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Fans Behaving Badly: Anime Metafandom, Brutal Criticism, and the Intellectual Fan

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Fans Behaving Badly: Anime Metafandom, Brutal Criticism, and the Intellectual Fan

In September 2005, a fanfiction writer posted a story featuring the main characters from the popular anime series *InuYasha* on *adultfanfiction.net*, an open fanfiction community featuring adult-themed stories. The reviews of the story were overwhelmingly positive until one very distressed reviewer demanded that the story, a graphic rape, carry a warning label for such content. Supporters of the writer attacked the reviewer and the writer denied that the story contained rape, suggesting that at the very most it was “non-consensual sex.” The back-and-forth bickering continued and the supporters of the writer continued to post increasingly more elaborate praise and support. Eventually, however, the discussion would have run its course and the textual remnants of this digital fight would have faded into the background static of the Internet, save for the efforts of the Fandom Wank community.

The community motto of Fandom Wank, “because we think ‘Fandom is Fucking Funny’ isn’t taking it far enough,” might say a great deal about the central ideals of this community, but we wondered what might be the implications of the existence of such a community, what purpose it might serve and what significance it might have. Furthermore, we see this as an opportunity to explore practices of anime fan culture using the theory of Matt Hills

in a way that does not compromise the intellectual significance of those practices based on academic presuppositions of what does, or does not, qualify as intelligent discourse.

FANDOM WANK

Fandom Wank (FW) is hosted on a journal-style community, JournalFen, similar to the more popular livejournal.com, in which members gather to engage in a form of active criticism, a process they call “pointing and laughing,” at recent examples of “wank” in a wide variety of fandoms, anime and otherwise. Though it conspicuously references the British slang, wank is defined by the FW community as “self-aggrandizing posturing, fannish absurdities, circular ego-stroking, endless flame-wars, [and] pseudointellectual definitions.”¹ In general, wank is part of the less-than-polite interactions that are relatively commonplace when there is any sort of anonymity online.

DESPITE THE UNUSUALLY CAUSTIC NATURE OF THE WANKAS' PRACTICES, CERTAIN EMERGING PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR AND A COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATIONAL WIKI SUGGEST THAT THESE TEXTUAL PRACTICES MAY BE MUCH MORE COMPLICATED THEN A FIRST GLANCE MIGHT INDICATE.

As of this writing, FW has more than 5000 members, who call themselves “wankas,” and has produced thousands of posts dedicated to mocking wank and wankers (people who create wank).² The community practices of FW are relatively straightforward. Members of the community post well-developed “wank reports,” which define the context and the specifics of the particular example of wank the poster is reporting on, while providing amusing commentary and pointing out humorous quotes. The wankas then proceed to mock the wank mercilessly, often using harsh language, insults, and inside jokes.

Despite the unusually caustic nature of the wankas' practices, certain emerging patterns of behavior and a comprehensive informational wiki suggest that these textual practices may be much more complicated than a first glance might indicate. The engagement of the wankas in these meta-fandom practices suggests a level of critical textual analysis that would not be out of place in an educational setting, despite their rude language and humor. This reminded us of Matt Hills's work studying fan cultures, more specifically his concept of the fan-as-intellectual. Hills argued in his 2002 book *Fan Cultures*

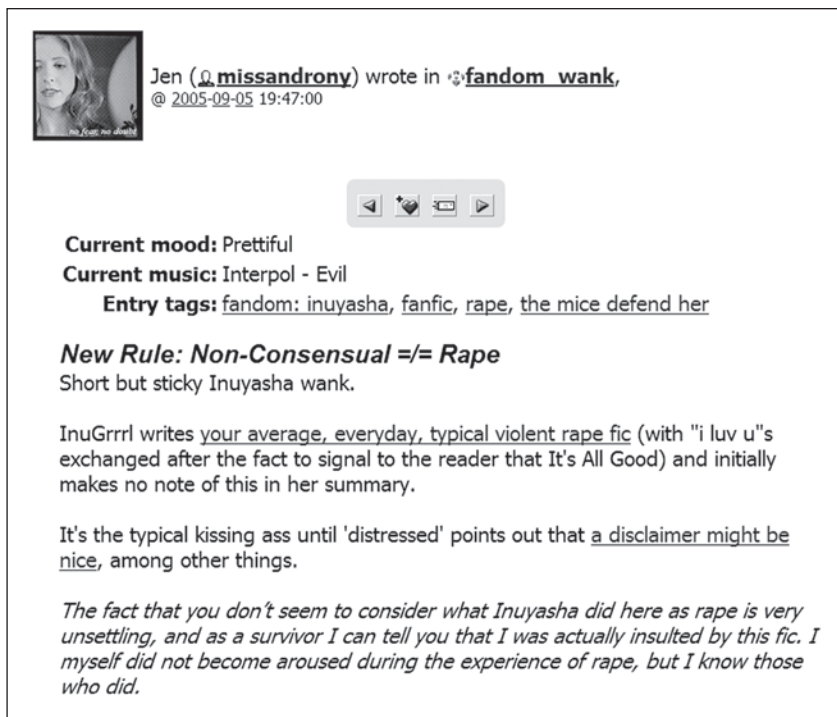


FIGURE 1. Screen capture of September 9, 2005, Fandom Wank post.

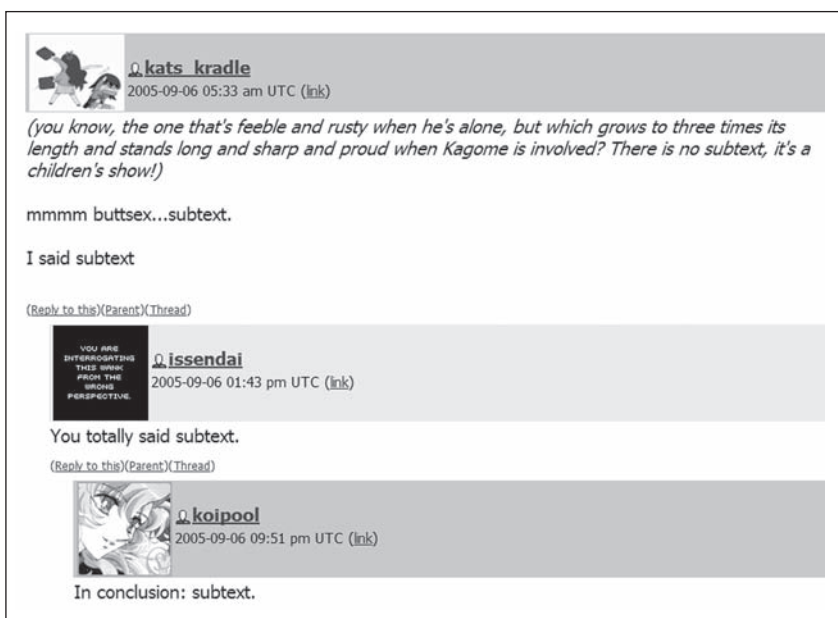


FIGURE 2. Screen capture of comment exchange in September 2005 Fandom Wank post.

that fan-studies scholars are too fixated on shaping their perceptions of fan practices to resemble those of academia instead of studying authentic fan practices.³ Hills created the concept of the fan-as-intellectual to encourage scholars in fan studies to accept that intellectual practices can occur outside of institutionalized settings, particularly within new-media settings. This study aims to demonstrate that community-building practices aimed at bettering communications within the community are occurring, indicating fan-as-intellectual practices. To accomplish this we will be examining two wank reports and their subsequent comments, all featuring the wank of one *InuYasha* fanfiction writer of dubious judgment and her fans.

FANDOM STUDIES AND ANIME

Fandom studies are complex, and two significant theorists in the field, Henry Jenkins and Matt Hills, have both proposed interesting theories of fan practice. While fan studies have been part of academic research for decades, most current discussions on the nature of fandom and fan communities can be traced back to Henry Jenkins's book *Textual Poachers*.⁴ Since its publication in 1992, *Textual Poachers* and Jenkins himself have come to be key reference points for academic studies of fans. Jenkins developed the concept of the scholar-fan to both explain his own relationship to the work that he was doing and to explore what responsibilities academics have to their subjects. In *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins also lays out a critical framework with which to theorize the practices of fans and consider the culture of fandom. Jenkins does this largely by connecting the fan practices to a subversive consumerism that allows fans to actively participate in their own entertainment media and create a cultural space that more actively serves their interests.

Jenkins is, however, not without critics. Matt Hills has become one of Jenkins's most vocal detractors and Hills and Jenkins are well aware of their antithetical relationship within academic circles. They published a conversation that they recorded without an audience and behind closed doors at the 2001 "Console-ing Passions" conference on gender and television studies. While the version of the conversation Jenkins presents in a 2006 collection of his work, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers*, tends toward discussing the problematic positioning of separating out "good" and "bad" fans, some of the fundamental differences between their views are evident.⁵ These differences are even more pronounced in Hills's book, *Fan Cultures*, first published just a year after this conversation in 2002.

Matt Hills does not hesitate to situate his theories and practices outside of more traditional views of fandom culture. Hills is critical of Jenkins's scholar-fan concept and suggests that the idea of the scholar-fan perpetuates two problematic tendencies in fan studies: the valorization of rational academic discourses over actual fandom practices and the need to organize models of discourse along academic conventions. Because of this need by academics to force fandom into an academic model, a forced dualism is created of "good" and "bad" fan practices. This academically created bias, often unintentional, regarding "bad" discursive practices results in the marginalization of anime and other dominantly Internet-based fan cultures.

To offer alternative views of this problematic model of fan studies, Hills creates the concept of the fan-as-intellectual and suggests that fans engage in intellectual processes far outside the realm of academics in ways that show little resemblance to comparable academic practices. Hills believes one of the major shortcomings of scholastic inquiry into fan culture is the inability to recognize many of the intellectual processes that take place on a regular basis within fan culture, as these practices often do not fall into traditional patterns of knowledge making.⁶ Because academics value their own judgment systems over those of their areas of study, both the groups, scholars and fans, conflict ideologically. Hills believes that we need not be afraid of academic practices moving out of the "institution" and into the hands of fandom practitioners.

Observations on the nature of Western anime fan practices are found in Susan Napier's article, "The World of Anime Fandom in America" in the first volume of *Mechademia*.⁷ In that article, Napier studied the members of the Miyazaki Mailing List (MML) and their practices and found that they also expected good netiquette even through most of the list members were male. This suggests both that "nice girls" and "nice fans" do not flame and that this practice can be translated, in some small way, to American anime fandom. However, Napier also acknowledges some of the limits of her work, noting that members of the MML were on the whole better educated and older than what one might expect in other online anime fan communities. This leaves an opening to examine the dark underbelly of anime fandom in America as a response to Napier's well-constructed, but only partial, picture. In the second volume of *Mechademia*, Meredith Suzanne Hahn Aquila also explores anime fandom in America through the conventions of fan culture.⁸ She examines the *Ranma ½* fanfiction community and how adherences to conventions within that community are valued.

OUR POSITION AS RESEARCHERS

As both Jenkins and Hills suggest, it is important to understand where researchers stand in relationship to the fan culture they study, and good research practices demand we make our potential biases clear. The best way to describe us is to acknowledge that we are academics and at the same time anime fans. Between us, we have fourteen years of experience as fans and have both at various points been active in college anime clubs and Internet fandom. In fact, it is through one online fandom that was involved in a particularly “epic” wank that we even became aware of FW. Furthermore, in the studies of anime fan culture, we found that the recorded practices explored only certain elements of what it means to be a fan but did not fully encompass our lived experiences within anime fandom.

Our position as academic researchers is therefore one of familiar observers; we have an understanding of fandom and fan practices and were familiar with wank even before we had a definition for it. But we have never participated in the FW community, aside from some snickers at particularly insightful comments. We are neither wankers nor wankas, but we are participants in the culture of anime fandom. We also had to keep in mind our investment in fan practices and how we might desire to paint a favorable picture of fan culture, specifically in this case, a favorable picture of the FW community.

In order to address these potential biases we largely relied on FW’s own definitions of their terms and practices. We turned to their complex and well-organized community wiki. Because of the polarizing nature of certain dominant modes of language use within the FW community, it is important to consider fan practices divorced from additional interferences based on “bad” or explicit language. A more quantifiable-based research, including the use of discreet quantifiable units of language identified through the memes listed on the FW wiki, helped to distance us as researchers from possible bias based on this harsh language.

FANDOM WANK WIKI

Beyond the electronic journal style community itself, FW members have created a massive and detailed wiki that looks and operates like Wikipedia.⁹ Although members have to register in order to edit the wiki, membership is open and at the time of this writing there are just over 1700 members who have produced 3000 pages (including stubs and redirects) since November

2005.¹⁰ Through this wiki, new users are able to search through infamous wanks, understand community history, discuss key wankers and wankas, and, perhaps most importantly, access the definitions of frequent phrases, favorite insults, memes, and even a Fandom Wank dictionary. This organizational structure easily lent itself to a study of anime meta fandom practices because of its self-definitional nature.

THESE ELEMENTS OF ORGANIZATION ALONG SPECIFIC GROUP BELIEFS SUGGEST A CERTAIN LEVEL OF COMMUNITY FORMATION, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON UNIFICATION UNDER CORE VALUES.

The wiki also serves to organize the FW Jurisimprudence, which outlines the laws to which FW ascribes, including the famous Godwin's law, many of which they have theorized and tested on one of FW's many sister journal communities. Jurisimprudence even has a separate wiki in which the laws, their addenda, and corollaries total more than three hundred entries.¹¹ On the FW wiki, that number has been trimmed to forty-nine.¹² The Jurisimprudence list serves a vital function to us as outsiders to the community because it defines the behaviors and arguments that the wankas have deemed to be without justification in any circumstance.

For example, Godwin's law, created by American attorney Mike Godwin in 1990, states that, "As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches 1."¹³ Godwin's law is not actually considered a Jurisimprudence law as it did not originate in FW, but several corollaries have been added by FW. The importance of this law for the wankas inspired a "Nothing is like the Nazis" rule that warns people from ever comparing anything (save Nazis) to Nazis. These elements of organization along specific group beliefs suggest a certain level of community formation, with an emphasis on unification under core values. However, online communities form via different properties than their offline equivalents, as Demetri Williams suggests in his research into online social capital. In his article, "The Impact of Time Online: Social Capital and Cyberbalkanization,"¹⁴ Williams suggests that online social capital provides more boundary-crossing experiences than offline counterparts, suggesting the exact opposite of cyberbalkanization, but the experiences themselves are not as deep or fulfilling as the offline equivalent.

In the quest to create more fulfilling or deep experiences in online spaces, community formation requires members to create accurate and meaningful textual versions of themselves that can interact within the community. In FW and its associated wiki, usernames and participation in discursive practices are designed to provide this community experience. Alan Aycocock codes

four modes of behaviors that self-disclose personal information and help to create interpersonal connection in his article “Technologies of the Self.”¹⁵ He suggests that, among other features, degree and kind of commitment plays an important role in connecting individuals in an online community. While it is possible to just explicitly state this information, a user can also demonstrate commitment to a community by learning and using the specific lingo that the group uses. The FW wiki was designed for exactly this purpose.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research project tests two main hypotheses. First, if FW practices according to its own group values, then it forms a secondary intellectual discourse with which to evaluate the fandoms that compose their primary discourse communities. Second, through the use of memetics, which we can identify and codify, we can differentiate the inside/outside forms of discourse found in FW, thus suggesting patterns under which they organize their discourse. In this context, we define memes as individual repeated phrases or concepts that develop as part of the community lexicon.

Gary Marshall in his article “The Internet and Memetics” presents a way to measure the organization of an online group, or specific individual within that group, by studying the operational memes.¹⁶ Memes are different forms of repeated text, code, or other patterns, but user-level memes are most significant for this study. These memes circulate quickly and play a significant role within online communities, each with cultural and social capital. Communities with vast memberships like the FW community create memes specific to their members, some that they identify themselves as memes and some that they categorize as slang, definitions, or in-jokes but that otherwise share the same function within community practices.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AND APPLICATION

After sorting through the lists of common phrases, terms, and memes provided by the FW wiki, and through cursory glances of their discussion threads, we observed three primary features of FW discourse: comments dedicated to improving discussion, maintaining self-organization, and affirming community identification. Within these primary categories, the memetic behavior

tended to further subdivide into smaller subfeatures. To better differentiate between each subfeature, we defined the nature of each and listed examples, as shown in Figure 3.

Through this breakdown of discourse and memetics, the forms of fandom discussion begin to emerge, and the data can begin to be coded. Such quantitative coding helps us test our initial hypothesis, but in order to address the second hypothesis we also recorded the targets of FW comments—the “wankers” (outsiders committing the wank) and “wankas” (FW community insiders).

In addition to the quantifiable research, we examined specific posts/comments and wordings, employing textual analysis to help reveal some of the underlying intentions of the commenters and the community itself. This allowed us to account for most important trends that might not be initially observable through our data set, as well as some general patterns of discussion.

FEATURES	SUBFEATURES	DEFINITIONS
Improving Discussion	Limitations	Directing the discussion away from certain topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “This is not racism wank”
	Textual Criticism	Analyzing the logic or phrasing in a post or comment to find errors or points of insight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “tl;dr” (too long, didn’t read) • “Interrogating from the wrong perspective”
	References to Theories and Laws	Invoking various informal laws <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Godwin’s law • Ockham’s razor
Self-organizing Activities	Insults	Direct verbal attacks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common catfighting cunt • fanbrat
	Behavioral Comments	Criticizing actions taken or mentioned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet lawyers • BNF (Big Name Fan)
Community Identification	Inside Jokes/Lingo	Jokes and phrases that likely originated on FW (based on Web site information) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bartending in the dark • “But what are your thoughts on yaoi?”
	Miscellaneous Labels	Labels that do not easily fit into other categories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anonymouse (anonymous) • “Pit of voles” (referring to fanfiction.net)

FIGURE 3. Features of discussion.

SAMPLE

Because FW is a multifandom community with thousands of members and thousands of posts, we narrowed our research to one specific fandom: that which relates to the *InuYasha* anime and manga series by Takahashi Rumiko. The anime series has been a long-time staple of Cartoon Network's *Adult Swim* late-night block of adult animated shows, and it is one of the most well-known anime series in America, with an equally large fan base, therefore making it an appropriate subject area as somewhat representative of American anime fan culture.

We further narrowed our focus to studying two specific posts found on FW in late 2005 and early 2006. These posts circulate about a specific "wanker" and operate much like chapters in a continuing saga, thus minimizing the need for addressing background issues. The instances of wank themselves feel very familiar to us as long-time observers, and occasional participants, of anime fandom and therefore represent larger anime fan practices. Furthermore, these posts are a few years old, so the discussion has stabilized and ended, with no new comments.¹⁷

RESULTS

In this project, we studied the introductory report of the primary wanker on September 5, 2005, and another incident posted on April 3, 2006. The September post contains 558 comments, yielding 85 recorded memes, and the April post contained 315 total comments, with 152 recorded memes. Some of

those memes were found within the same comments and some comments did not contain either memes or other information pertinent to this study.

Of the three primary features, behaviors of community identification were observed most often with 108 out of the cumulative total 237 memes recorded (45.6 percent), as shown in Table 1. The

remainder was split between improving discussion and self-organizing activities (28.7 percent and 25.7 percent respectively). The most predominant subfeatures were comments of textual criticism (26.5 percent), insults (16 percent), and inside jokes/lingo (24.9 percent).¹⁸

AS FW MEMBERS ATTACK THOSE COMMITTING "WANK" OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY, THEY TAKE SOME STEPS TO ORGANIZE THEIR BEHAVIOR TO MINIMIZE INTERNAL SQUABBLES.

TABLE 1. Memetic Responses in Fandom Wank Posts

Features	To Wankers		To Wankas		Combined	
	Freq.	% of N_1	Freq.	% of N_2	Freq.	% of N
Improving Discussion	43	31.1	25	25.2	68	28.7
Limitations	1	0.7	1	1	2	0.04
Textual Criticism	39	28.2	24	24.2	63	26.5
Reference to Theories and Laws	3	2.2	0	0	3	1.3
.....						
Self-Organizing Activities	54	39.1	7	7.1	61	25.7
Insults	37	26.8	1	1	38	16
Behavioral Comments	17	12.3	6	6.1	23	9.7
.....						
Community Identification	41	29.7	67	67.7	108	45.6
Insides Jokes/Lingo	32	23.2	27	27.2	59	24.9
Miscellaneous Labels	9	6.5	40	40.4	49	20.1
.....						
Totals	$N_1 = 138$		$N_2 = 99$		$N = 237$	

DISCUSSION

In studying the memetics of FW online discussions, distinct trends seem to point to an intellectualized fan community that improves the quality of discussion by aggressively attacking poor or weak arguments (i.e., those that feature poor logic, lack of entertaining factors, and violate FW’s own preestablished guidelines). Furthermore, as FW members attack those committing “wank” outside the community, they take some steps to organize their behavior to minimize internal squabbles, even going so far as to briefly educate their members on the proper use of language and logic in constructing arguments.

As we analyze our findings, we acknowledge that both Jenkins and Hills have made room in academic discussions for a variety of conversations about fandom and the role of fan practices within subcultures. Angelina I. Karpovich, in her article “The Audience as Editor,”¹⁹ examined the unique role of beta-readers—fans who act as test audience and editor in one—in fanfiction communities using elements from both Jenkins and Hills to support her arguments about the community-building relationship surrounding these

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fan practices. This expression of collaboration seeps into other areas of fan culture beyond the creation of fanfiction and is clearly evident in the organized FW practices we observed.

Much of FW's focus seems to be on textual criticism specifically analyzing the wording or logic of wankers' comments and exposing the

faultiness of the wank. Over a quarter of the total recorded memes (26.5 percent) were dedicated to the textual analysis of fandom arguments and discussion, looking both outward to wankers and inward at FW members. In the April post, the wanker who had previously been the subject of a FW wank report discovered that one of her fanfiction stories had been plagiarized. In retaliation, the wanker summoned her fans to attack the plagiarist and lodge numerous complaints to the Web site that hosted the fanfiction. FW members admitted the story had been plagiarized but criticized more the wanker's method of retaliation. Many of the FW comments directly quoted the wanker, then dissected the wording to expose the wanker's weaknesses. When the wanker throws insults at the plagiarist, a FW member chastises her for not using proper spelling in her insults:

[Wanker:] *those that take good things, and then remake then for their own benifit, aka EVIL MAIPULITIVE BITCHY SLACKERS.*

[Wanka's response:] 1) Assuming you meant "manipulative", who the hell is she manipulating? 2) On second thought, maybe you meant "nail polishing"?

In the same comment, the wanka remarks on the lack of creativity shown in the wanker's comments, namely the repetition of the same word. This quote and response demonstrates another trademark characteristic of the FW community: to criticize and comment for personal amusement, not to fulfill an academic goal. As a result, their comments are often sarcastic or mocking and frequently are meant to show the wanker as an attention seeker or fool.

FW members will also criticize each other's comments and use of language, but less aggressively than as is demonstrated toward wankers. Of total memes used towards wankas, 24.2 percent focused on textual analysis and criticism. One wanka, a recent member judging by the nature of responses, asked why plagiarism of fanfiction, which is by its very nature infringing on copyrights, is bad when the authors know the fics are not entirely original material. Other wankas rose against this member, but when the member explained that the questions are only for clarification, the wankas hold back

and explain the situation. This explanation digresses into a lengthy side thread on the details of plagiarism, copyright, and the purposes of fanfiction, thus demonstrating that the wankas want to educate as much they criticize. Furthermore, in the September post one wanka typed “viral” when she had meant “virile,” thus leading to some gentle teasing and a tangent about *InuYasha* with Ebola.

Part of this textual criticism might stem from the sense of distance that FW members place between themselves and their fandoms as meta-fandom critics. Wankas do not solely define their fandom tendencies within the realm of a particular fandom; some of those commenting are fans of *InuYasha* specifically, most of anime in general. One frequently recorded form of textual criticism in both posts was the variation of “Get out of my fandom, you make my fandom look stupid,”²⁰ where the wankas could see how an outsider’s perception of a wanker’s behavior might reflect poorly on the fandom at large. Specifically, one FW wanka states, “this wank makes me happy in that sad sort of ‘but . . . but it’s my fandom so it’s good but it’s wank so it’s bad’ sort of way.” This wanka is torn between two emotions—enjoyment at the attention given to a beloved fandom and sadness that this occurred through wank.

Aside from textual criticism, FW members also engage in self-organizing activities to keep members united against wankers. Most frequently they use insults to attack wankers, especially when wankers demonstrate certain ego-fluffing behaviors. This emphasis on insults defies conventional belief in the niceties of online fan relationships, especially among women. Riannon Bury, in her book *Cyberspaces of Their Own*, examines the role of fan communities in the lives of female fans and one article, “Nice Girls Don’t Flame,”²¹ implies that relations to fan discursive practices and community collaboration are based in conventional American middle-class etiquette. These practices are used to mitigate conflict or prevent it altogether by qualifying statements and carefully guard against any textual affront, which was precisely the opposite of what we discovered.

All but one insult were aimed at those outside the community, reaffirming FW’s subtle “us vs. them” dichotomy. In the April post, the wanker believed she was famous enough to have legions of fans supporting her and called on these fans to attack the plagiarist. Wankas on FW referred to these fans as “fanpoodles,” thus insulting both the fans and the wanker by demoting these fans to insignificant noisemakers. The term “fanpoodles” was used twice in the April post but was repeated frequently in the subsequent post, creating a meme directly associated with these related wank incidents. Many wankas theorized that this cry of plagiarism was the wanker’s attempt at

automatic sympathy, and one wanka said this means “a growth not only of her fathead but her legion of fanpoodles.” Other wankas suggested there was no real plagiarism; that instead the wanker had constructed an alias, known by wankas as a “sockpuppet,”²² and reposted the fanfiction under that alias for attention.

The one instance when an insult was used toward a fellow wanka occurred when a wank broke the most important rule of self-organization: “what happens on Fandom Wank stays on Fandom Wank.”²³ FW members strive to keep their actions secret from those who are the subject of their mocking and to remain completely uninvolved, lest FW be accused of promoting trolling—aggressively rude comments and actions toward others. However in the April post, one wanka admitted they reported the plagiarized story and other wankas criticized that person for it. “Really, what part of ‘point and mock’ you do not get? Reporting the fic = BAD,” said one wanka. Wankas most commonly unite to mock the wanker but are not afraid to check other FW members when they step out of line.

Lastly, FW wankas use insides jokes/lingo and miscellaneous labels to reaffirm their alliances among each other and against the wanker, thus solidifying community identification. Of memes aimed at wankers outside the community, 23.2 percent came in the form of inside jokes and lingo, and of the wanka-to-wanka memes, the most prevalent (40.4 percent) appeared as miscellaneous labels, to further distinguish between insider and outsider discourse. In the April post, the most frequent label referred to “BNF” or “Big Name Fan.” A BNF is someone who is well known in the fandom and on FW for committing frequent wank.²⁴ Once the BNF reaches a certain level of perceived infamy among wankas, that BNF gets her or his own page on the FW wiki. In the April post, wankas frequently made reference to a particular BNF and compared the actions of the current wanker with the previous actions of this particular BNF. When one wanka suggested the current wanker have her own page on the FW wiki, another wanka responded: “[this wanker] is bad and all, but she hasn’t surpassed [the BNF] in the ego department.”

CONCLUSIONS

While our quantifiable research into the metafiction practices of the FW community demonstrated several emerging patterns, there is still a great deal of examination that is necessary before we can make any solid claims about the nature of the community and its members. It is becoming clear,

however, that wankas do practice activities that appear to be at least partially intellectually motivated. As Matt Hills suggested, it is difficult for those operating within an academic institution to recognize fans-as-intellectuals because of biases toward what are “good” and “bad” fan practices.

ALL FAN PRACTICES, EVEN THOSE WITH NO INTELLECTUAL VALUE WHATSOEVER AND AMOUNT TO LITTLE MORE THAN INANE VERBAL SPEW, ARE WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION.

As current academics who grew up as digital natives within a volatile landscape of anime fan culture, we would even suggest taking it one step further. All fan practices, even those with no intellectual value whatsoever and amount to little more than inane verbal spew, are worthy of consideration. The practices of the young and highly networked are representative of the forefront of electronic textual discourse, informatics, and aesthetics.

While we are unlikely to personally call others “assholish motherfuckers” as part of an academic discussion anytime soon, nor would we encourage others to adopt this as a common verbal idiom, we cannot deny the importance of profanity as part of a system of language use. Anime fans are not all strange otaku or frustratingly embarrassing weeaboos,²⁵ but as long-time fans ourselves, we cannot deny that anime fans have a touch of mania about them. That this would spill over into language use in fan culture is hardly a “stop-the-presses” realization. The future of fan-culture studies must be prepared to look at realistic fan practices and not cherry-pick based on ideological structures of academia. It might not be pretty or always leave us feeling positive about fan culture, but for anime fans and our understanding of them, these are invaluable studies into the reality of their lived experiences.

Notes

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15. Alan Aycok, "Technologies of the Self: Foucault and Internet Discourse," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 1, no. 2 (1995): <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/>.
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17. Data collection consisted of collaborative assessment of discussion threads on FW. We analyzed each thread together and collaboratively determined what memes were present, how the memes were used, and to whom they are aimed, either at the wankers or among the members of FW. In testing two hypotheses, the data analysis was a two-fold process. First, we analyzed whether FW makes use of community-identifying markers, thus indicating that they are a self-organizing discourse community. Second, we compared the frequency of comments directed toward wankas (those within the community) versus wankers (those whom the community is ridiculing). This sort of quantitative analysis should indicate whether FW actively practices their community ideologies.
18. Much of the discussion was aimed at the wankers from outside the FW community—58.2 percent of all memes recorded (identified as *N1* in table 1)—the majority of which fell into the categories of textual criticism, insults, and inside jokes/lingo at the wankers' expense (28.2 percent, 26.8 percent, and 23.2 percent of *N1* totals, respectively). Of the memes used between FW members (41.7 percent of total, designated *N2*), most were distributed between the categories of textual criticism, miscellaneous labels, and inside jokes/lingo (24.2 percent, 40.4 percent and 27.2 percent of *N2* totals, respectively). In direct comparison of subfeature frequencies between targeted groups, both wankers and wankas received textual criticism, but wankers received a slightly higher percentage (28.2 percent versus 24.2 percent of respective totals). Inside jokes/lingo occurred with similar frequencies between both groups—23.2 percent of *N1* totals for wankers and 27.2 percent of *N2* totals for wankas. Insults seemed to be exclusively used against wankers (26.8 percent), while miscellaneous labels were shared mostly between wankas (40.4 percent).
19. Angelia I. Karpovich, "The Audience as Editor: The Role of Beta-Readers in Online Fan Fiction Communities," in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, ed. Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (New York: McFarland & Company, 2006), 171–88.
20. "Get out of my fandom, you make my fandom look stupid," Fandom Wank Wiki

page, http://wiki.fandomwank.com/index.php/Get_out_of_my_fandom%2C_you_make_my_fandom_look_stupid (accessed April 6, 2009).

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24. "Big Name Fan," Fandom Wank Wiki page, <http://wiki.fandomwank.com/index.php/BNF> (accessed April 6, 2009).

25. English-speaking Western fans with childish obsessions of anime, J-pop music, and anything Japanese.