What You Watch Is What You Are? *Early Anime and Manga Fandom in the United States*

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What You Watch Is What You Are?

Early Anime and Manga Fandom in the United States

ANDREA HORBINSKI

The early years of anime and manga fandom in the United States were an era in which a fascinating welter of developments occurred simultaneously among fans of "geeky" popular culture, particularly science fiction, comics, and gaming, and set the stage for the current structures of fandom as they exist today. Over the course of approximately twenty years in the 1970s and 1980s, American fans attracted to "Japanimation" came to identify themselves as anime fans, a process that was by no means guaranteed to end with that result. Indeed, in their first few decades in the United States both anime and manga went through processes of familiarization, estrangement, and re-adoption that mirrored the experience of other new media in other times and places, particularly that of movies in Japan in the 1900s through 1920s. The evolution of American fans' attitudes toward these media was closely related to the fates of the first companies' attempts to operate for profit in these spaces, and the failures of these companies' efforts to import anime and manga as cartoons and comics essentially conditioned the current regime among both companies and fans that celebrates anime and manga as distinctly Japanese media.

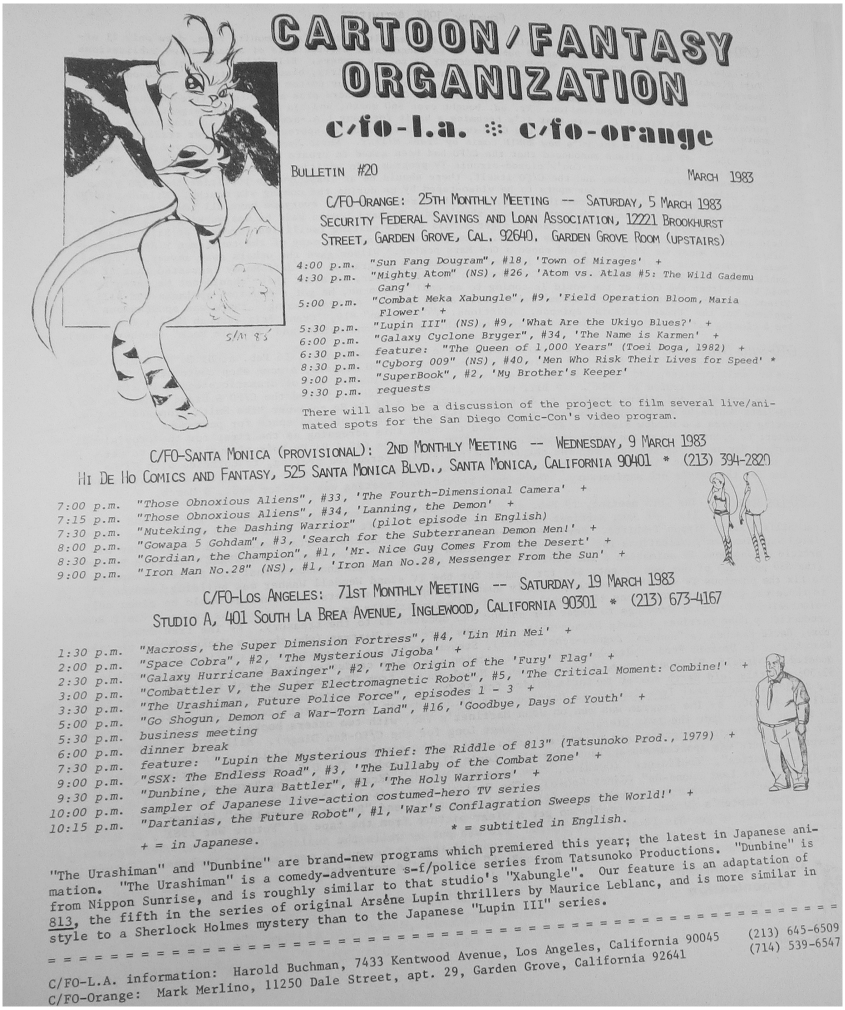
Sociologist Casey Brienza contends that the history of manga publication in the United States before the start of the period she covers in *Manga in America* is more or less irrelevant because "manga was simply not, in short, something that was ever going to work in the comics publishing field" and therefore is not worth discussing at length.[1] While these conclusions are certainly correct for Brienza's study of the American manga industry since 1997, as a historian I cannot agree that those prior decades ought to be disregarded. Failure structures later developments no less than success, and the failures of anime and manga tell a story that is worth adding to the larger narrative of popular culture and its audiences in these decades. Moreover, taking a bottom-up rather than top-down vantage point on this era tells a very different story than the one we can derive from corporate sources; fan cultures are driven by motives other than pure profit, and the archives of fan

cultures reveal that even in the years when Japanese media were not selling well, fans were still engaging with them in ways that were consequential. In other words, telling the story of popular culture without engaging with the audiences who consume it creates a fundamentally one-sided and inaccurate narrative.

First, We Take California: Anime Arrives

Early anime fans were drawn to anime not because it was Japanese but because it was an additional form of science fiction or cartoons, in which they had a prior interest. In this respect, the experience of Fred Patten (1940–2018), who had grown up watching cartoons on television and who eventually became a notable figure in science fiction, anime and manga, and furry fandoms, was more or less representative. Living in southern California his entire life, Fred became one of the founders in 1977 of what was christened the "Cartoon/Fantasy Organization" (C/FO), which is now regarded as America's first anime club, eventually serving as its secretary after the organization expanded nationally.[2] The archives of the Fred Patten Collection in the Eaton Library of Science Fiction at the University of California, Riverside, on which this paper principally draws, are full of proof and final copies of Fred's desktop publishing efforts in service of the C/FO and other associated fan events, including science fiction and anime conventions, over the course of more than forty years.

Patten was himself a furry, which may explain the choice of "Sandy," an anthropomorphized female otter-type creature with antennae who served as the group's mascot despite the fact that she had no clear analog in the anime that was one of the group's mainstays. Although Patten later emphasized the C/FO as an anime club, materials in the archives make clear that not every C/FO member nationwide shared this evaluation: Patten himself complained in a report on a trip to Japan in 1986 that the anime goods shops he and his group visited did not contain a lot of "cute animal" merchandise—"cute animals" being the code for characters that drew furry attention used through most of the Patten materials. While cat and bunny girls are certainly not unknown in anime and manga and video games, they were perhaps somewhat less common in the 1980s than they have become in the age of Final Fantasy and the JRPG. In any case, there is quite a difference between the style of animalization of the human form epitomized by Fran from *Final Fantasy XII*



CARTOON/FANTASY ORGANIZATION

c/fo-l.a. ⁘ c/fo-orange

BULLETIN #20 — MARCH 1983

C/FO-ORANGE: 25TH MONTHLY MEETING -- SATURDAY, 5 MARCH 1983
SECURITY FEDERAL SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION, 12221 BROOKHURST STREET, GARDEN GROVE, CAL. 92640. GARDEN GROVE ROOM (UPSTAIRS)

4:00 p.m.	"Sun Fang Dougram", #18, 'Town of Mirages' +
4:30 p.m.	"Mighty Atom" (NS), #26, 'Atom vs. Atlas #5: The Wild Gademu Gang' +
5:00 p.m.	"Combat Meka Xabungle", #9, 'Field Operation Bloom, Maria Flower' +
5:30 p.m.	"Lupin III" (NS), #9, 'What Are the Ukiyo Blues?' +
6:00 p.m.	"Galaxy Cyclone Bryger", #34, 'The Name is Karmen' +
6:30 p.m.	feature: "The Queen of 1,000 Years" (Toei Doga, 1982) +
8:30 p.m.	"Cyborg 009" (NS), #40, 'Men Who Risk Their Lives for Speed' *
9:00 p.m.	"SuperBook", #2, 'My Brother's Keeper'
9:30 p.m.	requests

There will also be a discussion of the project to film several live/animated spots for the San Diego Comic-Con's video program.

C/FO-SANTA MONICA (PROVISIONAL): 2ND MONTHLY MEETING -- WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH 1983
HI DE HO COMICS AND FANTASY, 525 SANTA MONICA BLVD., SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA 90401 * (213) 394-2820

7:00 p.m.	"Those Obnoxious Aliens", #33, 'The Fourth-Dimensional Camera' +
7:15 p.m.	"Those Obnoxious Aliens", #34, 'Lanning, the Demon' +
7:30 p.m.	"Muteking, the Dashing Warrior" (pilot episode in English)
8:00 p.m.	"Gowapa 5 Gohdam", #3, 'Search for the Subterranean Demon Men!' +
8:30 p.m.	"Gordian, the Champion", #1, 'Mr. Nice Guy Comes From the Desert' +
9:00 p.m.	"Iron Man No.28" (NS), #1, 'Iron Man No.28, Messenger From the Sun' +

C/FO-LOS ANGELES: 71ST MONTHLY MEETING -- SATURDAY, 19 MARCH 1983
STUDIO A, 401 SOUTH LA BREA AVENUE, INGLEWOOD, CALIFORNIA 90301 * (213) 673-4167

1:30 p.m.	"Macross, the Super Dimension Fortress", #4, 'Lin Min Mei' +
2:00 p.m.	"Space Cobra", #2, 'The Mysterious Jigoba' +
2:30 p.m.	"Galaxy Hurricane Baxinger", #2, 'The Origin of the 'Fury' Flag' +
3:00 p.m.	"Combattler V, the Super Electromagnetic Robot", #5, 'The Critical Moment: Combine!' +
3:30 p.m.	"The Urashiman, Future Police Force", episodes 1 - 3 +
5:00 p.m.	"Go Shōgun, Demon of a War-Torn Land", #16, 'Goodbye, Days of Youth' +
5:30 p.m.	business meeting
6:00 p.m.	dinner break
7:30 p.m.	feature: "Lupin the Mysterious Thief: The Riddle of 813" (Tatsunoko Prod., 1979) +
9:00 p.m.	"SSX: The Endless Road", #3, 'The Lullaby of the Combat Zone' +
9:30 p.m.	"Dunbine, the Aura Battler", #1, 'The Holy Warriors' +
10:00 p.m.	sampler of Japanese live-action costumed-hero TV series
10:15 p.m.	"Dartanias, the Future Robot", #1, 'War's Conflagration Sweeps the World!' +

+ = in Japanese. * = subtitled in English.

"The Urashiman" and "Dunbine" are brand-new programs which premiered this year; the latest in Japanese animation. "The Urashiman" is a comedy-adventure s-f/police series from Tatsunoko Productions. "Dunbine" is from Nippon Sunrise, and is roughly similar to that studio's "Xabungle". Our feature is an adaptation of 813, the fifth in the series of original Arsène Lupin thrillers by Maurice Leblanc, and is more similar in style to a Sherlock Holmes mystery than to the Japanese "Lupin III" series.

C/FO-L.A. information: Harold Buchman, 7433 Kentwood Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90045 (213) 645-6509
C/FO-Orange: Mark Merlino, 11250 Dale Street, apt. 29, Garden Grove, California 92641 (714) 539-6547

Figure 1. 1983 C/FO newsletter for the Los Angeles and Orange County chapters showing Sandy on the masthead.

and, say, Minnie Mouse or Lola Bunny, who epitomized the American style of anthropomorphization of the animal form that future furries tended to encounter in cartoon consumption from childhood onward in the United States.

The C/FO started in Los Angeles and spread from there to Orange County and the Inland Empire and eventually to other states. Chapters met in a variety of rental spaces, including nerd-related bookstores or game shops, and watched programs of cartoons for several hours on a regular, usually monthly,

basis. New chapters in other areas were usually started by people who had attended a few meetings of an established chapter and were inspired to replicate the experience closer to home. Chapter members paid membership fees to cover costs, and chapters themselves paid an annual fee to the C/FO parent organization, run out of Patten's apartment, to maintain their official status. Screening attendees were usually asked to contribute an admission fee at each meeting to cover costs related to the use of the space or the distribution of the programs for the meeting's content, which were usually the sole means of knowing anything about what was being shown in this pre-internet age. Nonmembers paid a surcharge for newsletters and programs in some chapters, incentivizing them to become full-fledged members. In the case of anime, the programs reveal some fascinating commonalities in the way that fans took it upon themselves to wrestle this content into a format they could understand and enjoy.

In the 1970s and 1980s anime was mostly available in the United States in two ways. The first, much less common, way was as a dubbed and adapted version of the show that was broadcast in English on U.S. television stations and that frequently bore little if any relation to the original. (Ironically, the English-language adaptation of *Tetsuwan Atomu* [1963–66, *Astro Boy*], which set the paradigm for this first age of anime adaptations, may have been one of the most faithful of them all.) As the 1980s went on, C/FO members also reported that anime was broadcast with subtitles in some markets; this was the case with *Galaxy Express 999* (1978–81, *Ginga tetsudô 999*) in the New York City area, for example. Second, and much more regularly, however, fans were watching pirated copies of anime that had been recorded from televisions directly onto VHS, usually by people who had access to Japanese-language television channels, primarily in California and Hawai'i, or by members of the U.S. armed forces or their families who were stationed in Japan. A thriving trade in copies of these VHS tapes, sustained by informal networks among fans and occasionally being sold for profit at game or comics shops and conventions, meant that quality was highly variable (since VHS tape, being physical and magnetic, degrades with each copy made) and that it was sometimes difficult to secure sequential runs of episodes of the same shows.

The central problem of early anime fandom was that very few people spoke Japanese. With shows that were dubbed and officially distributed in English vastly outnumbered by those that were not (and in an environment in which local TV stations dropped shows with low ratings mercilessly, frequently leaving devoted viewers with no officially licensed alternatives to see

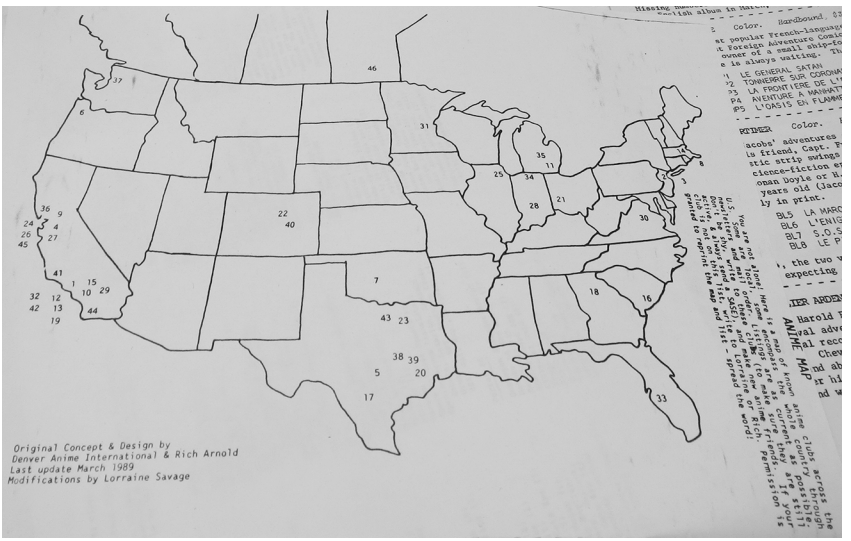


Figure 2. March 1989 map prepared for the C/FO newsletter depicting known anime clubs across the United States and Canada.

the rest of a cancelled series), early anime fans in the United States evolved a number of strategies to mitigate the difficulties of the language barrier. As attested in the Patten archive, these strategies took four principal forms: episode synopses, episode transcripts, Japanese vocabulary building, and live summary and/or translation of shows.

Of these, the first two forms were by far the most common, judging by the preponderance of surviving documents related to them in the Patten archives. Episode synopses were generally written by diligent fans with insider knowledge, whether this took the form of Japanese language skills or access to officially available promotional materials, which Fred Patten, for example, often obtained through his role as a freelance writer/promoter for Japanese animation studios and their shows in the California market and nationally.[3] These synopses were then typed up and photocopied for distribution, either through newsletter mailing networks or their sale at anime screenings. Someone could purchase a set of synopses in order to watch a whole show and know what was going on, or to fill in the gaps in their knowledge of the show if they had not managed to obtain all of the episodes. The fees charged for these synopses were deliberately nominal, usually just enough to recoup printing and shipping costs (if applicable); the belief that being "noncommercial" is a legitimate defense against potential copyright infringement

claims was already strong in fandom spaces, and it remains so in some areas of fandom to this day.[4]

Episode synopses, however, were deliberately somewhat high-level, designed to convey the events of an entire show of 26, 39, or 52 or more episodes in a manageable amount of paper and text. Episode transcripts were the strategy of choice for those who wanted to know what was happening in a given episode of anime on the most granular level possible. Given the level of effort involved in translating every line in a twenty-two-minute episode, complete with descriptions of actions and events, and then typing up all that text, it is perhaps unsurprising that full-blown episode transcripts are relatively uncommon in the Patten archive. Those that were archived usually have a price of $1 per copy, one episode each. More interesting, almost all of them include pages with explanations that insist the transcript is an "interpretation," which does not infringe on the Japanese copyright holders in any way; all of them, however, appear to be unvarnished translations, which does constitute copyright infringement under U.S. law.

The fannish attitude toward the rights holders and the companies involved in officially licensing and distributing anime in the United States at the time was an outgrowth of the deferential posture evidenced in these notes—notwithstanding the fact that most of the anime fans consumed was pirated in one way or another. American anime fans generally saw themselves as boosters of anime in their local broadcast markets, and they aspired to official acknowledgment of their activities in their roles as early adopters, which they actually achieved to some degree in the late 1970s. As Fred Patten related in a 2001 book chapter, years of contact between the C/FO in Southern California and Japanese anime studios began with a visit from Tezuka himself to a C/FO meeting in 1978. This meeting culminated in "a tour group of about thirty Japanese cartoonists and animators," including Tezuka, who attended the San Diego Comic Con (SDCC) in 1980, "so they could see for themselves what an audience Japanese animation was developing in the United States." Although nothing much came of this tour at the institutional level, according to Patten, "the influence on the fledgling anime fans of having met some of the most popular Japanese cartoonists, and the concept that fans were performing an important cultural service by helping to introduce Japanese animation to Americans, had a significant effect for years."[5]

But the influence in this era was not all one way. In a fine irony, the visit of (future) Japanese anime industry figures to American fandom in 1980 that was to have a lasting impact on Japanese fan cultures as a whole was not that

of Tezuka and company to SDCC. Rather, it was that of Okada Toshio (b. 1958) and Takeda Yasuhiro (b. 1957) to the science fiction convention Worldcon in Boston (specifically, Noreascon Two), which directly inspired their bid to host the now-legendary DaiCon III convention in Osaka in 1981 and launched them on the path to founding General Products and Gainax. Unheralded, unanticipated, and unknown as Okada and Takeda were (the exact opposite of the deference shown to Tezuka and his colleagues in San Diego), their Worldcon experience ultimately changed fandom worldwide in another example of the transnational influence of fannish border-crossing.[6]

Languages and Letters: Speaking for Anime

The deference shown toward rights-holders in the fannish newsletters was the flip side of an argument that would eventually bring down the C/FO as a national organization and reconfigure the U.S. anime fandom scene by the beginning of the 1990s, namely, the ongoing argument about pirated versus officially distributed media and what moral obligation fans had to media companies, if any. The arguments about piracy were and are partly a consequence of an exaggerated idea of the importance of what was a small minority of early adopters to the commercial potential of officially licensed media.[7] In the 1970s and 1980s, however, this attitude most often manifested in campaigns to either reverse a cancellation decision or to get a local TV station to put anime on the air.

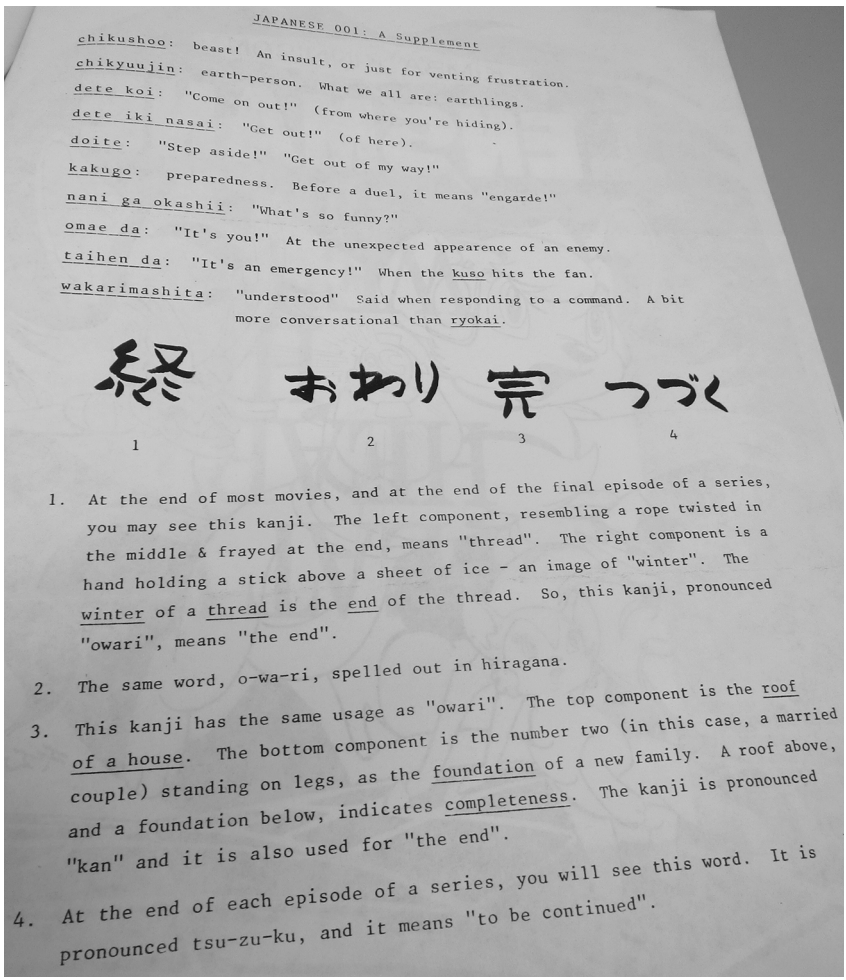
Letter-writing campaigns had been pioneered in the science fiction fandom community in the late 1960s, when Bjo Trimble (b. 1933), assisted by her husband John, spearheaded the grassroots letter-writing campaign that successfully resulted in the production of the third season of *Star Trek* (1966–69), reversing CBS's decision to cancel the series after just two seasons. Judging by the contents of the Patten archive, anime campaigns had a mixed record. For example, the June 1982 bulletin of the C/FO–New York chapter informs fans of the impending cancellation of the *Galaxy Express 999* anime in that market:

> As some of you know, Entel Communications has now started its programming at 10:00pm Sundays, instead of 9:00pm. C/FOer Patricia Malone has discovered that *Galaxy Express 999* will go off the air this week and there is no planned replacement animation. The people at

> Entel feel that "not many 'children' are up at 10:00pm Sunday evening," hence no sponsors.
>
> Naomi Saraki, the person who does the subtitles, believes that if she can get enough *letters* from people to show the higher-ups there is an audience, perhaps something could be done. We've asked this once before; if everyone would please write to Entel, perhaps we could get them to reinstate animation in their programming.

As it happens, this particular C/FO-New York campaign was a success. The August 1982 bulletin contained an update, informing fans: "In September, Mater & Tetsuro will be back from vacation to continue their trips on the *Galaxy Express 999.* Many thanks to everyone who wrote in and helped to get *GE 999* back on the air. The people at ENTEL now know that their animation appeals to more than just kids." Six months later, in the newsletter for the 32nd monthly screening, the C/FO–New York was at it again, asking members to write to the local station WQR-TV9 on behalf of Fuji Television, which was "planning to introduce Reiji [*sic*] (Captain Harlock, *Galaxy Express 999*) Matsumoto's animated series, 'Queen of a Thousand Years,' to american [*sic*] audiences. It is being translated into English and because it is not a violence-oriented series, it will survive the transition nearly intact." The C/FO–New York cast this campaign in terms of mutual self-interest, saying that "Fuji will need support from the US fans to get this series on television. . . . Only letters will work; *lots* of letters. They need proof that there is an audience for the program. So, if you want some serious & intelligent animation on network TV, write."

Letter-writing campaigns were by no means guaranteed to be successful, and a flyer entitled "Star Blazers in New York" from around the same time as these C/FO–New York bulletins provides some hints as to why that could be. After outlining the current outlook in New York City for the broadcast of *Star Blazers* (1979–84), the now-infamous English-language adaptation of three sliced and diced *Space Battleship Yamato* shows (1974, 1978, 1989, *Uchû senkan Yamato*), the flyer detailed seven guidelines for fan letter writers, including not to call the TV station directly, not to write form letters, to mention their age and request a later time slot for the show, to be polite ("Rude letters get us no place, and will hinder more than help"), to "mention that you have friends who have also seen the show and enjoyed it. But try not to mention that you are part of a letter writing campaign that is organized," not to write cut-and-



JAPANESE 001: A Supplement

chikushoo: beast! An insult, or just for venting frustration.
chikyuujin: earth-person. What we all are: earthlings.
dete koi: "Come on out!" (from where you're hiding).
dete iki nasai: "Get out!" (of here).
doite: "Step aside!" "Get out of my way!"
kakugo: preparedness. Before a duel, it means "engarde!"
nani ga okashii: "What's so funny?"
omae da: "It's you!" At the unexpected appearance of an enemy.
taihen da: "It's an emergency!" When the kuso hits the fan.
wakarimashita: "understood" Said when responding to a command. A bit more conversational than ryokai.

終 おわり 完 つづく

1 2 3 4

1. At the end of most movies, and at the end of the final episode of a series, you may see this kanji. The left component, resembling a rope twisted in the middle & frayed at the end, means "thread". The right component is a hand holding a stick above a sheet of ice - an image of "winter". The winter of a thread is the end of the thread. So, this kanji, pronounced "owari", means "the end".
2. The same word, o-wa-ri, spelled out in hiragana.
3. This kanji has the same usage as "owari". The top component is the roof of a house. The bottom component is the number two (in this case, a married couple) standing on legs, as the foundation of a new family. A roof above, and a foundation below, indicates completeness. The kanji is pronounced "kan" and it is also used for "the end".
4. At the end of each episode of a series, you will see this word. It is pronounced tsu-zu-ku, and it means "to be continued".

Figure 3. "Japanese 001," translated by Eddie Wood, circulated by the C/FO–New York in its December 1983 newsletter.

paste type letters on the grounds that "this will set us back, and will give the impression that we are just a bunch of little kids," and not to "get over involved with one letter. Your letter should be short and to the point." At the end of the flyer, there is an address to which fans could send a self-addressed stamped envelope if they wanted to join the local *Star Blazers* fan club.

The third strategy available to anime fans was studying Japanese, which, judging from the newsletters, usually took the form of guides to catchphrases

and/or common expressions likely to recur in a given series or across anime in general. This strategy also seems to have been relatively uncommon; it was not until the 1990s and 2000s that college-level Japanese teachers in the United States began reporting that anime and manga were driving enrollments in Japanese-language classes. One example of such a guide contains brush-painted reproductions of kanji and hiragana phrases used in television, specifically those for "the end" and "to be continued," as well as explanations of the radicals in the kanji themselves. Another vocabulary list circulated by the C/FO–New York in December 1983, including such common words and phrases as "gambatte" (defined literally as "Try hard!" or "Go for it!"), "hoshi" (usually "star," sometimes "planet"), was defined in terms of the *Galaxy Express 999* anime. Its definition of "Isoide" reads: "'Hurry!' 999 is pulling out of the station, Maytel & Tetsuro are running to catch it, the Conductor leans out the window, 'Isoide! Hayaku!'"

The fourth strategy of which anime fans availed themselves was by far the most interesting, namely that of live summary/translation at anime screenings. For whatever reason, this strategy, called "narration" in the newsletters, seems to have been practiced principally by the fans of the C/FO–New York, which began in 1980.[8] In "narration," bilingual fans, usually women, would live translate/interpret the anime for the benefit of their fellow non-Japanese-speaking fans. The undated newsletter that announced the 53rd monthly screening of the C/FO–New York chapter, for example, states that at the previous screening (presumably January 1985, given the reference to Disney's *The Black Cauldron* [1985] as "upcoming") chapter president Patricia "Pat" Malone "narrated the *Macross* episode, #36, which was given a wealth of applause when it ended."

Other C/FO–New York newsletters, however, betray the enormous amount of effort that these fan volunteers put into the screenings and the tensions that arose. In a letter published in the July 1983 bulletin and dated June 20 of that year, Pat Malone registered her discontent with her fellow fans along several axes, opening with the question, "How come people always ask for something in English but as soon as it's shown some people are grumbling about it and, as what happened last meeting, have it pulled for some Japanese cartoons." Malone's question was apparently prompted by a failed attempt to screen the animated feature *Winds of Change* (1979, *Hoshi no Orufeusu*) the previous month; after twenty minutes, popular demand at the screening led to turning off the movie and switching to anime. "We are the CARTOON FANTASY ORGANIZATION not the Japanese Cartoon Fan Association," Malone wrote. "We are not exclusively Japanese cartoons many of us want to see

something else, something different. Some people have gotten to be like the censorship we all complain about, only it's 'if it isn't Japanese, it's no good.'"

Malone had put a significant amount of personal labor into the club, as she reminded people: "I have worked hard to get the club a meeting place, to get various and new programs. Also to get translations of programs. (I gave a narration of the first 2 episodes of 'SSX.') As much as I love Harlock, I don't want a steady diet of him. I sometimes want to see something different, something in English like others in the club I know of. But if the ones who just want to watch giant robots and space battles get their way, the club will loose [*sic*] members and dwindle to nothing." Interestingly enough, given the contents of her letter, Malone signed off with the Japanese phrase "Dewa shitsurei itashi-masita," which literally means "I have disturbed you," but in context could mean anything from "Excuse me" to a much ruder phrase. In the next bulletin, Malone informed members that the C/FO–New York newsletter writer job, and by implication the presidency of the chapter, had fallen to her by dint of no one else volunteering. Her report from the August screening was that "the change of control was announced and accepted by the members."

That same August 1983 screening featured a rare instance of a male Japanese speaker assisting with narration, this time one Hiroto Mandai, who helped Malone with an episode of SSX and one Jim Kapostzas with "the narration of the feature, YAMATO: THE CONCLUDING CHAPTER. Hiroto was given a hearty thank you and a round of applause for his help." Mandai maintained a correspondence with Malone after he returned to Japan, writing to her in October 1983 about the state of anime and manga in Japan, mentioning Adachi Mitsuru and Takahashi Rumiko by name (and in American rather than Japanese name order); Malone published his letter verbatim in the December 1983 bulletin. It seems that "narration" sometimes consisted of reading the English subtitles aloud to the audience, which Kapostzas and two attendees, "the Moriarty brothers," are stated to have done at other times, as did Malone herself, as at the 41st meeting in 1984, when she "with the help of the people in the front row read the subtitles to MY YOUTH IN ARCADIA." In the same bulletin, Malone informed members of the start of a campaign trying to keep the animated show *Inspector Gadget* (1983–86) on the air, and that "Urusai Yatsura means Those Annoying Aliens or Those Noisy Aliens."

The fact that the C/FO screening attendees protested *Winds of Change* is significant given the film's tortured bi-national origins: released by Sanrio as the rock generation's answer to *Fantasia* (1940), it consisted of five short retellings of segments from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and was directed and written by a Japanese animator, Takashi, but was nonetheless created entirely

in Hollywood. The movie performed dismally upon its initial U.S. release in 1979 under the English title *Metamorphoses;* after trimming seven minutes, the studio rereleased it under the title *Winds of Change,* which was the version that went over so poorly at the New York screening.[9] Although certainly not "anime" in the sense of limited animation that was made for television in Japan, the argument could certainly be made that *Winds of Change* was nonetheless "Japanese animation," or "Japanimation" as it was called then. Were the C/FO members reacting solely to the movie's language, as Malone claimed? Or was it just that *Winds of Change* was a bad movie, as the box office returns indicated?

The practice of "narration" in the C/FO–New York in the early 1980s recalls nothing so much as the prewar institution in Japanese film known as the *benshi* (narrators of films who interpreted movies live for audiences in the theater). Like anime fans in the United States, Japanese movie audiences faced a language barrier when watching films made abroad even in the silent era, as they could not read the intertitles in other languages. Japanese film promoters hit upon the notion of the benshi, often going so far as to invent their own sound effects. (Before the advent of talkies, movie scores in the United States were most often provided by in-house accompanists who improvised, usually on piano.) Benshi were so popular, and so institutionalized as part of what made movies movies, that they continued well into the talkie era despite multiple attempts by promoters of so-called Pure Film and the fascist Japanese state to stamp them out through various means, as detailed by film historian Aaron Gerow in *Visions of Japanese Modernity.*[10]

The key point of comparison, highlighted by the similarities between benshi and fan narration, is how movies were treated in Japan in the early twentieth century and how Japanese animation was treated in the United States after 1963. Gerow's book is in part an argument for recognizing that early Japanese cinema was always a transnational phenomenon and a transnational negotiation, contrary to a discourse of film in Japan that has, in his words, relied upon "asserting a clear border between Japan and the West when narrating a history of cinema rife with border crossings."[11] The same dichotomy has been applied to anime, and it does not hold up any better: how should a transnationally produced animated feature like *Wings of Change* be categorized? (And who should get the blame for its failures?) Does the outsourcing of the animation for *The Last Unicorn* (1982) by Rankin and Bass to the Japanese studio Topcraft (which later became the core of Studio Ghibli) make that movie "anime" or "Japanese animation?" What about anime in which the bulk of the animation labor was outsourced to Korea or Taiwan or Vietnam? What

about American cartoons from the 1970s whose animation was done in Japan, in whole or in part?

Epiphanies and Spectacles: Crossing Boundaries of Genre and Nation

The central experience of early anime fans in the United States was often the revelation—frequently narrated in terms of having an epiphany—that many of the cartoons that they had enjoyed in earlier years had been made in Japan. Patten himself made this connection in 1970 thanks to an encounter with the manga version of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* at Westercon, a West Coast science fiction convention, which led to his realization that *Astro Boy*'s origins lay across the Pacific.[12] These epiphanies were powered by the fact that before anime was "Japanimation" it was just cartoons; *Astro Boy, Speed Racer* (1967–68, *Mahha GôGôGô*), and other shows were dubbed into English and shown on TV in the States with no remark on their national origins or being "strange." As Patten summarized, "To Americans, these half-hour TV cartoons were indistinguishable from most American TV animation. . . . So the cartoons from Japan were not thought of by the public as 'Japanese animation.' If their origins were realized at all, they were considered to be just part of a vague 'foreign animation' category."[13] In Patten's telling, when comics and science fiction fans discovered Japanese anime as such, beginning in 1976 with mecha shows, "there was considerable culture shock."[14]

Aaron Gerow writes of cinema in Japan that "Certainly cinema . . . was seen as alien only after it was treated as familiar (as a misemono)."[15] When cinema was introduced to Japan, in other words, it was treated not as inherently foreign, Western, or modern, but simply as another form of spectacle, an entertaining thing to watch (*misemono*). Just as the earliest films in the United States and Europe were shown as part of the programs at vaudeville shows or (via kinetoscopes and the like) as one of multiple attractions in amusement arcades, like those on Coney Island, film in Japan before the 1910s was not marked out as special or separate but was naturalized as merely another kind of entertaining performance. So too were Japanese animated TV shows first treated the same as other, American-produced TV animation; it was only after they were "discovered" and popularized as "Japanimation" by Patten and his fellow fans that anime became marked as alien and Other, albeit (just like films in Japan) in a "good," entertaining way. This urge to treat anime as Other was what led Patricia Malone to castigate her fellow New York–C/FOers

for their alleged unthinking preference for Japanese-language materials. It was also (among other things) what led to the split between science fiction (SF) and animanga fandoms in the 1990s, which Patten and other older fans lamented: "it used to be that fans who enjoyed Japanese animated SF also enjoyed American SF movies, TV programs, novels, and comic books. They were satisfied with a Japanimation video room as part of a comprehensive general SF convention," Patten wrote in 1994, "Most of them still are, but now some fans are organizing separate 'anime and manga' conventions to concentrate on this Japanese visual SF alone."[16]

Even Patten, who surely ought to have known better, persisted in equating all of anime and manga solely with science fiction. "I can't help feeling that people are missing the real point," he wrote in that same 1994 article, "The point is not that this is Japanese animation, but that it is science fiction animation—or that it is animated SF. This missed point is emphasized every time somebody asks why Japanese animation is becoming so popular in America, the implication being, what is there about the Japanese cultural mystique that is so entrancing, which the animated cartoons of other countries can't match?" Patten's sidebar notes on the article, written a decade later, in 2004, acknowledge that "in 1994, anime's appeal may have been mostly as animated SF and fantasy. That is certainly no longer true."[17]

To be fair to Patten, the equation of anime and manga with science fiction was naturalized by what kinds of anime and manga were exported to the U.S. markets for the first twenty years after the first anime screening in the United States in 1975, and particularly in the 1980s. The experience of manga in the States in that decade makes clear that both anime and manga were being slotted into pre-existing fan spaces and markets; manga's general history in the United States mirrors that of anime, but (in a reversal of the historical relationship between the two in Japan) on a more compressed timeline and very much in anime's wake. In the 1980s, manga was sold alongside comics, which were entering a creative and capitalist cul-de-sac after their retreat from urban newsstands to dedicated comics shops, frequently in suburban strip malls and shopping centers. This retreat to the suburbs and the abandonment of large swaths of comics' former broad audiences in favor of focusing on white male customers was matched by a transformation in mainstream comics content, which, in literature scholar Ramzi Fawaz's analysis, "*devalued* the kinds of gender and sexual transformations that superhero comics like *The X-Men* had celebrated in the mid-1970s."[18] Manga was being treated as

Figure 4. Cover of *Viz-in*, vol. 2, no. 10, promotional newsletter distributed by VIZ Media, c. 1990, depicting the English release of *Xenon* (1986–87, Jûki kôhe Zenon).

familiar, in other words, in that it was slotted into current American "mainstream" comics culture, which at the time was both masculinized and oriented toward science fiction in a broad sense, ranging from superheroes to SF-ish action tales. Viz and Dark Horse, the two main companies that tried to sell manga as comics, licensed properties that would appeal to established comics fans and marketed them in locations frequented only by those same fans, who were constructed as male and (usually) white by both comics companies and most comics shops. Accordingly, there was no sense that manga could appeal to anyone beyond this presumed core comics demographic, regardless of the existence of female and nonwhite comics fans then and now.

Consequently, SF titles like *Ghost in the Shell, Akira,* and action manga like *Xenon* (1986–87) feature heavily in the promotional materials preserved in the Patten archive from these years. There was no attempt to import titles marketed to people beyond this demographic in Japan (i.e., shôjo, josei, and many seinen titles) because those audiences were presumed to have no U.S. equivalent. As Casey Brienza notes, moreover, the process of making manga familiar—what she calls "domesticating"—was particularly labor-intensive in these years, "involving reversing pages so that they would read in a left-to-right Western-style orientation and retouching artwork to remove and replace Japanese sound effects before manga fans stateside began demanding that companies present manga "unchanged."[19] Only when manga broke out of the comics market with the rise of shojo titles such as *Sailor Moon* (1991–97) in the 1990s did it become "strange" and "Japanese"; it did so, moreover, by attaching itself to trade book publishing. As Brienza summarizes, "While manga was not successful as a comic, and comics were not usually successful as books, by constructing the medium as something distinct from American comics, manga was able to become a book—and some manga series have gone on to sell millions of copies in the trade book market."[20] The treatment of manga not as "Japanese comics" but as an entirely distinct, alien medium enabled manga to rise to unprecedented heights of popularity in the States and worldwide. In turn, the popularity of manga has wrought many changes on the U.S. comics industry—but that's another story.

Conclusion: Coming of Age in Fandom

The early history of anime and manga fandom in the United States demonstrates that the specific history of adoption of anime and manga into existing

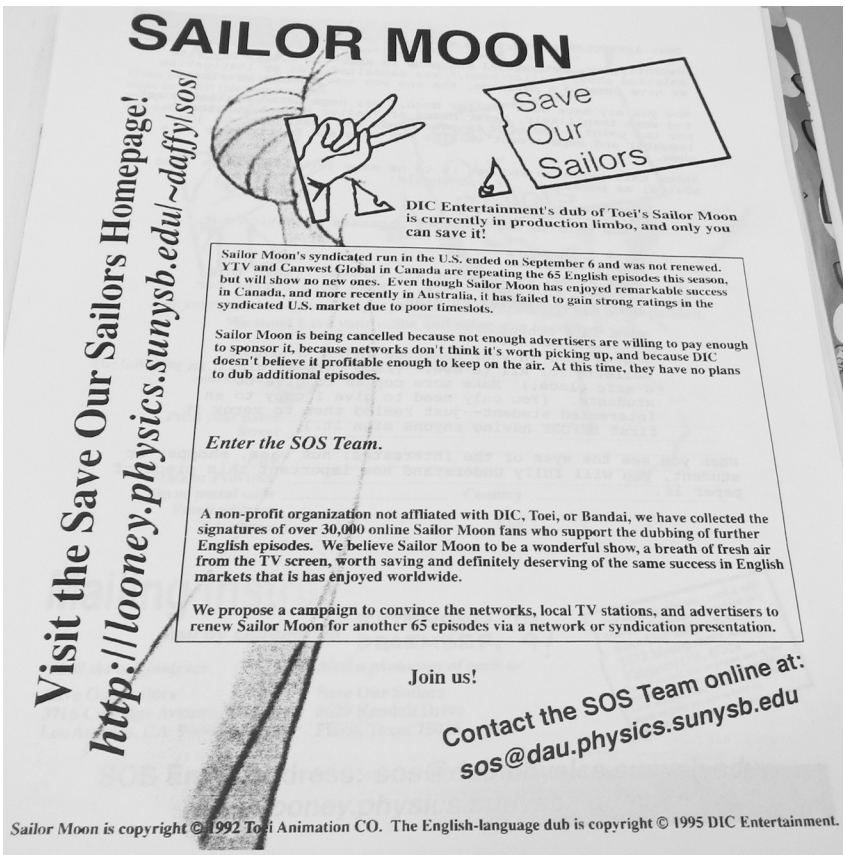


Figure 5. "Save Our Sailors" flyer promoting the fan campaign to return *Sailor Moon* to American broadcast.

U.S. fan cultures has many similarities to the adoption of cinema into Japan in the early twentieth century and, for that matter, of comics into Japan in the late nineteenth century. The problems of media adoption across boundaries of nation and language are thus to some extent medium-specific rather than nationally determined, as the parallel evolution of benshi in Japanese movie theaters and narration among U.S. anime fans indicates. Audiences have grappled with these same problems not as a consequence of national or cultural characteristics but due to the more prosaic technical characteristics of these media themselves: in the case of both anime and movies, audiences first dealt with a "new" form of media by naturalizing it as a pre-existing form of media, ignoring or effacing differences of language, culture, and national

origin, as well as technical specifications. Cinema in Japan was treated as a form of spectacle; Japanese cartoons were consumed first as cartoons and then as science fiction. Over time, however, these differences became increasingly apparent and their significance became increasingly elevated by audiences, finally reaching the point where these media could no longer be subsumed into pre-existing categories. As a result, SF and anime fandom cultures in the United States have developed on different tracks for the past twenty-five years.

The first twenty years of anime and manga fandom in the United States saw explosive growth in the popularity of these media among a rapidly growing group of fans, from science fiction devotees in the 1970s and 1980s to an increasingly broad and increasingly younger swath of the population in the 1990s. The broadcast of the *Sailor Moon* (1992–97) anime in syndication in the States in 1995 probably marks the end of this "childhood" era, which makes it only fitting that the anime's initial syndication was a failure; it returned to U.S. broadcast only after a successful fan campaign. In the twenty years between Fred Patten and Wendell Washer screening anime for the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society in July 1975 and the debut of *Sailor Moon,* the pre-existing structures of fandom—both in terms of existing fannish audiences and of the companies that sought to monetize the growing enthusiasm for anime and manga—had a huge influence on the development of the U.S. anime and manga industries. Those industries also began to come into their own after 1995, mostly after having shaken off a rocky early history of failed ventures and false starts conditioned by those same pre-existing fandom conditions. In other words, this history mattered in ways both positive and negative to the people who made significant profits in the U.S. anime and manga booms of the late 1990s to mid-2000s.

Taken altogether, the Patten archive and the history of early anime and manga fandom it contains demonstrate that the history of anime and manga in general and in the States specifically has always been one of border crossings, in which media and their industries and audiences on both sides of the Pacific have influenced one another in repeated and frequently surprising ways. This transnational history is not one in which cultures are odorless or borders are nonexistent. But it is one in which border-crossing has repeatedly proved to be possible, meaningful, and mutually consequential.

Andrea Horbinski holds a PhD in modern Japanese history with a designated emphasis in new media from the University of California, Berkeley. She has discussed anime, manga, fandom, and Japanese history at conventions and conferences on five continents, and her articles on manga and fandom in Japan and online have appeared in *Transformative Works and Cultures, Convergence, Internet Histories,* and *Mechademia.* Her book manuscript, "Manga's Global Century," is a history of Japanese comics from 1905–89.

Notes

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14. Patten, 56.
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