Think back to July 20, 2007. Do you remember where you were and what you were doing at 11:59 PM? For many, the answer would be “I have no idea” or “Probably sleeping” and there would be no clear collective answer. But ask a Harry Potter fan, and the result will likely change. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the final book in the Harry Potter series, was released on July 21, 2007, and most bookstores had midnight release parties the night before. In Potter fandom – the name for the community of fans of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* book series and its associated films, the collective memory of the night of July 20th involves costumes, the smell of books, long lines, and a strange mix of excitement and sadness.

Although the study of collective memory is well established, and fandom studies as a discipline is eminently suited to the exploration of collective memory, only a handful of scholars have done research in the area of fandom-specific collective memory. In this paper, I will examine Harry Potter fan-website (or “fansite”) owner Melissa Anelli’s 2008 book *Harry, A History* in the context of fandom and collective memory studies. I will argue that the book represents an artifact of and helps to facilitate the creation of fannish collective memory. I will first explore the literature regarding both collective memory and fandom studies before providing a background summary of the book. I will next analyze the book as an artifact and facilitator of fannish collective memory based on the criteria established in my review of collective memory literature. My method of analysis is a close reading and rhetorical/thematic analysis of the text of Anelli’s book. To begin, I shall look at the literature regarding collective memory studies.
According to Zelizer (1995), collective memory is defined as “recollections that are instantiated beyond the individual by and for the collective” (p. 214). In collective memory, these recollections are determined not by individuals alone but are instead created by the group. Among the characteristics of collective memory that Zelizer (1995) highlights are its processural nature, meaning that it is an ongoing rather than finite activity; its partiality, meaning that “(no) single memory contains all that we know, or could know, about any given event, personality, or issue” (p. 224); that it is “simultaneously particularistic and universal,” meaning that whilst a memory can have a particular meaning for one person or group it can have a different or more general meaning for the wider collective (p. 230); its usability, meaning that the collective is able to use the memories it produces for social, cultural, and political purposes; and its materiality, meaning that it “exists in the world rather than in a person’s head,” embodied in artifacts such as “monuments, diaries, fashion trends, television retrospectives, museum openings, and fashion shows” (p. 232). These characteristics are important because they form a useful rubric for evaluating objects or artifacts to determine whether or not one can classify them as artifacts of collective memory – which is exactly my goal in this paper, i.e. to evaluate the book *Harry, A History* and analyze it an artifact of and which facilitates collective memory for the Potter fandom social collective.

Pierre Nora (1989) defines *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory, as places or things in which people store memory as history because there is no longer true memory. “*Lieux de mémoire* originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills because such activities no longer occur naturally” (Nora, 1989, p. 12). Nora’s *lieux de
mémoire are “moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned,” objects which refer to their context rather than live in it (Nora, 1989, p. 12). Nora says that “as traditional memory disappears, we feel obliged… to collect remains” (1989, p. 13). Although *Harry, A History* is not itself a physical artifact of Potter fandom, it is nonetheless a collection or archive of memories of fannish activities. Nora also notes that the selection of lieux de mémoire is strategic, through the choice of which samples and examples to highlight and represent (1989, p. 17), and they “are created by a play of memory and history” because there is “a will to remember” (p. 19). Additionally, Nora’s “lieux de mémoire only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications” (1989, p. 19). This is significant for the purposes of this study because in a community as diverse as the fandom community, a site of memory must be able to be many things to many people.

The concept of “prosthetic memory,” suggested by Landsberg (2004), is explained by Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) to be a product of the historically- and culturally-specific nature of memory as situated in modern society with its mass media technologies. They are named “prosthetic” memories because they are not gained via lived experience but instead “are derived from engagement with a mediated representation” – for example, by watching a film or television series (as cited in Blair et al., 2010, p. 11-12). This concept is relevant to this study because fan communities share prosthetic memories – memories created while engaging with the text (whether it is a film, television show, or book), memories created while engaging with each other online, or memories created while engaging with texts such as Anelli’s book that provide narratives of fannish experiences, etc. The prosthetic memory is not the memory of doing the reading, in other words. In the case of a prosthetic memory gained while reading the *Harry
Potter series, it might mean a shared prosthetic memory of visiting the wizarding school Hogwarts. Considering that Hogwarts is fictional, one clearly cannot have a real memory of visiting a wizarding school called Hogwarts somewhere in rural Scotland – but the fandom collective shares a prosthetic memory of Hogwarts based on how Rowling describes it in the series. Likewise, fans who were not able to attend conventions could develop prosthetic memories of doing so based on their mediated interactions in online communities with fans who were able to attend them. The book *Harry, A History* (Anelli, 2008) provides another medium through which mediated prosthetic memories can be developed.

Bodnar (1992) defines public memory as “a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future” (p. 15). These public memories are created through two kinds of cultural expressions: official and vernacular. Official cultural expression is born “in the concerns of cultural leaders or authorities at all levels of society” (p. 13) and it “presents the past on an abstract basis of timelessness and sacredness” (p. 14). By contrast, vernacular culture “represents an array of specialized interests that are grounded in parts of the whole. They are diverse and changing and can be reformulated from time to time by the creation of new social units” (p. 14). According to Bodnar, “Public memory speaks primarily about the structure of power in society” (p. 15).

The interplay of “official” and “vernacular” classification when it comes to fannish collective memory is interesting when one considers questions of power – within the wider public collective fans are a minority and do have the power to create official memory narratives, but within fan communities, there are powerful narratives. This was especially true in Potter fandom in the period of time that the book *Harry, A History* (Anelli, 2008) covers, when the fandom was smaller relative to its size today. Its activity was taking place more centrally over a
handful of message boards and on LiveJournal, and individual fans were able to build groups of friends and followers and achieve the status of “Big Name Fan,” (BNF) meaning that they were generally well-known and that their fannish works (such as fanfic – stories written by fans about the characters and settings in the texts they are fans of – and fanart – art created by fans based on the texts of which they are fans) were likely to gain many views and accolades. These BNFs were also often the fans who were running the fansites and message boards where fannish activity was taking place, or would use their popularity to help launch new fansites, gaining them an even more privileged place in the fandom hierarchy. If and when these BNFs choose to tell their stories, do these narratives then qualify as “official?” This paper will explore that question in further detail.

Nostalgia is distinct from both memory and history. In its ideal form, history records events as they happened (how often the discipline achieves this in an objective manner is a subject for a series of other papers); collective memory is how “a culture or a community comes to understand the events of the past” (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2000, p. 420). By contrast, “nostalgia distorts the past for the sake of affect and is more culturally specific and normative” (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2000, p. 421, emphasis original). Nostalgic views of the past are inherently idealized views – how it was before is implicitly better than how it is now. According to Geraghty (2014), “nostalgia not only represents a longing for the past, it is also manifested as dissatisfaction for the present” (p. 163). He characterizes nostalgia as active agent, “exerting a shaping influence on the past and present; bringing the two periods of an individual’s memory together, making a new and more fulfilling experience of history and the possibilities it holds for the future” (Geraghty, 2014, p. 164). Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles describe the power of nostalgia as a political and rhetorical tool “because of its emotional resonance with an audience and
because of the identification it creates between political leaders and their audiences” (2000, p. 421). In fandom, relations between BNFs and the rank-and-file fans could often resemble those between a political leader and her constituents. In many ways, Anelli’s (2008) book is an exercise in nostalgia, pointing to an earlier time in fandom and invoking it as the good old days. How then does this affect its capacity to act as an artifact of collective memory or to facilitate the creation of collective memory for Potter fandom?

The discipline of fandom studies explores the community of media fans and the relationships they develop with each other and the source material of which they are fans. Scholarly interest in studying fandom originated from a desire to look at the collective action taken by fan communities to “form interpretive communities that in their subcultural cohesion evaded the preferred and intended meanings” intended by those in power in media and in many ways in society in general (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007, p. 2). As the discipline evolved, the focus of most research in the area shifted from what Gray, et al. (2007) refer to as the “Fandom is Beautiful” stage (p. 3) in which defense of fandom as a legitimate subculture featured strongly in many works to a stage more focused on fan output and which explored how the fannish subculture fit into mainstream culture (p. 6). They identify a third wave of fandom studies – its current incarnation – in which there is an increased focus on “investigation of fandom as part of the fabric of our everyday lives,” through which “third wave work aims to capture fundamental insights into modern life” as a whole, not just with regards to fans themselves (p. 9). So, then, studying the collective of fannish society can be useful for the insights it can provide into the workings of the public collective as a whole. In the same way, studying the collective memory of fans within their collective society can provide useful insights.
into the way collective memory functions within the wider sphere of collective and public memory studies in less specific communities.

Although the collective memory of fandom is a lesser-explored aspect of fandom studies, some work in the area has been done. Citing a study he conducted in 1991 with another researcher, Jenkins (2013) wrote in his book *Textual Poachers* about having interviewed people who remembered watching the television series *Batman* as children: “Remembering *Batman* evoked images of a personal past and also of the intertextual network of 1960s popular culture” (p. 35). Jenkins describes a number of shared memories between the people he and Spigel, his coauthor for the 1991 research, had interviewed for their study. This shows that collective memories of fannish activities such as watching a television show do exist, and suggests that such collective memories are in some way a part of the fan experience.

Another television show studied in this context is the seminal British science fiction show *Doctor Who*, which began its first run in 1963, went on indefinite hiatus in 1989, and was then briefly resurrected for a television movie in 1993 before finally coming back to television with the same continuity in 2005. Still running in 2015 after celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2013, the show provides a unique opportunity to explore collective memory of a text that has been firmly established in the public’s mind for decades yet is still evolving. Emphasizing the social framing of artifacts of collective memory which fans created and consumed to commemorate both the text and production history of *Doctor Who*, Hills (2014) explored how fan-written accounts of their experiences in fandom, both autobiographical and semi-fictionalized (the latter of which he terms “fanfac,” a riff on the fandom-preferred term for fan fiction, which is “fanfic”), draw on fannish collective memory as well as help to produce it and mediate it. Hills (2014) argues that fannish collective memory, which he refers to as “fan-cultural memory,”

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draws on “a sense of shared recognition” (p. 35). He looks at a series of fanfac works produced by Doctor Who fans and points out common elements among them all, arguing that this represents the collective memory of Doctor Who among its fans. Hills’ (2014) works of “fanfac” represent material artifacts of collective memory which are subject to ongoing negotiation due to the nature of Doctor Who and its fandom and which are both partial to the experiences and context of those who created them and usable for the fannish collective as a whole. I will argue that Anelli’s (2008) Harry, A History, functions as such for Harry Potter fandom.

Television is not the only medium which fandom researchers have explored in the context of collective memory, of course. Hunt (2011) explored how memory narratives are circulated and used in film fan culture as well as the role of nostalgia within those narratives. Hunt (2011) argues that, using memory narratives, “fan magazines recycle and reiterate popular histories of film, with the extensive detailing of anecdotes and histories of productions serving to fix certain texts and canonical, cult or classic film artefacts” and that nostalgia is used in these narratives to mediate between the text and the audience and provide a resonance between the collective memories presented in the magazines and “the activities and discourses of fans as they engage with film” (p. 99). Geraghty (2014) says that “nostalgia and memory are bound up in the creation of a contemporary fan identity” (p. 3). This kind of scholarly work is relevant to this study since as previously discussed, I will in this paper explore how the use of nostalgia in Harry, A History (Anelli, 2008) affects its capacity to mediate fannish collective memory.

Collective memory must be processural, partial, particularistic and universal, usable, and material (Zelizer, 1995). An artifact may function as a lieu de mémoire or site of memory, in which a social collective stores its memories because they are afraid they will lose them if they do not. Collective memory may be official or vernacular (Bodnar, 1992) and one may acquire a
prosthetic memory through mediated representation (Landsberg, 2004). All of these attributes of collective memory can be applied in fandom studies in the study of artifacts of fannish collective memory. Just as the study of fandom social groups provides insights for the wider field of cultural studies, so too can the study of fannish collective memory provide insights into the wider field of collective memory. Hills’ (2014) concept of “fanfac” is a prime example of a material artifact of collective memory, and works of fanfac are often fueled by nostalgia, through which their readers connect to the work. I will discuss all of these elements in relation to Anelli’s (2008) book *Harry, A History*.

**Commemorating Harry Potter Fandom: *Harry, A History***

In November, 2008, it had been almost a year and a half since the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the final book in the wildly successful Harry Potter series. The fandom was still going strong: there were still movies to be produced and released, and the cessation of the production of new source material is often less of a hindrance to fannish activity than people outside of fandom might think it would be. To add to this, Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling was (and continues to be still in 2015) in the habit of periodically releasing tidbits of information about the characters, plot, and world of Harry Potter that did not make it into the books. For example, through the website Pottermore.com (of which I am a member), an interactive site which allows users to play through the story with interactive reading and games, Rowling has released new information about characters, plots, and the wizarding world. Additionally, she has disclosed information about her writing process and why she made certain storytelling decisions. Between the films, periodic bits of new information from Rowling, and general residual enthusiasm, the fandom was in no danger of being forgotten.
Still, there was no organized or centralized record, as such, of Potter fandom history. In various corners of the Internet it was possible to find accounts of pieces of the history, recorded in the LiveJournals and blogs of fans, chronicled in their Flickr streams, or mentioned in authors’ notes or comments on fanfics. There was a sense of a shared, collective “Potter fandom” memory because there were things that “everyone” had done – midnight book release parties, standing in line for film tickets, putting together costumes for Halloween or perhaps for a convention, discovering Wizard Rock (the name given by Potter fandom to Potter-specific “filk,” or fandom-related music) for the first time, etc. There was not, however, a well-known or widely-published piece of fanfac, to borrow Hills’ (2014) term, regarding this collective memory.

Into this breach strode Melissa Anelli, longtime webmistress of one of the most successful Harry Potter fansites on the Internet, The Leaky Cauldron. In 2008, she published a book called *Harry, A History* (its title is a play on one of Harry’s Hogwarts textbooks). It serves both as a personal recollection of her time at the center of Harry Potter fandom – she even was able to interview J.K. Rowling on more than one occasion – and as a narrative of the collective memory that all Potter fans share of the years leading up to the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. While some of Anelli’s (2008) personal recollections, such as her repeated personal contact with J.K. Rowling, are not memories that all fans share, her stories of attending conventions and staying up all night to read the newest book and maybe-accidentally getting embroiled in ship wars (fights over which characters should/will become romantically involved) are ones that are common to most fans who would be likely to pick up her book. Even Anelli’s interviews with Rowling are likely to spark some kind of prosthetic memory in many of Anelli’s readers, as they were well-publicized within the fandom and a source of significant drama and angst in one memorable instance (2008). Thus the book functions as both a repository of
collective memory and a medium for the creation of collective memory. I shall now explore how it does so.

**Analysis**

Anelli’s *Harry, A History* (2008) represents a material artifact of fannish collective memory because by providing a chronicle of years of fandom history, it also both records and helps to create fans’ collective memory of that period of Harry Potter fandom. Although it is told through the lens of Anelli’s experiences and some of those experiences are ones which she shares with very few other fans, the majority of her personal anecdotes are ones which Potter fans are likely to be able to find analogues to in their own experiences. Even some of Anelli’s most “exclusive” experiences are often connected to or themselves are experiences which her readers will have had mediated experience of from their own perspective. Even if they did not have a previously-formed mediated memory of these events, Anelli’s narration of them allows her readers to form a prosthetic memory of them from a more immediate or involved perspective.

For example, in 2005, Anelli (2008) and another Potter fansite owner, Emerson Spartz of Mugglenet, were given the opportunity to interview J.K. Rowling. The climate in the fandom at the time was colored by long-running “ship wars,” or conflicts within the fandom between different factions which believed that different characters should or would become romantically involved over the course of the series. The main conflict was between those who wanted to see Harry get together with his female best friend, Hermione Granger, and those who wanted to see Hermione get together with Harry’s other best friend, Ron Weasley. Spartz and Anelli both belonged to the Ron/Hermione camp, and in 2005 after the publication of the fifth book in the series, to most in the fandom it had become clear that Rowling was as well. When the question came up in the interview, Spartz referred to those who wanted Harry and Hermione to get
together as “delusional.” Anelli’s and Rowling’s reactions could probably best be described as amused (there was laughter, a fact which would be a major point of contention in the ensuing drama) but reluctant to explicitly agree. Rowling suggested that perhaps delusional was not the right word but that she felt it was eminently clear after the events of Book 5 that yes, it was going to be Ron and Hermione. Between Spartz’s comments and the reactions of Anelli and Rowling, the interview shortly became known in the Potter fandom as “The Interview” and was the cause of much consternation and drama. Though Anelli (2008) talks about The Interview from her personal perspective and tells the story as she remembers it, her readers – as long as they were in fandom in 2005 – will have their own memories of The Interview which they will be able to connect to Anelli’s.

This is an example of both the partiality and the particularistic/universal aspect of collective memory, as illustrated by *Harry, A History*. The book is partial and particular in that it is framed by and represents the experiences of Melissa Anelli, a youngish adult white woman who ran a successful Harry Potter fansite and had cultivated some privileged relationships because of that. But it is universal in that some readers will have or will, through their reading of the book, be able to create “prosthetic” memory of some of the events that Anelli (2008) describes, while many of her stories simply don’t involve the same amount of privilege – many fans attended conventions over the years, and even more attended midnight release parties. And while perhaps most readers would associate positive memory with the anecdotes related in *Harry, A History*, given the polarizing nature of some of them (particularly The Interview and her account of earlier ship wars-related occurrences), there is a subset of the fandom collective that will associate at least a portion of the memory presented in the book with negative personal memories. Thus the book functions as both as an account of the collective memory of what
Potter fandom was like during a certain period of time from a particular perspective but also as a medium through which the universal collective memory of Potter fandom is constructed, similar to the process Hills (2014) describes taking place in Doctor Who fandom around works of fanfic.

This process of collective memory construction is why the book represents a piece of usable memory: it provides a sociocultural record of nearly a decade of activity by a vibrant and diverse subculture, and as described above, different members of the subculture can look to this book and allow it to spark their own recollections. Even with the focus/framing of Anelli’s (2008) personal experiences around the more general historical elements, the book provides an important record of what happened in the heyday of Potter fandom, particularly if one is looking for the proverbial view from the top. Additionally, Anelli (2008) takes time to interview a prominent anti-Potter protestor, providing insight into the reasons behind the arguments made by protestors like her. These insights could be useful to Potter fans in the future if they find themselves in discussion or debate with people who are trying to suppress the Potter books/films or other works like them.

Finally, the book is not, despite being a published book, finite. In addition to being translated into several languages other than English, in 2014, an expanded e-book version of the book was released. The expanded version of the book included bonus content such as the full text of Anelli’s solo interview with J.K. Rowling (not to be confused with The Interview), photos, videos, an expanded chapter, and more. As such, Harry, A History, is an example of the ongoing processual nature of collective memory.

Harry, A History (Anelli, 2008) functions as a lieu de mémoire (Nora, 1989) because it is a repository of memories – both ones which are particular for Anelli and will end up as prosthetic memories for her readers and ones which are more universally applicable to the
fandom as a whole. The strategic choice which Nora (1989) speaks of is evident in the very structure of the book, which contains two parallel chronological timelines, and in the choices Anelli makes regarding which stories to tell and how to tell them.

These are the ways in which *Harry, A History* (Anelli, 2008) meets Zelizer’s (1995) criteria for being an artifact of collective memory, as well as ways in which it helps facilitate the creation of collective memories within the fandom collective. Additionally, I have shown how the book functions as a *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1989). I will now analyze the position of fanfac within the power structures of the public and fannish collectives, and what that means for its status as official versus vernacular memory, as defined by Bodnar (1992). To review, Bodnar defines official expressions of memory as those which come from cultural leaders or those who operate from positions of power within a collective and which concern the entire collective, whereas vernacular expressions of memory are diverse and come from those who are not in power within the collective (1992).

Within the larger public collective, the fannish community does not have a powerful voice. Fannish activities are often looked down upon as childish or strange, and the “geeks” and “nerds” who populate fandom communities are often the butts of jokes. Star Trek’s William Shatner famously participated in a *Saturday Night Live* sketch which parodied Trek conventions, in which he angrily advised Trekkies to “get a life.” According to Jenkins (2013), the sketch mirrored the actor’s true feelings about fans, although he has since developed a less fractious relationship with fandom. Although fan conventions continue to increase in popularity, they are still met with suspicion and even hostility by many outside of the fannish community. Shows such as *The Big Bang Theory* on CBS market themselves as shows about geeks/nerds for geeks/nerds, but I and many others in the fandom community feel more like we are being
laughed at when we watch that show than we feel that we are laughing with the show. In the Marvel fandom, fans have been clamoring for a film centered on Scarlett Johansson’s character, Natasha Romanoff, for several years now, but there are still no concrete plans to make one. Fandom is very much a subculture, a group that does not hold power over the discourse of the larger public collective. It is telling that Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington’s (2007) second wave of fandom studies was largely concerned with defending fandom as a legitimate subculture whose activity mattered and that the third wave is still preoccupied with justifying in many ways the normalcy of fannish activity.

Thus when one looks at the big picture of the larger public collective, fannish memory is a vernacular memory. Fannish memory of the Harry Potter series is a particular, vernacular memory of the series, contrasted with the official memory held by the larger population of everyone who read the books or saw the films, or is simply aware of their existence, but never bothered to engage with the text on a deeper level and get involved in fandom. If the collective one is evaluating is the larger public collective, then the official memory of the Harry Potter series would be something like this: J.K. Rowling was a poor woman who wrote a book about a boy wizard, the book became wildly successful and not only spawned a book series but also a series of films, and she is now the richest woman in Britain. The vernacular memory would be where the memories of midnight book release parties and fan conventions and dressing up like Hermione Granger to attend a wizard rock concert would come into play. In this case, any piece of fannish memory, including Harry, A History (Anelli, 2008), would need to be classified as vernacular memory, because it would be coming from the minority voices within the power structures in question.
If, however, one narrows one’s focus to the fandom collective itself and considers the power structures within the fandom community – because like any community, it does have its own power structures which can be observed and evaluated – one reaches a different conclusion. As previously explained, particularly within the period of time covered by *Harry, A History*, there were clear power players within Potter fandom, known colloquially as Big Name Fans (BNFs). To be a BNF required a lot of work – one had to produce a lot of quality fanfic or fanart, or run a well-known and well-liked fansite, or possibly both, and maintain enough close friendships to have people to back one up in fights while also maintaining enough acquaintance-level friendships to develop a following of loyal associates. BNFs were generally active on message boards and maintained a personal LiveJournal, which they would also use to participate in LiveJournal communities. All of this visibility in what was then a much smaller and more centralized fandom than it is today meant that a relatively small number of BNFs and fansite owners carried a surprisingly large amount of influence over the tone of Potter fandom.

Therefore, within the fandom collective and judged based on the power structures of that collective, the memory narratives expressed by BNFs and popular figures such as Anelli, who was incredibly well-known within fandom due to her ownership of the fansite The Leaky Cauldron and the fact that she was one of the two fansite owners who was part of “The Interview,” function as official memory based on Bodnar’s (1992) definition. Within the society of fandom, BNFs and fansite owners are the holders of power, they are the cultural leaders who are implicitly given the authority to define the expressions of the collective. As such, a piece of memory work/fanfac published by a figure such as Anelli also constitutes official memory due to her position within the fandom.
Interestingly, the question of whether fanfac in general represents official or vernacular memory within the fannish collective is less easy to answer. Although some accounts of fanfac are written and published by figures such as Anelli, who already have some measure of power within the collective when they release their work, others are not. For example, in 2007 an edited collection of essays by women who are fans of *Doctor Who* was published (Thomas & O’Shea). Some of the essays in the book were written by women who could arguably be said to have power within Who fandom (the community of people who are fans of *Doctor Who*) – for example, one of the essays was written by Carole Barrowman, the sister of one of the actors in the series, and another was written by Lisa Bowerman, who plays a character in the official *Doctor Who* audio dramas produced by a company called Big Finish. These women, due to their proximity to the production of the series, are inherently more powerful within the fannish collective than some of the other women whose essays are featured in the book. Their narratives are coming from a place of power and are therefore theoretically official memory narratives, but that does not necessarily mean that the entire book is an official memory narrative.

While Barrowman and Bowerman would be generally recognizable to most *Doctor Who* fans, many of the other women whose essays are featured in the book would not. They are much more like rank and file members of fandom who happened to know each other through conventions and were therefore able to connect with each other and get their essays in the book. Their narratives do not come from a place of power even though they ended up being published in a book that was successful enough to have spawned not only a sequel in which well-known women media professionals discuss the show, but also similar books from the same publisher including one about *Doctor Who* focusing on queer fans and one focusing on women comic fans. As such, they are arguably still vernacular narratives, unless one chooses to argue that placing
them alongside official narratives like Barrowman’s and Bowerman’s, in a relatively successful book, raises them to official narratives by association.

The question of whether fannish memory work such as published accounts of fanfac should be classified as official or vernacular memory largely depends on the context in which one is evaluating them, since Bodnar’s (1992) definition of official and vernacular memory is dependent on the power structures of the collective to establish what is official and what is vernacular. Because of this, I argue that it is possible for published accounts of fanfac such as *Harry, A History* (Anelli, 2008) to exist as both official and vernacular memory. In the context of the wider public collective, all fannish voices are vernacular voices as they lack the power to become official voices. However, in the narrower context of the fannish collective, Melissa Anelli was in a position of power when she released the book which gave her an official voice.

As previously established, nostalgia is an inherently idealized view of the past which can be used rhetorically to create emotional resonance in an audience (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2000). Hunt (2011) described how memory narratives are used in fan magazines for this purpose – to mediate between the text and the audience, providing resonance between their collective memory of the text and the activities which they engage in to commemorate that text. Nostalgia plays a key role in *Harry, A History*: Anelli (2008) uses it to frame the story, which she narrates in two parallel timelines. She begins the first of the two timelines by describing her experience of the announcement of the release date for the final Potter book. Then, commenting that everything she and her Leaky Cauldron friends and colleagues did that day was “turning into a sappy nostalgia-fest” (Anelli, 2008, p. 12), she begins the narrative of the second timeline, flashing back to the beginning of her time in Potter fandom. Over the course of the book, she flips back
and forth between the two narratives, weaving her story for the reader and inviting them to remember their own experiences in those times through the same nostalgic veil she uses.

Her writing style is conversational and personal as she explains to the reader what she was thinking and feeling at a given point in the story, and she relates the stories of past events as just that—stories, with dialogue and descriptive action and settings. The people in the stories don’t just say things, they insist and accuse and ask too innocently; they throw themselves into chairs rather than sit down, snigger rather than laugh, snap books shut rather than close them (Anelli, 2008). This vivid use of language is intended to engage the reader and draw them in, to paint a picture of the past for them which they can jump into a la Mary Poppins (if I can mix my fictional worlds for a moment) and meld their own recollections of those times with Anelli’s to form a single cohesive collective memory of the years of Potter fandom activity the book covers.

History, memory, and nostalgia are constantly weaving together, complementing and obscuring each other in turns in Harry, A History (Anelli, 2008). Much of what Anelli (2008) recounts can either be factually verified or is framed by elements that can be—release dates of books, locations of events, the existence of interviews, etc. The dialogue she recounts of many of the events, however, one assumes she is reconstructing from her own memory, perhaps with input from the others in the “scene,” perhaps not. But how then does she make it a story? To what extent does her nostalgia for the past change the way she writes the story? To what extent does her desire to provide a chronicle not just of her own story but of the story of Potter fandom as a whole change the way she writes the story? These questions cannot perhaps be answered without either speaking extensively to Anelli or employing a time machine, but they are interesting questions to ponder nonetheless.
It is also interesting to think about how Anelli’s memories of the events she recounts—not just the ones only she was privy to, such as decision-making meetings for her website or interviews with J.K. Rowling, but also fan conventions and book release parties—change or otherwise affect the way fans reading her book remember their own experiences. In addition to developing prosthetic memories of the things Anelli (2008) describes which they did not have unmediated access to, they now have mediated access to a new perspective on experiences they already have their own perspective on. Thus Anelli’s (2008) history and particular memory has the chance to alter the universal collective memory, a chance gained through the connection created with readers via a shared nostalgia for Potter fandom past.

In his discussion of fans collecting items related to their fandom of choice, Geraghty (2014) says that “collections do not completely make the fan but in their collecting fans create a sense of identity through the association of personal memories and nostalgia for the particular objects they collect” (p. 181). Although in this paper I am not discussing fan behavior regarding collectibles but rather the importance of nostalgia to creation of fannish collective memory, I think this statement is very relevant to this study. The association of personal memories and nostalgia with the memories recounted in *Harry, A History* (2008) all contribute to the formation of a fannish collective memory around the events recounted in the book.

**Conclusion**

This study contributes to the fields of fandom and memory studies by adding to the small number of studies that explore the intersection between the two. There are many avenues for further study in this area. More extensive study regarding the creation of “fanfac” is warranted so that the motivations behind its production and dissemination can be better understood, as well as the ways it both functions as and helps create collective memory. Additionally, ways which fans
create and maintain collective memory beyond the publication of fanfic should be studied, particularly in the digital realm. Finally, the implications for fannish collective memory studies on the wider field of collective memory should also be explored in more depth.

By narrating her own experiences in Harry Potter fandom in her book *Harry, A History*, Melissa Anelli (2008) provided a fannish collective memory narrative for Potter fandom which is processual, partial, particular and universal, usable, and material. The book also serves as an archival *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1989) for Potter fandom. Although Anelli is not an academic, her book can be assessed within the context of the discipline of fandom studies, which has established its place in the wider field of communication because of the implications of the collective actions taken by fans as well as what fannish relationships with media can tell us about the average non-fan’s relationship with media. Although fannish voices are vernacular voices in the wider public collective, within the fannish collective, figures such as Anelli have enough power that their voices carry official weight and their memory narratives constitute official memory. By utilizing nostalgia to create a connection between readers and the events she recounts, Anelli (2008) helps to facilitate the process of construction of a fannish collective memory. For all of these reasons, *Harry, A History* (Anelli, 2008) both functions as a repository of fannish collective memory and helps mediate the construction of fannish collective memory.
References


