

POPULAR CULTURE NEWSLETTER VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2, MAY 2010

Layout: Nicholas Porter

BGSU ASIAN POPULAR CULTURE SYMPOSIUM

by Esther Clinton, Jeremy Wallach, and Kristen Rudisill

Scholars from around the country converged on Bowling Green's campus for the BGSU Asian Popular Culture Symposium, held April 14th-16th. The distinguished visitors to our campus were impressed by the hospitality they encountered and by the undeniable usefulness of the Bowling Green approach, with its emphasis on everyday life and the continuity between folk and popular forms, to the study of popular culture in Asia. Even the weather stayed nice! After the event's conclusion, one of the presenters wrote, "This has been a very well-conceived and organized symposium on a timely and significant theme. Connections and conversations that took place at Bowling Green last week will impact scholarship for years to come."



Jeffrey Brown shares his remarks on Ian Condry's paper presentation to a packed house. Facing him on the left are Dr. Condry, Kristen Rudisill, and fellow discussant Larissa Heinrich.

Popular Culture Colloquium speaker Satomi Saito (GREAL) began the proceedings with a well-attended talk titled "Time Continuity and Japanese Animation: A Media Theory of Anime." This fascinating presentation, which delved into the history of different filmic techniques used to simulate three-dimensional reality in animated cartoons, naturally led into the first session, "The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and New Directions in Asian Popular Culture Studies," presented by Ian Condry from MIT. Dr. Condry spoke about his current research involving ethnographic fieldwork in Japanese animation studios. His presentation was followed by remarks from two discussants, Larissa Heinrich, a Chinese history specialist from the University of California at San Diego, and our very own Jeffrey Brown. An enthusiastic discussion followed inspired by their comments around issues of how one conducts ethnographic research on popular culture industries, the cultural meanings of mass-mediated visual artifacts, and the relationships between seriality and fan participation. The following session, on music, was titled "Remixes in Urban North India: Toward a Postlinear Model of Musical Circulation and Hearing," and featured ethnomusicologist Paul D. Greene from Penn State. Dis-

cussing his current research with DJ remix artists in Delhi, Dr. Greene's presentation led to a lively debate about the ethics of sonic appropriation involving him and his two discussants, Nilanjana Bhattacharjya from Colorado College and current Popular Culture Center Fellow Christopher Williams (see previous issue). One highlight of this session was Dr. Williams's reference to an article on a Mahler symphony that happened to have been written by Paul Greene's father, a professor of religion.



Ethnomusicologist Paul D. Greene presents his research on Indian film song remixes.

The second day opened with the third session, on narrative, titled "Peering into Deep Waters: Exploring Both the Depth and the Breadth of a South Asian Folk Epic," presented by Brenda Beck. Dr. Beck is a professor emerita who now heads the Sophia Hilton Foundation in Toronto, Canada. She has been working with this particular South Indian epic, the Legend of Ponnivala, for over four decades and has spearheaded a project to produce a several-hour-long animated feature of the epic, complete with musical score, voice actors from the greater Toronto area's South Asian Community, and graphics modeled after local folk motifs. Several episodes of this epic were premiered at Bowling Green at the symposium. The discussants for this session were Deeksha Nagar, of Bloomington, Indiana's Mathers Museum of World Cultures, and Esther Clinton, who knew Deeksha from their graduate training in folklore at Indiana University. Dr. Nagar spoke about the role of traditional narratives in her neighborhood growing up in India, and Dr. Clinton argued for the importance of traditional stories to constructing local world-views. This session

Jeremy Wallach directs a question during Brenda Beck's session to Dr. Beck (Center) and her two discussants, Deeksha Nagar (R) and Esther Clinton (L).



culminated in a consideration of the role of folk narrative in everyday life, both in South India and elsewhere.



Discussant Jennifer Prough offers her remarks on Jennifer Robertson's presentation while Dr. Robertson (onscreen) looks on and listens through the magic of Skype technology.

The final paper session, on performance, was conducted via Skype with Jennifer Robertson, of the University of Michigan, presenting her current research on Japanese eugenic ideology, the Takarazuka Revue (an all-female theater troupe founded pre-WWII), and humanoid robots. Her presentation, titled "Talking Feet: Performance and Performativity in Japanese Eugenics," was followed by comments by Jennifer Prough of Valparaiso University and Jack Santino. Dr. Prough related Dr. Robertson's presentation to her own research on comics aimed at Japanese girls, and discussed how the design of contemporary robot "gynoids" exemplified Japanese gender ideologies. Dr. Santino discussed how Robertson's presentation demonstrated that ideologies of racial purity can indeed be implicated in issues of robotic design.

The final event of the symposium was a panel discussion featuring remarks by Peter Kvetko of Salem State College in Massachusetts, and our very own graduate students Puja Batra-Wells and Nicholas Ware (who had earlier quite capably run the Skype session with Dr. Robertson). Dr. Kvetko spoke about his research on alternative pop music in India and how it exemplifies certain trends in the academic study of Asian popular culture and concluded by raising a number of questions for the open discussion that followed. Nick and Puja represented our department admirably by relating the subject of the symposium to key concepts in cultural theory, particularly the idea of hybridity, and adroitly took up the mantle for the next generation of scholars concerned with issues of cultural identity, global flows, and the roles of national cultures.

The final event of the symposium was a screening of four recently-completed animated episodes from the "Legend of Ponnivala" animation project and a huge concert by BGSU's own Game and Anime Music Ensemble (GAME), a student-run orchestra with guitar, bass guitar, keyboards, drums, brass sec-

India specialist and ethnomusicologist Peter Kvetko addresses the audience during the final panel discussion on the future of Asian popular culture studies.



tion, strings, and woodwinds, even a choir and a *taiko* drum! The group is dedicated to the performance of genre-defying Japanese popular music, both instrumental and sung (in Japanese, "Church Latin," and a Japanese-inflected approximation of American English) and they played on into the night, until the BTSU closed down and they had to stop.



Symposium Discussants Nilanjana Bhattacharjya and Christopher Williams with Jeremy Wallach at the University of Wisconsin Press book display.

The symposium was accompanied by a book table from the Popular Press/University of Wisconsin Press, an elaborate multimedia display about the

Legend of Ponnivala, and an exhibit of popular art from India curated by Kristen Rudisill and Shaurya Kumar. This exhibit included both popular calendar art and art that incorporated folk techniques or motifs. Artists represented were Shaurya Kumar, Neil Chowdhury, Atin Basak, Santosh Kumar Das, G. Raman, and M.R. Renjan.

Three pieces from the Popular Indian Art Exhibit.



The symposium was planned and organized by Kristen Rudisill and Jeremy Wallach, assisted by graduate student Mona Liu. The main sponsors were the Department of Popular Culture and the Center for Popular Culture Studies; other sponsors of the symposium and the Indian art exhibit included the Department of Ethnic Studies, Department of Sociology, School of Art, Department of German, Russian and East Asian Languages, Department of English, Women's Studies Program, Department of Musicology/Theory/Composition, Asian Studies Program, Institute for the Study of Culture and Society, Kala Fine Art, ECAP, and CLAZEL Entertainment.

DEPARTMENT OF POPULAR CULTURE MA STUDENTS, 2009-2010

Tim Bavlnka's research interests include comic books, black metal, the occult/shamanism in popular media, literary theory, fan mythology creation, and internet communities. He has delivered presentations at several conferences including: "The Superhero Significance: The Role of Superhero Comics as Literature" (University of Toronto, The New Narrative Conference, May 2008), "The Superhero Struggle: Reflections of Society in Marvel Comics" (Bowling Green State University, Battleground States Conference, February 2010), and "ISA: Internet State Apparatus - Hulu.com and Reclaiming the Consumer" (PCA/ACA Conference, April 2010). Additionally, Tim's piece "Images and Text: The Interdependent Relationship of Artists and Writers in Comic Books" was featured in the April 2007 edition of the *University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Journal of Undergraduate Research*. Tim has plans to present at more conferences in the upcoming Fall and Spring semesters. Next year Tim is Popular Culture Colloquium Series Co-Coordinator (with Brandi Venable).

Puja Batra-Wells's research interests include food studies, critical and cultural theory, material and expressive culture, and museum studies. She presented a paper titled "Devouring the Culinary Other: The Story of Chicken Tikka Masala" at the 2010 Battleground States Conference and at the Indiana University/Ohio State University Folklore Conference. She was also a participant in the BGSU Asian Popular Culture Symposium. After completing her MA degree, Puja intends to gather fieldwork experiences while working on a food studies project before applying to PhD programs next year.

Kendall Binder's research interests extend to Queerness in television, music, and film; representations of HIV/AIDS and the moving image; and Queer Politics. He presented "Gay.com: Queer Politics and the Online Carnival" at the 2010 PCA/ACA Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, and is currently submitting a paper titled "The Pastiche Lacks Pink: HIV Decoded as Love in Greg Araki's *The Living End*" to the Lesbian, Gay, Queer, Transgender Conference in Washington D.C. He also gave a well-attended public presentation titled "MILK: Gay Visibility and Equality in the US" at BGSU Firelands in Huron, Ohio on February 23, 2010. In addition to working as a part-time Circulation Supervisor at the Jerome Library at BGSU, Kendall will be performing liaison duties (with Brandi Venable) for the incoming first-year MA students in the Department of Popular Culture. His future plans include applying to PhD programs, visiting out-of-state friends, and preparing for his thesis.

Jared Brown focuses his research on television situation comedy, gay black male performativity, and true crime portrayals. He presented work on *The Golden Girls* at the 2010 Battleground States Conference and the 2010 BGSU Women's Studies Symposium. *The Golden Girls* will also provide the cen-

tral topic of Jared's thesis, in which he will be examining issues around elderly female sexuality, as well as the ways in which the show both reinforced and refuted stereotypes of elderly women in American society. His future plans are to pursue a Media Studies PhD with a focus on the performance of moving images. He is also interested in working for a major network in the audience reception/research area.

Graduating from the University of Florida with a degree in Spanish and Marketing, **Racheal Cobb** lists her scholarly interests as including consumer culture, marketing, and *The Simpsons*. Although she has yet to settle on her thesis topic, Racheal intends to go down the PhD path upon completing her Master's degree.

Kasey Cullors's primary research interest centers on ethnomusicology. Specifically, his thesis involves Michael Jackson and performance studies and will culminate in a cultural analysis of the album *Thriller*. Kasey presented at the ASALH National Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio in October 2009 and the 2010 PCA Conference in St. Louis, Missouri.



Kendall Binder gave a presentation at the Firelands campus February 23rd on "Milk: Gay Visibility and Equality in the US." He spoke for 30 minutes followed by a 30-minute Q & A and a showing of the film Milk. The event was sponsored by the HOPE organization at Firelands and over 100 people attended.

Ted Freese is a hard-boiled cop on the edge who isn't afraid to break a few rules if it means he gets results. His research interests include Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMO), identity and allegiance in online forum communities, and gaming in general. Ted presented "Meta-Gaming and Resistance: Taking Your Ball and Not Going Home," a presentation concerning creative resistance and gaming at PCA/ACA 2010. Ted has an essay in the upcoming "Enduring Questions" essay collection for ABC-CLIO's online database, and is submitting a paper, titled "Panoptic Playgrounds," to the gaming conference Meaningful Play. His future plans include finishing his thesis on time, and using his Master's degree to open a Pop Culture Dojo where he and other masters of popular culture will impart their wisdom to those who seek it, and teach students to assess and resolve issues or conflicts with television, literature, and gaming tropes.

Mallory Jagodzinski's research interests include history, feminisms, literature, and language and linguistics. Within the realm of romance novels, which served as the foundation for her thesis, she is especially interested in depictions of female friendships, location/space, fertility/infertility, and feminism. She presented "Is My Chemise Showing?: The Performative Force of Clothing in Celeste Bradley's *The Spy*" at the 2010 PCA conference in St. Louis, and was asked to submit the full length paper to the *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*. Outside of studying, her activities include membership in the Graduate Women's Caucus and serving as the Vice President of BGSU Slow Food.

Meredith King received her BA in Dramatic Literature from Sarah Lawrence College in 2005. A native New Orleanian, immediately after Katrina she felt compelled to move back home and rebuild. After several years, she was ready to move on, joining the class of 2010 in Popular Culture. She is interested in fandom, Internet communities, new media, and gender studies. She has presented papers at several conferences including Battleground States and PCA. Her thesis is on the community involved in the creation of the 2008 Internet web-series *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*. In the future, Meredith hopes to continue her studies while living someplace warm.

Hailing from Chengdu, in the Chinese province of Sichuan, **Menghan "Mona" Liu** graduated from Sichuan University, where she majored in English language and literature. Her undergraduate thesis focused on American advertising, and contained considerations of capitalism and gender performance, which led her to find the Popular Culture department. Mona is attempting to apply a western perspective to the study of Chinese independent musicians, primarily those who perform alternative rock, rock, indie rock, and indie pop. Mona's main research interests are alternative rock/ indie music and Asian pop, but also encompass war and war reporting, culture and tourism, PC game theory, queer analysis of Chinese literature, and theories of space and place. She hopes to include this last interest in her thesis in relation to the Chinese music industry.

Elizabeth Mason's research interests include trauma, gender (specifically masculinity), cinema as a means of establishing national identity, the body, and sexuality. Liz's thesis explores post-9/11 masculinity and trauma in 2008 American superhero films. A veteran of several conferences, she presented at Battleground States 2009 and 2010 as well as PCA in 2009 and 2010. Upon graduation, Liz's future plans include pursuing publication and applying to PhD programs.

Tierney Oberhammer has an eclectic range of scholarly interests including milk (the beverage), female criminals, the psychoanalytical study of monstrous/abject femininity, and mimicry in relation to postcolonial studies. She gave the presentations "Milk in the American Mind" at the 2010 PCA and "Class, Race, and Marginalization in *Drag Me to Hell*" at Battleground States 2010. Before joining the program, Tierney had several articles relating to pediatric issues published with Carolina Peds Online. Tierney will be graduating in December, after which she

plans to leave the Midwest and perhaps eventually pursue doctoral studies.

Originally from the United Kingdom, **Nick Porter** is interested in professional wrestling throughout the world, post-punk music, and twentieth century visual art. His thesis aims to address the depiction of race, ethnicity, and nationality in American professional wrestling. Nick presented at Battleground States 2010 and the 2010 PCA in St. Louis. In the future he hopes to present at the 2010 MPCA in Minneapolis, Minnesota and hopefully continue his education in the US with doctoral work in some form of cultural studies.

Nick Reinhard's main academic interests are the study of everyday life and folklore and folk narratives. Following his graduation, Nick will be going on for a second Master's degree in Leisure and Tourism within the HSMLS Graduate Program at BGSU beginning Fall 2010.

Brandi Venable's research interests include Children's and Young Adult Literature, British authors of Y.A. literature, fairy tales, depictions of Little Red Riding Hood in recent video games, coming-of-age tales and childhood rites of passage, and childhood's monsters and nightmares. She presented "The Cannibalistic Carnival and the Exhibit of the 'Other': An Examination of Social 'Othering' in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*" at the 2010 PCA/ACA Conference as well as "On and Off the Battlefield: Dr. Seuss as a War Propagandist" at the 2010 Battleground States Conference. Brandi's future plans include submitting a proposal for the 2010 American Society for Theatre Research Conference in Seattle, WA this fall, serving as the 2010-2011 Popular Culture Colloquium Series Co-Coordinator (along with Tim Bavlnka), and acting as the 2010 GradSTEP Co-Coordinator (with Kendall Binder). She hopes to apply to PhD Programs for admission in Fall 2011.

Nick Ware's research interests include game studies, post-apocalyptic and dystopian narratives, and cultural geography. He has presented at the PCA and Battleground States Conferences, the BGSU Popular Culture Colloquium Series (of which he was coordinator for the 2009-10 academic year), and the Asian Popular Culture Symposium. Upon completion of his MA at Bowling Green, Nick will enter the PhD program in Texts & Technology at the University of Central Florida in Orlando.

Sade Young's academic interests include Afro-futurism, hip-hop, and African-American popular culture, which will provide the basis for her thesis's exploration of Afro-futuristic journeys through hip-hop vernacular and post-humanism. She presented the paper "When Rappers Phone Home to a Disconnected Number" at Battleground States 2010 and the 2010 PCA Conference. In the future, Sade intends to present at more conferences, achieve publication, and pursue a PhD in African-American, American, or cultural studies.

FACULTY NOTES:

On Tuesday, April 13th, **Dr. Jeffrey Brown** gave a talk on Gay and Lesbian Superheroes for "Vision," the BGSU Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Questioning, Ally (LGBT) student organization.

This April, **Dr. Becca Cragin** was officially promoted to Associate Professor with tenure. The Department of Popular Culture heartily congratulates Dr. Cragin on the achievement of this important career milestone.

Dr. Matthew Donahue had a body of photographic work related to his art cars accepted for exhibition in a juried art exhibit scheduled for November 2010 sponsored by the Arts Commission of Greater Toledo (see photo). In addition, he served as an educational mentor for Sylvania Southview students enrolled in the course "Methods of Inquiry in the Humanities." Dr. Donahue has also completed production of a DVD of his band MAD 45's live performance at the Black Swamp Arts Festival and is currently writing material for a new album tentatively titled "Seduction of the Innocent."



"Jackson Pollocktik" by Matthew A. Donahue

Dr. Montana Miller's article, "Taking a New Spotlight to the Prom: Youth Culture and Its Emerging Video Archive," was published in the March 2010 *Journal of American Culture*. Dr. Miller gave the keynote address, titled "Assent of the Avatars: Challenges of Ethical Ethnographic Research (and IRB Review) on the Internet," for the Online Teaching and Learning division of the American Educational Research Association national meeting in Denver on May 2. She has also been invited to Los Angeles for a May 20 workshop on IRBs at the UC Humanities Research Institute and to Washington, DC in July to address the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Human Research Protections on issues of new media research. On March 23, Dr. Miller also spoke at the Bowling Green Town Hall Forum on underage drinking and driving. She addressed the Bowling Green PTO on April 12, speaking on issues of communication with teenagers and adolescent risk-taking. Dr. Miller also gave several presentations about Facebook and its effect on school climate and student/teacher boundaries to the faculty of Perrysburg H. S. at their May 4th in-service day.

POPC Interim Chair **Dr. Marilyn Motz**, after receiving a ringing endorsement from her colleagues, has been named Chair of the Department of Popular Culture for a four-year term beginning Fall 2010.

Dr. Jeremy Wallach gave a colloquium presentation titled "Ghostly Presences: On the Uncanniness of Recordings" on March 5th for the Department of Culture and Communication at Drexel University in Philadelphia. Earlier that day he gave a guest lecture on popular music genres in a Drexel undergraduate class on Indonesian Popular Culture (yes, there really is such a class!).

Eileen O'Neill, a Popular Culture MA holder (1990) and current president and general manager of The Learning Channel, returned to BGSU on April 23rd to collect a BGSU Centennial Alumni Award. Follow this link to a photo of her receiving her award (which we can't reproduce here due to copyright restrictions):

<http://bgsuphoto.smugmug.com/>

[Photography/BGSU-Centennial-](#)

[Alumni-Awards/11977283_v6BFx#848872065_r8onB](#)



Dr. Esther Clinton's spring graduate seminar "Heroes and Villains" at the final class session (5/6/10).

Where Are They Now?

The POPC Newsletter is interested in the current whereabouts of past MA grads for our Where Are They Now? series, to begin in our September issue. Please send info, leads, and such to jeremyw@bgsu.edu.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!!!