

Media Production as Media Theory (Symposium MANGA lab 6)
DRAFT Version 2019.1.10

Venue: Concordia University

Commentators:

Thomas Lamarre (McGill University. Associate Professor in Communications Studies)

Diane Wei Lewis (Washington University in St. Louis. Assistant Professor, Film & Media Studies)

Marc Steinberg (Concordia University. Associate Professor, Film Studies, Cinema)

February 1 (Friday)

10:00–12:00 Morning session (2 hours)

10:00–10:30 Jacqueline Ristola (Concordia University)

“Big Anime eyes!”: Three moments in the transnational circulation of the aesthetics of anime

10:30–11:00 Commentators: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis.

11:00–11:30 Il Im Kim (International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

The invention of Otaku terminology

11:30–12:00 Commentators: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis.

12:00–13:00 Lunch

13:00–16:30 Evening session (3.5 hours)

13:00–13:30 Edmond Ernest Dit Alban (Concordia University)

Where Media changed the Perception of Social Space: The Urban Planning of Otaku territories since 1990

13:30–14:00 Commentators: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis.

14:00–14:30 Laura Ivonne Quiroz Castillo (The Metropolitan Autonomous University)

(Re)configuring common places through cosplay: codigophagia and transformations of Mexican pop-cultural scapes.

14:30–15:00 Commentators: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis.

15:00–15:30 Coffee Break

15:30–16:00 Diane Wei Lewis (Washington University in St. Louis, Assistant Professor)

"Kitchen Programmers": Housewife Teleworkers and the Information Technology (IT)

16:00–16:30 Commentators: Thomas Lamarre, Marc Steinberg.

16:30–17:00 Final discussion session

Discussants: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis, Diane, Marc Steinberg.

February 2 (Saturday)

10:00–12:00 Morning session (2 hours)

10:00–10:30 Chen Cong (McGill University)

Historicizing “Sounds Right”: Seiyu, Audiovisual Conformity, and Media Environment in Japan

10:30–11:00 Commentators: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis.

11:00–11:30 Álvaro David Hernández Hernández (International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

The Vocaloid scene in Japan as a interinstitutional system: an open network of closed worlds

11:30–12:00 Commentators: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis.

12:00–13:00 Lunch

13:00–16:30 Evening session (3.5 hours)

13:00–13:30 Aurélie Petit (Concordia University)

Of Tentacles and Men: an approach to the French reception of Japanese pornographic animation, between 1978 and 2008

13:30–14:00 Commentators: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis.

14:00–14:30 Maki Suzuki (Tokyo University)

How can we evaluate the “peripheral” nature of manga?

14:30–15:00 Commentators: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis.

15:00–15:30 Coffee Break

15:30–16:00 Hang Wu (McGill University)

How to Eat a Monster: The Production of Animated Special Effects in *Monster Hunt* (2015)

16:00–16:30 Commentators: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis.

16:30–17:00 Final discussion session

Discussants: Thomas Lamarre, Diane Wei Lewis, Diane, Marc Steinberg.

Abstracts

“Big Anime eyes!”: Three moments in the transnational circulation of the aesthetics of anime

Jacqueline Ristola (Concordia University)

“Big eyes! Big eyes! Give me big anime eyes!” Robin Williams exclaims as his animated character takes photographs in Blue Sky Studios’ *Robots* (2005). Likely an ad lib by Williams himself, his enthusiasm was quite prescient, as anime aesthetics became a popular image in American television animation such as *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2005–2008). As a marker of transnational cultural appropriation, these anime-styled series illustrate the pervading influence of “Cool Japan” in American popular culture (McGray 2002, Iwabuchi 2002, 2015). But this phenomenon is not merely a question of aesthetics, but also the material conditions of its development. In short, how do anime aesthetics and their transnational appropriation within the past two decades illuminate shifting economic and political relationships between Japanese, Korean, and American animated media production? Such questions propel my proposed dissertation project.

To analyze this anime-style phenomenon, I examine three different historical moments where the anime aesthetic is appropriated, contested, or reshaped. The first moment is the aesthetic appropriation of Disney comics by “the Walt Disney of Japan” Osamu Tezuka during the U.S. occupation of Japan (1945–1952), where American forms of cultural imperialism were reshaping Japanese cultural forms (Said 1978, 1993; Dower 1999). The second moment is the production and distribution of anime-styled series on the animation-oriented cable networks Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network from 2003–2008. Anime-styled series produced new politics of curation, with cable networks framing the anime aesthetic of these series with particular programming blocks to negate their foreignness or enhance their cultural cache. Crucially underpinning such aesthetic appropriation however is the underpaid animation labour outsourced to Korea, where most production of anime and anime-style work is executed. The third moment analyses three digital streaming platforms, Netflix, Crunchyroll, and Amazon Prime Streaming, and how new politics of curation and production emerged in anime-styled programming from 2010–present that embraced the anime aesthetic as a profitable production style.

The invention of Otaku terminology

Il Im Kim (International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

Since the late of the 20th century, the terms on Otaku culture have frequently appeared in public. Japanese Otaku and elites have constantly developed new terminologies and concepts such as the “cosplay”, the “fujoshi”, and the “2.5-dimensional”. Those terminologies have been referred to not only as Otaku terminologies but also as Japanese originality which is independent of the West. This study

aims to clarify attributes of Japanese Otaku terminology by analyzing the discourses which have been invented by both groups, elites and anonymous Otaku.

Otaku and elites have built a new world by inventing their own terms, concepts, and contexts. Words that even have previously clear meaning structure can be reborn in the Otaku world. Otaku have established their own language system. The way anonymous Otaku and some elites encroach on the existing language world is exclusive. We need to notice that Otaku's terminologies frequently link with the existing language systems. The Discourses have been repeatedly invented and propagated around such ironic situations.

(Re)configuring common places through cosplay: codigophagia and transformations of Mexican pop-cultural scapes.

Laura Ivonne Quiroz Castillo (The Metropolitan Autonomous University)

As many other fan practices, cosplay has allowed fans to appropriate and reelaborate diverse media texts while actively participating in the construction of their fandoms. Nevertheless, far from examining the particular ways in which Mexican anime and manga fans appropriate these texts through cosplay – answering the question what do fans do with their object of fandom?–, this paper aims to examine through an ethnographic approach, what do these fans do with cosplay as both a cultural practice and as a cultural product. I will use the Latin American philosopher Bolívar Echeverría concept of “codigophagia”, which recalls to processes of cultural appropriation and syncretism that derive not only in new interpretations or in new cultural expressions, but in new forms of agency and in new ways of participating in the construction of the social sphere. In this sense, I will examine how cosplay has allowed fans to build and rebuild common places through media texts; but also, I will explore how cosplay has had an important role in the reconfiguration of Mexican pop-cultural scape.

"Kitchen Programmers": Housewife Teleworkers and the Information Technology (IT) Revolution in Early 1980s Japan

Diane Wei Lewis (Washington University in St. Louis, Assistant Professor)

This paper examines discourses and practices related to the emergence of telecommuting and home-based computing in early 1980s Japan with an emphasis on concepts of gendered labor and domesticity. With the launch of NTT's Information Network System (INS; an early version of ISDN) and the diffusion of Office Automation (OA) technology (fax machines, computers, fiber optic networks), a number of Japanese companies provided housewife workers with terminals that would allow them to perform data entry, programming, document preparation, and other forms of low-level computer work from home. These "kitchen programmers" (as one company referred to them) attracted public fascination as symbols of how the distinctions between public/private, inside/outside, work/leisure, individual/social, men/women, and even human/AI might dissolve given new forms of fluidity and flexibility made possible by the IT revolution. Critical examination of the kitchen programmer phenomenon (in which I include both the reality and the public imagination of these workers) suggests ways that historical constructions of "labor," "workplace," and "productivity" can be used to theorize developments in media and technology and attendant cultural shifts. In addition, I will discuss what considerations of gender can offer media theory.

Historicizing “Sounds Right”: *Seiyu*, Audiovisual Conformity, and Media Environment in Japan

Chen Cong (McGill University)

Seiyu's voice performance in anime requires not only an audiovisual synchronization on the technical level, but also a seemingly subjective perception of “sounds right,” in terms of a conformity between the vocal casting's tone, pitch, timbre, etc. and the drawn characters' emotion, personality, drawing style, not to mention gender and age. Although such perception may seem to vary by individual feelings, this project will examine the transformation of voice performance over the changing media environment in Japan, from silent films to overseas television dramas and to anime, hoping to demonstrate that, a certain way of how to hear voice in audiovisual media has been historically produced under multifaceted technological and social circumstances and then made to become commonly recognized and accepted,

while accompanied by the suppression of alternative and multiple hearings. To put it simply, the voice performers are made to talk that way, and the audiences are made to hear that way. In assuming how a character-image-body should sound and whether the voice fits, nothing is natural but naturalized, nothing is internal but internalized.

The Vocaloid scene in Japan as an interinstitutional system: an open network of closed worlds

Álvaro David Hernández Hernández (International Research Center for Japanese Studies)

The 'Vocaloid scene' refers to a mix of *dōjin* activities mostly focused on the amateur production of music, songs and several derivative works based on the Vocaloid's fictional characters. This 'scene' merges the amateur orientation of *dōjin* activities with the market and profit-making orientation of several industries. I regard amateur and industry practices as the building blocks of institutions where actors can interact according to several 'logics of orientation' or goals addressing value. In the case of the activities of the industrial actors, their relation towards the cultural texts are oriented towards the production and/or management of cultural texts as a profit-making commodity in an open market. This orientation contrasts with the *dōjin* activities and the derivative use of fictional characters, which are mostly oriented towards non-profit activities based on the emotive consumption of the texts within closed communities. I regard the Vocaloid scene, as a network of *dōjin* and industrial actors, which is oriented above all, towards a logic of participation. Although all these activities include different actors with different orientations, they altogether shape what I regard as an 'interinstitutional system'.

Of Tentacles and Men: an approach to the French reception of Japanese pornographic animation, between 1978 and 2008

Aurélie Petit (Concordia University)

While taking into account the considerable spot Japanese animation has secured within the French cultural imagination since its first televised broadcast in 1978, the popularity of its pornographic counterpart on the territory isn't surprising. This animation genre, as an aesthetic figure, became usual to the French public's eye.

Through a joint diachronic analysis of both pornographic and Japanese animation's reception in France since the 1970s, and following Susanna Paasonen's theory that pictorial pornography requires from its viewer a solicitation of somatic archives (Florian Voros; 2014), I'll demonstrate how pornography's desires could be constructed through cultural object consumption.

How can we evaluate the "peripheral" nature of manga?

Maki Suzuki (Tokyo University)

Manga has been regarded as peripheral. And, cultural studies and media studies have positively evaluated such marginal position. Speaking of Japanese controversies, Shunsuke Tsurumi and Masao Yamaguchi are. Such evaluation was in agreement with cultural research as criticism of nationalism and criticism of imperialism. The structure in which the center and the periphery are knitted has become problematic. However, the way that new empires do not have such centers and circumstances is now becoming problematic. It is not a nationalism of one country but a capitalism that globalizes it. In this thesis, in such circumstances, still ask the significance of problematicization of the marginal nature of cartoons. Specifically, take the case of a situation where comic field is being organized.

How to Eat a Monster: The Production of Animated Special Effects in Monster Hunt (2015)

Hang Wu (McGill University)

This paper will be looking at the fantastic monster that appears in Raman Hui's *Monster Hunt* (2015), a CGI animation and live-action hybrid production from China which highlights scenes of monster eating, to address how the human-monster relation is played out at the level of the technological, the social, and the geopolitical. As an integration of different film technologies, *Monster Hunt* brings together the world of human beings filmed by the photographic camera lens and the world of fantastic monsters generated by the digital lens through the production of animated special effects. Drawing on media

studies and animal studies, this paper will also show how the mediation of monsters through digital effects shifts the act of eating animals, as the violence against nonhuman beings, into a kind of what Donna Haraway calls as “symbiogenesis” between human beings and monsters. *Monster Hunt* thus invites its viewers to feel distinct media textualities, different kinds of being, and worlds (regions) that are already in affective communications.