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Male Cosplay Performance at Fan Cons

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The costumed science fiction, fantasy gaming, or anime fan, dressed as his favorite character, holds a place within the popular imagination as a "true" representation of the fan community, creating an image of this exotic other. That generalized image also contains stereotypes about male fans as being "unmanly" with regard to the understood conception of masculinity in the United States in general and the South in particular. I suggest that through cosplay, the practice of costumed role-play, male fans perform their masculinity in such a way that both acknowledges and subverts the dominant American conceptions while appropriating their power to provide meaning in the context of the fan community. Through participant observation and interviews at MechaCon 3.0 and MechaCon IV in Lafayette, Louisiana, I demonstrate how the performances involved in both the private creation and the public display of cosplay costumes by male fans embody this appropriation and transformation of Southern masculinity to become meaningful to male participants in the fan community.

Nerds, *geeks*, and *media fans* are names given to and often embraced by a voluntary community whose atypical tastes mark its members as different from those of mainstream United States society (Blake 2001:129). Fan culture, the term I use to identify this diverse group, is a community of consent emerging through practice where members enter into and congregate together because of shared interests, including various science fiction movie and television programs, fans of fantasy novels and role-playing games, video game fans, and manga/anime fans. Fan community membership involves certain practices: reading the text with close attention and a mixture of emotional proximity and critical distance; interpretive practices drawn from the realms of artistic, literary, and dramatic criticism; consumer activism asserting the right to make judgments about the direction of the favored text; and a creative nature expressed through fiction, art, filmmaking, filking (writing songs about fan interests through parody), and cosplay. The intense involvement of fans with such "disposable media" violates the bourgeois aesthetics

of mainstream society leading many to view fandom as childish, eccentric, and in some cases deviant. And no image of fandom holds a more poignant place in the socially imagined conception of the fan than that of the costumed media fan – the cosplayer (Jenkins 1992: 227-230, Costello and Moore 2007:127).

Cosplay, defined as "costumed role-play," is the performance of dressing as a particular character from any of the plethora of media that fans enjoy. While fans can and often do wear their costumes to events such as movie showings or to costume parties, the practice of cosplay finds its central importance at fan conventions, or Cons.   As a participatory practice of convention-going, the first recorded instance of cosplay occurred in 1939 at the World Science Fiction Convention when Forrest Ackerman wore a futuristic costume (DragonCon 2007). During a Con, cosplay involves wearing the costume, posing "in character" for photographs, and, should one decide to enter, performing as the character in a skit during a masquerade or skit competition (Broussard 2008).

While fans of both genders cosplay at Cons, this work focuses on the strategies through which male cosplayers perform their masculinity. As Jenkins (1992), Blake (2001), and Hadju (2008) articulate through their analyses, mainstream United States society has deemed male fans to be unmanly due to a perceived submission to one or more popular media franchises (*Star Wars, Star Trek, Lord of the Rings, Dungeons & Dragons*, etc.) that have been deemed ephemeral by culturally-sanctioned analysts, through the cultivation of socially-devalued knowledge relating to the favored franchise(s), and a perceived lack of interest in "manly things" such as sports and sex. I will, however, argue that through the performance of cosplay, male fans acknowledge the existence of traditional, hegemonic masculinity in the United States that excludes male fans from being deemed "manly." Through the appropriation of its conceits and symbols, they reinterpret these in ways that are both meaningful to them as fans and that announce that they are "manly" and "masculine."

Theoretically, I draw upon Pierre Bourdieu's work on the cultural production of taste (1980), Henry Jenkins' ethnographic work on the practices of media fans (1992), and Roger Caillois' work (1961) on play (particularly *mimicry*), which frees play participants from reality through the construction of a temporally transitory but real-at-its-present alternative reality (23), which as Henry Jenkins and others argue, allow fans to (at least within the temporal and spatial boundaries of the Con) create a new reality resonating harmoniously with their shared values (Jenkins 1992: 227-230, Costello and Moore 2007:127). Similarly, I incorporate the concept of symbolic inversion, whereby participants in festival take on roles, both socially and sexually, different and often oppositional to those they have in everyday life, and which while potentially reaffirming traditional hierarchies and gender roles (Babcock 1979, Ware 1995) can potentially undermine those social conventions (Zeeman Davis 1968:131) or at the very least present spaces for the articulation and dissection of concerns about social issues such as gender, sexuality, and racism (Jenkins 1992:283).

Additionally, I incorporate multidisciplinary studies on masculine identity and the performance of masculinity. Scholars like Peter Jackson (1991), Eric Segal (1996), Scott Kiesling (2005), and Athena Wang (2000) argue that masculinity is a social construction and that the form practiced by the dominant group is "hegemonic masculinity." Similarly, James Messerschmidt argues that masculinity (and femininity as well) is a public performance where individuals reproduce behaviors seen as masculine (or feminine) by others in the immediate situation (2004:4). In the United States, hegemonic masculinity, primarily that of Caucasian/Anglo-United States males, promotes dominance over one's self, one's emotions, one's environment, and others. Displays of United States hegemonic masculinity fall into two broad categories: physical ruggedness and sexual prowess. Physical ruggedness incorporates all forms of physical prowess: general strength, being an outdoorsman, martial/military experience, and an active involvement with organized sports. Sports fandom and participation have acquired almost religious status in the United States (Prebish 1984), and as Wes Borucki articulates, the martial arena of college football has become central to masculine identity in the South (Borucki 2003:478). I define sexual prowess as both the hegemonic superiority of male heterosexuality and the interest in, accumulation of, and desire to brag about conquests. Amid the multiplicity of masculinities present in contemporary western society, this hegemonic masculinity that asserts the physical, social, economic, and sexual dominance and prowess of those seeking to call themselves "men" has emerged as the primary social construction of masculinity and implicitly subordinates and marginalizes all other masculinities (Jackson 1991:201). The multiplicity of masculinities described in Jackson's article articulates two important points: that gender is a continuum of practices and attitudes and not a totalizing binary opposition and that the ideal conceptualized by the hegemonic form of masculinity occupies a position at the far end of the spectrum of masculinity and not the entirety of that spectrum.

One group marginalized through the dominant conception of United States hegemonic masculinity is the male nerd, geek, or fanboy. While membership and participation in the fan community is open to anyone, the general conception is that educated, middle class, white males fill the ranks of fandom and that females and non-whites comprise a small minority (Lancaster 2001:xxv). Henry Jenkins describes the popular conception of the male fan as being a brainless consumer enslaved by the media company, who devotes his entire life to the obsessive cultivation of worthless knowledge, possesses no social skills, is desexualized and/or feminized through involvement with the mass media, and cannot separate fantasy from reality (1992:10-13). Michael Blake comments that the marginalization of the socially ostracized in high school, which he terms "geeks," includes abuses that range from "petty humiliations to vicious assaults" (2001:127). These assaults, he argues, often go unreported because of the shame of victimization, perpetuating a silent acceptance of the hegemonic conception of male fans as "weak" and "unmanly" (2001:127-128).

Like Jenkins, David Hadju (2008) argues that many of these stereotypes found an early articulation in Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocents* (1954), when the psychiatrist argued that reading comic books led to juvenile delinquency. While most of Wertham's condemnations center on criminal behavior, he lists homosexuality – a violation of the hegemonic dominance of male heterosexuality – as a consequence emerging from interaction with comic books (1954:118). As Hadju notes, while the academic community challenged and contradicted Wertham's methodology and findings, the popular appeal of his work and a televised Senate hearing in which he was a central expert led to the creation of the Comics Magazine Association of United States's Comics Code which for several decades kept the content of comic books suitable only for young children (2008: 170, 290-292). The economic effect (loss of profit and distribution outlets) on comic book publishers then was similar to the effect of video game publishers who defy or refuse to carry symbols denoting ratings by the Electronic Software Rating Board. More recently, film critic Robin Wood (1986) argued that the rereading of media texts by fans is infantile and regressive, producing nothing, whereas rereading of high art produces new insights. Comedic performances, such as Triumph the Insult Comedy Dog's mocking *Star Wars* fans, describe the male fan as being "lonely men who have never even had sex" and who willingly wait "days, even months for just a taste of George Lucas' table scraps" (Milk and Cookies.com).

The stereotypes presented in such cultural discourses argue that male fans are "unmanly" due to a perceived submission to another and a perceived lack of interest in or aptitude for "manly pursuits". These interpretations of the actions and attitudes of male fans describe male fans as transgressing the aesthetics of hegemonic masculinity. According to the logic presented within the stereotype, male fans prefer to be indoors watching cartoons or movies or playing video games or *Dungeons & Dragons* instead of being outside hunting, fishing, or playing or watching sports. Similarly, adult male fans perform acts in public that are normally performed indoors by children, such as, when Triumph the Insult Comic Dog comments on a "rousing game of *Star Wars Risk* or *Stratego*," which is "normally played indoors by twelve-year-olds." Such transgressions subvert the "natural" understanding of what is masculine and what is proper behavior (Jenkins 1992:16-17). As Pierre Bourdieu comments, "The most intolerable thing for those who regard themselves as the possessors of legitimate culture is the sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates shall be separated (1980:253)." While the interests of male fans transgress the hegemonic ideal of masculinity leads mainstream society to characterize the male fan as "unmanly," through my research, I will argue that through cosplay, male fans challenge this assertion that they are unmanly and recast the hegemonic definition of masculinity into something subservient to fan culture in general.

This is interview and fieldwork-based research. I conducted my participant observation field work at MechaCon 3.0 and IV in Lafayette, LA on August 3-5, 2007 and on August 1-3, 2008, respectively, as part of ongoing research into fan performance. During those two weekends, I conducted a total of six interviews

with male attendees at MechaCon as part of a larger group of eighteen interviews. Roughly two-thirds of my interlocutors are female; similarly, my daily visual survey of attendees suggests a similar female – to – male distribution. My male interlocutors range in age from eighteen to twenty-seven. Being a member of the fan community, researching at a Con proved both rewarding and challenging. I wish to take a brief moment to thank my primary interlocutor Mary, a respected member of the community who travels the Con circuit judging cosplay competitions and holding panel discussions on cosplay and costuming strategies, for introducing me to all of the individuals I interviewed both at the Cons and outside of them. Having conducted my work under the auspices of the Institutional Review Board, I have given all interlocutors random pseudonyms to protect their identities. I wish to note that due to IRB constrictions, I did not interview anyone under the age of eighteen even though teenagers comprised a large portion of attendees at MechaCon both years.

As this article focuses on the strategies through which male cosplayers perform their masculinity, I do not include discussions regarding the performances of androgynous characters, *crossplay* – cosplaying as a character of the opposite gender – a practice that both male and female cosplayers participate in, or any strategies and practices of female cosplay performance. This work also does not include other genres of fan performance such as writing fan fiction, producing fan art, and making fan films. One such omitted genre, often analyzed by scholars, is that of "slash,"/"yaoi," or homo-erotic, fan fiction; I omit slash fiction from my analysis for two reasons. The first is that the production of fan fiction in general and slash in particular is largely confined to internet websites or to fanzines (fan-made magazines) and not a performance genre at a Con. Second, slash fiction is largely written by female fans, and as this work focuses on performance by male fans, it falls outside the realm of this text (Bacon-Smith 1986, Jenkins 1997: 175-177, Stasi 2006: 119-120). Discussions of such performances and genres are for other works at other times.

General Theory of Cosplay

Before delving into the specific strategies male cosplayers use in reclaiming their masculinity through performance, I wish to present certain assumptions that will be made in this paper for analytical purposes and to set forth a general theory of cosplay as both play and symbolic inversion. The first assumption is that cosplay occurs specifically at a Con; while fans do wear their cosplay costumes to parties and other events, cosplay proper is an embodied discourse "spoken" through performance within the spatial and temporal boundaries of the fan Con. While there are as many discourses spoken as there are speakers, one common theme of these discourses is that cosplay at a Con functions as a shibboleth – a symbol used to identify a person as a member of a group. For communities of consent, the use of clothing as a shibboleth connotes willing and willful participation and desire to be a community member often due to the time, expense, and attention to detail required to manufacture a costume (De Caro and Jordan 1984, Michael 1988).

The importance of this rests in my second assumption: The Con is a display event where fans announce their membership in the fan community through the performance of fandom specific actions (Abrahams 1982:304): role-playing, gaming, engaging in discussions about the texts, and cosplaying. The image of the costumed fan is a powerful symbol both within fandom and in United States society at large of what makes this consent community unique and/or different, serving, therefore, as an important point of entry for the study of fandom, fans, and their beliefs. While some may wish to equate a Con with other costume events that share certain similarities (historical reenactments, Renaissance Festivals, etc.), and while cosplay at a Con certainly falls into the spectrum of costume events, I wish to draw an important distinction that the Con is not marketed as a tourist event open for the general public to come and watch the performance. Such tourist events often draw a sharp line between performer and audience, and no such division exists at a Con. Events hosted by the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) provide similar opportunities to perform communal membership as a fan Con; however, members of the SCA attempt to re-create the arts and skills of a general era as well as the social memories associated with that era and not perform as a specific character from a text known to members of the community.

Here I analyze cosplay as a form of mimetic play incorporating symbolic inversion that transforms the social world while incorporating the individuals involved into the group (Kapchan 1995:480, Michael 1998). As Roger Caillois says of mimicry, "it consists in the actor's fascinating the spectator, while avoiding an error that might lead the spectator to break the spell (1961:23)." As Mark, a nineteen-year-old male of Asian ancestry says, "You stay in character. People expect that. You're who you're dressed as. You're not you." Rocky articulates similar sentiments with the words, "I'm not me here. I'm Sephiroth. That's what's important." While cosplayers see themselves as performers, the performance does not occur without the audience (many of whom are other cosplayers); therefore, the performance arises from the interplay whereby all present enact the roles of performer-spectator simultaneously. This simultaneous performance and interaction allows the mimicry play of cosplay to create "true social bonds" through the active participation and interpretation of both the fan audience and the fan performer that frees all present during the performance from the limitations of the prohibitions and clearly delineated role-boundaries imposed by cultural hierarchies (Babcock 1978:21, Ware 2001:225) while generating a sense of "what utopia would feel like" (Dyer 1985:222) and providing an ecstatic release that allows for the experiencing of childlike pleasures in a community that shares the deeply held values of all involved (Sadler 1969:3-5, Jenkins 1992:283).

Cosplay performance incorporates many symbolic inversions. These include female as male, male as female, human as anthropomorphic animal, young as old, old as young, pacifist as warrior, human as monster/undead/elf/dwarf/orc, and human as robot/android/alien. These inversions both affirm and challenge traditional notions about identity, race, and gender (Zeeman Davis 1968, Babcock 1979, Ware 1995). I argue that this initial affirmation acknowledges the existence

of the generally accepted, socially created fiction of proper behavior before the interpretation of that behavior becomes transformed into something else through fan performance. In this case, mainstream U.S. society's dominant, hegemonic conceptions of masculinity and its stereotypical conceptions regarding the gender and sexuality of members of fan culture become subservient to the values of fan culture. Fans incorporate and play with gendered conceptions that affirm the existence and cultural value of these concepts but also challenge their innate worth and suggest new, alternate models that provide meaning to the members of the fan community.

Physical Ruggedness

Physical ruggedness is one of the central traits of United States hegemonic masculinity. To be a man is to be strong, independent, and rugged. Weakness is decried through insult and mockery. As Deborah James' research reveals, male insults against other males link weakness with being "like a woman," and therefore, unmanly (1998:406). Ann Ferguson articulates, if one male wishes to show "supreme contempt for another," that male will accuse the other male of being a girl – an insult that places the insulted male outside the "in-group" of males and outside of the zone allowing for the access of social power and camaraderie that being "male" encompasses (2004:155). In choosing characters to cosplay, male fans often choose characters presented as being physically strong, rugged, and as having strong martial and/or military connection through which to perform their own masculinity.

Attending any Con will provide a plethora of such physical characters from the Jedi Knights/Sith Lords of *Star Wars,* to soldiers from various video games like *Metal Gear Solid,* to knights, samurai, and gun-wielding warriors depicted in comic books, video games, and manga/anime. Swordsmen are popular characters for male cosplayers, and the sword, like other weapons, has a history of being seen as a symbol of masculinity and masculine pursuits. Two of my informants, Brad and Rocky, cosplayed as Sephiroth, the villain from the video game *Final Fantasy VII.* Sephiroth, who stands nearly half a foot taller than the protagonist (Cloud Strife), has waist length silver hair, emerald eyes, dresses from head to toe in black leather, and wields a six-foot-long katana known as the *Masamune,* is the greatest general and most powerful warrior in the game world. Another of my informants, Harold, cosplayed as Auron, the gruff, silent Clint Eastwood-meets-samurai swordsman from the game *Final Fantasy X.*

None of these three are exceptionally tall and all have average builds. None possess any military experience, and Harold alone has martial arts training. All choose similar reasons for cosplaying as these swordsmen. Brad chuckled before responding of Sephiroth, "He's cool. I mean, he's evil and all, but he's cool-evil. Everybody's scared of him, because he can pretty much kill everyone with one swing of his sword. He's got a pretty face, but when you kick ass like he does, doesn't matter." Rocky replied of Sephiroth, "He's got power. He's in control. Even when he goes psycho and tries to destroy the world, everything he does is

calm and collected unlike Cloud who's all moody and brooding." And Harold says of Auron, "He's just got an aura of power – calm, cool, skilled."

Bob, a nineteen-year-old Caucasian male about five-feet-seven-inches tall with a stocky build, dressed as Naruto Uzumaki, the titular character from the manga and anime series *Naruto,* which depicts the quest of a hyperactive teenage ninja who seeks to prove to his clan that he is the most powerful. He kept his dark brown flattop hidden beneath a spiky blonde wig, held vertically in place by a piece of cloth with a metallic plate in the front and tied in the back in the style of martial artists. He wore a short-sleeved orange shirt over a long-sleeved black shirt that has an appearance similar to a turtleneck, orange pants, and blue sandals. Bob does not have any martial arts training, but he chooses to play as this young ninja because, as he says, "I feel like him sometimes. I get excited. I say dumb stuff. I mess up. Naruto does too, but things still work out at the end. Plus, he's a ninja. He's strong, powerful, he can kick butt in a way I never will."

Another of my interlocutors displays a similar appropriation of traditionally masculine symbols for fan purposes but places a regionally specific twist on both cosplay and this appropriation. Ray, who stands about six-feet-two-inches tall and has a powerfully resonant voice emanating from a sturdy frame, dressed as Boba Fett from *Star Wars*. A twenty-seven-year-old attorney from New Orleans, Ray replaced the battle-worn gray, red, green, and yellow coloration of the Mandalorian bounty hunter's armor with shimmering gold highlighted with black lines and black fleur-de-lis figures on the helmet and shoulders where the Fett clan image appeared. Colored to display his "devotion" to both *Star Wars* and the New Orleans Saints football team, Ray tells me that, "I'm not hunting Corellian slime [Han Solo] but a Super Bowl victory." Ray and two other members of the Blast Alpha Garrison attended MechaCon while on break from their duty "patrolling the levees to make sure that no Rebel scum bomb them and blame the Empire like they did during Katrina."

Here, fan creativity blends symbols of traditional masculinity (the hunter, militaristic violence, and sports fandom) with a fan's obsession over details and accuracy in costuming and textual knowledge, and a knowledge of and willingness to humorously engage stories that circulated in the wake of a tragedy. Through this synthesis of dominant and subjugated valuations, Ray not only appropriates symbols and traits of traditional masculinity but also incorporates notions of the masculine "analytical" mind in a way that displays the creativity prized by members of fan culture. This is accomplished through the synthesis of fan icons with a localized meaning that engages both general issues of masculinity (synthesizing football, hunting, and fandom) with regionally specific concerns such as the cause of the levee breaks after Hurricane Katrina (Jackson 1991: 200-202, Jenkins 1992: 279-280).

Construction methods, while used by male and female cosplayers, also provide a method for male fans to display their masculinity. While the sewing of a costume calls into mind feminine domestic skills, male cosplayers pride themselves on their sewing abilities and on their ability to work with more difficult and dangerous construction materials such as fiberglass and metal. For the head wrap of his Naruto

costume, Bob cut a piece of sheet metal to the right size with a welding torch and then shaped the resulting rectangle with a grinder. He says, "That impressed my friends – even those who think I'm not cool because I don't drink or like football. But here I was, this 'little cartoon boy,' doing 'stuff real men do,' as my friend Rob likes to 'joke'. And I was like, 'yeah, I do this stuff, but I do them for what I want – what I think is cool." Rocky, who fashioned his *Masamune* from fiberglass says, "I like working with fiberglass because it's dangerous. I wear a mask and all, but it's still dangerous and you got to plan, be focused, in control."

Sexual Prowess

Sexual prowess, pride in sexual conquests, and a strong libido are also seen as "natural" in traditional masculinity. To be truly masculine one must also be sexually attractive to women (Jackson 1991:201-203, Lips 2008:37). Engaging in heterosexual activity and exhibiting pride in sexual conquests are ways for men in United States to perform their maleness, displaying attitudes commensurate with those of the hegemonic definition of masculinity (Lips 2008:292-293). Cultural discourses, often comedic performances, present the stereotype of the male fan as an individual lacking both sexual desire and prowess. Henry Jenkins references a *Saturday Night Live* sketch where, at a *Star Trek* convention, William Shatner asks a Trekkie, "Have you ever kissed a girl?" (10). Triumph the Insult Comic Dog describes *Star Wars* fans as "...thirty-five-year-old men. Lonely men. Men who have never even had sex – not even with a Catholic priest," whose only sexual partner is a hand, and who are incapable of sexually pleasing a girl.

Contrary to the comedic cultural discourses discussed above, male fans do express an interest in sex and choose characters through which they can display their sexuality. Rocky admits sheepishly that he chooses to cosplay as Sephiroth because, "he's got way more fangirls than Cloud does." Rocky's statement that he chose to cosplay as Sephiroth because of the many "fangirls" displays a desire to been as sexually attractive to females; when I asked how important the "fangirls" were, Rocky replied haltingly, "They are – but they aren't. I mean – you know – it's – it's just [he sighs in frustration]. It's not the most important thing, but it matters, because it makes me feel good." Harold offers a similar statement of Auron, "Fangirls love to put him with all the chicks in the game, so I get to be kind of popular with them."

Ray also admits that Boba Fett's perceived sexual prowess drew him to the character. "He's cool, don't get me wrong. I mean, he's a bounty hunter. He travels the galaxy, stalking humans for money. Not nice, but a cool job and awesome armor. But he's got to be a ladies' man. You've seen *Jedi*, right?" I assert that I have many times. "Well," he continues, "you remember Jabba's palace, right? After Oola gets fed to the Rancor, you remember that little shot where they show Boba flirting with the three background singers? Han Solo may be a space pirate who gets a princess, but 'the Fett' gets three women – three women. Man, that's cool." When asked how that affects him and his performance, Ray laughs and shakes his head, "You got to know what it does for you. I mean, knowing how bad

Boba is just makes you feel cocky. I can easily walk with his swagger all day – even though I get tired, hot, and sweaty from this costume." While Rocky and Harold define the importance of sexual attractiveness in relation to the perception and reception of his cosplay performance by female fans, Ray defines this importance as being more of an internal identification that allows him to take a traditionally masculine attitude believed to be divorced from male fans and transform it into a creative drive that fuels his performance, encouraging him to continue wearing the costume even when heat and exhaustion make it uncomfortable.

By choosing characters that display traits traditionally associated with masculinity, Brad, Rocky, Bob, Harold, and Ray, like other male fans, appropriate those traits – such as physical ruggedness and sexual prowess – and recast them in ways meaningful to them as fans. Such displays, Eric Segal argues, prove central to United States masculine identity, such that males who do not display an interest in such activities are denied male camaraderie and even the right to be termed masculine (1996:635). Douglas Holt and Craig Thompson argue that men purchase things such as Harley-Davidson motorcycles and "mountain man retreats" so as to display and perform their own masculinity as being "rugged," "raucous," and "self-reliant" (2004:426). Through this appropriation of traits and attitudes traditionally defined as masculine and through practices that are physical and "dangerous" in nature, male cosplayers wrest the masculinity stripped from them by the popular conception of the fan (as someone who has neither the interest nor the aptitude for "masculine activities"), reclaiming and reshaping it so that it opens to that which it seemed to exclude: male fans are recast as being gendered masculine individuals.

During cosplay, male fans symbolically invert the "natural order" of masculine dominance, making traditionally masculine symbols and traits subservient to the traditionally subjugated and marginalized male fan (Davis 1968:127-128, Jackson 1991: 201-202). Through this mimetic display of "traditional masculinity" that serves as an embodied discourse announcing membership in the fan community, the male cosplayer, like Prince Adam of Eternia holding aloft the Sword of Grayskull and becoming He-Man, transforms into a being that Roger Caillois describes as possessing "all types of terrifying and creative supernatural powers" (1961:87, see also Sherman 1997) through which he becomes empowered to challenge the negative assertion that the he is neither masculine nor a sexual being.

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