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Queer Parody and Sailor Moon Fandub

Fig. 1. @torontoqueerfilmfestival. Sailor Moon Parody Post1. @sailormoonparody, 15 Feb 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CosE96ttLM_/.

Fig. 2. @torontoqueerfilmfestival. Sailor Moon Parody Post2. @sailormoonparody, 15 Feb 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CosE96ttLM_/.

Fig. 3. @torontoqueerfilmfestival. Sailor Moon Parody Post3. @sailormoonparody, 15 Feb 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CosE96ttLM_/.
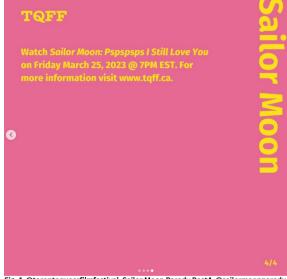

Fig. 4. @torontoqueerfilmfestival. Sailor Moon Parody Post4. @sailormoonparody, 15 Feb 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CosE96ttLM_/.

In recent years, the intersection of queer theory, digital media, and fandom has given rise to a new form of cultural production known as queer parody. Queer parody and fandubbing are forms of participatory culture in which fans create new content that subverts, critiques, or reinterprets mainstream media from a queer perspective. Fandubbing refers to the process of adding new voiceovers to existing footage, and abridging is a form of fan fiction or fan art where fans create shortened or parodied versions of existing media. Queer fandubbing and parody allow creators to engage with and critique dominant norms and social injustices through their fan-made content. By creating their own localized versions of media content, fans can highlight the limitations and biases of mainstream media and provide alternative perspectives.

Sailor Moon, a popular Japanese multimedia franchise created by Naoko Takeuchi in 1991, has captivated audiences worldwide [1]. Sailor Moon has become a subject of queer parody, with fans using fandubbing and abridging to challenge the original series' portrayal of gender and sexuality. Sailor Moon parody fandubs are fan-made videos in which the original audio of the anime is replaced with a new, often humorous, voiceover. These voiceovers may include new dialogue, characterizations, or jokes, and are typically created by fans using video editing software. *Sailor Moon Abridged* (2007-) [2] created by the YouTube channel "megami33" in 2007, re-dubs and abridges the original Sailor Moon anime, adding humorous and irreverent commentary (megami33). The series has gained a large following and has been praised for its humor and satire, as well as its subversive take on gender and sexuality, making it an important example of queer parody in the digital age.This research essay explores the ways in which post-cinema technology has allowed for the emergence of queer parody and how it intersects with queer theory, particularly the works of Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and José Esteban Muñoz. Through an analysis of various sources, including the *Sailor Moon*

Parody series, this essay seeks to understand the significance of queer parody in contemporary digital culture and how it challenges traditional notions of identity and representation.

Sailor Moon Parody (2020-2022) [3] was created by Harjot Bal, a queer Sikh multimedia artist who served as the writer, director, and producer of the project. This fan-made series reimagines Sailor Moon and her friends as non-normative and queer characters, challenging the heteronormative and cisnormative assumptions of the original series. The series also incorporates themes of anti-racism and anti-oppression, further expanding the intersectional approach of queer parody. Bal's fandubbed and abridged versions of Sailor Moon are informed by extensive research from a critical perspective of academic literature and internet culture mediums, as well as their own lived experience. Through their Sailor Moon dub version, Bal creates an over-the-top, queer parody that pushes the subtextual themes that inter-generations of people have observed, and if fandub and abridged content is an indicator, these queer stories are desired. Bal is thoughtful about how different versions of Sailor Moon have made decisions for their dub tracks, based on various factors that influence production for mainstream releases, such as political correctness of the historical moment, producer's aesthetic vision, technology, and voice actors. For Bal, the *Sailor Moon Parody* project is a creative outlet for their queer political expression. Bal wanted their script to convey a larger message that is thoughtful about what is essential and non-essential to the audience receiving it. Bal initiated the project during the COVID-19 social lockdowns and the resurgence of social justice movements, using fandubbing as a way to challenge norms and social injustices while having an artistic forum to express themselves. The time-based scale of the digital video medium to create an audio track that syncs was a major consideration for Bal. Bal found Sailor Moon movies that had not been released in North America. In addition to offering fresh visual content to an audience, they were drawn

towards the full-length movie format (approximately an hour) because it allowed for a creatively compelling structure that could be stand-alone, making it more accessible because it does not require viewers to watch other things in order to follow the story. Bal's *Sailor Moon Parody* series is a strong example of how fan-made content can provide less represented views and tell stories that represent marginalized communities and subvert unquestioned norms. It challenges the Westernization and transmogrification of the original series, exploring themes of gender, sexuality, and race to offer a unique and diverse perspective on the Sailor Moon universe [4].

In the context of Sailor Moon Parody, fandubbing and abridging become critical tools for queer parody and activism, allowing creators like Harjot Bal to challenge dominant norms and social injustices through their fan-made content. In their book *What is Digital Cinema?* (2005) [5], Lev Manovich explains how digital technologies have transformed the world of cinema, from production to distribution and exhibition. Manovich argues that fandubbing is a form of participatory culture that allows fans to engage creatively with cinema, while also challenging the homogenization of mainstream cinema and the rise of globalization (Manovich 13-30). Scholars such as Jesús Eduardo Oliva-Abarca who wrote *The Abridged Phenomenon: Fans Parody Anime* (2017) [6], and Koulikov and Oboe in their work *Anime Parody and Internet Creativity: An Emergent Media Nexus* (2007) [7] have analyzed the characteristics and implications of anime parody and abridging. These practices allow fans to engage with and critique the anime industry and its tropes, while also raising legal and ethical questions about the use of copyrighted material. According to Koulikov and Oboe, the use of copyrighted material for fandub raises legal and ethical questions. They argue that while fandubbing can be seen as a form of creative expression and transformative work, it can also infringe on the original creators' rights. They suggest that the use of copyrighted material for fandub should be subject to fair use

guidelines and that creators should acknowledge the source material in their work (Koulikov and Oboe 7).

The works of scholars Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, and José Esteban Muñoz offer a critical lens to understand the political and cultural significance of queer parody in the context of fandubbing and post-cinema technology. In *Gender Trouble* (1990) [8], Butler discusses the potential of parody and humor to challenge the prevailing cultural narratives related to gender and sexuality (Butler 192-95). Likewise, in their work *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) [9], Sedgwick explores the ways in which cultural narratives have constructed and reinforced heteronormative assumptions and beliefs in (Sedgwick 93). Muñoz, in his book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009) [10], argues that queer art and performance can offer glimpses into diverse and utopian futures that can challenge dominant cultural narratives and create new forms of representation and community building (Muñoz 123). These scholars all suggest that parody and humor can create a space for subversive and alternative readings of dominant cultural narratives, while also providing a means for resisting and contesting oppressive social norms, and offer different visions of queer identity and community. In the case of Sailor Moon fandubs like *Sailor Moon Parody* (2020-2022), queer parody is a means of achieving these goals.

The intersection of queer theory, parody, post-cinema technology, and fandom in Sailor Moon has been explored in academic literature. Misemer's article *Queer Female Fandom and the New Sailor Moon* (2017) [11] emphasizes the importance of fan culture in creating new forms of resistance and empowerment for under-represented communities through an analysis of how queer female fans engage with and subvert traditional shōjo narratives in the Sailor Moon reboot (Misemer 28-58). Their article highlights how fans use fandubbing, abridging, and other forms of

creative appropriation to critique and reimagine the original text, offering new perspectives on gender, sexuality, and identity. Hoskin's article "*Westernization and The Transmogrification of Sailor Moon* (2018) [12] examines the impact of localization and adaptation on the erasure and alteration of queer themes and characters in the English version of Sailor Moon, and the importance of considering cultural and historical contexts in media production and consumption (Hoskin 45-66). Similarly, Yatron's article *30 Years Later, Re-Examining the 'Pretty Soldier': A Gender Study Analysis of Sailor Moo*n (2022) [13] offers a critical analysis of Sailor Moon's portrayal of femininity and queerness, highlighting the series' subversion of traditional gender norms and emphasis on diverse representations of gender and sexuality emphasizes the potential for media to provide a space for representation and community building (Yatron 15-45). Overall, these articles demonstrate how queer fandom and parody can create spaces for resistance, empowerment, and utopian futures. They underscore the importance of media in shaping understandings of marginalized identities and the potential for media to provide a space for representation and community building. By engaging with queer theory and embracing emergent media forms such as anime parody and internet creativity, we can continue to push the boundaries of representation, challenge dominant cultural narratives, and imagine alternate realities, perhaps experienced but not yet represented.

 This essay has examined the intersection of queer theory, parody, post-cinema technology, and Sailor Moon fandom, highlighting how queer parody can create spaces for resistance, empowerment, and utopian futures. Through Sailor Moon fandubs, fans strategically use queer parody to critique heteronormative assumptions and gender roles in the original anime, while also providing new and diverse representations of queer identity and community. Fans have used fandubbing, abridging, and other forms of creative appropriation to critique and

reimagine the original text. Scholars such as Butler, Sedgwick, and Muñoz have explored the potential of queer parody to subvert dominant narratives and disrupt traditional power structures. Misemer's *Queer Female Fandom* and the New Sailor Moon and Yatron's *Re-Examining the 'Pretty Soldier'* demonstrate how queer fandom can offer new perspectives on gender, sexuality, and identity. By embracing this emergent media nexus of anime parody and internet creativity and engaging with queer theory, we can continue to push the boundaries of representation, challenge static cultural narratives, and imagine new queer futures.

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