IT WAS ABOUT 0300. Unusually for me, I’d been to sleep but had awakened as usual from a stress dream in the middle of the night. I’ve been unemployed for almost a year now, after [REDACTED] University decided not to renew my one year contract with them. Between then and now, I’d submitted, revised, resubmitted and been awarded my PhD on Torchwood and national identity from Aberystwyth, had two peer-reviewed pieces accepted and had given several papers at conferences around the world, three on various aspects of my dissertation, one on Agents of SHIELD and identity (#teamWard) and two on the Ianto memorial (as I call it).

One of the two peer-reviewed pieces I have coming out is a co-authored digital book with Liza Potts and three of her students that uses the memorial as a case study. (Details are below in the Further Reading section.) We’re developing a digital archive of the dedications that were left there as well, an archive based on the three years and two months where I walked at least an hour each way from my flat in Cathays or Roath, in all weather, three days a week, every week to catalogue the items left behind. I’ve also published twice on this, indirectly when talking about the commodification of Cardiff (Beattie 2013) and directly about the memorial in relation to counterhistories (Beattie 2014).

It's not uncommon for me to get two or three job rejections in a day. Each one tells me essentially the same thing: there was not only somebody better than me but there were, in fact, a great many somebodies better than me. More publications, more teaching experience, better name recognition or any of a dozen other things it could've been (or could have been perceived as having been). I'm currently living in my mum's spare room, trying to keep up with the flow of scholarship without institutional access, and often without the money to buy the books I need either.

Now I'm not telling you this in order to make you feel sorry for me, but in order to give you an idea of both my state of mind at the time and to show you the common situation...
of many early career researchers, in the humanities and social sciences especially. In the case of fan studies in particular, a large proportion of us are part-time academics at best (and not so out of either choice or lack of ability) and a majority of us are female.

At the time of writing, to the best of my knowledge, there have been only a handful of published works on the memorial. I know this because I’ve written or co-written a lot of them; the exception being Rebecca Williams and Ruth McElroy’s chapter in Osborne’s *Queer Wales* which contextualises the memorial with regard to Cardiff and sexuality. Apart from that great chapter (full details are, again, in the Further Reading and both scholars’ other academic work is highly recommended), it’s been basically me and/or Liza Potts and her team.

There are also a very few scholars who work in both contemporary archaeology and media studies; of that tiny group, to the best of my knowledge I am one of the only ones with postgraduate degrees in both (MA Archaeology for Screen Media from Bristol which had a focus on contemporary archaeology, MPhil Ancient History from Cardiff and PhD TV Studies from Aberystwyth) and who also has practical archaeology experience (five field seasons during and after my BA in Classics from SUNY Buffalo). Between that, my publications, the three years and two months that I went out to the site recording what was left behind and my various analyses (many of which are, I admit, still unpublished), I think it is fair to say that I am actually an (though not necessarily the) expert on this particular site (she said modestly).

So, this was the Tweet I saw that morning at 0300:

‘[MAN’S NAME REDACTED] should write a book on the Ianto shrine.’
— Paul Cornell.

Thanks for that!

Now, before I go any further, I do want to state explicitly and categorically that I *absolutely do not* believe that Cornell intended to erase or slight me personally or any of the other academics listed here. I also absolutely do not believe that he was intentionally trying to promote a man or a man’s work over women’s. I’m not accusing of him of anything, I’m not demanding an apology and I don’t mean to imply that he’s not a good ally – quite the contrary, in fact, that he is such a good ally is why it’s clear that this was an error. I also don’t mean any of this in the ‘Brutus is an honourable man’ sense. What I think this situation does show, however, is how easily women’s work (academic, fan and otherwise) can be erased. In
this situation, we have a Name (here Cornell) who, completely without malice, states that he believes that a Man, should be the one to write a book on a topic without considering the problems such a suggestion can produce. Because this person is a Name, he has a much wider reach than the various scholars who have worked on the memorial (even though we are all also fans and have our own acafan communities and networks). The Name has also implied what field said study should be confined by (here religious philosophy) which, though certainly an option, is not ideal as the major endorsed discipline as most disciplines outside Fan Studies still subscribe to such discredited theories like the media effects and uses and gratifications models, which I shall discuss below. The techniques used to catalogue the data, itself a critically important part of the study of any material culture, derives from archaeology, specifically contemporary archaeology which, like Fan Studies, also uses ethnography as a method.

Also, because this person is a Name, they are perceived to have authority ('He wrote for Doctor Who!' ‘He's been a fan for decades!' ‘He's a professional writer!' ‘What've you done that's comparable?!’), here meaning that, completely without meaning to and even though several of us have been working on various aspects of the memorial for years, the Man who the Name recommended will most likely be perceived as the best choice. That all of the scholars (thus far) are women (who are, as I doubt I need to tell anyone reading this, often made to feel uncomfortable in fan spaces at best and are actively forced out of them at worst) and that the Name chose a Man (thus giving the Man the Name's own transferred authority, compounding the subconsciously-perceived greater authority a male author would have over a female anyway, especially with regard to fan spaces and academia both) without bothering to even check if anyone (regardless of gender) was working or had worked on the topic just makes all of this worse.

I’d like to move on to tell you a bit about the content of the memorial and a bit about the people who’ve dedicated items, who we’ve met or heard from on-site and who’ve taken the time to chat with me or with Liza and/or her students over the years. Obviously, I won’t name names or give specifics — Liza and I are both extremely concerned with keeping those people who are involved in our research anonymous and safe to the point that we’re working on a paper discussing ethics protocols for fan tourism — but some generalities are useful to help illustrate the points I’m trying to make.
The majority of people who've dedicated items at the memorial, at least during my recording of it and based on self-identification either on the item or in an interview with me, identify as female. Most are in either the 26-40 age group or the 18-25 age group. Neither of these facts are surprising; that fan work (or fan activities) are largely female has been known for a long time, though the reasons for it are debated (the Further Reading section has a few suggested places to start). Perhaps unsurprisingly (and I found this in my PhD research as well), there is a strongly visible LGBTQ+ presence as well, Ianto having been involved in a romantic relationship with Jack at the time of his death.

As I said above, I would go out to the memorial three times a week, every week (there were a handful of exceptions where I’d have to miss the occasional day). I met so many wonderful people out there, fans and curious non-fans alike, who gladly chatted with/allowed themselves to be lectured at by the strange contemporary archaeologist/fan studies academic with the notebook and the odd accent. Many of them gave me permission to take their photos (hands, usually, rather than anything clearly identifiable) as they placed or secured their dedication. I became friends with many of them and I still keep in touch with a few, though I now live on the other side of the planet. Generally speaking, even the people who had no idea what Torchwood was or why an archaeologist would be interested were politely confused.

Then there were the homophobes. Usually men, frequently making ugly comments; only once did I catch three of them pulling things off the memorial. Confronting them did get them to stop and to leave, and the Cardiff Bay police and Mermaid Quay security were very concerned and responsive when I reported it as a hate crime (I had a PC ring me a few days later as well because he was a big fan of the series, which was nice).

There were also those intolerant of fans. The ones who’d infantilise the dedicants (in absentia, of course) or insist that anyone who dedicated or visited was ‘insane’ or, even more often, that the dedicants were ‘sobbing teenage girls.’ So we have the (false, but socioculturally prevalent) association between open displays of emotion and insanity and being female, in particular being a young female. Also going with that is the connections between homophobia and sexism, in that LGBTQ+ males in particular are stigmatised because they are perceived as being closer to how females are perceived by those within this sort of toxic masculine environment (and, indeed, echoed in the slightly more tolerant but still very rigid codes of masculinity often constructed by societies which are then also echoed in
the fan hierarchies that develop within and from them).

Cult fandom can also be strongly perceived as feminised because of the traditional ‘geek stereotype’ (prizing knowledge over brute force or athletic skill) and, the fact that fans are still pathologised in the popular press, coupled with the association between women and insanity with regard to whatever or whoever the object of their fandom is, means that these negative associations (in the instances in which they appeared) interact synergistically. The media effects and uses and gratifications models have been debunked for over a decade in favour of Matt Hills's interpretation of fan activity as affective play, a view I share.

In this instance, Cornell’s championing of a particular author means that the Name's authority is now backing a male to be in charge of interpreting and disseminating (and therefore discursively controlling) a predominantly female and strongly queered space. Again, I am certain this was not Cornell's intention, but this is how it can be read, either that the ‘hysterical women’ need a male guardian or keeper and/or that only a man is ‘fan enough’ to explain things. By a Name promoting a Man to tell the story of a primarily female/queer space, rather than promoting (or even looking for) the women who’ve already been doing so means that, instead of a diverse multiplicity of voices – which is essential for any good project – the women who’ve been working and producing data are erased by the Name and the Man's perceived authority over the topic.

Though I am (I hope understandably) protective and probably too proprietary over the memorial and the various projects that touch upon it, I want to see more done on it by more voices, academic and not. That’s one of the main reasons Liza and I are developing the online archive, as an aid to academics and interested non-academics everywhere. I was delighted when I learnt at a conference that Rebecca and Ruth had discussed the memorial in their chapter; in addition to being excellent scholars at the University of South Wales they’re both great people.

If anyone reading this knows of other work on the memorial (or would like to do some or would like to hire me to do some) my contact details are in the Further Reading section. If Cornell’s promoted author would like to write a book on it, I have no objection; my point here is that those in (perceived) authority need to understand how easy it is for them to (unintentionally) erase or slight people who don’t have that same level of authority or reach. Words have power and Names have (perceived) authority. Used widely, they elevate and diversify. Used poorly, they erase.
Fan activity, including academic study of it, is often women’s work. Erasing us from the analysis and dissemination of that work deprives fans and academics alike of a critically important perspective, as well as diminishing those of us who are already engaged in these studies and these activities. It's hard enough being a woman in academia and in fandom.

Fan Studies is predominantly female. Fan work is predominantly female. The memorial itself is predominantly female and queer. Women’s work is devalued and erased all the time, everywhere and frequently without even realising it. That's what Cornell's statement evokes, albeit unintentionally on his part. I am an expert on this topic. My fellow (female) academics are experts too, and we are entitled to be sensitive when we find our work is being diminished.

I get enough of that from the job rejections.

Further (Highly Select!) Reading

For work looking more specifically at female fans, Camille Bacon Smith's (1992) Enterprising Women is a good, if slightly dated, start. Rhiannon Bury's (2005) Cyberspaces of Their Own looks at women in early online fandom, showing that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Laurie Cubbison’s chapter ‘Russell T. Davies, “Nine Hysterical Women,” and the Death of Ianto Jones,’ in B.T. Williams and A.A. Zenger (eds.) New Media Literacies and Participatory Popular Cultures Across Borders looks at female Torchwood fans and the fan reaction to Ianto’s death. Finally (though there are so many works to be found on the topic!), Zubernis and Larson do excellent work; I’m partial to their 2012 book Fandom At the Crossroads. Again, all of these authors come highly recommended.

For work on the memorial itself, the most recent is L. Potts, M. Beattie, E. Dallaire, K. Grimes, K. Turner, Participatory Memory: Fandom Experiences Across Time and Space. It's still ‘forthcoming’, but a draft (currently being revised in accordance with peer review) can be found here: http://participatorymemory.lizapotts.org/participatory-memory/index.
Liza and her team and I are also developing this: L. Potts, M. Beattie et al. 'A Digital Archive of the Ianto Memorial in Cardiff Bay,' which is a digital project with the WIDE Institute. We hope to have an update on the WIDE Institute's main website this summer. My 2014 chapter, 'A Most Peculiar Memorial: Cultural Heritage and Fiction', in J. Schofield (ed.), Who Needs Experts? Counter-Mapping Cultural Heritage deals directly with the memorial, why (I theorise) people dedicate and visit as well as how the memorial works as part of the official and counterhistories of the area. My 2013 chapter, 'The 'Doctor Who Experience' (2012–) and the Commodification of Cardiff Bay in M. Hills (ed.), New Dimensions of Doctor Who, as well as my (non-academic) pieces from 2015 ('Who's Town is it Anyway' in R. Smith? (ed.), Outside In: Vol 2) and 2011 ('Landmark Television: A Fan’s Life in Cardiff' in G. Burk and R. Smith? (eds.), Time, Unincorporated: Volume 3) mention the memorial as part of the overall arguments relating to Cardiff, Doctor Who and Torchwood and the commodification of the city. Rebecca Williams and Ruth McElroy’s 2016 chapter, ‘Omnisexuality and the City: Exploring National and Sexual Identity through BBC Wales’ Torchwood’ in H. Osborne, (ed.), Queer Wales also contextualises the memorial. The powerpoints and, in the case of ‘Eight Years [G]one...’, recording of my various conference presentations can be found at https://independent.academia.edu/BeattieMelissa.

Questions, comments, death threats and job offers may be sent to tritogeneia@aol.com.