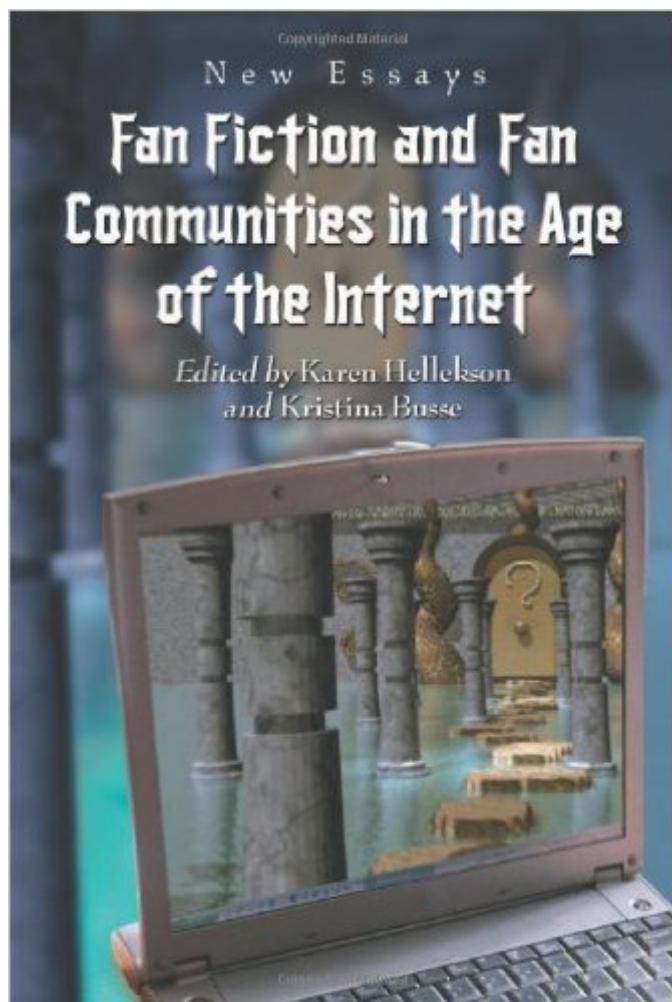


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Fan Fiction And Fan Communities In The Age Of The Internet: New Essays



Synopsis

Fans have been responding to literary works since the days of Homer's *Odyssey* and Euripedes' *Medea*. More recently, a number of science fiction, fantasy, media, and game works have found devoted fan followings. The advent of the Internet has brought these groups from relatively limited, face-to-face enterprises to easily accessible global communities, within which fan texts proliferate and are widely read and even more widely commented upon. New interactions between readers and writers of fan texts are possible in these new virtual communities. From *Star Trek* to *Harry Potter*, the essays in this volume explore the world of fan fiction--its purposes, how it is created, how the fan experiences it. Grouped by subject matter, essays cover topics such as genre intersection, sexual relationships between characters, character construction through narrative, and the role of the beta reader in online communities. The work also discusses the terminology used by creators of fan artifacts and comments on the effects of technological advancements on fan communities.

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One of the things I found particularly interesting (and enjoyable) about reading this book was how it mirrored discussions held with fan communities about what they do. Along with a helpful bibliography on fan studies, and more than one review of fan fiction history (its origins as well as academic study on the topic) there are various, sometimes contradictory, perspectives on the writing of fan fiction. These discuss the various forms it can take, and what models the writing fits into. Also very interesting is the history of machinima, one of fandom's latest art forms. A bit academic for the layman but still a useful introduction to those not familiar with fan fiction studies.

This is an essential book for anyone interested in contemporary fan communities and their creative products: fanfic (including slash fiction), fanvids, online RPGs, and much more. The writers are all both active fans and credentialed academics, and the book as a whole maintains academic rigour while remaining clear and comprehensible to readers who don't know the jargon. For members of fan communities, the language and activities described will be familiar. For those who are new to this subculture, Busse and Hellekson's introduction gives a succinct and readable account of the intellectual genealogy of fan studies while outlining the state of internet communities at the time of writing (admirably avoiding the common danger for books about the internet, the making of grand claims for a landscape that will be out of date by the time the description is in print, by emphasising the history and time-sensitivity of the world they describe), and Coppa provides a history of science fiction and media fan communities as they developed into the cultures which all the essayists examine and explore. Each of the essays presents a snapshot of fannish life, considering the communities which form around fan fiction writing, video making and other activities through fresh and interesting theoretical lenses. I was particularly intrigued by Coppa's reading of fanfiction as performance, Busse's and Lackner, Lucas and Reid's examination of writers' and readers' interactions as potentially and sometimes problematically queer acts, and Willis's depiction of slash fiction as making space for queer subjects in normatively straight textual worlds, but others will find different selections from this smorgasbord of literary and cultural analysis to be most appealing.

I am not an academic, but I found this book very readable. Beyond that, it was inspiring to read such a diversity of thought about the fannish culture to which I belong. Unlike the few other books I've read about media fandom, I wasn't just nodding my head and thinking "Yes, I know this already." Several of the essays introduced new ideas, new ways of thinking about fans and how we interact with one another and with our texts, that were not just novel to me but well-argued and fascinating. My particular favorite was the essay that suggested a view of canon, fanon, and fan-created texts as part of an "archive" of a particular show, movie, or book, erasing the boundary between canon and fannish creations in a way that is, IMO, nothing short of revolutionary. I would enthusiastically recommend this book to any fan interested in meta, and any scholar interested in media fandom.

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