Victorian readers' personal motivations for their fascination with Jack the Ripper, but two fandom-related perspectives are established beyond doubt: firstly, that Jack was a sensation and a celebrity, and secondly, that "Jack the Ripper" is and always has been a collective, collaborative, cultural invention (Warwick 2007, 72). The Whitechapel murderer is not synonymous with Jack the Ripper. Notes by contemporary police, now housed in the London Crime Museum, indicate that the Whitechapel murderer was Polish barber Aaron Kosminski, readily identified by a reliable witness who refused to testify in court (Benetto 2006). Kosminski was institutionalized in insane asylums from 1891 until his death in 1919. "Jack the Ripper" is a product of

[1] The term "New Journalism" is also associated with the crusading investigative style of reporting pioneered by William J. T. Stead of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

what one might call "proto-convergence" between the media and the newly literate public. Reportage on his celebrity is plentiful, dramatic, and probably to some extent hyperbolic:

> In the autumn of 1888, reporters dwelled on the "thrill of horror" that ran through the country as a result of the atrocities taking place in Whitechapel. After dipping his pen in purple ink, one journalist wrote: "Horror ran through the land. Men spoke of it with bated breath, and pale-lipped women shuddered as they read the dreadful details. People afar off smelled blood, and the superstitious said that the skies were of a deeper red that autumn." (Curtis 2001, 77)

There is further concrete evidence of Celebrity Jack, created by a whole mass of people inside and outside of the media. This includes the immediate addition of tableaus depicting his crimes to London waxwork museums, some of which were, according to the local magistrate "revolting in the extreme" (76). Meanwhile, at the site where victim Annie Chapman was murdered, one enterprising local started charging visitors a penny simply to enter the yard where she died (123). "Crowds of sightseers" at Whitechapel were entertained by a pavement artist's "graphic representations of the murders" (Schmid 2005, 34) while "a local woman did a lively trade selling swordsticks to members of the crowd" (34). This appears very much like an intersection between "dark tourism" (Foley and Lennon 1996; Lennon and Foley 2000; Wilson 2008; Farmaki 2013) and fan tourism (Williams 2017; Geraghty 2018; Zubernis and Larsen 2018). "Dark tourism," now a well-established field of study, refers to the commercial or noncommercial visitation of sites where atrocities and/or tragedies have taken place. The term was coined in 1996 by Lennon and Foley, but variations on the practice seem to be fairly ancient (Hartmann et al. 2018). Murder sites are a classic destination of so-called "dark" tourism, as are prisons.[2] Steenberg describes tourism to the scenes of crimes as an "example of an intersection [of these fandoms] with the kinds of fan practices normally associated with more socially sanctioned forms of celebrity" (2017). Motivations for "dark" tourism are probably as diverse as their tourists, but might include the contemplation of death and suffering, schadenfreude, a desire to empathize with victims, and/or a desire for education in a kinetic, sensory form (Farmaki 2013, 283).

[2] Again I must register my objection to the descriptor "dark" used to mean "negative," but that is the term commonly used in these texts.

Fan tourism, as it sounds, is the practice of visiting sites associated with fans' preferred media properties and/or celebrities. Ripper Tours remain a popular and thoroughly commercialized attraction of Whitechapel up to the present: TripAdvisor boasts a multi-page selection of "Ripper tours." According to Lincoln Geraghty, "media fan tourism is about passing through different tourist spaces and finding meaning in the act of being present, taking photos, and performing as a fan within those spaces" (2018). Fan tourists describe their experience in sensory, spatial terms, such as getting "closer to the story" or making a "connection" (Reijnders 2011, 245). Obviously, the earliest Ripper tourists were not taking photos, but they were performing in a fanlike way, getting "closer to the story" via the enthusiastic contemplation of the celebritized killings and the collection of unofficial merchandise. Geraghty writes that fan tourist sites are both "constructed and natural, subverted and official, consumed and constructed, creative and hierarchical" (2018). Some of these properties apply to the Jack the Ripper case. The yard of 29 Hanley Street, where Chapman was murdered, is the "natural" destination of those wishing to participate experientially in the phenomenon of the day. It is also constructed, opportunistically, as a tourist site one must pay to enter. It is the officially constructed scene of a crime, and the subversively consumed scene of voyeuristic entertainment. It is creative in the sense that onlookers project their fantasies and fears regarding the killer and victim. It is almost a kind of physical enactment of media convergence, where onlookers brought their own fascinations and fantasies to the mystery playing out in the press. Curtis writes that

> the impenetrable mystery of the Ripper's identity and motives created a huge vacuum into which all kinds of cranks or crazies as well as many ordinary, rational people rushed with their ideas and fantasies. (2001, 251)

While the reader might object to the easy demarcation between "cranks and crazies" and "ordinary, rational people" (the serial killer fans and true crime enthusiasts of their day?), notice the spatial metaphor. People physically inserted themselves into the spaces associated with the Ripper, and so into the narrative.

Two other terms frequently associated with fan tourism are "pilgrimage" and "performance" (Williams 2017; Zubernis and Larsen 2018). "Pilgrimage" captures the emotional dimension of the physical movement, the crossing of a boundary between space that is mundane and everyday and space that

is—if not precisely sacred—endowed with special emotional qualities. "Performance" relates to the sorts of actions fans use to inscribe and/or record their presence at special places. Lynn Zubernis and Katherine Larsen remark that

> inscribing one's name at a tourism site is as old as tourism itself. Byron etched his name into a pillar of the temple of Poseidon in Greece and Charles Dickens etched his name on a window at Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon. (2018)

Scholars do not know precisely how onlookers behaved at semi-official Ripper "scenes" like the places of the murder, but we do have multiple reports of Ripper "performances," or "personations," which we can connect to the fannish practice of cosplaying, or dressing up as a favored character. The term "play" in cosplay carries overtones of both play in the sense of pure fun and jollity, and play in the sense of performance and acting: to play a role. Paul Booth (2015, 2016) considers both as aspects of fannish play.

Sophie Duncan argues that "the Ripper murders and their 1888 coverage re-theatricalized not only London, but many provincial towns," both through the many professional plays based on or interpreted through the Ripper story, and through "extra-theatrical, popular performance 'scenarios' by civilian men" (2019, 190). Men in London used costume and performance to imagine themselves into the whole cast of characters: "the plain-clothes detective, the Ripper's female victims, and the Ripper himself" (190). The contemporary verb for such performances was to "personate." Here is a fascinating departure from our modern usage of "*im*personation," implying that in dressing and behaving as these semi-real, semi-imaginary characters, the performer is not so much partaking in a falsehood as *embodying a character into being*, in line with the Butlerian idea of performativity. Recorded detective "personations" include that of a sailmaker of Ipswich who "gave out that he was a detective from Scotland-yard," apparently walked around offering people "undecipherable [*sic*]" messages, promising that "the murderer would call [. . .] and upon being confronted with the written paper it would have a strange effect" (195). Other men engaged in "Ripper-baiting": dressing in female clothing and loitering at likely hours in the appropriate Whitechapel locations. This was one tactic used professionally by police and journalists, but other motives are unknown. In 1889 one Edward Hamblar was arrested for "disorderly conduct and being dressed in female attire," specifically a hat, veil, "dress, two flannel petticoats, and a dress improver" (198). Multiple men of course claimed to be Jack, and/or threatened to "do

for [women of their acquaintance] the same as 'Jack the Ripper' had done for the others [. . .] some night when she little thinks of it." "Do a Jack the Ripper" or "play Jack the Ripper" seem to have become threatening idioms to some extent, recorded in letters and divorce proceedings (199–200). Some men—including perfectly nonviolent ones—utilized costumes and props as a part of their Jack personations. George R. Sims was a journalist, author, and collector of mortuary photographs. Duncan notes that he recollected with relish his experience of going "to the Pavilion Theatre, Whitechapel" late at night, carrying "a long Japanese knife of a murderous character for melodramatic purposes" in a "black bag," continuing,

> I often wonder what would have happened had someone cried out, "That's the Ripper," and my black bag had been opened. [. . .] On the occasion when I carried the black bag and Japanese knife I [. . .] was standing among the people, close to the very spot where one of the worst murders was committed. (201)

Is this cosplay? It sounds like it, with the props carefully selected for the theatrical impression, but the audience for whom fan cosplay is typically performed can only be imagined, lest the player find himself in real-life trouble. Lamerichs argues that "cosplay emphasizes the personal enactment of a narrative [. . .] a form of fan appropriation that transforms, performs, and actualizes an existing story in close connection to the fan's own identity" (2011). It is a liminal experience, incorporating aspects both of the self and the Other, mixing properties of the self with properties of the character one is performing. Ellen Kirkpatrick argues that cosplay "exemplifies a moment" of "embodied translation, during which the fan transfers the character from a limitless fictional landscape to the fan's delimited physical one" (2015). Given the amount of speculation and mystery surrounding Jack the Ripper, the fears and anxieties and contemporary bogeymen he represented (a mad doctor? an evil aristocrat? a foreign Jew?), one can certainly imagine the personations as a sort of delimitation—the endless landscape of possibilities narrowed to the personator's body, brought within his control.

If cosplay involves elements of both the player and the character, here is a first demonstration of how Jack the Ripper was collaboratively invented through a proto-convergence culture. There is also a wealth of textual evidence for this process. The second way I observed the public creation of Jack is through what one might call proto-textual poaching: a vast and rapid uptick in public letter writing for publication on the subject of the killer,

who he was, what his motives were, what sort of character he was—and of course, claims to be him. Initiated from the very first murder, that of Annie Chapman, hundreds of readers likewise "wrote themselves into the Ripper story, and in the process left some clues about their own desires, fantasies, and fears" (Curtis 2001, 239). Curtis coded a sample of 241 readers' letters published across five newspapers, and found that their topics fell into five overlapping categories: "detection, law and order, suspects, moral and social reform, and miscellaneous" (241). Emphasizing that multiaccentuality of serial killing that Schmid observed, many writers took a moralistic posture, reproaching the public fascination with sensation-horror, blaming "journalists, novelists, and theatre managers" for pandering to the "'the foul and seamy side of human nature'" (248). "'We have set up King Horrors,' complained one writer, 'and we must bow down and worship him'" (248). Perhaps most interesting to my purposes are the hundreds of letters claiming to be from the Ripper himself. The missive signed "From Hell" is probably the best-known of these. Of almost equal fame are the "Dear Boss" letter—this is the first in which the writer names himself "Jack the Ripper"—and the "Saucy Jacky" postcard, in which he signs off as the above. There is no evidence that any of these missives were actually from the killer, though a linguistic forensic expert established in 2018 that the letter and the postcard are almost certainly by the same writer (Nini 2018). In any case, both the police and the press were inundated with "Ripper Letters," claiming either to be The Ripper or an associate:

> Written in different hands, most of these manic messages threatened more butcheries to come. Thus the *East London Observer* (Oct. 13) published a letter from "George of the High Rip Gang," boasting that he would now commence cutting up "gilded" women or duchesses in the West End, while his "pal"—"jocular Jack"—continued his work in the East End. As he put it, "Oh, we are masters. No education like a butcher's. No animal like a nice woman—the fat are best." (Curtis 2001, 145)

This might be compared to the fannish practice of online roleplay, a form of digital play in which fans assume the personas of their favorite characters or celebrities to create Twitter accounts, journals, or other roleplaying platforms in their name. Nor was this textual form of "personation" limited to men. In 1888,

> the police actually caught one of the Ripper letter writers, who turned out to be a "good-looking, respectably dressed," twenty-one-year-old seamstress named (appropriately) Maria Coroner, from Bradford. A search of her lodgings yielded copies of several Jack the Ripper letters in her handwriting, addressed to both the Chief Constable and a local newspaper, indicating Jack's intention to "do a little business" in Bradford. (Curtis 2001, 172)

As in some contemporary forms of textual poaching, readers took from the media narrative and wrote themselves into it—for attention, for entertainment, for reasons known only to themselves. Most of them are intensely melodramatic: Clive Bloom describes them as a form of confession narrative heightened to the level of fiction via black humor and the invention of a Cockney, slang-using persona (Bloom 2007, 94–95). When the papers couldn't get Ripper news, they made it. In November 1894, the *Gazette* published "several macabre stories, one of which consisted of a long letter written by 'Jack the Ripper's Pal'" (Curtis 2001, 207). Perhaps most fascinatingly of all, in 1894, the sensationalist newspaper the *Sun*[3] actually managed to publish the first Ripper fanfic. Pitched as a piece of investigative journalism, an anonymous staff reporter known only as "WK" supposedly traced the "real" Ripper to Broadmoor, an asylum for the criminally insane, and promised to extract his final confession, exclusively for the *Sun* (Bloom 2007, 92–93). Of course there is a question of where roleplay becomes fanfic, but this is a real, verifiable historical example of a first-person fictional narrative in which our hero meets a real-life serial killer, a genre that dominates the serial killer fanfic on Wattpad to this day.

Though the bulk of surviving press on Jack the Ripper is naturally British and London focused, journalists in New York also produced a large body of newspaper reports and Ripper-based dime novels. After 1894, I found frequent comparisons with America's own first celebrity murderer, one Herman Webster Mudgett, better known as H. H. Holmes (Schmid 2005, 44). David Schmid writes that "the Holmes case was one of the first high-profile instances of serial murder in America, and the intense media and public interest in Holmes rapidly made him into a star of American popular culture" (49). Schmid documents that for many commentators, the technology-obsessed, entrepreneurial Holmes represented "the dark side of frontier individualism, a man who, by defining progress in violent terms, was willing to use anyone to achieve his goal of self-(re)generation" (51).

[3] Not to be confused with the contemporary British tabloid *The Sun*.

Mark Seltzer explores the complex collision of technology and primitive forces at work at the scene of the Chicago 1893 Columbian Exposition, a short distance away from which Holmes had constructed the hotel where he killed an unknown number of people via a network of traps, trapdoors, gas chambers, and other fatal technologies—at least, according to the press (2013, 237–50). The actual facts of the Holmes case are difficult to verify, and the killer took them to his death. "The technophilic city of light and life and the tech-noir factory of death" (237) were a readymade press phenomenon, inciting an intense and public conversation over American identity, modernism, technology, individualism, and self-invention.

Thus we can understand how, despite the fact that Holmes was caught and had a verifiable identity, both he and the Ripper served as cultural constructs embodying the *fin de siècle* fears and fantasies of their respective cultures. The response to Holmes "combined horror with fascination, even admiration" (Schmid 2005, 53). Holmes was intensely self-conscious of his own celebrity, as Schmid documents. In his final confession, he claimed to have killed a total of twenty-seven people both in the Chicago hotel and elsewhere. Many doubted this, both because he was "being paid a handsome sum by a newspaper for this confession and because they preferred to let their imaginations run riot and attribute hundreds of murders to Holmes, turning him into the devil incarnate" (54). Holmes participated in the iconography of monstrosity that began to be attributed to him, claiming in his prison writings that his face and features were literally changing to resemble Satan. He published his own account of his crimes, "to compete with the flurry of books that appeared about him" (55). He sold his confession for thousands of dollars. What exactly he planned to do with those dollars is a mystery, given that he was already sentenced to execution, but neatly demonstrates how "Holmes was inextricably both murderer and businessman" (Schmid 2005, 57) to the last, an *American Psycho* predecessor for the turn of the century. The American answer to the London waxworks were dime museums, which rapidly adapted to advertise "artifacts and photographs of Holmes, his victims, and his crime scenes [. . .] a large pile of human bones, a human skull, and a miniature replica of the Castle in Chicago" (Boswell and Thompson 1955, 46). Though early attempts to convert the so-called "murder castle" into an actual tourist attraction were thwarted, its excavation attracted the very same kind of fannish tourism that the Ripper's crime scene did. Schmid quotes a witness report from the *Chicago Daily News* in 1895:

> "Cyclists, evidently away on a day's outing, dismounted and left their steeds in the alley back of the castle while they fought with the street gamins for advantageous loopholes in the wooden sidewalk, through which they could peep at the men digging in the soft mud of the cellar. By 9 o'clock fully 100 men, women and children were lying flat on the sidewalks above the cellar peering in through every conceivable crack or knothole." (Schmid 2005, 58)

Once again, it would be fruitless to speculate on the exact motives of such onlookers. But observe the descriptions of physical actions: digging, peeping, peering. There seems to be a trajectory of the physical body towards the "heart" of the story, a movement to insert the self into the narrative, to "get closer to the story" as Reijnders's participants described (2011, 245).

We have already set the groundwork for many insights into fannish behavior around serial killers that predate fan studies. In the twentieth century, though, there is arguably a shift in the popular press portrayal of its serial killer celebrities. Jack's and Holmes's celebrity was based in monstrosity and sensation-horror. According to Vronksy, the imagery of monstrosity and horror yields in the second half of the twentieth century to a "new postmodern serial killer role model" (2004, 6), specifically associated with Ted Bundy. Fox and Levin write that the "human monster" that was once so common in media images of serial killer imagery had yielded to a "more modern image [that] describes these killers as unusually handsome and charming" (2005, 107; see also Wiest 2011, 39). However, the process is not neat or strictly chronological. As I will observe when I come to discuss Jeffrey Dahmer, the monster discourse did not die out, nor has it. Discourse, after all, is always in struggle and flux. It would be more accurate to state that the later twentieth century produced a new *option* for constructing serial killers: the "psychopathic or sociopathic personality" (Murley 2008, 33). The psychopathic sex symbol came to full fruition and public attention around the trial of Bundy, one of the most popular serial killers with online fandoms today. Both Bundy and Richard Ramirez had "fans who flock[ed] to courtrooms during trials and prison visitation rooms after convictions, and [. . .] receive[d] a substantial number of letters, visitors, and even marriage proposals" (Wiest 2016, 331). They have been the subjects of countless interviews, documentaries, foreign and domestic publications, and "their autographs, photographs, and even hair clippings draw large sums at auction" (331–32). Before I turn to examine the Bundy case in more detail, I

must make a brief side-foray to introduce this topic of buying and collecting such "murderabilia" from twentieth and twenty-first century serial killers.

The collection of memorabilia—or murderabilia, as it is here called—relates of course to the fannish practice of collecting artifacts, both official and unofficial, associated with favored texts. As the practice of collecting murderabilia is conducted primarily online, I will discuss it properly in the chapter on cultural capital, through which lens it is best viewed. But this practice has a long pre-digital history. Ruth Penfold-Mounce compares it to a practice common in the 1700s, wherein people kept the fingerbones of executed criminals as a charm against running out of money (in Damon and Fiennes 2019, episode 6). Penfold-Mounce also relates cases from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries wherein doctors performing autopsies kept body parts from convicted criminals. While the contemporary collection of body parts, writings, and objects connected to serial killers is obviously not quite the same, Poppy Damon and Alice Fiennes argue that people retain a kind of magical thinking around these artifacts. Many of us hold an implicit belief that abstract properties, be they evil, charisma, specialness, or something else, can be transmuted through the body part or object that has touched the body of a serial killer. This is an example of a phenomenon known as the "law of contagion," which psychologist Paul Rosen summarizes as "once in contact, always in contact" (Damon and Fiennes 2019, episode 1). The murderabilia collectors that Damon and Fiennes interview value the authenticity of their products, and dealers go to great lengths to certify that their items for sale are real. There is, naturally, a booming market in counterfeit murderabilia. Sometimes, interviewees speak of the killers whose objects they possess with absolute awe: Eric Holler, a significant figure in the establishment of the murderabilia industry who I will revisit in chapter 4, describes the feeling of receiving a letter from "Richard fucking Ramirez" in "starstruck" terms, reflecting on his "groupies" and describing him as a "fucking legend" (episode 1). The UK and several US states have laws in place to prevent criminals from profiting directly from their crimes, but this has not always been the case. John Wayne Gacy, for example, successfully sold paintings from his prison cell until 1985. His artwork continues to be auctioned. In any case, there are always workarounds: Holler conducts many of his transactions with imprisoned serial killers via an understanding that should they post him saleable murderabilia, he will "take care" of them financially in the form of "gift[s]" (episode 1).

The six episodes of Damon and Fiennes's *Murderabilia* podcast (2019) throw up a lot of themes that murderabilia and other fan memorabilia collectors have in common. Dorus Hoebink, Stijn Reijnders, and Abby Waysdorf write that "fandom is about more than reading and writing; it is also about touching, smelling, controlling, and collecting the objects of fandom" (2014). Cornel Sandvoss argues that "fans give their consumption an inherently private and personal nature that removes their object of consumption from the logic of capitalist exchange" (2005, 116). For murderabilia collectors and fans alike, owning a material and physical link to the object of their fascination allows the insertion of the self into a larger narrative, allows the fan to mold an experience of that narrative via manipulation of the collection, and allows one to build and experience one's identity through it (Hoebink, Reijnders, and Waysdorf 2014). Damon and Fiennes discuss how private murderabilia collections differ or compare to museum collections. Predictably, the owner of the Hastings "True Crime Museum" argues for a didactic purpose to his public display, but his murderabilia collection is equally woven into his local and personal history, given that he received the beginnings of his collection through family history and contact with local murderers (Damon and Fiennes 2019, episode 3). The podcast hosts find themselves affected by the desire to touch, experience, and somehow understand the "authentic" experience of holding and touching real, material murderabilia, and are disappointed to discover that the letter from executed murderer Sean Sellers which they purchase online is in fact a photocopy. Geraghty (2014) and Hoebink, Reijnders, and Waysdorf (2014) all note that fan collection of memorabilia is an overlooked aspect of fan studies, which Geraghty attributes to "its basis in consumption rather than production" (2014, 2). Consumption is devalued in academic discourse. Fascinatingly, Jack Denham (2016) has written that once the serial killer moves from consumer (of people) to object of consumption (via their body), moral condemnation tends to transfer from the object of consumption—which is now the killer—to the ever-hungry consumer, the buyer, the collector, the hoarder. Again, I will explore this in chapter 4, in a discussion of contemporary murderabilia collection via the internet. I will be concerned with the authenticity of the material object, specifically its relationship to subcultural capital, and how this connects to the posited authenticity of the (wo)man outside the law. I will also be attentive to the objects' investment with meaning by the consuming collector. Murderabilia auction sites, including Holler's Serial Killer Inc, will be an important focus for this study.

For now, I must continue to set the groundwork via an examination of the pre-digital history of serial killer fandom. The celebrity psychopath of the twentieth century was created through the media surrounding Ted Bundy in particular. The contemporary media made much of the dichotomy between Bundy's civilized persona and the brutal facts of his crimes. AP News described him as a "charming killer" who "seems one of us" (Berlinger 2019a, episode 1). Bundy's outrageous, self-orchestrated trial, the first to be broadcast live on national television, has recently gained new popularity and attention via its heavy inclusion in writer-director Joe Berlinger's Netflix documentary series *Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes* (Berlinger 2019a). Berlinger made this documentary simultaneously with the Zac Efron vehicle *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile* (2019b), a biopic that essentially cuts re-enactments of the court scenes and historical footage with depictions of Bundy's private life based on an autobiographical book by his then-girlfriend Elizabeth Kloepfer. The biopic's title is taken from the judge's closing statements to Bundy, describing his crimes. In the next breath, the judge expressed regret at the path Bundy chose in life, told him he would have made a good lawyer, and admonished, "Take care of yourself. I don't have any animosity to[ward] you, I want you to know that" (2019a, episode 4; Yes, this really happened). Bundy seems to have had a similar effect on many people around him, and the *Bundy Tapes* recreates and reinforces the celebrity he enjoyed at the time of his trial. Reflecting on his eventual success in getting Bundy to talk (albeit in third-person) about his crimes, journalist Stephen Michaud admits, "I was there to tell his story" (Berlinger 2019a, episode 1). And the *Bundy Tapes* are *his* story, giving Bundy plenty of space to pontificate on the nature of history and fiction, recounting the press fascination, interviewing former associates discussing his chameleon-like ability to change his appearance. Even at his execution, investigative journalist Hugh Grant Aynesworth maintained that Bundy was "entertaining" with "a good sense of humour" despite being "a very devious, mean son of a gun" (episode 4). Attorneys on both sides of the case marvel at his audaciousness, his sheer force of character. This serves the conservative function of eliding the mistakes made by law enforcement in apprehending him. He was, after all, *just so special*. Some of the material I present in chapter 5 will parody this conservative function of crime texts.

Bundy, of course, did have multiple female fans attend his trial, who claimed to be "fascinated" by him, to the point of adopting the seventies fashions his victims favored. These included hoop earrings and shoulder-

length brown hair with a center parting. Unlike the Ripper-baiters, these onlookers weren't attempting to assist law enforcement. Some believed him guilty, others did not (including his new girlfriend, Carol Boone, to whom he somehow managed to propose mid-trial). Bundy's trial set the template for the new type of celebrity criminal, and the press continued to construct him as a celebrity after his conviction. Having been re-apprehended after a prison break (his second), he was filmed returning to prison surrounded by reporters with flashing cameras, smirking conspiratorially at his public. Bundy's extreme star-power was most apparent at his execution by electric chair, one of the first major news stories to use satellite trucks for reporting. The execution was celebrated across America. Students from Florida State University—one of the institutions from which Bundy selected his victims—hung an enormous banner outside a fraternity accommodation reading "Watch Ted Fry/See Ted Die!" (see figure 1).

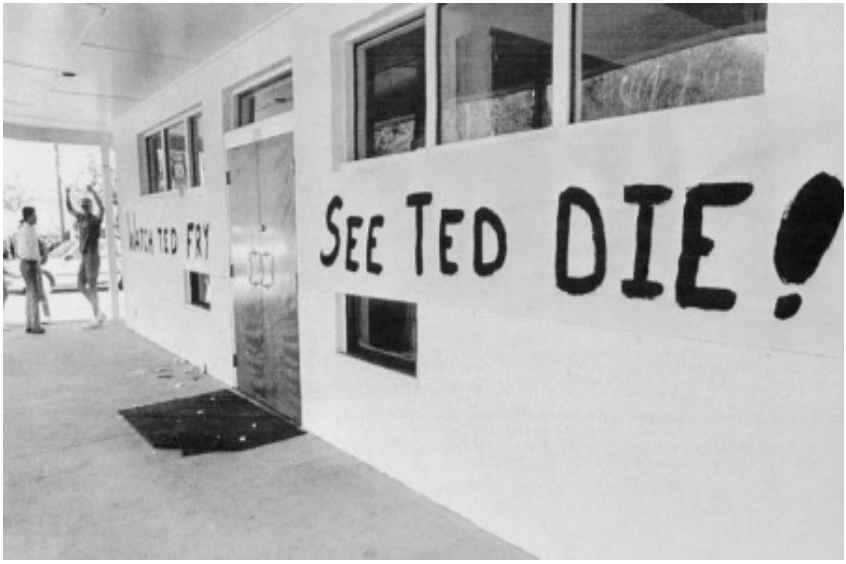

Figure 1. Celebratory banner at Florida State University (Public Domain image by Donn Dughi).

At the prison itself, a huge crowd had gathered with the news vans, and the atmosphere was carnivalesque. Onlookers drank, sang, cheered, and held up homemade signs reading "Hey Ted, this buzz is for you," "Burn Bundy Burn," and similar slogans (Berlinger 2019a, episode 4). Much of the crowd

was comprised of Florida State students, who would have been, as Michaud observed, no more than ten at the time the crimes took place. Michaud considered the event an "excuse to get drunk and whoop it up" (Berlinger 2019a, episode 4). Folklorist Rachelle Saltzman reported:

> Visual representations and mock enactments of Bundy's execution while the event was occurring accompanied the word play [on the signs]. On the back of one truck was a life-size inflatable doll strapped into a chair and wearing a black ski mask topped by a chrome hubcap and a pair of antennae (Lyons and Trei 1989, 7a). Vendors hawked electric chair pins, and one spectator repeatedly staged a hanging with a doll while another carried a coffin. Some spectators wore imitation execution hoods (Davis 1989, 8a). Still others "sported aluminum-foil imitations of the electrode cap that was soon to be attached to Bundy's head to send the fatal surge of electricity to his brain" (Lyons and Trei 1989, 1a). (Saltzman 1995, 108)

Here is another form of cosplay that can be understood as the insertion of the self into a prominent public narrative. There is no discernible statement or meaning to the costumes: They are, as Joel Gn (2011) contends cosplay can be, pure spectacle. Gn likens this kind of cosplay to

> Baudrillard's (1994) conception of simulation or simulacra, whereby objects are simply copies without an original referent. This means that through the consumptive act in cosplay, the image becomes a disembodied sign that acquires its own material force (1994, 6). (2011, 587)

I will return to this idea of signs without referents in chapter 5. Moreover, the folkloric analysis aligns with an idea that the folklorists and anthropologists have put forth—the idea of the execution as Bakhtinian carnivalesque space. In this delimited space, licensed by authorities as set aside from ordinary life, social norms are suspended. Meaning, logic, rationality, and logos are discarded. Spectacle reigns. Saltzman found the atmosphere "festive [. . .] reminiscent of rowdy eighteenth- and nineteenth-century public hangings" (102). Once the execution was announced, fireworks were released (107). When the hearse removed Bundy's body, the crowd cheered and ran after it, as though for a celebrity limousine. It was even white (Berlinger 2019a, episode 4).

Fan conventions, gatherings, and spaces are likewise analyzed in carnivalesque terms and have been since Jenkins (1992; cf. Freund 2006; Booth 2016). Lynn Zubernis and Katherine Larsen argue that

> realworld fan spaces function both as liminal spaces and as sites of performance, play, veneration, and community norms [. . .] The circumscribed space of conventions has been described as a sort of "magic circle," within which fans all understand and share the event's parameters and norms (Huizinga 1955). (Zubernis and Larsen 2018)

Fan convention space particularly is described as a transitional space of temporary transgression, one that "encouraged open and creative expression within that space, even of behavior and ideas which would be censured in the broader culture" (Zubernis and Larsen 2018). Most people would not normally find it acceptable to admit they are happy to see a man die, especially if they work in law enforcement. Yet Lyons and Trei quote police offer Bob Duha at the execution as observing, "I went to this [execution] thinking it would be a solemn occasion, [. . .] but everybody's making this into a tailgate party and I'm a party animal" (1989, 7a). The idea of a magic circle will return in chapter 5, when I consider fandom as play.

Bundy's was the first case in which the mainstream media professed their consternation with serial killer "groupies," a term obviously borrowed from moral panics over young women's engagement with music. The term was revived for the trial of Richard "The Night Stalker" Ramirez in 1989–90. Ramirez murdered thirteen people across the Los Angeles area from 1984 to 1985, breaking into their homes apparently at random, and was also convicted of multiple rapes and molestations. A 1990 report for KRON 4 news interviewed several women who attended the sentencing. The featured participants are dressed in a somewhat gothic style, preferring dark clothes and sunglasses, perhaps in alignment with Ramirez's professed Satanism. "*They* are the women in black," intones reporter Chuck Coppola, "admirers of Richard Ramirez's" (KRON 4 2014 [1990]). Some defend Ramirez's character and claim he has been nice to them; others profess simple fascination with the audaciousness of his crimes and the length of time he evaded capture. Interestingly, the report seems to cast the women as the new criminals: "From Los Angeles to San Francisco, *they* stalk Ramirez" The stress is always on "they"—the anomaly, the Bad Other. *We* are legitimately, indeed professionally, fascinated by Ramirez; *they* are the freaks who want to sleep with him. I return here to Jack Denham's (2016) argument, that the "consuming fan"

takes on the monstrousness of the consuming serial killer, who becomes a passive object. (Though Ramirez was obviously still alive at the time of this report, he is pictured in handcuffs as the fans "stalking" him are described; effectively, he is contained and neutralized). The press also made much of two women who were having an apparent feud over Ramirez's affections, with the *Current Affair* program dubbing him the "Death Row Romeo" (The Uncombed One 2017 [1990]). In the Netflix documentary series *Night Stalker: The Hunt for a Serial Killer,* reporter Tony Valdez remarked, "In all my years of covering trials in Los Angeles, I never saw a defendant with more sex appeal than Richard Ramirez. [. . .] [He had an] animalistic magnetism, [a] charisma women found attractive" (Russell and Carroll 2021, episode 4). *The Los Angeles Times* reported on a woman who attended his trial in a "skin-tight black spandex jumpsuit" and "smiled and waved" at the murderer (Timnick and Lee 1989). Many of the participants in the *Night Stalker* docuseries who are positioned as normal, rational, and sane attest to Ramirez's charisma and qualities of "specialness." "I remember when he walked through the door," states a crime scene technician: "He was tall and slender, he had these dark eyes" (Russell and Carroll 2021, episode 4). Her response when he looked directly at her was to think, "wow," she recalls—before going on to elaborate on her perception of "evil" in him. Police officer Gil Carrillo attests to a sensation of fear and awe at having Ramirez confined in an interview room: "If this guy starts to float around this room I'm outta here [. . .] [I thought] this guy's gonna levitate" (episode 4).

Ramirez also had explicit male admirers, though of course they are never called groupies. I have already mentioned murderabilia collector Erik Holler, who hailed Ramirez as a rockstar and considered Ramirez's in-court declaration of "Hail Satan" to be "fucking awesome" (Damon and Fiennes 2019, episode 1). Ramirez also had a penchant for drawing pentagrams on his palms: In the *Night Stalke*r documentary series, a trial witness recalls finding herself waiting outside the courtroom next to a boy with a pentagram tattoo. She refers to him as "somebody who looked up to" Ramirez, rather than a groupie (episode 4). The *Night Stalker* documentary likewise stresses Ramirez's charisma, introducing him via voiceover recordings that are initially unidentified—except that they are captioned in purple font, matching the font of the title screen, hinting towards their origin—and their uniqueness. They aren't unique—Ramirez's justifications and explanations are the standard self-aggrandizing melodrama, casting himself as the simple expression of human evil, sometimes "in alliance with the evil that is inherent

in human nature" (episode 1), or at other times above all dull plebian society, "beyond good and evil" (episode 4), and so on and so on, the authentic man outside the law. Again. Ramirez's discussion of Satan and Satanism as his motivation and as a "stabilizing force" in his life provides the audio for real crime scene photography (episode 2), thus imposing his narrative and interpretation over that of the victims and their families. *Night Stalker* does make space for the victims—some of his survivors give their account of events, as do the families of those he murdered—but Ramirez, whose identity is not fully revealed until the final episode of the docuseries, remains the focus, the mystery and the star. Ramirez was actually apprehended by a group of citizens who saw him recognize his own photograph in the newspaper and attempt to flee. As he was transported to prison, a huge crowd gathered, screaming, cheering, and jumping up and down—supposedly for the police, though the arresting officer admits that the woman who lifted her shirt to show her breasts did so specifically for Ramirez (episode 4). Compare the crowds that gathered around Bundy's execution—supposedly for the victory of law. In sum, Bundy and Ramirez both attracted quite the range of fanlike engagement—but it is female behavior specifically that is pathologized. Reporter Laurel Erikson in *Night Stalker* describes a "clown car of these women" when discussing Ramirez's admirers, while a local resident declares them "the dumbest bitches ever" (episode 4). Compare the pathologization of "fangirls" as opposed to any other kind of fan.

Bundy and Ramirez are two of the most popular serial killers with present-day fans online, and both attracted high degrees of contemporary fanlike behavior. When I turn to Jeffrey Dahmer—almost if not equally popular in present-day online fandom—the picture is quite different. As Schmid demonstrated convincingly, "Dahmer's fame was qualitatively different from Bundy's" (2005, 220). So much contemporary media on Bundy had a tone of near admiration to it—as did the judge who sentenced him. Bundy's excellence at serial killing was a key point of discussion: A veritable expert at murder, detectives, journalists, and criminologists consulted with him extensively after his apprehension on the motives and patterns of other serial killers for the insight he'd be able to provide. Granted, this was partly an appeal to his narcissism designed to derive a full confession—Bundy initially spoke about his crimes entirely in the third person, opining like a theatrical professor on the sort of person who would have done such things—but it solidified his cultural status as an expert, professional, and above all, accomplished character. Jeffrey Dahmer was afforded no such

authority. His tragic, monstrous queerness, combined with his cannibalistic tendences (exaggerated, but true) precluded this. Dahmer was the cultural monster Bundy wasn't. Newspapers were obsessed with the fact that he had consumed human flesh—and apparently compared the taste to "filet mignon" (Tithecott 1995, 6). The contemporary term for Dahmer's crimes was "homosexual overkill"—as opposed, one contemporary journalist commented satirically, to "'good old heterosexuals' [who] 'kill people just the right amount'" (122).

Dahmer had few contemporary fans in the traditional sense. He was certainly a celebrity. At his trial, the sisters of two of his victims protested that, while Dahmer's face was everywhere, their brothers were forgotten (Tithecott 1995, 167–68). But he did not have many fans who behaved in the identifiably fannish ways I have documented above, so far as I have been able to ascertain. Phyllis Chesler does report a "growing number of women supporters" at his trial, some of whom "reportedly formed a Jeffrey Dahmer fan club" (1993, 963), but they never seemed to receive the publicity that Bundy's and Ramirez's fans did. In any case, it can be argued that if Dahmer had fans, they were far fewer, less visible, and less vocal than the fans of Bundy and Ramirez. He had admirers, typically homophobes: "Sales were brisk for a poster issued by the Oregon Citizen's Alliance that read 'Free Jeffrey Dahmer: All he did was kill homosexuals'" (Tithecott 1995, 10). An organizer for the Lesbian Alliance of Metro Milwaukee reported to Martha A. Schmidt that "we get a lot of phone calls here. People saying, 'I think Jeffrey Dahmer is a wonderful person. He did the right thing. Get rid of those queers'" (Schmidt 1994, 88). A lesbian social worker recalled hearing people on the street call Dahmer a hero. In the sphere of performativity and roleplay, the president of the Gay/Lesbian International News Network received the following answering machine message: "Hello, this is Jeffrey Dahmer. I want your head in my refrigerator. Call me" (88). This admiration is more about hatred of queer people than affection for or interest in Dahmer (who was, of course, queer). So far as Dahmer is depicted now, portrayals tend toward pity and interest—not empathetic, but to a degree, sympathetic, thus playing into the trope of the tragic queer and queer death. The *Biography* episode "Jeffrey Dahmer: The Monster Within" (Harris 1996) depicts its subject as a tragic Jekyll, struggling futilely to contain his inner Hyde, finding soon after "his first murder" that "only alcohol erased the horror and violence" in his mind. At his arrest he is described as "whining . . . like a baby crying noise about him." More grotesque than guilty, as the arresting detective reports,

Dahmer cried, "went into a rage," and appealed to be allowed to kill himself. The prison chaplain describes him as "like a little boy." His construction could not be further from the charismatic ringmaster of the *Bundy Tapes*, yet even Dahmer seemed to be aware of the immediate celebritization that was about to overtake his trial, telling the detective: "When I tell you what I'm gonna tell you, you're gonna be famous." But Dahmer—the tragic, monstrous queer killer/victim—certainly has fans now. He is one of the most popular serial killers on the internet. Thus the contemporary fandom of this queer killer forms an important point of contrast to Bundy and Ramirez.

Another queer serial killer who appears to have *gained* a fandom in the contemporary sense is Aileen Wuornos. Wuornos was a lesbian sex worker who was systematically abused more or less from birth, and went on to kill seven male clients between 1989 and 1990. Though she initially testified that each time she had been in fear for her life, that each man had tried to rape her, her story changed a great deal, sometimes claiming to have killed in cold blood, "real nasty" (in Schmid 2005, 240). Wuornos killed in a way that is unusual for women: She killed strangers, outdoors, with a gun (Rogers 2010, 56). In short, she killed like a man. Kyra Pearson argues that the media masculinized Wuornos in order to make her intelligible:

> Reporters introduced the public to its "first female serial killer" through biographical information. While characterizations of her as an anomalous female killer classified her as a murderer who should not, by definition, have existed, biographies about her life preceding the murders suggested that her killing was inevitable. Though contradictory, these claims mutually reinforced one another by drawing upon criminality as a gendered category. The logic was: she was anomalous because she killed like male serial killers do, and her killing was inevitable because Wuornos's upbringing had predisposed her to a life of crime, invoking criminality as a category that seemingly confirms masculinity. (2007, 265)

Unlike Dahmer, Wuornos did have public, vocal defenders at and shortly after her apprehension. These were mostly feminists, who maintained her "right to self-defense" (Chesler 1993), highlighted her history of trauma and abuse, and pointed to the discrepancies between her trial and the trials of Bundy and indeed of Dahmer. Dahmer was at least "able to command a private lawyer" and had the support of his family in court (963). Wuornos had no such resources. Bundy was offered a plea bargain; Wuornos was not (963). Several lawyers offered to defend Bundy pro bono. Wuornos's public

defender was more interested in negotiating a film deal than defending his client. Some of her contemporary defenders sound like admirers: Phyllis Chesler refers to Wuornos's acts as "Everywoman's most forbidden fantasy and Everyman's worst nightmare" (934). Feminists like Chesler are concerned primarily to situate Wuornos within the context of systematic abuse that the judicial system ignored, and in doing so, they sometimes posit her actions as justified: "Was a quarter-million johns all Wuornos could take before she cracked, or, dare I say it, experienced a momentary flight into sanity?" (958). This reads like a radical feminist take on Trilling's observations of insanity-as-authenticity, or so-called insanity as the natural response to a society that is itself completely insane (1972). For Chesler, society's treatment of women—particularly poor women, sex workers, and lesbians—is insane.

Wuornos remains at some level another tragic queer: Nick Broomfield's pair of documentaries *The Selling of a Serial Killer* (1992) and *Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer* (2003) focus on her exploitation before and after her crimes. His work makes it clear that every single person around Wuornos, from her lawyers to her born-again Christian adopted mother, was intent on profiting off of her. Indeed, Broomfield has been accused of continuing this exploitation (see Schilt 2000), regardless of his sympathy for Wuornos; he is still a comparatively wealthy, comparatively powerful man gaining money and status from her life story. That said, Wuornos did not perform like a tragic queer. Dahmer was contrite and miserable in court, apologizing to his victims' families and professing that if he could give up his own life to bring them back, he would. After her sentencing, Wuornos admonished the court, "I'll be up in heaven while y'all rotting in hell" and told the jury, "May your wife and kids get raped. Right in the ass" (in Broomfield 1992). Shortly before her execution, she appears in Broomfield's documentaries to have become completely out of touch with reality, claiming that organization (the prison system? the judiciary?) is manipulating her brain through technology inside her cell, and moreover, that the police deliberately made her into a serial killer, and were surveilling her before she ever killed. She then compares herself to Jesus and informs the public that we are all about to be "nuked" (2003). There is absolutely a pathos here, but Wuornos remains an elusive and "difficult" figure who evades categorization:

> She is more than just victim, and more than predator.
> She doesn't fit comfortably into either the "serial" or "spree" murder categories.
> She is and isn't a lesbian. She is not the media's monster,

> and is also a little too broken to be the feminist vigilante we need . . .
> She is, absolutely, an outlaw. (Gottlieb in Robinson 2014, 142)

Though sensitive to the claims of exploitation that have been made around Broomfield's work, Christine Rogers (2010) appreciates it for breaking Wuornos out of the typical modes of narration used for violent women: victims, mad, or bad. Sometimes Wuornos seems mad—sometimes she is rational. Sometimes she seems vicious, vindictive—at other times she is professing her love and thanks for the documentary maker. Sometimes she is a victim. Sometimes she is wishing for the jury's children to be anally raped. Indeed, the Charlize Theron biopic *Monster* (Jenkins 2003) has been rightfully criticized for oversimplifying Wuornos, portraying her as reluctant prostitute who is a "fool for love," pushed back again and again to a life of crime by her nubile young (fictional) lover (Rogers 2010, 58). Rogers wrote that Wuornos inspired a special public hatred, in contrast to the near-admiration male serial killers seem to elicit. This is no longer the case. For as Murley acknowledges, the internet has also opened up the consideration and reaction to crime to a much more diverse range of voices than have dominated the official professional genres (2008, 133–49). For example, in 2019, the extremely popular hip-hop artist Cardi B used a promotional photograph inspired by a famous picture of Wuornos, in which Wuornos holds up her own handcuff chain to her neck. Cardi B, a former sex worker who has stated that she stripped to escape domestic violence, tweeted the photograph of herself imitating the pose as part of a promotional drive (Barret-Ibarria 2019). Fannish response was immediate: "Yea props to Aileen Wuornos!!" one fan replied. Fandom for the rapper and fandom for the serial killer with whom she is identifying collide. "This is so political," tweeted Black lesbian activist Dani Love: "I actually strongly support this. I respect it. I'm actually mind blown by this" (in Barrett-Ibarria 2019). Online clothing shop proprietor and designer Eric Lee created a "t-shirt juxtaposing that iconic image of Wuornos in handcuffs with Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign slogan 'I'm With Her.'" It remains one of his most popular designs. Lee states:

> I was fed up with the phony agendas of neo-liberal politics. [. . .] Career politicians that pretend to give a shit about poor people while supporting legislation that kills them. I wanted to say something about it and happened to be reading a lot about Aileen Wuornos at the time. She was the definition of disenfranchised. (in Barrett-Ibaria 2019)

Drag performer Willam Belli created a parody song named "Aileen" to the tune of Dolly Parton's "Jolene," which contains the lines "She hated men just like I do / But she had the balls to follow though" (Belli 2018). Fandom of Aileen Wuornos, then, seems to be qualitatively different from the other kinds of fandom so far encountered, and the findings will bear this out. It is more like fandom of an idea than a person—the idea that structural violence against women and girls deserves to be met with violence, and if a few johns have to die for that, so be it. This is certainly less supportive of conservative and patriarchal ideologies than the traditional "special mysterious genius psychopath finally caught by dogged investigators" myth that texts around Bundy and to a lesser extent Ramirez tend to uphold—but then, the source texts on Wuornos, like the Broomfield documentaries, are distinctly less conservative than the *Bundy Tapes*.

I have now established a range of fannish behavior around nineteenth and twentieth century serial killers, existing before scholars began to consider fandom as community or fandom in digital space. I have observed solid evidence of popular imaginative engagement with serial killer media as a form of proto-convergence, of textual and performative play, of the insertion of the self into public narratives and constructions of these killers. I noted especially the pathologizing of female fannish behavior, as opposed to more professionalized and legitimized forms of male "interest." Finally, I observed that famous queer and female serial killers Dahmer and Wuornos did not attract the sort of fannish behavior that Bundy and Ramirez did, but have in recent years attracted fanbases on the internet. Next, in chapter 2, I begin the systematic application of fan studies lenses to online serial killer fandom, starting with the work of Henry Jenkins.