



FIFTH ANNUAL
FANDOM & NEOMEDIA
STUDIES ASSOCIATION
CONFERENCE
PROGRAM

Thursday, 8 June

7:00PM – 9:00PM: Movies and Discussion
*Suddenly Plunged into Another World: The Vision of Escaflowne, Magic Knight
Rayearth, & Elementalors*
Christopher Carson
FANS Cinema Archivist

Friday, 9 June

8:00AM – 5:00PM: Conference Registration

Saturday, 10 June

8:00AM: Conference Room Doors Open, Conference Registration Opens

9:15AM: Opening Remarks
J. Holder Bennett
FANS Chair



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9:30AM: Fandom Conventions: A Sociological Theoretical Perspective
Dr. Ronald Lorenzo
Prairie View A & M University

Fandom conventions have become barbaric in their social character. Drawing on sociological theory from Marcel Mauss, Thorstein Veblen, David Riesman, and Stjepan Mestrovic, the author applies a theoretical perspective to interpret the contemporary fandom convention. Starting with Mauss' concepts from *The Gift* (1925), the author documents the origin of the fandom convention as an exchange of genuine gifts from fans to each other or the objects of their fandom. The author interprets the contemporary fandom convention through the perspective of Thorstein Veblen in order to highlight the transition away from peaceable conventions to the predatory form of convention that dominates the fandom scene. Predatory conventions exploit fans and turn gift giving from sincere acts of appreciation to pecuniary acts for celebrities and promoters. David Riesman's description of social character from *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) shows how modern fans have become socially engineered mass consumers being led towards exploitation. Finally, the author concludes by applying Stjepan Mestrovic's concept of postemotionalism (1997) to describe the present state of fandom conventions. Where once the emotions at fandom conventions were genuine, sincere, and spontaneous, the current postemotional convention is one in which the emotions of fans and celebrities alike have become synthetic and machine-like in character.

10:00AM: Fan Fiction as a Digital Descendant of Transformative Literature
Elizabeth Jendrzey
Texas Women's University

The internet brought many ways for individuals to create and share new texts across the globe, a practice that has been wholly embraced. However, fan fiction, a common form of this exchange, is often dismissed as the frivolous writings of fans with little better to do. An understanding of the history of transformative works places fan fiction in the context of a much longer narrative. Drawing from past attitudes and trends regarding transformative works, this paper suggests that modern fan fiction is the digital descendent of a rich history of literary transformations.

10:30AM: Fans Love It a Latte: The Rise and Participatory Nature of Coffee Shop AUs

Katharine McCain
Ohio State University

Back in 2011, an anonymous poster to LiveJournal started a thread titled, “Explain it to me like I’m five—fandom edition” asking, “Can someone explain coffee shop AUs to me? Why are coffee shops so prevalent in mundane AUs? Why not bookstores or diners or banks or something?” Six years later, fans and scholars alike are no closer to answering this question, though there is little doubt that this trope continually dominates much of the fic, headcanons, and GIF-sets surrounding some of the most popular twenty-first-century fandoms to the extent that fans now claim, “It’s not a true fandom unless there’s a coffee shop AU.” Thus, this paper will begin teasing out some of the reasons behind the coffee shop’s popularity and, by answering Henry Jenkins’ call for a more nuanced approach to what is “participatory” in “participatory culture,” how this trope is expanding the dialogue between fic writer and reader, as well as blurring lines between fiction and reality.

11:00AM: The Flash and His Fantastic Fear of Ferocious Fans

Kyle Hammonds & Garrett Hammonds
University of North Texas

Conferences such as A-Kon, and others like it, indicate a friendly relationship between popular culture creators and their fans. These author/audience relationships are often fun and productive. However, there has also historically been a bit of uneasiness between authors and fans. Authors rely on audiences to consume their content, while audiences want authors to generate content that they enjoy. When the desires of authors and audiences come to clash, each side has navigated the tension in different ways. In recent years, with the popularity of the CW’s TV adaptation of *The Flash*, a character who is representative of this tension has climbed into the limelight as never before – Barry Allen’s arch nemesis, the Reverse-Flash.

The Reverse-Flash, AKA Eobard Thawne, is a villain with an especially symbolic origin story: Thawne is a character who is a scientist and an obsessively dedicated fan of Allen’s Flash. He recreates the circumstances that gave the Flash his powers and develops his own superhuman abilities. Thawne is eventually disappointed by his hero and turns against him – becoming the Flash’s most formidable foe. In this paper, the authors explore the notion that the Reverse Flash

story acts as an allegory reflecting a fear of comics stakeholders who have been disappointed by their heroes (the authors). The Flash/Reverse-Flash tension may offer insight into the fight for creative power/control between authors and audiences. Concepts from history and narrative theory will be utilized to uncover the details of this meta-communicative story.

11:30AM: The Proteus Effect in Cosplay
Connor Leshner
Arizona State University

The Proteus Effect has so far been used to elucidate the difference in attitudes and behaviors when moving from the digital platform to the physical (Yee, Bailenson, Ducheneaut, 2009). However, there is evidence to suggest that a Proteus Effect-like phenomenon happens in the realm of cosplay. In cosplay, the individual brings an entity from the digital world into the physical one, and then performs that character's behavior. Similar to dramaturgy, the individual takes on the identity of a character, and performs closely to that character's script. However, cosplay has no defined script, and, as such, the behaviors of the individual and the behaviors of the character may become intertwined. When someone is in cosplay, and their behaviors are open to that of their own interpretation, they are more willing to engage in actions that are closer to their character's behavior than their own. With that said, someone may be willing to engage in sexual or romantic activity that their normal proclivities might not have allowed. Later, when completing one's cosplay performance, it is possible that the effect the cosplay had on the individual persists, allowing the intertwined behaviors to continue. Ultimately, as the behavior of the cosplayed character begins to unwind from the person's behavior, this will cause the lingering activity to end. When an individual cosplays, they gain the behaviors of the character from the digital world, and the effect lingers. Therefore, if someone enters into sexual relationships while cosplaying, then those will persist until a short period of time after the individual no longer cosplays that character, or type of character.

12:00PM – 1:00PM: Lunch Break

1:00PM: Keynote: Anime Genre Preferences and Associations with Anime Fans' Paranormal Beliefs and Sexism

Dr. Stephen Reysen

Texas A & M University at Commerce

Co-authors: Dr. Courtney N. Plante, Dr. Sharon E. Roberts, Dr. Kathleen C. Gerbasi, & Dr. Iva Katzarska-Miller

There are a variety of different genres of anime ranging from those set in realistic, everyday worlds to those based in completely fantasy or unrealistic alternate worlds. In the present research, the authors examine the associations between genre preferences and anime fans' degree of belief in paranormal phenomena, as well as self-reported sexism. After constructing a five-factor model of anime genre preference (drama, slice of life, mecha, action, and hentai), regressions controlling for participants' sex, age, and religiosity showed that greater preference for action and hentai uniquely predicted greater endorsement of paranormal beliefs above and beyond the other genres of anime. Beyond paranormal beliefs, the authors also measured degree of anime consumption and ambivalent sexism. Anime consumption was positively associated with both benevolent and hostile sexism. Preferences for the drama and hentai drama genres mediated the relationship between consumption and hostile sexism, while preferences for drama, slice of life, mecha, and action mediated the relationship between consumption and benevolent sexism. The results of this research support the notion that the types of media individuals consume are associated with various beliefs.

2:00PM: The Social Character of Contemporary Board Game Culture

Dr. Ronald Lorenzo

Prairie View A & M University

Societies produce objects that reflect their cultural values. Board games as cultural objects reflect the social character of contemporary society. In *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) David Riesman describes the dominant form of social character as other-directed. Different from personality, social character refers to the social organization of preferences and goals within individuals, as well as their predominant emotional drives. The author identifies two forms of other-directedness in board game play. One form of other-directedness is characterized by collaborative play emphasizing the importance of working as a team. A second form of other-directedness is characterized by players cooperating in pseudo-collaborative games, only to engage in acts of betrayal. The author observes that other-directed social character has transformed board game culture. Thorstein

Veblen's concept of barbarism, described in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) can be applied in understanding this phenomenon. Board game culture now includes barbaric activities such as competing for invidious distinction in the pecuniary damage incurred by board game purchases. This invidious distinction is symbolized by the "shelfie" – or a photograph of all the board games in a private collection – that fans display online. Among the fans and creators of board games, the predatory nature of board game culture extends into the online comparison and ranking of board games. Instead of providing a moment of temporary escape, board games have become another arena for the anxieties and problems of other-directed society.

2:30PM: The Age of Bullet-Curtain: The Semio-Cybernetics of "Densely Contexted" Digital Texts
Dr. Jason Qian Chen
TKWW Media Group, Hong Kong

The unique overlaid commentary system, or *danmu* in its Chinese nickname, implemented by a number of notable video-sharing and broadcasting communities in Asia (such as NicoNico Douga in Japan and Bilibili in China) not only realizes a sense of virtual "liveness" as Hamano claims but also, fundamentally, provides heuristic tropes of quantification and vectorization. Faced with the initial difficulty in analyzing texts of *danmu* with conventional semiotic approaches, this research argues that the *danmu*, despite its conversational appearance, should be understood as a hybrid of semiotic utterances and simulations of interfaces of control, like the metaphoric vehicle that the word *danmu* (lit. bullet curtain) points to – the barrage of bullets in shooter video games. This research then further traces the discursive premise of such semio-cybernetic modulization or encapsulation, claiming that the concept of information itself has promoted such change with limitations on interpretive senses and preferences on stacked storage (hence physicality, interactivity and remixability) of utterances, as Kittler once concluded. Taking the model one step further, this research also assesses the possibility to generalize the case proposed above, discussing whether and how much most of the "densely contexted" digital texts, like those in text/dialog boxes, can be observed as such semio-cybernetic capsules, especially in this "late" digital age wherein speeches (in *danmu*) and bullets (in shooters) are viewed and utilized alike.

3:00PM: Afternoon Break

3:30PM: State of Fandom in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Jonathan Tarbox
Lecturer, Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia

Long active as both a consumer and producer of fandom materials in the US and Japan, the author has recently been able to observe the state of various fandoms, anime fandom, or otaku, in particular, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This presentation details the origins and growth of otakudom in the Kingdom in recent years, including Saudi Comic-Con and GCON, an all-female fandom convention.

4:00PM: Linguistic Gendering of Non-Traditional Female Characters in Japanese Translations of American Superhero Movies
Stefanie Thomas
Ohio State University

According to Abé Markus Nornes, Japanese translation techniques of foreign-produced entertainment media follow a specific set “grammar” which occasionally produces a stereotypical genderization of characters not found in the original source material. In his book, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*, he cites a few lines of the film *RoboCop* (1987) in Japanese translation as emblematic of this process. However, given that this movie was created three decades ago, at a time when the sociopolitical environment fostered an insistence on traditional gender norms/gender essentialism, the questions of whether this “grammar” is still utilized in media translation work nowadays, and of the underlying reasons of insisting on imposing linguistic gender markers not even in common use outside of popular entertainment, remained unanswered in his work.

The present study analyzes the incidence of linguistic gender markers in the Japanese subtitles and dub tracks of *Hellboy* (2004), *Kick-Ass* (2010), and *The Avengers* (2012) by providing numerical as well as qualitative data regarding the use of explicitly feminine vs. explicitly non-feminine-coded linguistic gender markers. Initially, it provides a historical and sociopolitical overview of the development and imagined vs. actual use of gendered Japanese language. The exegetical section includes a juxtaposition of language usage in subtitles and dubs in an attempt to answer the question of whether the restraint of on-screen lip movements or written vs. spoken paradigms factor in the translation decisions. Additionally, the study seeks to compare the analyzed characters with each other in terms of age, relationships to other characters, and personality to discover whether these considerations have any bearing on marker incidence.

4:30PM: Seeing with Shinigami Eyes: *Death Note* as a Case Study in Narrative, Naming, and Control
Kyle Hammonds & Garrett Hammonds
University of North Texas

Scholars and fans alike, both consciously and unconsciously, often mine comics for their pedagogical potential. Despite the ever increasing popularity of the manga and anime series *Death Note*, though, little formal analysis has been done on the lessons contained in its noir(ish) story. Ohba – *Death Note*'s co-creator – claims that the story does not have a moral, pedagogical mission. Meanwhile, scholars have criticized the story as glorifying potentially dangerous behaviors, including philosophies on the virtue of violence and apocalyptic religion. Is there truly any “moral of the story” to be extracted from *Death Note*? And, if so, how can one be sure that their interpretation has legitimacy? In this paper, the authors find that *Death Note* is not merely a melancholy detective story; but, rather, a complex narrative in which chaos is the ultimate determinant of morality and the only way to access control is through the power of naming. *Death Note* serves to take a metaphor/model for communication – the social constructivist model – and literalize it in the context of fantasy. In other words, the narrative of *Death Note* serves as a not-so-friendly reminder that communication affects reality in ways that can be creatively constructive or profoundly damaging.

5:00PM: Registration Closes, End of Day

Sunday, 11 June

9:00AM: Conference Room Doors Open, Conference Registration Opens

9:30AM: Work-Life Balance of Women Professionals in Media Industry in India
Dr. Jayanthi Ramadorai
Acharya Bangalore B School

The media is a rapidly growing sector in India, with daily newspapers registering increases in circulation and revenues, bucking the Western media trend where newspaper readership is decreasing rapidly. According to the Registrar for Newspapers in India, the number of dailies and periodical published are 105,443. There are 821 satellite television channels, of which 404 are news and current affairs channels while the rest are devoted to entertainment and lifestyle. Over the past three decades, women have entered journalism and media industry in India in substantial numbers, making their mark in every form of media: print, radio,

television, news agencies, and internet journalism. But only half the race is won; while they continue to be a minority, today's women journalists have both opportunities and visibility in India's media. Grant Thornton, a global accounting and advisory firm, shows that on average, women make up only 15% of the workforce in Indian companies. Globally, this figure stood at 35%. Today, only 1.8% of CEOs in India are women.

Work and family life have been an integral part of a woman's life. The need to study the inter-linkages of family and professional life becomes all the more important with an increasing number of women entering the formal labor market. The very fact that women go out of home to work in a public space puts several kinds of pulls and pushes upon home life which includes their domestic work to maintain home and the family.

Media and marketing is a very competitive field, which often includes tight deadlines, travel, and working in the public eye, physical demands, and danger keeps stress at high-levels for media professionals. Due to this work pressure, it becomes exceedingly difficult for a marketing professional to maintain work-family life. Many times, people, in the quest to achieve targets and goals, stress themselves hard and they miss out on the small and significant pleasures of life. It is a fact that a healthy work-life balance affects job satisfaction, job performance, and ethical decision making of a marketing professional.

This study endeavors to explore the challenges associated with managing professional and personal life of women media professionals. This is also to study the determinants of Work Life Balance, WLB policies, and strategies of the organization, and the effect of WLB on Organizational performance.

10:00AM: The Alice Archetype in Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*

Joshua Jordan

North Forney High School

Though other scholars have explored Miyazaki's film *Spirited Away* from a feminist fantasy perspective (Rifa-Valls) and by comparing it to Lewis Carroll's Alice novels (Satoshi,) the focus of this paper is performing a feminist character study of Chihiro Ogino, the protagonist of *Spirited Away*. This paper will analyze to what degree Chihiro conforms to the Alice archetype. As a methodology for such an analysis, the paper will describe similarities in surreal setting, parentless plot, and heroic characterization between Chihiro's story and that of three other girl protagonists on a journey in a magic world, namely Lewis Carroll's Alice in

the novels *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, Dorothy Gale in the *The Wizard of Oz* and *Return to Oz*, and Sophie from Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle*.

Having evaluated Chihiro Ogino on this spectrum of girl protagonists, the paper will contextualize the evaluation by comparing it to Miyazaki's comments about writing *Spirited Away* in the documentary *The Kingdom of Dreams and Madness* and then draw conclusions about how closely Chihiro conforms to the Alice archetype. In summary, this character study is an attempt to place the protagonist of *Spirited Away* somewhere in the tradition of stories about heroic girls on a journey without parental supervision in surreal magic kingdoms.

10:30AM: Mystic Messenger and the Future of Parasocial Romance
Kim Khanh Tran
York University, Canada

Approved by the York University Department of Psychology Research Ethics Board, this study surveyed parasocial romances (romantic relationships with media characters) as experienced by players of the Korean dating simulation mobile game *Mystic Messenger*, which celebrated one million users worldwide just three months after its July 2016 release. Because the gameplay is exceptionally immersive in that it is unprecedentedly linked to the player's real time, such as messages and calls with game characters that may be sent and received throughout the day, *Mystic Messenger* provides a unique platform to study parasocial romances (PSR). The present study addressed the multiple research gaps between parasocial friendships and PSRs, as well as between PSRs in traditional media and PSRs in new media. The study found that PSR strength with a game character, rather than the amount of time spent playing, was the better predictor of the player's endorsement of idealized romantic beliefs. This finding thus lends support to the emerging body of research focusing on the importance of PSRs with characters in predicting media consumers' beliefs and attitudes. Results further revealed that there were no significant differences between PSR strength reported by single participants and by participants in a relationship. This finding provides the groundwork to contest the dismissive characterization of dating sim fans as being more socially isolated or inept, unable to maintain a real-world social and dating life. Within the scope of the present study, gender is not directly a variable of interest. However, considering *Mystic Messenger* is a female-oriented dating sim game, with 92.33% participants self-identified as women, data collected and its analysis have the potential to provide

insight into the understudied topic of women's parasocial interaction in the dating sim subgenre

11:00AM: Closing Remarks & "How Did We Do?"

Andrew Tague

FANS Vice Chair *Pro Tem*

12:00PM: Registration Closes, End of Day

FANS Committee and Editors of *The Phoenix Papers*:

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