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Fandom Colonisation

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Vilified and Fixed: Fandom Colonisation

Thessa Jensen, associated professor, InDiMedia - Centre for Interactive Digital Media, Aalborg University, Denmark.

Jensen has been an active part of the BBC Sherlock fandom since 2011, reading, commenting, reviewing, and writing fanfiction, as well as maintaining her tumblr-blog. She is also a member of the Danish Baker Street Irregulars and the Cimbrian Friends of Sherlock Holmes. Her research interest in fanfiction focus mainly on ethical, design, and creative aspects of the participatory culture, in which fans work for free, developing stories, artwork, and other fanworks for their fellow fans.

Lýsa Hannah Westberg, MA, English; BA in English and Japanese Studies, educated at University of Southern Denmark and Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan. Independent researcher, affiliated with InDiMedia - Centre for Interactive Digital Media, Aalborg University, Denmark

Westberg has been in fandom since 1998, entering into online fandom in 2004. She has chaired Patronus 2006, an international scholarly Harry Potter conference at the University of Copenhagen. Research interests focus on fandom as a nation, intercultural fandom cooperation, and New Literacies with emphasis on fanfiction and the use of fandom platforms.

Keywords: fandom nation, fandom colonisation, fixing fandom

"Teen Wolf Fans Are Nasty AF" reads part of the headline of the online teenager magazine 'Teen' on October 24 2015. The article continues with a derogatory review of several Teen Wolf fanfics including links to their authors. Published by a magazine which declares themself as "the best teen and tween website", 'Teen' managed to outrage fans. It took days and hundreds of comments, tweets, and mails to the publishers, before the article was taken down.

Vilification in scholarly works and the media may have significantly lessened in recent years. Still, misunderstandings, applied exoticism, and imbalances of power between scholars and journalists on one side, and fans on the other are not rare occurrences.

An analysis of a number of recent news articles, scholarly works, and websites, shows how the attempt of fixing fandom still prevails. Like Said's view on how the Orient is treated, fandom is similarly exotisised, incorporated, and fixed. Scholars explain how to become better fans, attempting authority over fandom by applying rules to a culture, which already has their own.

This, the notion of the 'better fan', devalues the existing discourses, rules, and traditions within fandom. The expert validates a line of thinking which reiterates the idea of a fandom in need of fixing. When self-professed experts represent fandom and fans, they do not represent emotions and the presence of fans, but tend to make generalisations of a very diverse group. In these problematic publications fans are seen as a homogenous mass, overlooking the individualities of fans and fandom.

In this paper, we regard fandom as a nation. As scholars, we have to acknowledge the inherent

and existing discourses, traditions, and rules already present in the Fandom Nation, a focus that helps us avoid the gross generalisations of Orientalism and Colonialism.

References (preliminary):

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Vintage.

Said, E. (2003). Orientalism. 1978. *New York: Vintage*.

www.teen.com - a copy the original article '*11 Scott McCall-Stiles Stilinski Fanfics That Prove Teen Wolf Fans Are Nasty AF*', later changed to '*11 Dirty Scott McCall-Stiles Stilinski Fanfics All Teen Wolf Fans Must See*' by Alexandra Dalusio, posted on October 24, 2015, including the comments up until the article was taken down.

- as well as 300+ news articles on fandom and fans via news aggregator fanthropology.livejournal.com