Creative Consumption: An Exploration of Food Based Fan Practice

Undergraduate Research Thesis

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by Marisa Wieneke

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Project Advisor: Professor Merrill Kaplan, Departments of English and Germanic Languages and Literatures

Introduction

Planet Earth has been destroyed and aboard the starship *Heart of Gold* Arthur Dent wants a cup of tea. "He had found a Nutri-Matic machine which had provided him with a plastic cup filled with a liquid that was almost, but not quite, entirely unlike tea."(Adams [1979] 2005, 83) Frustrated with the results, Arthur attempts to communicate to the machine a beverage that, with the destruction of the Earth, has become a complete impossibility. "[Arthur Dent] told the Nutri-Matic about India, he told it about China, he told it about Ceylon. He told it about leaves drying in the sun. He told it about silver teapots. He told it about summer afternoons on the lawn. He told it about putting in the milk before the tea so it wouldn't get scalded" (Adams [1980] 2005, 155). Upon receiving all of this information the ship's computer shuts down all other functions in an attempt to synthesize a product out of ingredients that no longer exist. The lack of computer response leads to some close calls for the crew of the ship which ultimately propels the plot forward in Douglas Adams five book trilogy *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. The ship's computer is eventually able to synthesize an excellent cup of tea for the beleaguered Mr. Dent and he is able to connect to the taste of his home world even though it ceases to be extant. But what about the rest of us who want to taste the impossible but do not have an incredibly powerful space ship with food replicating capacities?

The problems that Arthur Dent and the Nutri-Matic confront are the same problems that confront fans who want to create foods from media universes where the plants and cultures depicted therein have never even had the benefit of existing in our reality. Just as Arthur Dent must explain the history of tea to the computer so too must fans reverse engineer the information they receive surrounding the food on screen in order to create a result that will ultimately be

"almost, but not quite, entirely unlike" the imagined original. This inability to produce the 'actual' product does not deter fans from using food as a way of enacting their personal fandom and generating meaning through connecting a beloved media world to their experiences in reality. This thesis is an attempt to discover how fans translate foods from the imagination onto their dinner table without access to food replicators or super computers.

  With this project's focus on fans it is useful to define who exactly I am referring to when I say fan. Typically the word fan refers to an individual and fandom refers to a collective of individuals who are fans of the same thing. Defining the fan is a subject that has plagued fan studies since its inception because fan activity encompasses a spectrum of often contradictory activities. In *Textual Poachers*, a seminal academic work on fandom, Henry Jenkins writes that the subculture of fandom "cuts across traditional geographic and generational boundaries and is defined through its particular styles of consumption and forms of cultural preference"(Jenkins, 1). Fans are perhaps most recognizable through their affective relationship to an object, an object that can be anything from sports to boy-bands to science-fiction television shows, and beyond. This project is focused on the activities of media fandoms, or groups of individuals whose objects of fandom tend to be television shows and films. According to Mark Duffet in *Understanding Fandom* this fandom is "the recognition of a positive, personal, relatively deep, emotional connection with a mediated element of popular culture" and it is " socially enacted through different sets of gender relationships, different styles of behavior and types of feeling" (2013, 2-3). The primary practice of media fans is simply consuming the text (Duffet 2013, 166). The consumption of the text is filtered through the fan's own experience which allows the fan to connect emotionally with the text and generate meaning. The experience of the person and the passionate identification with a text create what Duffet describes as "personal fandom"(2013,

24). This personal fandom can be enacted in innumerable ways from particular viewing habits to writing fan fiction or producing art works. Fans are ultimately interpreters of texts.

The particular fan practice with which I will engage in this paper is the act of interpreting food from a particular media universe and then using this interpretation to recreate the dish in reality. The original media text is consumed by the fan. The fan's enjoyment of this text then spurs them to create works based on the show, and in this case these creations are also consumed in a very literal sense. Instead of participating through other fan activities such as writing fan fiction these fans are making foods from their favorite universes. This project at its most broad hopes to be applicable to all kinds of fan food consumption, however it is primarily focused on those foods that can only truly exist in the imagination because the ingredients come from imaginary places.

My focus on impossible food was a choice that was made in order to make data management possible as there are hundreds of fandoms filled with fans who are interested in making food from different media universes. Food made by fans can take many forms ranging from a sculpted cake to a cup of tea. Fantasy universes such as those found in the heterocosms[1] of Harry Potter, The Lord of the Rings or George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire, have foods that are not part of our reality, however, these stories are clearly recalling a time and place that the majority of their audience will recognize as similar to a time and place of reality i.e. the Medieval Latin West or modern day England. As a result the food found in these texts is perceived by fans as belonging to a specific culinary tradition. In the case of all three previously mentioned heterocosms the food that is made by fans is clearly influenced by an interpretation of traditional English food. Focusing on imaginary foods not only reduces the amount of

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1. "a heterocosm, literally an "other world" or cosmos, complete, of course, with the stuff of story"(Hutcheon 2013, 14)

overwhelming data but it also serves to more clearly highlight the fan's understanding of the dish because the food is not actively proclaimed to be part of a certain earthly heritage. In the case of truly imagined foods the original exists entirely in the mind and so the interpretation of the original is very much subject to the imagination of the fan creating the adaptation. When the ingredients are impossible the choices for ingredient substitution become much more dependent on other factors such as the context of production and how the individual fan imagines the original.

The exploration of other worldly fare will primarily take place through a case study of the dish "gagh", from *Star Trek*. The primary purpose of using examples from one dish is, again, a decision I made in the interest of keeping information manageable so as to best illustrate the practice. A few different examples draw from other fan foods are used when applicable. *Star Trek* is an American science fiction franchise that is comprised of the television shows *Star Trek: The Original Series, Star Trek: The Next Generation, Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, Star Trek: Voyager,* and *Star Trek: Enterprise* as well as several *Star Trek* films. The dish "gagh" or "qagh" is a Klingon delicacy made of serpent-worms and is typically served and consumed live. I will use the spelling gagh because this is the spelling most commonly used by the fans themselves. Klingons are a humanoid warrior species from the planet Qo'nos (Kronos) and are the only species, other than humans to appear in every *Star Trek* television series. This paper became focused on this peculiar dish because of its iconic status (Zolkover, 2014) within *Star Trek* fandom has generated a lot of different fan adaptations.

This project is a result of my own interests in science fiction media and foodways. In the winter of 2015 I watched a science fiction television show from the 90's called *Babylon 5*. Soon after I finished the series I discovered that a cookbook full of recipes for alien foods from the

television show had been published. Fascinated by the idea that people were making food from *Babylon 5* I began to search for fan recipes and quickly discovered that there are recipes for nearly every media universe. The sheer number of recipes and online conversation on the topic indicated to me that I had clearly found a practice that is very important to certain groups of people and thus deserving of study.

Overview

Fandom as a community "exists on the "borderlands" between mass culture and everyday life and that constructs its own identity and artifacts from resources borrowed from already circulating texts."(Jenkins 1992, 3). It is because fans choose to exist in this "borderland" and because the media they choose to engage with is seen as being 'low-brow', that fans are often culturally perceived as behaving inappropriately by giving inordinate attention to meaningless products. While working on this project I felt that I often encountered the opinion that this subject is one that could or should be taken less seriously then perhaps another topic. As the subjects of my research are real people I feel that it would be a disservice to them to approach this topic with any less rigor then I would approach any other academic project.

This project hopes to add to the relatively new discipline of fan studies. Historically fan scholars like Henry Jenkins have focused on transformative works such as fan fiction and used this practice as a way of showing how the fan is not a mindless consumer but also a producer whose product is an act of resistance against ideologies found in the original. There has been far less scholarship that has focused on fan interaction with material culture. To my knowledge this project is unique in its focus on fans and their food creations.

All of the fan experiences that I use in this paper are from online sources. A lot of fan activity occurs through the internet and according to Duffet, "our practice of the net is never

entirely virtual; its use is *mediated by everyday life*"(2013, 239). I have consulted blogs, fan

created websites, forum posts, google group conversations, and articles published on fan

websites. These diverse online sources created a mediated sense of the fan as an individual and

the fan community that is in conversation around this practice. It is because of the nature of these

sources that this project must not only analyze how fans are creating these foods but how they

are communicating about this practice online. All of these sources occur in a twenty year

timeframe; however two decades is a long time in a space such as the internet which changes so

rapidly. When analyzing more recent blogs and articles I felt comfortable using the creator's

name and any of the relevant information that they publically posted online because these spaces

are written with the assumption of a public audience. With some of the older sources, namely

google group conversations, I have referred to the poster with either their online pseudonym or

initials. Sources that were posted from before the rise of social media do not assume the same

sort of public audience as information published in the last eight or so years. I think that this

method has provided me with an appropriate amount of data to complete this particular project

responsibly. I feel I must note, however, that I have inevitably missed certain pieces of

information. As Duffet notes, this method tends to bracket off personal fandom and it "tells us

much less about processes intrinsic to it, both on an individual and collective level"(2013, 254).

Despite the lack of personal interactions with the fans themselves, I have found that these online

sources do not suffer from a dearth of personal opinion, emotion, or explanation. I feel that

through these sources I have been able to create an adequate analysis of the topic for the time

being.

The exploration of this fan practice will occur in three parts. I will begin by investigating

how fans actually go about creating the food by analyzing how the experiences of the individual

fan and the context of production influence how the fans negotiate the food item into our reality. In this first chapter I will be using Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* as a guide because this particular approach is helpful for unpacking texts that are understood by their audience as existing in relation to other texts. In the second chapter I will utilize the concepts of cultural capital and subcultural capital to consider how fans position themselves as food authorities and negotiate with ideas of authenticity when there is no genuine original. In the final chapter I utilize performance theory and the idea of immersion in an attempt to understand what happens when fans create and eat their replications.

Chapter I: Adaptation- Creators, Contexts and Commensality

When fans create stories or objects from a heterocosm they are creating an adaptation of the original text. According to Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* (2013), an adaptation can be, "an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works" and, "a creative *and* interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging"(8). These descriptions are applicable to fan created texts and objects because fan works are often created through textual poaching. Textual poaching as described by Jenkins(1992) is an active reading of a text which salvages or remixes the different elements of the original text to create a fan made work which usually maintains an identification with the original text. *Theory of Adaptation* provides more than just an apt description for the actions of foodie fans. Hutcheon claims that, "although adaptations are aesthetic objects in their own right, it is only as inherently double or multilaminated works that they can be theorized as *adaptations*"(2013, 6). This theory of adaptation provides a way of analyzing a text that is understood by the creator and audience as existing in relation to another text. Fan adaptations require some comprehension of the work or works they are adapted from in order to fully understand the fan created text. To the creator and the audience a fan made dish is obviously "multilaminated". An adaptation of gagh may appear to be just a bowl of noodles but the dish becomes gagh when it is understood in relation to *Star Trek*, and therefore its relation to *Star Trek* is part of its formal identity. Food, such as gagh, becomes a way for fans to connect to the heterocosm of their choice because as an adaptation it exists through its relationship with the original work.

Using the theory of adaptation as outlined by Hutcheon offers some very useful analytical tools. This theory explicitly recognizes that the closeness of the adapted text to the original text should not be a main judgment of value, this allows for a certain amount of built-in critical

distance[2]. This theory of adaptation pays attention to the intention of the creator of the adaptation, the reasons for the adaptation, and the context of production. These factors are revealed through the differences between the original and other adaptations (Hutcheon 2013, 28). Over the course of theorizing adaptation Hutcheon divides her analysis into sections so as to isolate how the who, why, when and where of an adaptation all influence how the adaptation is created. Inspired by this framework I have attempted to do the same in utilizing subsections that explore how the adapter, the context, and the form of the adaptation all influence how the adaptation is constructed.

The Creators

The process of translating gagh from screen to table is one that is dependent on the individual and their understanding of the original text. According to Hutcheon the creation of an adaptation is not only subject to medium demands, "but also to the temperament and talent of the adapter- and his or her individual intertexts through which are filtered the materials being adapted"(2013, 84). The fan's understanding of the text as well as their experiences and situation within society generate their expectations of how the food should look, feel, and taste. The methods by which imaginary foods are adapted are also dependent on not only the individual fan's reading of the object on the screen but also their skills in the kitchen. The imagined original version of the dish is formed out of images on screen and personal expectations of what that object should be like. These expectations are then matched with ingredients, flavors and techniques that the adapter believes will allow them to turn the imaginary expectation into an object that can be ingested. The adapter matters when considering the adaptation, and their identity can influence the finished product in a variety of ways.

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2. Abstaining from making a judgment value of a cultural good is part of cultural studies, however, because of the stigma of the word adaptation indicating a lesser product I have found restating this practice to be very helpful.

Based on their ability to even participate in the adaptation process of gagh there are assumptions that can be made about the creators. First of all, participating in this type of media fandom implies a certain amount of privilege. Access to a television for viewing *Star Trek*, and a computer for uploading recipes means that these participants are probably middle class especially those with access to computers in the mid-nineties when the technology and the internet were much less accessible then they are today. Second, most of these participants seem to be adults at the time that they are making and sharing these recipes. The online fan spaces I visited for this project primarily focus on the food creation process and very little personal information is offered unless a personal description is posted on a website or a blog information page. Only one of the accounts included any sort of statement of race and not wanting to assume that race is not a factor I can only say that fans tend to be culturally understood as white (Stanfill 2011)[3]. Many primary sources also did not included their gender, however, more than half identified as male[4].

The number of male identified participants and the type of work being created could indicate that this practice falls under the designation of affirmational fandom. Affirmational fan works are those that confirm the authority of the original media text, such as prop replica building or generating encyclopedic websites. Affirmational fandom as Hills (2014) explains is often seen as being a primarily male endeavor that is sanctioned by the creators of the text because it often works to confirm the authority of the original text. Fandom activity that is considered affirmational is often positioned as oppositional to transformative works, such as

3. This will be explored a little more fully later in this paper. Fan studies in general has only recently looked at race as a factor in personal fandom and while there is not much information on the study of race in relation to the topic of this paper I have tried to at least recognize that it is a factor and will hopefully be able to explore this more fully in a later paper.

4. Of the 10 fan created sources I cite in this paper 6 explicitly identified as male and only two identified as female

slash fiction, which are seen as creating new readings of the text, therefore transformative works are seen as unsanctioned and are perceived to be a primarily female endeavor (Hills 2014). It is possible to interpret the following adaptations as being affirmational, and the fact that the majority of the participants identify as male seems to further indicate that this gendered fandom binary holds some water. I think that noting that the majority of the adapters in this case are male is an important part of understanding who is creating adaptations of gagh, but I also think that the male-ness of this group could be explained because many of them identify with Klingons who have a masculine/warrior culture. If I had made a case study of another food or type of fannish cookery the gender split may have been different or not have been as apparent. To this end gender is an important aspect to consider. Ultimately, however, looking at these interpretations as affirmational expressions of fandom disregards the importance of the individual in the interpretation of the text.

In Jenkins' work on fan culture he writes that creating works such as fan fiction requires "fans to draw upon their personal backgrounds as one means of extrapolating beyond the information explicitly found within the aired episodes"(1992, 107). This is certainly true for Jason Henninger a writer for tor.com who has written several articles for the site about science fiction inspired cuisine, and whose reading of Klingon culture is tied directly to his ethnicity. Henninger writes, "I've always considered myself something of an honorary Klingon", with a, "genetic predisposition to look Klingonesque... I've always presumed that Klingons were based, in part, on Mongols and Arabs. That would explain why all I have to do is furrow my brow and, voila, instant son of Kahless[5]"(Henninger 2009b). This reading of Klingon culture is placed within Henninger's own experiences and because of this connection to his ethnicity he is then

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5. Kahless the Unforgettable is a mytho-historical Klingon Emperor.

inspired to make certain decisions when it comes to creating an adaptation of Klingon food. In his gagh adaptation Henninger decided to use cellophane noodles and bean sprouts for the worms which are common choices for this dish, however, he writes that, "The sauce is inspired by muhammara, a Syrian red pepper dip" (Henninger 2009b). For this adaptation Henninger is inspired by his perceived ethnic connection to the Klingons, and using his knowledge of ingredients he creates an adaptation of gagh that is linked directly to his individual experience.

Many adaptations are tied to the individual fan's perceptions of characters from their text of choice. Henninger also makes an adaptation of Wolaxian spider meat created by an alien character called Granny in the science fiction television show *Farscape.* Henninger writes that "I wanted to make something easy and tasty, but in this case it would have to reflect the strangeness of her character"(2009a). This adaptation is wholly inspired by Henninger's understanding of the character, whose strangeness he attempts to capture through a combination of spices. Henninger's adaptations of gagh and Wolaxian spider meat demonstrate different strategies for extrapolating beyond the material of the original text, but ultimately this extrapolation is dependent on how Henninger himself interprets the dish as it appears on the screen.

Fans occasionally make food as part of displaying identification with a specific character or group of characters. For example some *Star Trek* fans belong to a fandom within the fandom, they are Klingon culture fans. These fans identify with the Klingons, though not through a perceived ethnic connection as Henninger does. Klingon fans often filter the recipes through a Klingon sensibility which is similar to how Henninger uses the strangeness of the character Granny to inspire his ingredient choices. One such Klingon culture fan has taken the Klingon name K'Tesh as a pseudonym. K'Tesh is the creator of *K'Tesh's Klingon Recipe Pages*, a site dedicated to Klingon recipes. Interjecting Klingon language into his food descriptions and

writing about constructing a Klingon Warrior uniform, K'Tesh positions himself as Klingon for his audience. Interacting with the *Star Trek* universe through food can be accomplished in many ways, however, someone such as K'Tesh, who identifies very strongly with a particular type of character, is choosing to create a food adaptation that reflects their taste in characters. While plenty of *Star Trek* fans who do not identify as strongly with the Klingons do create interpretations of gagh due to its iconic status within the *Star Trek* fandom very few of these fans created adaptations of other Klingon dishes. In this case K'Tesh's food adaptation choices are being filtered through his desire to interact with a particular culture within the show. This is demonstrated through the proliferation of citations which he uses as a way of negotiating authenticity. I have noticed that this language of authenticity is primarily used amongst those who, like K'Tesh are Klingon culture fans and are using food as a means of interacting with that culture. Creating an 'authentic' adaptation becomes a primary concern when the food is being used as a means of creating a cultural experience[6].

Through recipes, ingredient choices and justifications surrounding the choices fans make reveals parts of themselves in their adaptations. How the text is read, personal preferences, and what the fan feels most connected to in the show become evident in how their adaptation takes shape. According to Hutcheon "texts bear marks of the assumptions of their creators" (2013, 109). The assumptions of the creator, however, do not just arise out of nowhere, but are inextricably intertwined with the contexts of production and the reasons for interacting with the text through food.

Contexts of Production

The context of consumption is integral to understanding why and how the food

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6. This will be more fully addressed in the next chapter.

adaptation is created and the negotiations that take place in an effort to make the imagined

objects exist. Hutcheon states that, "An adaptation, like the works it adapts, is always framed in a

context- a time and a place, a society and a culture; it does not exist in a vacuum. Fashions, not

to mention value systems, are context-dependent"(2013, 142). The context modifies the meaning

of the work and because of this the context of production should be examined closely. The

context for this fannish practice exists, as I see it, in three layers. First, by investigating the type

of event for which the food is created it becomes clear that the immediate context of production

influences the ingredients chosen. Second, when the event and adaptation happen can have an

effect on how the adaptation is approached and ultimately how the food is created. Finally and

perhaps most broadly I will analyze how the creation of the original texts in a Western, North

American context caused certain ideologies to be encoded in the original idea of the food

because these encoded meanings tend to travel with the idea of the food in many of the fan

adaptations.

<u>The Event</u>

Fans make food adaptations for a wide variety of reasons and occasions. Information

about themed birthday celebrations, and viewing parties occurred most commonly but there were

a few postings for other events such as fan club meetings or conventions(Intern 1998), and

fundraising dinners as well. All of these different contexts work to inform the food choices of the

adapter. Preparing foods for a fundraiser dinner as Adam Zolkover, of the blog *Twice Cooked,*

does is probably going to yield different results than making food for a casual gathering or a

meal for one. For example at Zolkover's *Star Trek* themed fundraiser he served eight other

people and because this event was intended to raise funds, a certain standard for the food was to

be expected. In fact Zolkover mentions that he could not find any existing recipes online that he

found suitable for this type of event. So he made his own recipe utilizing broth, vegetables, whole spices, and agar. Zolkover writes that he was also limited by the fact that one of the diners was vegetarian and he writes that, "barring the consumption of real-life annelids, we couldn't have, say, long strings of beef tartar or buckwheat noodles soaked in meaty consommé" (2014). Here the context limited his ingredient choice through the restrictions of his audience and expectations that this was to be a formal event. His ingredient choices, even the hypothetical omnivorous options, project a certain standard of class, and not the type of warrior class that typically comes to mind when making gagh. This adaptation of the dish, when compared to dishes made for viewing parties or other less formal events that tend to simply use noodles in a sauce is a clear example of how context can change how the adaptation is created.

In the space of the event or party, perceptions of everyday foods can be altered simply through the context of the event. One commonly employed tactic for achieving more conventionally acceptable and palate friendly dishes is to simply rename an existing dish in a context in which that more ordinary dish can be read as the impossible one. This seems to be most common at casual parties. On the tumblr vegetarian cooking blog *Platter*(2011), the poster provides the details of a *Star Trek* themed birthday party that the blogger threw for themselves. The event is described as a "proper dinner party" and the images in the post reveal place settings augmented with *Star Trek* Federation themed napkin holders and drinking glasses. The poster writes that they played some *Star Trek* on the television during the meal. All of the dishes for this event were specifically made to be vegetarian and the majority of the food was made using recipes and ingredients familiar to the earthbound such as cheesy orzo or sesame noodles with peanut sauce. Instead of using a recipe for gagh, this adapter uses a recipe for an established dish and then labels the dish accordingly.

The use of labels that declare a dish to be of impossible origin is a common alternative to attempting to directly replicate or interpret the dish from the original text[7]. Through labels this fan is able to call upon the similarities between the earthly dish and the alien food and create a dish that is read as an adaptation of the imagined original. The use of *Star Trek* symbols in the decorations as well as the television show playing in the background help to inform the guests that the food should be considered in relation to the *Star Trek* heterocosm. The context informs the food, which through this relationship with the show can be understood as an adaptation of gagh and as gagh it further works to inform the context. The food is always being informed by, and informing the context. In this case the context is what constitutes the food as an adaptation, where the food then works to inform the context. I found a similar instance of food renaming from a google group poster. In this thread the poster recounts *Star Trek*: *The Next Generation* viewing parties that a high school friend of his would throw for the season premiers every year. Invitations to these gatherings had Starfleet Command letterhead, and trivia games about the show would be played both before and after the viewing of the new episode. At this event there were of course Star Trek themed refreshments. These refreshments were not complicated recipes, but rather renamed products such as gummi worms for gagh, and grape juice as romulan ale (D.M. 1995). These ingredients do not even have the benefit of being close visually to the on screen cuisine, however because of the specific context the partygoers are able to read these foods through the theme of Star Trek and as with the previously mentioned dinner party these foods in turn help to reinforce the theme.

The When

When the adaptations were created can have an effect on how the original text is

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7. There are many instances of fans consuming 'ready-made' foods with a fannish intent that then helps to create an instance in which those foods become an adaptation and this practice will hopefully be the subject of future papers.

interpreted and how the adaptation is created. The activity of creating adaptations of gagh has occurred for a relatively short amount of time but I have encountered examples where the passage of time is a factor in process. The majority of the adaptations of gagh were published online from the late 1990's to the early 2000's when several *Star Trek* universe shows were still on the air. The majority of these older recipes use noodles as substitutes for the serpent-worms. In the most recent adaptation I found, Zolkover (2014) uses molecular gastronomy techniques that have only recently become available and accessible to home chefs. As new ingredients and techniques become available new approaches to the dish take shape.

The ability to document this practice through online discussion is a very recent phenomenon. Since many of the recipes were posted when computers and the internet were becoming more widely available it is not surprising that even at its peak in popularity the conversations around *Star Trek* food was more contained to fan spaces. In the age of social media foods from wildly popular franchises such as *Harry Potter* and *Game of Thrones* are discussed in all different types of online platforms from cooking blogs to news sites.

It should also be noted that the majority of the adaptations were created while new *Star Trek* universe content was still being made and it may be that this particular fan adaptation will fall out of fashion as we move further away from the context of the creation of the original content. The creation of food adaptations from media universes is not going away. In fact I think the conversation is growing, just not around the *Star Trek* franchise.

North America as a Context

Science Fiction shows such as *Star Trek* tend to position the alien characters as other relation to the human characters, who usually function as the protagonists. Aliens tend to be displayed in ways that focus on how they are different from the human characters and the human

characters are often forced to lead the way in overcoming these difference in order to complete the objective of the episode, propel the plot forward, and (most importantly) learn what it means to be human in a galaxy teeming with sentient life. While it is unsurprising that the aliens are treated, well as alien, in relation to the human characters, it is concerning that the alien characters (and their food) are often encoded with symbols that index them as oriental in order to achieve an instant sense of recognizable difference and exoticism. The issue becomes not that the aliens are other, but that they are the oriental other in relation to the human occident. This is an issue that has arisen due to the show being created in a North American context, in which the construction of the other as the east to America's west is tied to our imperialist past and perpetuated by our culture in numerous ways as theorized and critiqued by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978). In the electronic postmodern world according to Said,

> there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media's resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of "the mysterious Orient" (1978, 26).

It is in this context that *Star Trek* was created and as such the use of the alien as the orientalized other is a common trope in the show. Alien food, particularly Klingon cuisine, is used as a way to provide a sense of culture for the imaginary beings. In order to highlight the otherness of the alien culture the food is often presented using Asian ingredients which, as signifiers of the orient for an American audience, become a way to signal that the aliens are a particular and exotic other. Hutcheon reminds us that "contemporary events or dominant images condition our perception as well as interpretation"(2013, 149). So it is no surprise to learn that the Asian ingredients are used to construct ideas of difference and that these particular ingredient choices become a symbol for otherness that is then used by fan adapters in order to give their food a "not

of this world" quality.

The portrayal of Klingon culture and cuisine provides an excellent example of this process. Klingons are used as a reoccurring foil for the human controlled Federation of Planets. The Orient is always portrayed as "symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent"(Said 1978, 72). Klingons are portrayed as militant and violent, which is used to highlight the rationality of their human counter parts. Their position in relation to the Federation is a subjected one. Said writes that "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal" (1978, 40). While often working in partnership with humans the Klingons are still used to represent what the human characters are not. The way in which Klingon food is constructed on the set of the television show demonstrates how the Klingons are made to be read as other through their food which works to reinforce Western perceptions of the orient as other.

In the *Star Trek Cookbook* (Birnes and Philips 1999) Alan Sims, the property master for both *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star* Trek*: Voyager*, discusses how he created the food props for both shows. Sims spends the most time describing his process for creating Klingon food for the screen. He describes all alien cuisine as "monster food"(56). Describing Klingon food in particular Sims writes, "my interpretation is this is stuff that when you look at it, you want to just wretch. You just want to vomit looking at this stuff because it's living worms, serpents, and even organs that monsters eat" (56). In order to create this monster food Sims writes, "I use weird, odd things like octopus, huge squid tentacles, and very bizarre-looking dried Asian seafoods. Into this, I would mix edible items, things that you and I could stomach and find palatable, as opposed to a lot of these other revolting looking things."(56) Sims creates a clear differentiation between Asian ingredients and Western ones. The Asian ingredients are portrayed

as inedible and bizarre in comparison with the western edible and normal ingredients that his assumed audience could stomach. Sims positions the Klingons and their food in relation to the humans and their palatable food. Klingon food is meant to look "barbaric" (63 and 239) and he arranges the food so that it is spilling over the plate which gives the illusion that it is alive (63) and possibly lacking the self-control to stay on the plate. A similar lack of self-control among the Klingons is often a cause for conflict in the show. Through the use of Asian ingredients to symbolize the alien difference of the Klingons, he is in affect signaling that Asian culture is other.

Not only is Asian culture the other but it is a homogenous other. At no point does Sims differentiate between the different cultures whose food he is claiming for the Klingons. The ingredients are described as monolithically Asian. Sims' advice to those who wish to create their own alien food follows the same principle: "You can create your own alien dishes by thinking of what you don't see every day on a table. Rice noodles look odd and they can replace pasta. Udon noodles are good, of course, because they look like gagh. Soba noodles also look unconventional" (241). His suggestion to use different types of Asian noodles interchangeably and instead of (presumably) more familiar types of pasta suggest that using Asian ingredients associates the dish with an alien culture in a way which regular old linguini is unable to replicate.

This use of Asian ingredients to simulate the exotic otherworldly flavors trickles down into the fan made adaptations. The adaptations of gagh, which are inspired by the props made by Sims are often directly influenced by his culinary choices, using Asian style noodles instead of Italian or European ones. Adaptations of other science fiction foods also fall back on the idea that Asian ingredients translate to a dish that seems more exotic. Jason Henninger's recipes often utilize Asian ingredients to create unexpected flavors. For a soup from the show *Farscape* he

was inspired by Moroccan cuisine, the unfamiliarity of an American audience to these flavors creates the sense that they really are alien (2009a). In another article, Henninger offers some broad suggestions for creating science fiction food which are inspired by garnishing techniques from Thailand and spice combinations from Lebanon. He writes that, "If you have a Middle Eastern, Asian or Indian grocer nearby, chat with the owners and get cooking tips. Try spices you've never heard of before. The less familiar the flavor, the more potential it has to transform well-known dishes" (Henninger 2010). The underlying presumption here is that the audience of the show will be unfamiliar with these cooking traditions, it presupposes a white audience. Said writes of orientalist texts that, "such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe"(1978, 94). This is due to what he describes as dialectic of reinforcement, through which experiences of reality are determined by what the reader has read and this influences authors to write on subjects that are defined by readers experiences (1978, 94). When the show creators and fans use Asian ingredients to create food from outer space, not only are they perpetuating orientalist ideas about who is the other and how this is represented but they are also reiterating an understanding of fandom as white with a certain set of cultural experiences.

The use of ingredients from other cultures as a way of signaling something that is not human is problematic and as I see it, the result of the show being made in a North American context. This context, as with the viewing party examples, has modified the meaning of these ingredients and has turned them into something alien, albeit with much more disturbing connotations.

Food as a Medium

Food is a unique medium through which fan engagement with a text can be expressed.

Food is a means of active, physical interaction and as Hutcheon notes, "the move to participatory modes in which we also engage physically with the story and its world... is not more active but certainly active in a different way"(2013, 23). Food is able to create certain experiences that cannot be accomplished in the same way through other fan practices such as viewing the text, or writing fan fiction. Eating is always a communicative act that is more than the sum of the nutrition facts. Commensality, the act of eating and drinking together is always an act of communicative or social significance. According to Tan Chee-Beng in the article *Commensality and the Organization of Social Relations*, commensality "involves rules of hierarchy and solidarity, boundary making as well as symbolic expression"(2015, 13). Understanding how commensality functions in these fan communities demonstrates the unique properties of a food based adaptation.

A large part of Commensality defines who is allowed at the dinner table. The facts of who is eating what with whom create very real boundaries between those in the group and those outside. In effect, when fans make food adaptations they are aligning themselves with certain groups through their food choices. When a fan makes and shares food from their text of choice they are communicating their affiliations with the text and often a particular fandom. The creation of gagh not only functions as a declaration of *Star Trek* fandom but it can also be an expression of specifically Klingon fandom. A dish that is an adaptation of a particular text can also create further group divides. For example the idea of gagh is not the most appetizing dish and therefore boundaries are created between those who are willing to eat it and those who are not. Those who wish to share and express an affinity with Klingon culture tend to use gagh as vehicle for their expression of personal fandom. The choice of food reinforces group cohesion and displays distinctions between groups as does the physical act of eating together.

Commensality is an essential part of celebrations (Chee-Beng 2015, 23) and as demonstrated earlier in this chapter fans use their fan food adaptations as a part of their celebrations and gatherings. These food adaptations do not seem to be consumed regularly, but are reserved for special occasions. Food is a huge part of the fan K'Tesh's celebrations, which is unsurprising considering his website is dedicated to food adaptations. He uses food as a way of bringing other fans together to celebrate a show that has so much meaning for him personally. On a section of his site dedicated to food and decoration suggestions for hosting *Star Trek* viewing parties K'Tesh writes that, when " TNG went off the air at the end of the 7th season, I planned to host a second party/wake to celebrate the end of a wonderful friendship"(2002). Due to his emotional connection to the show which makes him feel the need to celebrate and mourn the show's end he hosts an event. Food is a central part of this event and becomes part of what makes the event memorable and truly celebrated by a community.

Fan communities are often formed in or mediated through online environments and just as these communities exist online so too does commensality. Online commensality functions similarly to commensality in person in that it reinforces boundaries and social relationships. Fans upload photos and recipes of their foods expressly for the purpose of sharing with other fans. This creates a virtual commensality through which fans are reinforcing and creating social boundaries as well as creating personal significance through discussions of celebrations using food. Fans also post recipes with the knowledge that other fans may use their recipe. The extension of a recipe is the invitation to eat together, not always in person, but in thought. For example one fan uploaded a menu from the celebration he and his family had for the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* finale:

Our family has decided to commemorate the TNG finale, "All Good

Things", in appropriate style: we're having a 24th-century dinner. I
thought the readers of this forum might appreciate seeing our menu:

appetizer: plomik soup	;split pea soup
main course "Great Bird of the Galaxy"	;roast chicken
side dish: gagh	;oriental noodles/soy sauce
side dish: broccoli	;in honor of Reg
dessert: Vulcan pie	;from "The Star Trek Cookbook" (Bantam, 1978); ;apricots & cream (mmmmm)
dessert: hot fudge sundae	;Counsellor's favorite
beverage: tea, Earl Grey, hot	;JLP standard
beverage: Romulan ale	;7-Up + blue food coloring
beverage: "it's green"	;Squirt + green food coloring

Our table will be decorated with Galoob and Playmates figures,
with the Big E and shuttlecraft Goddard as centerpieces. My wife and
I will be in costume (R.D. 1994, formatting adjusted for clarity)

By sharing this menu virtually the poster R.D. is sharing the celebration with his online community. R.D. also extends an invitation to those in his area to attend this event should fellow fans be interested in turning this virtual commensality into a face-to-face meeting.

This online commensality, just like commensality in real life, demonstrates certain social boundaries. On the recipe websites I have found very little fan justifications for the activity and only one instance of someone actually disparaging the practice in a comments section (Henninger 2010). The lack of justification seems to imply that this activity is normative for the spaces in which it occurs. The spaces where fan recipes are shared appear to be spaces really only traversed by those who are interested in fan foods if not already participants in the community. There do not appear to be fan and non-fan skirmishes online indicating that there are clear cut boundaries between those who seek out recipes and want to generate this type of engagement and those who do not.

Commensality is not just a cultural act of boundary maintenance. Eating food can create a specific physical engagement with new cultures or ways of being. Commensality experiences can allow tourists to feel as if they are part of the local community (Chee-Beng 2015, 29). In the

book *Bite Me: Food in Popular Culture*, Fabio Parasecoli (2008) writes that, "Gastronomy is precisely one of the aspects of the travel experience where tourists can get in close contact with different realities: ingestion, after all, is a very intimate act"(132). Food and commensality allow fans to create unique experiences that in a way work to bridge our reality with that of the text. Parasecoli also notes that through learning how to create dishes experienced through their travels, tourists can relive certain moments (2008, 133). In creating certain foods fans are able to recreate and relive certain moments of the show in a physical way.

Food is a social act that can be celebratory and create a unique bodily experience. It is these qualities that make it such a powerful medium for adaptations. When fans make food from their favorite shows they are not only celebrating and aligning themselves with that cultural text, but they are also generating and reinforcing personal attachment to that text by explicitly tying the text to their physical reality.

Conclusion

Food adaptation is mediated through the individual fan doing the interpreting and creating. It is because this mediation is such a subjective process that fans often disagree with each other as to the best method to capture the imaginary original in reality. While Hutcheon's theorization of adaptations may not make value judgments by comparing the adaptation to the original, fan discourse surrounding the adaptation of food is filled with judgments grounded in subjective understandings of the original. The process of negotiating an adaptation into existence and posting the result online often involves negotiations with other fans in the community through displays of subcultural capital.

Chapter II: "Feels Klingon enough to me, even if it's not poisonous"
Negotiations of Authority and Authenticity

Despite the impossibility of actually consuming the food from imagined planets, the discourse that surrounds these meals is one of authenticity. As food can provide a window into a culture, authenticity becomes a term that is used to market a 'genuine' cultural experience. The perpetuation of the idea of a food being or having authenticity is often especially important in spaces of food tourism where the food becomes the experience and so perceiving that experience as actual or genuine is affected by the claims of authenticity that surround the food. In the article "Authentic or Not, It's Original" Meredith Abarca (2004) examines the politics of claiming authenticity in the world of ethnically Mexican cuisine. Abarca uses two definitions of authenticity as the concept relates to food culture. The first definition suggests that authenticity is a quality generated through the chef because of the chef's inherent or established authority. The second definition applies to the cooking method, wherein the cooking method is considered authoritative and produces authentic results. With food such as gagh there are no chefs with inherent authority nor are there any methods that can be touted as genuine due to the sheer nonexistence that is an integral aspect of this practice. Despite the fact that there is no way to actually eat Klingon food certain fans are invested in discussions of authenticity when negotiating their adaptations.

Fans are unable to claim inherent authority over the Klingon foods they are creating. Instead fans display their knowledge of *Star Trek* and Klingon culture as a means to claim authoritative knowledge over the imaginary food and then use this authority to stake a claim of authenticity for their adaptation. To examine how this authority and the resulting claims of

authenticity are generated I will use Bourdieu's model of cultural capital, which provides a system that can usefully examine how people use taste (both orally and culturally in this case) to distinguish themselves from others closest to them in social space (Duffet 2013). Fan scholar Matt Hills reminds us that Bourdieu, "allows us to consider any given fan culture not simply as a community but *also as a social hierarchy*"(2002, 46). This hierarchy is negotiated through displays of knowledge and access to objects of fandom.

   Before using the theory it is important to acknowledge some of its short comings. It has been stated that for Bourdieu's work to be applicable the cultural products in question have to operate along visible lines of class distinction. This can be seen as a problem when investigating objects of popular or mass culture because these objects are perceived as being enjoyed by everyone therefore rendering them useless when determining class distinctions (Duffet 2013). Another common critique is that the idea that cultural capital is not related to media as Bourdieu seems to view media as neutral to the process of gaining different types of capital (Hills 2002). These critiques, however, have not rendered the theory useless in fan studies. Sarah Thornton has extended Bourdieu's idea to create 'subcultural capital', which is not correlated to class but rather 'being in the know' (Duffet 2013 and Hills 2002). The idea of subcultural capital ties in with Hills' statement that fans "tacitly recognize the 'rules' of their fan culture, attempting to build up different types of fan skill, knowledge and distinction" (Hills 2002, 46). To this end I will be using Bourdieu to primarily explore how authority and authenticity are displayed within the created social hierarchy of fandom, in other words, the subcultural capital. When assessing the choices made by fans in a particular food interpretations it is helpful to recognize that their habitus, a "personal stock of learned predispositions" (Duffet 2013, 130) which directly affects ingredient and method choices. As fans use information from their habitus they are displaying

their cultural capital that aligns them with a particular social grouping (Duffet 2013, 129). In short subcultural capital refers to negotiations that take place within the hierarchy of fandom and cultural capital refers to how the social hierarchy of society as a whole influences the choices that fans make. As subcultural capital is nested within cultural capital, I will first briefly examine how cultural capital interacts with fandom before I move on to examine how subcultural capital is negotiated and utilized in an attempt to generate claims of authenticity in relation to an impossible food.

Cultural Capital

The perception of fan activities and fandom in American society, while improved since Jenkins wrote *Textual Poachers*, is not always favorable. According to fan scholar Mel Stanfill, "mainstream media constructs fandom as a nonheteronormative variety of whiteness, positioning the supposed inadequacy of fans as the result of substandard- but standardizable-self-control" (2011). Fans are culturally understood to be white men who choose to deviate from the norm by acting in a way that is perceived as out of control consumerism and childish or feminine attachment. Fan works are considered unproductive forms of labor and because of the lack of productive production fans are often constructed in movies and television shows as unsuccessful. Fans and fandom are generally viewed as activities of bad taste. Fans are often stigmatized as interacting with media that is unimportant or inappropriate given the perceived quality of the text. In a few personal conversations with friends and family regarding the topic of this project, I got several reactions that disparaged this fannish activity as a 'waste of time'. To summarize Jenkins, fans transgress bourgeois taste and this disruption of dominant cultural hierarchies ensures that their preferences are seen as abnormal or threatening (1992, 17). The perception that fans are wasting time or behaving inappropriately leads those who have a

vested interest in the maintenance of boundaries to try and separate themselves from groups, such as fans, through disparaging their actions.

Cultural capital is a way of distinguishing one's self. I have determined that certain ingredient choices are displays of cultural capital and not subcultural capital because these choices are based on perceptions of "class" in a more economic sense then they are a display of fan knowledge. One clear example is the comparison between Adam Zolkover's molecular gastronomy inspired rendition of gagh and the version created by K'Tesh which uses instant ramen noodles. As noted in the discussion of context Zolkover's gagh is being consumed in a more formal setting, and the fact that this event is a formal one serves to highlight how Zolkover is using the ingredients to elevate gagh and turn it into dinner party fare. This adaptation is a display of high class taste, even though it is inspired by a popular culture product. K'Tesh's version uses a mass produced product that becomes relevant in a certain community through K'Tesh's displays of subcultural capital. Subcultural capital relies on different criteria for relevance than the more economically tied cultural capital.

Subcultural Capital

Those who curate websites for the culinary cosmos need to convince viewers that they have the authority to generate dishes that will produce the product that is closest to the ontologically impossible 'real deal'. Authority in these cases is created through displays of subcultural capital which are deployed to demonstrate three main points. 1) the poster is a fan, 2) as a fan they have accumulated a large amount of in depth knowledge concerning the text, and 3) because of this knowledge their adaptations of the food are more 'authentic' then other less qualified interpreters.

Of the fan sources I consulted for this project K'Tesh the creator of the website *K'Tesh's*

Klingon Recipe Pages, perhaps puts in the most effort to convince his viewer that he has the subcultural capital to not only to create the recipes but to become an authority. When viewing the website it is clear that the creator is a fan not only because he openly states as much, but because symbols of the *Star Trek* universe are everywhere. More specifically this site is visually demonstrating the creator's passion for Klingon culture. Not only has K'Tesh taken a Klingon name but he has also designed his website with a certain Klingon-esque aesthetic by using a font that mimics the style of the Klingon alphabet, Klingon phrases in descriptions, and images of Klingons and their cuisine from the various television shows in the *Star Trek* franchise. To emphasize his knowledge of the Klingons (and perhaps reinforce an identity as one) K'Tesh often adds in Klingon words and phrases throughout his descriptions of the food. He sometimes even puts the translation in parenthesis next to the word to help out those of us who are less knowledgeable. For this paper I have chosen to use the more emic spelling gagh, as it is used by the majority of my fan sources. K'Tesh, uses a different spelling proclaiming that, "the CORRECT spelling of this animal is "qagh" is unless you want to dispute "THE KLINGON DICTIONARY"(2002). His propensity to qualify his choices, even spelling differences by using official franchise created sources is apparent throughout the entirety of the website. Any food choice he views as being a possible point of contention he is quick to qualify with evidence to support his decision. Not only is K'Tesh placing himself within the communities of *Star Trek* fandom and Klingon fandom, he is also positioning himself as someone who is exceedingly knowledgeable on the subject. He is 'in the know'.

When writing about Klingon food K'Tesh usually provides multiple citations for each recipe. This notation often includes the appearance of the food in any of the television shows or movies that take place in the *Star Trek* heterocosm and comparing this data to textual

information gathered from various (often encyclopedic) books and computer based resources. In his introduction to gagh K'Tesh notes that there are fifty-one varieties of the dish and then goes on to name five, clearly in an effort to display his knowledge on the topic. Not only does K'Tesh let his reader know that he is fully aware of every facet of the food in question but he also writes that, "It is possible that I INSPIRED the recipe for Rokeg Blood Pie that made an appearance on Deep Space Nine in the episode 'Resurrection' " (K'Tesh 2002). This statement positions K'Tesh quite highly in the hierarchy of fandom in that his knowledge of the food has made him so qualified that it is possible that he has come to be considered an authority in the eyes of the official creators of the show.

In the article, *From Dalek half balls to Daft Punk helmets: Mimetic fandom and the crafting of replicas*, Matt Hills states that "Fans' subcultural capital includes the collective intelligence of compiling, correcting, and circulating information on all the...modifications and revisions that have cropped up over the years" (2014). The collecting and compiling of revisions is perhaps the cause of K'Tesh's prolific use of citations. To this end K'Tesh includes many different versions of the same dish and is quick to point out differences so that other fans are able to create a product that best reflects the version of gagh they wish to replicate. For fans trying to create gagh as seen in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode "A Matter or Honor" he points to a recipe found in an official companion guide to the show. If, however, a fan wants to replicate gagh as seen in the computer game "Star Trek KLINGON", K'Tesh recommends Yakisoba Stir Fry Noodles, red food coloring, and raw octopus tentacles (tentacles out of course). When faced with an error in continuity K'Tesh attempts to make sense of the difference:

> "Here is another problem we have seen several different versions of qagh. In "A Matter Of Honor" [TNG] the qagh was a dark brown/green color. In the book "The Way of the

Warrior" they have a picture that is labeled qagh, but looks more like some designer soap. One possible explanation of this is the 'Iw puj that the qagh feeds on prior to preparation for the table. Since just about any kind of 'Iw (blood) can be used there can be a great difference in the flavor of the qagh, and also a possible difference in the actual appearance of the dish." (2002)

By making the assertion that the type of poisoned blood fed to the worms can account for differences in appearance, not only is he attempting to create continuity within the show, but he is also crafting an explanation as to why his adaptations may look slightly different from the image that the dish was inspired from. This explanation has the added advantage of working within the logic of the show. The compilation of every alternative design, Hills asserts, supports "the creation of ontological unity between source text and prop replica" (2014). Meaning that through documenting each different variation K'Tesh is trying to, not only justify his culinary choices, but also to create the actual object through attempts to reconcile the differences between the idea of the object and the object itself.

Duffet argues that online discussions enable the dissemination and assertion of positions and values, if newer fans are unable to demonstrate that they possess a certain amount of fluency not only in the universe itself, but also in the values of the community they will often be criticized by older fans for not having the cultural capital to participate (2013, 242). Many of the websites and blogs that have these recipes do not have spaces for active discussion, but they often present ways in which they are aware of, and in conversation with each other. Many posters will explicitly call out other recipes and their creator's if they do not find the recipe to be close enough to their imagined version of the dish, their version of authentic. This type of criticism leads to the creation of new recipes and reveals the subjective values that go into creating an interpretation.

In a forum for Klingon food on the website Klingon.org, where everyone has a Klingon

identity, a poster who identifies as Kaga, created a thread titled "Kaga's Kollection of Klingon Kusine" (2008) in which they post their Klingon recipes. While others add to this thread most of the posts from other fans consist of recipes that they would like Kaga to try, some genial conversation, and statements of support for the endeavor. Kaga states that they began this cooking project because they were dissatisfied with the available Klingon recipe resources online. Many of the recipes posted in this thread are premised, not with citations and cross references, but with critiques of K'Tesh's work. Kaga concedes that, "K'Tesh, is, of course, THE authority on recreating Klingon cuisine with Earth ingredients"(2008). Recognizing this authority aside, Kaga feels that K'Tesh either "sacrifices authenticity for the sake of catering to "civilized" human palates" or goes to the other extreme and creates dishes that are not edible (2008). By demonstrating the failings of the 'authority', Kaga is then placing their own interpretations in a position of authority. Occasionally Kaga will concede to the merits of a solution provided by K'Tesh but this is often accompanied by improvements that Kaga claims makes their recipes more authentic. When Kaga credits K'Tesh with the idea of using noodles as a substitute for serpent-worms they include that their recipe looks better than the one K'Tesh advocates (Kaga 2008).

 In a further attempt to display their subcultural capital, Kaga is quick to point out Klingon foods for which K'Tesh fails to provide recipes. For example Kaga writes that K'Tesh fails to mention Tknag Hooves, so they have provided six different recipes. Kaga also mentions the dish Pipus Claw, for which K'Tesh states that using chicken feet would result in an accurate looking dish, but fails to give a recipe, so Kaga lays out several options. In demonstrating their ability to out-cook an authoritative figure, Kaga is attempting to demonstrate their subcultural capital.

 While Kaga is clearly trying to negotiate between K'Tesh's authority and the fact that his

recipes do not fit with Kaga's own standards, there is one recipe that seems to be universally disparaged. Mentioned on several sites where gagh is a subject of conversation, an interpretation by linguist Dr. Lawrence M. Schoen involving gummy worms and chocolate sauce which is described by K'Tesh as "no way near being accurate". Another Klingon food enthusiast and linguist like Dr. Schoen, Mark Mandel, on the cookbook page of the website "The Linguist List " writes that "At the third qep'a' (convention) of the Klingon Language Institute, the Director, Dr. Lawrence Schoen, brought Gummi Worms in Hershey's Syrup. While this was satisfactory in appearance and messiness, I found the flavor cloying". While some fans are critical of this interpretation's ingredients, many applaud its appearance and the recommended method of consumption which involves grabbing handfuls (you supply the writhing) and dropping them into your mouth (K'Tesh 2002). In response to his dissatisfaction with Dr. Schoen's version of gagh, Mandel provides his own interpretation which he then brought to the next KLI conference. Mandel's adaptation, consisting of cocoa powder, ginger root, and water was met with a different reaction. On tasting the dish, Mandel recounts, "some turned bright red and ran to wash out their mouths; others grinned like warriors and took more"(Mandel). Mandel states clearly that he believes that Schoen's interpretation was lacking. Mandel is unique among fan recipe creators in that he also indicates a correct response to his interpretation. The fans who "grinned like warriors" are, in essence more Klingon, in his eyes because they can stomach his version of the dish. Based on the primary sources I viewed there are ways of interpreting gagh that are deemed to be more correct by the larger fan community and while this authority and authenticity seem to be based in the fans sense of what the dish should be there is also some consensus as to what makes for a good recipe. Mandel's recipe is the only version of gagh that I have encountered that made clear a correct reaction to eating the food.

The criteria of authenticity for each adaptation is ultimately in the eyes of the beholder, however, fan practices tend to carry their own distinctive criteria of relevance (Hills 2002, 179). The most relevant criteria for gagh seems to be its appearance, with Mandel as the exception, the ability of the dish to travel from the screen to the table in a way in which it remains recognizable seems to generally be the most important factor in this particular fan practice. In his article about fans who replicate props, Hills notes that fan prop builders, "emphasize discourses of screen accuracy, thus proposing an implicit ontological unity between text and material object" (2014). So while there are fan foodies such as Mandel, for whom the taste or reaction to the dish seems to be the most important, most of the other recipes stress the importance of the appearance of the dish. Taste, while still considered to some extent by all of the gagh adapters seems to largely fall to the side, leaving the visual worminess of the dish to be considered first. When Henninger is providing advice for fans who want to create science fiction food, the majority of his suggestions pertain to changing the appearance of the ingredients.

When recreating a dish that is made of worms from another planet, some may assume that earthly annelids would be an adequate substitute. Kaga does mention that gagh recipes calling for live worms or mealworms exist, and they write that, "I wouldn't be opposed to trying them, but as mealworms clearly aren't serpent-worms, and I can think of no other decent Earth substitutes for them, I think I'll go with K'tesh's solution to the problem and substitute noodles.(Kaga)". Other than perhaps not actually being willing to eat mealworms and yet still trying to experience Klingon cuisine the reasoning behind this dismissal of an ingredient that is arguably very close to the original idea of the food is that it does not look like the food on the screen. Noodles are also not serpent-worms, however, they are long, thin, and can easily be made slimy. Noodles were used in the creation of the onscreen version of the dish and so they are

acceptable, not because they are closer to the imagined grubs in a material sense, but because they look more like the on screen object.

Despite the fact that the original idea of the dish is made of live serpent-worms, most of the interpretations of gagh do not involve protein. I only found one instance of animal product use, raw octopus tentacles, which were used along with noodles in one of K'Tesh's interpretations. Even though the recipes are usually vegetarian I found only two recipes that identified as being specifically vegetarian or vegan. One was created by Adam Zolkover because he had a vegetarian dinner guest and the other was created by a vegan food blogger who goes by the pseudonym lazysmurf. The need to designate these recipes as vegan or vegetarian reveals a perception of qagh as a protein based dish even though recipes do not often contain meat or animal product. For this particular dish the desire for the finished product to look as it did on screen seems to trump all other aspects of the dish that fans could focus on, such as the fact that gagh is supposed to be a living dish. This distinctive criteria of relevance, the fact in this practice the look is often more important than other qualities makes sense when the most information that is available about a dish is the image.

Fan perceptions of authenticity when it comes to impossible foods are ultimately grounded in a subjective understanding of the original which means that collections of recipes often become contested territory. These fan recipes, however, are across the board deemed more acceptable then the official merchandised cookbook titled *The Star Trek Cookbook* (Birnes and Philips 1999). Presented from the perspective of Neelix, the chef on-board the U.S.S Voyager, this cookbook is filled with imagined commentary from the ship's crew as well as statements from the creators on set. The reactions that I have found online to the cookbook have ranged from mentioning but refusing to post recipes for fear of copyright (K'Tesh 2002), to Kaga's

diatribe:

> The only other source for Klingon recipes geared towards this planet is the cookbook belonging to that petaQ, Neelix. Some of his recipes have merit, such as his replicas of gagh or racht, but others... a Heart of Targ recipe consisting of tomato bruschette? I ought to gut him like the Ha'DIbaH he is and show him how a real Klingon prepares Talaxian Stew... (Kaga 2008)

The Klingon interspersed throughout this statement serving as both a display of subcultural capital and as a means of conveying their disappointment in a gruff Klingon manner. Despite this denouncing of the book Kaga does post the cookbook gagh recipe on his thread but they emphasize that it is the least realistic. One google group poster even decided to collect their own recipes because they were unsatisfied with the book and they were relieved that plans for a second official cookbook had been canceled (A.1999). The negative reaction to the cookbook places conceptions of authenticity in relation to the food of this fandom in an interesting position.

While the creators have a certain amount of authority being the creators of the original idea and the copyright holders, the food that results from the book is less "authentic" then the fan creations. Hills notices the same phenomenon in the prop building communities, the original props used on set tend to age and become damaged, thus distancing them from the image on screen and failing to create ontological unity. Hills rationalizes this by stating that the fan-made props are authentic in the sense that they are not official, mass-produced commodities, and yet, due to their attempts to create "the object" which is from a copyrightable image from a recognizable franchise, they are also inauthentic (Hills 2014). Hills' use of authentic is different from how this ambiguous word has been used thus far in this paper. Hills' version is clearly based on an economic market, and mine is based on a subjective 'gut feeling' a fan has about the recipe or product.

Here is where authenticity becomes even more slippery than usual (perhaps a bit like

pasta that has been used for gagh), understandings of authenticity in relation to fan made goods are based on distinctions in subcultural capital between individual fans and their imaginings of the original. However, when considered from a vantage point that notes the relationship between fan made authenticity and officially created authenticity the resulting fan made product is both "authentic and inauthentic"(Hills 2014). Hills explains that "[the replica] is a physical product that nonetheless relies on an absent or noncoincident media text for its meaning, and it is necessarily fan built rather than genuinely hailing from the terrain of official media production" (2014). In essence when looking at the authenticity of a fan-made good from outside the ground of subcultural capital, it must be viewed as both inauthentic and authentic.

Conclusion

     Using an ambiguous standard such as authenticity can seem like an unlikely choice for fans given the impossible nature of the object which they are attempting to create. Authenticity can be a problematic phrase; it is a weighty expectation to place on anything. Authenticity seems to become an important part of the discourse surrounding places or foods that are supposed to provide a genuine experience. Fans such as the creator of the blog *Platter* do not seem to be at all concerned with the accuracy of their creations. I surmise that this is because the gagh in this situation is informed by the context and it is a re-labeled dish, it is not supposed to exist alone as gagh. Fans such as Kaga and K'Tesh place much more weight on ideas of authentic Klingon creations because they are trying to make that specific food. The discourse of authenticity persists amongst those who make impossible food adaptations as an attempt to experience Klingon culture. These fans are using this food to infuse their reality with a sense of visiting another and it is because of this food tourism mentality that a discourse of authenticity remains an important part of the fan conversation.

Chapter III: The Process of Immersion: Experiencing the Intergalactic through Ingestion

Journalist Alyssa Rosenburg writes that, "there's nothing like a bite of something delicious but unusual to transport you to a place that you can only imagine"(2011). In the article "Food in Fiction: How cooking Brings You Closer to the Characters" Rosenburg provides three examples, including her own, of people interacting with a story world through cooking and eating. In all three instances the outcome of creating and eating food that is connected to a particular text is a distinct feeling of stepping "into that world". Rosenburg writes of two fans making food inspired by HBO's *Game of Thrones* who experienced "a powerful visceral connection to the people on screen and the world in which they live"(2011). Similarly in another of Rosenburg's examples Wendy McClune recounts her connection to a pioneer past through creating and consuming food from the pages of *The Little House on the Prairie* book series. McClune states that, "It really did feel like a little bit of time travel, like I can taste the same thing that these people in a little tiny building out in South Dakota in the middle of a terrible blizzard in 1881 experienced" she says, "Even if it's just the sensation of this piece of bread in your mouth. That really captivated me" (Rosenburg 2011). In an interview Cara Nicoletti author of the book *Voracious* (2015) in which she cooks her way through the food found in her favorite stories states that, "Cooking the meals that [the characters] ate always felt like a natural way to be closer to them and make them feel more real"(Leite 2015). These experiences of a story world through food are very similar to the discussion of fans as food tourists in chapter I, wherein food allows tourists to relive moments of their travels and allows *Star Trek* fans to relive moments from the television show.

This type of engagement falls under what fan studies scholar Mark Duffet describes as

"*enjoyment through engagement*". This engaged enjoyment is classified as such because it "involves the fan being active in suspending disbelief, making meaning and participating"(Duffett 2013, 178-79). This is not to say that being an active reader of the text is not engagement, but it is simply a different type of interaction in which the text-reader relationship is given primary consideration. The creation of food from another world is a practice that cannot only be considered as a text-reader relationship. It must be considered as a way in which meaning and significance are created through the ways fans engage with their text of choice in "cultural practices of play"(Hills 2002, 41). The ability of this type of engagement to provide fans with a sense of stepping "into that world" can be examined through the use of fan studies and performance scholar Kurt Lancaster's process of immersion.

According to Lancaster ," *Immersion* is the process by which participants break the frame of their actual 'everyday' world, allowing them to interact in some way within the fantasy environment"(2001, 31). In order to activate the process of immersion there needs to be an interface. This interface is a material object that allows its user to feel as if they have entered an imaginary universe. As Lancaster succinctly states, "It makes concrete the imaginary"(2001, 32). Lancaster's book *Interacting with Babylon 5: Fan Performances in a Media Universe* examines the structure of the interface and its performance qualities through an examination of how fans engage with the heterocosm of *Babylon* 5 through role playing games (RPGs), card games, and online interactions. To summarize Lancaster, when people engage with an interface, the imaginary world which that interface represents "envelopes the real-world perspective" causing players to feel immersed in that imaginary universe (2001, 31). As the statements from Rosenburg's article proclaim, fans are generating a sense of being immersed in another time or place through food creation and consumption. In these instances the interaction between the

created food object, recipe, and process of interpreting and adapting results in the creation of an interface which facilitates an immersive experience of an imaginary environment. It is because the recipes and food in this practice can be considered an interface that Lancaster's process of immersion becomes applicable. This section analyses how the creation of food from other worlds enables participants to have a subjective experience of that other world which is facilitated through Lancaster's frames of immersion.

This process of immersion is derived from the 'Frames of Performance' created by performance scholar Robert Schechner. Schechner's frames of performance were developed as a way of illustrating the relationship to between freedom and constriction in theatrical performance, with the inner frame being the most constant and constricted and the outermost having the most flexibility. Schechner's frames of performance are four concentric layers that are occurring simultaneously during a performance. These frames are labeled as drama, script, theater, and performance (Schechner 1988, 72 in Lancaster 2001, 78). The innermost frame is the drama, and it comprises what a writer writes,"the basic code of events", it is the domain of the author, and it is "detached from the actual 'doing' of the text"(Lancaster 2001, 78-9). The next frame is the script and it is how the drama is interpreted and enacted. The script is the domain of the director, master or teacher. Lancaster describes the script as the "interior map of production" (2001, 79). The third frame of theater comprises what the performers do onstage, it is the visual performance: "the mise-en-scene the spectators observe"(Lancaster 2001, 79). This frame is the physical manifestation of what is written in the drama as interpreted in the script. Schechner's outermost and final frame is that of performance which includes more than just the action onstage and encompasses everything from spectators to ticket takers. The frame of performance surrounds the entirety of the event. Though used primarily to describe theatrical performance,

Lancaster argues that the frames of performance are applicable to all performances that make up the "imaginary entertainment environment"(2001, 79), or the universe of the text which in Lancaster's example is the universe of *Babylon 5*.

Using the example of the war simulation game *Babylon 5Wars* Lancaster demonstrates how this game is predicated on the frames of performance in such a way that, "each layer reconstitutes the subject, altering the perceptual field of participants in the game"(2001, 79). In Lancaster's example of *Babylon 5Wars* the players choose a scenario which they will play. The scenarios are based on scenes from the television show *Babylon 5* that have been adapted for the purposes of the game. The actions that players can take while playing through the scenario are described in the rules. The rules determine how the players move around the cardboard pieces that represent their ships on a map. Lancaster then translates this performance into Schechner's frames of performance as: "scenario (drama); rules (script); pieces on a map board players manipulate (theater); and the entire space where the participants play, as well as any reference in their minds to *Babylon 5* episodes, performed strips of behavior from episodes, or any other spaces of memory that locate their game in a fictional universe" (2001, 80), constitutes the performance frame. In this application of the frames of performance the interface is activated through the innermost frames. In the war simulation game the particular scenario the players choose to play and the rules, which determine the actions that a player can make, and work together so that the cardboard pieces that represent ship parts become the interface. The scenario places the players within a specific moment in the *Babylon 5* universe and the rules guide the payers as to how to interact with that moment. Through the interface the players are reconfigured as a starship captains in a military simulation.

The four frames of performance provided by Schechner do not adequately explain

performances, such as that found in playing *Babylon 5 Wars,* that result in experiences of immersion. Lancaster writes that Schechner leaves out what he calls "the subjective frame", "the imaginary world of the fiction", or the "inner fantasy layer"(2001, 81). This fifth frame is comprised of the world of the author's creation; it is the heterocosm of *Star Trek* or *Babylon 5*. This inner fantasy layer is at the center of these concentric frames and it folds outward informing all of the other frames. This inner fantasy layer is essential to this type of analysis because it is the frame of reference to which all of the other layers connect. According to Lancaster, when all five of these frames are activated through play, a sixth "all-encompassing layer", the frame of immersion causes players to feel a sense of immersion in another world (Lancaster 2001, 82). Immersion occurs as the fantasy frame expands around all the other frames, causing it to seem *as if* it were a real environment. The other frames reconfigure the participants, and immerse them in fantasy (Lancaster 2001, 83). Interactions with a media universe do not always result in a feeling of immersion, it is only in cases of simulation that fans are able to create a sense that the imaginary universe is happening to them.

If according to Lancaster, *Babylon 5 Wars* is a simulation because through the activation of these frames the player is reconfigured as a starship captain I argue that it is reasonable to use these frames to see how someone who makes and consumes gagh could feel as if they were reconfigured as Klingon in the process. As in Lancaster's model the inner fantasy layer remains the same, it is the media universe that informs the other layers. When a fan makes gagh the inner fantasy layer could be the entire *Star Trek* heterocosm. This inner fantasy layer could also be a specific series or episode from within the *Star Trek* franchise. If a fan is making gagh they could be making it with a specific version in mind. For example, if a fan is using the version of gagh as seen in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode "A Matter of Honor" in which Klingon cuisine

features prominently then that episode is the inner fantasy layer.

The drama in this case becomes the original food object that exists in the mind of the fan and is based on the dish as it appears on screen. The drama also includes strips of behavior that the fan associates with that food or moment on screen. Not only is it the imagined food object but also the reactions the characters have to the food object. If a fan were making gagh and using "A Matter of Honor" as the inner fantasy layer then the jokes that the Klingons make at the expense of Riker, a human and star fleet officer, when he experiences Klingon food could become part of the frame of drama and as such may be reiterated by the fan in the production and consumption process or the frame of theater.

The script is the recipe. The recipe is the translation and interpretation of the food object from screen and the imagined ideal original into a tangible set of steps. The recipe when viewed as the script encompasses the processes of ingredient negotiation and adaptation, which as discussed earlier are mediated through the individual doing the cooking and consuming. The recipe or processes of interpretation become like the rules in Lancaster's example, they determine the actions that the fan can take in order to complete the task. The recipes or process of interpretation determine what ingredients will be used and through which methods they will be processed.

The theater frame becomes the acts of making and consuming the food objects as interpreted through the frames of drama and script. This frame also includes the reiteration of strips of behavior from the inner fantasy layer. These reiterations of strips of behavior can include saying the lines of characters in the universe or behaving as one believes a character would. As mentioned in chapter II, when eating Dr. Schoen's gummi worm and chocolate syrup gagh interpretation the consumer must "supply the writhing" (K'Tesh 2002). The writhing is part

of the theater frame as is the actual production and consumption of the food adaptation.

The performance is the entirety of the event. This would include the context of creation, the individuals who are both making food and eating it as well as any blogs, websites, or forum posts that communicate the event. When the creator of the blog *Platter* posts the account of their birthday party that blog post is included in the frame of performance along with all of the food, attendees, and decorations.

All five of these frames are surrounded by what Lancaster calls the immersive frame. When all five frames become activated through the interface, in this case the act of eating, an immersive experience can occur. The feeling of immersion is what fans are experiencing when they eat foods from another time or space and then feel as if they have traveled into another world. The sense of being immersed in a realm of fantasy while also being in reality is part of how fan food creations are a way in which fans can actively engage with a text. Lancaster writes that, "Immersion is a virtual state. It is not a virtual reality, but a virtual fantasy."(2001, 83) Fans are not creating these foods to escape from their world but to enhance their lives with acts of meaningful creation. In breaking the creation and consumption of fan food into frames and seeing those frames interact with one another provides a system for understanding *how* fans are textual poachers who take images from popular culture and remix them into creations that create meaningful experiences.

Conclusion

The process of immersion as outlined by Lancaster is a useful tool for theorizing how these types of immersive experiences occur. It should be noted, however, that this section in particular would benefit from the voices and experiences of the fans themselves. The types of sources I have chosen to use for this project are particularly limited when it comes to discussing

how the act of actually eating their fan food creation made them feel or how they behaved while making or eating the food. The lack of participant voice is also the failing of Lancaster's own application of the process of immersion. Not once does he include an account of the internal experience of playing a simulation game. It is only because of sources such as Rosenburg's article that I feel comfortable making the claim that fans do have immersive experiences when they create food adaptations. There is evidence in the fan sources I consulted that active engagement does generate meaningful experiences. The discourse of on screen accuracy also indicates that there is something to be gained by trying to get as close the imaginary original as possible. This evidence suggests to me that the process of immersion is still helpful at this current juncture for examining how fans may be generating experiences of fantasy in reality.

Conclusion

This particular type of mimetic fan practice, "centers on material culture and haptic presence but indicates the value of a framing immateriality, namely the cult world that "can never be apprehended in toto but only approached through...continuous, participatory consumption" (Steinberg 2012, 200 found in Hills, 2014). The creation of fan adaptations that seek to bridge the original text and reality do so not through a desire to forgo reality for the sake of fantasy, but through a process of integrating the original text into everyday life. Due to the affective relationships that fans have with their objects of fandom, Jenkins claims that the texts "become enmeshed in the viewer's own life, gaining significance in relation to when they were first encountered and evoking memories as rich as the series itself "(1992, 69). Making adaptations from prop replicas to fan fiction is part of the creation of this larger significance. A Fan's interpretations of texts are grounded in the fan's individual experience. When a fan actively creates, the original text becomes more intertwined in that fan's interaction with the world. When fans such as the creator of the blog *Platter* are inspired to celebrate an event centered on a show like *Star Trek*, and create an environment filled with their interpretations of the original text they are creating a meaningful and concrete tie to that original text in their everyday life. The desire expressed by some fans for on-screen accuracy in their food creations can result in the sense of actual creation of the original object. This type of "authentic" creation is used as a means to experiences in reality of a world that exists in fantasy. When fans create these moments of experience they are creating significance and meaning that further ties them to the text object of their fandom and in turn tethers that text to their experiences of the world around them.

This project, hopefully, is the starting point for further research into edible mimetic

fandom and text inspired fan culinary creations. This paper is far from a complete account of a multifaceted and oftentimes multilayered part of fan practice. It is but an initial attempt at delving into the creation of impossible foods and does not even scratch the surface when it comes to foods in reality consumed with a fannish intent, the negotiations of foods that have the benefit of established traditions, and food that has been sculpted into an edible likeness of an object from the text. Not to mention the marketing of fan made cookbooks and baked goods and their relationships to officially licensed products. Hopefully this paper will be the first of many that will investigate how food and fandom relate to one another because the discussion of how fans are creating and interacting with food is an integral and under examined part of the conversation surrounding fans and their interactions with material culture. Food is a uniquely powerful medium and to not investigate how fans use food to express their personal fandom is to ignore an important way in which fans connect texts to their actual lives.

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