

## **Introduction to Part Three: The X-Files: fandom and paratextual narratives**

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## Part three

### The X-Philes: fandom and paratextual narratives

Diane A. Rodgers

The notion of ‘cults’ as examined in chapter seven of this volume refers specifically to the religious devotion of groups following a particular figure or path of belief. However, the term ‘cult’ is often also applied to fanatical commitment to pop culture artefacts; often film or television series with a small but devoted following. *The X-Files* is frequently discussed in the context of cult television, with its own followers dubbed ‘X-Philes’ to whose responses and affection for the series are referred throughout this section. The status of *The X-Files* however, despite maintaining a cult sensibility, has a long history of acknowledgement within mainstream media (in examples discussed in our introduction), allowing the series extended cultural influence. The dedication of X-Philes and its ‘rabid’ fans (such as ‘shippers’ discussed in chapter fourteen) help bring a transmedia dimension to *The X-Files*, allowing the narrative to spill beyond the confines of the medium of television (and film adaptations) into various aspects of the lives of fans and extending the experience of *The X-Files* into books, comics and video games.

Briac Picart Hellec’s chapter opens this section by examining another significant example of cult television, *Twin Peaks*, in terms of its connections with *The X-Files*, as two sides of the same coin. Hellec looks at the series’ common characteristics and how each expanded their narrative into other media in ways that fundamentally shaped the televisual landscape. Will Lorenzo also looks at the notion of cult television and considers *The X-Files*

alongside its spin-off series *Millennium*: in particular how some episodes blend elements of science fiction and horror with Christmas-themed aesthetics and motifs.

Iris Haist's discussion of *The X-Files* moves beyond the format of television to its comic-book adaptations. Haist explores how these stories not only adapt existing storylines, but fill in narrative gaps and extend the narrative universe of *The X-Files*, considering their relationship to the setting (or moving) the boundaries of the series' canon. Janelle Vermaak Griessel and Natalie Le Clue's discussion examines X-Files fandom through the lens of social media which sees fans contemplating the 'scariest' and 'best' *X-Files* episodes of all time. Griessel and Le Clue's examination evidences fan-memory of the series and its lasting impact in terms of the role *The X-Files* continues to play in some people's everyday lives.

Marissa Spada's discussion looks beyond the more generic (typically male) *X-Files* fandom to focus on 'shippers': fans of the series, typically female, who were invested in the notion of a simmering romance between Mulder and Scully. Spada explores how discourses distinguishing between 'rabid' or 'hysterical' shippers and 'intellishippers' (those seen as expressing more 'rational' and eloquent fandom) signal masculinized readings of *The X-Files* and enhanced discriminatory gendered lines amongst the fans themselves.

The final chapter in this section by Ivan Girina and Andra Ivănescu considers the relationship between *The X-Files* and world of video games by examining the depiction of virtual realities within episodes of the series. The focus moves beyond the series itself, however, as Girina and Ivănescu examine video game adaptations of *The X-Files* (of which there are several, released between 1997 and 2018), with particular focus on 1998's *The X-Files Game*. This chapter aptly brings the section to a close with discussion of *The X-Files* as an example of transmedia storytelling, exploring the relationship between the series and its video game adaptations as an integral part of the cultural phenomenon.

This section illustrates the breadth of the wider universe of *The X-Files*, reaching far beyond the confines of television (and even film) to a huge variety of different mediums spanning all three decades since the series' inception. We see, therefore, in these chapters, how the dedication, commitment and enthusiasm shown by fans of *The X-Files* for the series in all its incarnations helps not only fuel the creation of material surrounding the main series itself, but also how the devotion of 'X-Philes' and 'shippers' help to define the series as being truly 'cult' in every sense of the word.