
Cosplay. Celebrity impersonation. Historical reenactment. Drag. Ren Fairs. Through research and stories, come discover the transformational world of costumes, and how they can be used to uncover, cultivate, and represent aspects of one's inner self.

What People are Saying:

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Thomas Endres presents a much-needed deeper dive into a phenomenon defined by difference. The case study interviews, and most importantly the photographs documenting the subjects interviewed in their cosplay performance, are presented in a manner that allows a greater depth of articulated voice from individuals than previous works have allowed.

~J. Richard Stevens, author of *Captain America, Masculinity, and Violence: The Evolution of a National Icon*

Endres accessibly and usefully documents the current practice of costuming as communication of multiple identities, providing full body photos and the voices of the creators in the various Costume Conversation sections.

~Pravina Shukla, author of *Costume: Performing Identities through Dress*

Tom vividly illustrates how cosplay can transform lives. In a world where polarized ideologies and judgmental thinking about difference have become normalized, these important stories need to be told. Thank you, Tom, for telling them so well.

~Deanna D. Sellnow, author of *The Rhetorical Power of Popular Culture: Considering Mediated Texts*



Cosplayer **Thomas G. Endres** is a professor at the University of Northern Colorado, where he teaches courses on unpacking popular culture. He is the author of *Sturgis Stories: Celebrating the People of the World's Largest Motorcycle Rally* (also published by Kirk House). Tom and his wife Maki live in Greeley, CO.



My Costume, Myself: Celebrating Stories of Cosplay and Beyond

Thomas G. Endres PhD

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MY COSTUME, MYSELF

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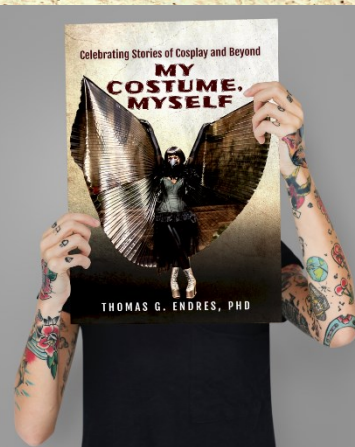
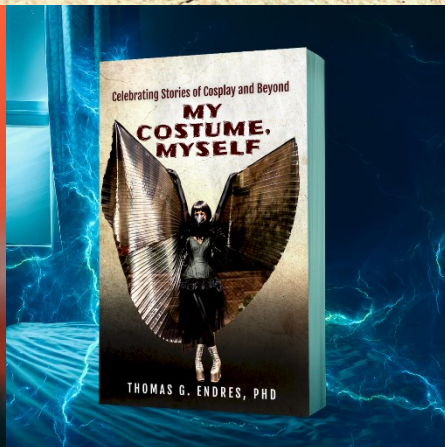
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You probably know a few things about me. If you perused the author blurb on the back cover or read my Preface, you picked up a few details, such as the fact that I'm a professor of Communication Studies. You could find out more by checking my name on places like LinkedIn or Facebook. But there are a few things about me that such a superficial search won't uncover. For example...

I. Am. Batman.

I am also Santa Claus.

And, depending on my mood or the occasion, I also tend to be a pirate, a Harley-riding biker, a Clint Eastwood-inspired cowboy, the Phantom of the Opera, or, most recently, Ego the Living Planet from *Guardians of the Galaxy 2*. How do you know which of these many personas I happen to be at a given moment? You look, of course, at my costume (see Images 1.1 and 1.2).

The big question is, does seeing me in that costume tell you *more* about me, or does it confuse and confound your sense of who I am? Here's a hint. In the Communication Studies discipline, we frequently present our students with this credo regarding our field: *You cannot not communicate*. That is, we are in a constant, 24-hour-a-day state of communication. You cannot turn off the message machine. You are always sending, which opens the door to constant and ongoing interpretation from others. At this point, students try to stump me:

"What if I'm just sitting here in class, not saying anything?"

"You are communicating your willingness, or lack thereof, to listen to the lesson."

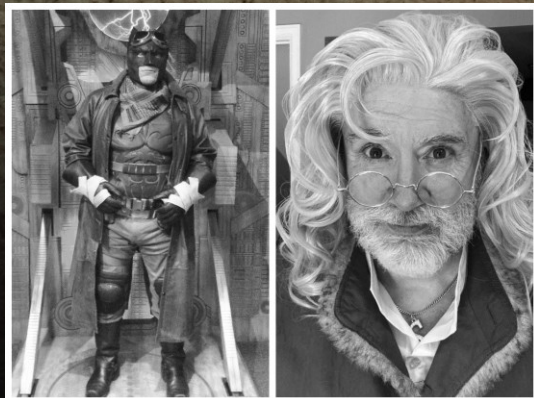
"What if I'm sleeping?"

"You are communicating that you are tired."

"What if I go off into the woods, and nobody knows I'm there, and I don't say anything to anyone?"

"Hmm. The very fact that you *chose* to go off into the woods by yourself, without telling *anybody*, says a lot about you!"

Yes, we are always sending information whether we intend to or not. Even in costume. *Especially* in costume. Why did you choose this persona? Why did you spend so much time and money, or so little, on its creation? How do you feel when you are wearing it? What are you telling me about who you are, what you fear, and how you see yourself? The communicative process never ends. Kirkpatrick (2015) says that putting on a costume "visualizes a subject's desire to change their locus, to cross a border, and it is always a meaningful move. It affects all. In fictional worlds, we have no special name for this practice – characters simply just suit up – but in the real world we call it cosplay."



Images 1.1 and 1.2 *Your author, dressed as Knightmare Batman from Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice (left) and Kurt Russell-inspired Santa Claus from The Christmas Chronicles. PHOTO CREDITS: Kellsie Moore (1.1) and Maki Endres (1.2)*