

*Girls who like Boys who like Boys*  
– *Ethnography of Online Slash/Yaoi Fans*

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## I. Introduction

### A. Introspective Introduction – or taking a plunge into the ocean

Let me paint you a few pictures: The first one is of a girl sitting trancelike in front of her computer; she scrolls through long documents and stares enraptured at the screen for hours at a time. If we move closer, we might glimpse familiar words over her shoulder: “Harry” and “Draco,” “Gryffindor” and “Slytherin.” As we watch her read, and stay for a while, we realize that “Harry” and “Draco” have a crush on each other and are making out. Another picture: A group of girls sit in a dark movie theater, watching *Lord of the Rings*. During some scenes, they giggle and elbow each other; they are, it turns out, joking, and exchanging innuendo about Aragorn and Legolas, Frodo and Sam, Merry and Pippin. As they leave the movie theater, some of them may be literally bouncing with energy and laughter, the others might be squealing, and someone might yell, “Eww! Hobbit-sex!!”

If we turn to another scene, here I am, sitting at my laptop. This is the me a year ago, when I did not have ten Word windows open at all times. Instead, there are five Internet Explorer windows, and five Instant Messenger ones: While I read a story in one Explorer window (and it talks about “Clark” and “Lex” together forever, before Clark became Superman, and Lex turned evil), my Instant Messenger windows are flashing. One of them is Mel, who vacillates between complaining about her homework, sending me links to

more stories, and sharing funny tidbits about a high school girl named Camy, who writes about gay sex as if it was between a man and a woman. Another is Yuri, who copies and pastes pieces of her role playing game to me. It is a *Harry Potter* game, she plays Harry, and innuendo with Draco is not just abundant, but moreover hilarious. Meanwhile, we are quizzing each other over Instant Messenger on Japanese grammar structures for a test the following day.

This is a text on slash and yaoi fans, women who read, talk, and write about men who have sex with men. And though I would have liked to place a concise ethnographic narrative, explicating the topic and issues at hand here, this was not possible. Until a few weeks ago, I was very uncertain as to why writing an introspective introduction would be so difficult, but soon I learned that, instead of slowly easing the reader into this text, I would have to ask her/him to take a plunge, in order to lead her/him out to the shore again.

A close friend, Red, finally made me understand the mechanics of my predicament. I was sitting with her at a coffee shop, complaining that I had too much information, too many details, to sift out a single moment of ethnography to put at the very beginning of this text. I asked her to choose an aspect of the activities of one of the fans I had worked with to place at the beginning of this text. I wanted to give my reader a glimpse of what it means to be a fan, but she shook her head and replied that all of the persons I had described were “professionals.”

I was baffled. What could she possibly mean by that? I thought to myself that after all the care I took in attempting to map out the many activities online fans engage or *do not* engage in, this was certainly not the message I wanted to bring across to the reader. Surely, Red who has read this manuscript at every stage of its production, had given me support, and had, in the end, been seduced by slash, could not have misunderstood my intentions. Therefore it had to be my own writing, which had failed. She went on to explain that the main message of the paragraphs was not about what a fan is. At this point I started to hyperventilate.

No no no, she exclaimed, when she saw the look of terror on my face, that was not what she had meant. Red went on to tell me that all of the fans described in this piece did something “higher” with it. Gesticulating, she painted the picture of an ordinary American girl liking the TV-show *Angel*, and watching it every time it is on TV. This girl could be called a “fan.” But the fans, I was working with and writing about, including myself, had “made it part of identity” to such a degree that we thought about it outside of the times shown on TV, to the extent that “being a fan” pervaded other aspects of our lives.

There it was; concise and to the point, Red had summarized the underlying keynote of my text. This text is, essentially, an ethnography of what it means to be an online fan. In order to underline what I wanted to translate, I would have had to offer a moment of ethnography alien enough,

yet understandable enough, to introduce an unfamiliar audience to the topic. Yet, such a single ethnographic moment does not exist. All of the scenes depicted above are, after all, not simply moments of ritual or hobby, but moreover are infused with a certain mode of identity. Beyond serving an introductory function, they urge you to immerse yourself into a world that will seem alien at best.

#### *B. Academia vs. Fandom: The agenda of this project*

Perhaps only a fan can appreciate the depth of feeling, the gratifications, the importance for coping with everyday life that fandom represents. Yet we are all fans of something. WE respect, admire, desire. We distinguish and form commitments. By endeavoring to understand the fan impulse, we ultimately move towards a greater understanding of ourselves. (Lewis 1)

This excerpt from Lisa Lewis's introduction to *The Adoring Audience* (1992) is aimed at an academic audience. Speaking to us, as academics, she aptly outlines both, a fan's fervid devotion, often accompanied by our incomprehension, to her/his fandom as well as shared aspects of activity and identity between academia and fandom which may allow for a comparison of the two contexts.

As Matt Hills (2002) describes it, both on the academic as well as the fannish front the emphasis lies on the "good" imagined subjectivity. However, in the academic world this "good" imagined subjectivity is often qualified by the concept of "the rational self." By "subjectivity" he does not mean the

term usually juxtaposed to “objective,” but rather an embodied academic subject. Basing this theory on Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s examination of imagined and/or idealized subjectivities and their contribution to community formation, Hills argues that:

The “good subject” of the “duly trained and informed” academic is a resolutely rational subject, devoted to argumentation and persuasion. [...] In short, academics have no choice, when all is said and done, other than to *believe* in their favoured theories. But, at the same time, the possibility that faith is the ultimate glue within academic argument is typically disavowed and ignored in favour of the imagined subjectivity of the rational academic. (Hills 3)

He asserts that academia and fandom, though they share dualistic notions of imagined subjectivities which exclude the respective other (who is, essentially, not seen as an embodied subject, and consequently not viewed as part of the community of “good” imagined subjectivity), stand opposed to each other. These dualistic notions of tightly knit communities invite tense interactions and power relations between them. The notion of good rationality and bad cultism is inherently wrong, as academia itself possesses its own cult heroes – and theorists. Equally, fans do not appreciate at all the generalized categories they are assigned to after being analyzed; as participants of their communities it is *their* imagined subjectivity that should win out, but rarely does. This is furthermore complicated by additional groups such as fan-scholars and scholar-fans, biased toward the belief that there is something specific about academic work and language code that may seem more right,



justifiable, and *believable*.<sup>1</sup>

It is almost impossible for a scholar and fan to write the obligatory passages on fandom; though it is very easy to expound on minuscule details of fanfiction production, or on the intricacies of interaction online, it is, at the same time, very difficult to give a definition of fandom and fans. Such a definition is necessary in the context of academic work – after all fans are like an obscure tribe at best for many who do not identify as “fan.” Though in my opinion, academia works in frighteningly similar ways to “conventional” fandom, e.g. conventions are conferences, and discussions regarding the interpretation of texts are academic rather than media texts, the truth is that I have found this point to be rather useless. Of course, one could use a comparative approach to juxtapose academia and fandom, and in the process of comparison find new nuances and angles to the structure of both; a comparative methodology would after all take these two fields out of their contexts and approach them differently than we are accustomed to. Such a text may serve very well to breach the gap between academia and fandom, or rather their respective prejudices of the other.

I have found, however, that what interests me most, is to attempt an accurate “translation” of fandom. The difference between academia and fandom lies not only in the perceived importance of both fields, but more so in the fact that this difference, perceived as it may be, is a *lived* experience (as

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<sup>1</sup> Fan-scholars are scholars who have become fans, or who are studying fans/fandom. Scholar-fans are fans, who analyze and theorize with academic theoretical concepts about their fandom(s).

often every imagined difference or similarity is). A comparative text would invariably aim to justify fandom to academia, or vice versa. One might even argue that this text, for the simple fact that it is academic, has such an agenda; and psychologically speaking, this may be one of the reasons or purposes for having written it. The point, however, is that many academics, who have not been exposed to fan-culture nor acquired that mode of identity, would never call themselves a “fan” of their own hero-theoretician. However, no fan of a book or TV show would refrain from identifying as “fan” (though many are academic, and in the academic part of their lives this identification as “fan” does have an impact). *And that is what matters.* Comparable or not, it is these identification issues that have moved and interested me the most; if I attempt to refrain from justifying one part of the universe (*my* universe) to another, it is partly in obeisance to academia in general and Anthropology in particular, but it is mostly because my attention has not been caught in an agenda to justify as much as it has been caught up in an attempt to translate identity.

My ethnography then discusses the diversity of a sample of online slash fans, including myself, and emphasizes the cultural elements of community and self-identity, which function in conjunction with psychological aspects as motivators. By placing slash fandom in a humanized context, this text will challenge the notion of a homogenous fandom entity, while calling attention to the common characteristics of a shared identity. I argue that the act of “being a fan” is centered around the object of worship, as

well as the act of worship (actively *or* passively), and is not only a mode of functioning, but also operates as a mode of identity. The formation of a fan-mode of identity is contingent upon psychological as well as cultural aspects, and is, in this online medium, an ever-evolving process.

### C. Introduction to Slash and Yaoi

To “slash” a character is to place that character or person in a male homosexual relationship, regardless of that character’s sexual preferences in the source. The slash/yaoi community is a subset of almost every fandom. In other words, nearly every traditional fandom, whether focused on traditional film media, books, music stars and even sports and movie actors, has a number of slash/yaoi fans. It’s important to note that slash/yaoi fans, though they have a heavy tendency toward that community, still define themselves as fans in general. Being a slash/yaoi fan (and being an online fan in general) is to be caught in the ever-fluid process of an interaction between psychology and culture. A slash/yaoi fan may have started reading or writing stories for a plethora of reasons and motivators, but many cultural factors also play a role in the formation of a notion of identity – a transformation of the self in order to accommodate a new part, “fan.” Both aspects act as “motivators” to “be a fan,” but neither functions on its own, and neither lies in a state of stasis; both aspects are necessary for a “fan” mode of identity to exist, and, ultimately, for this text to be written.

Seen from a long-term perspective, regardless of the initial motivators that have incited a fan to participate in slash/yaoi communities, the fan is not a function of the source text, or in other words what she/he is a fan of. Because the fan acquires a fan-mode of identity, i.e. identifies as a “fan,” and because online fandoms’ structures allow for easy accessibility of a huge array of localities, the fan is not limited to that one gateway fandom. She/he will be drawn to be a fan of many things, either concurrently, or consecutively. Thus, the character/show/game/person worshipped may become, metaphorically, the center of the universe, but it is the fan who places that text in the center, who has the power and control to do so.

I use both terms “slash” and “yaoi” distinctly. Yaoi itself is an acronym for the Japanese phrase *Yama nashi, Ochi nashi, Imi nashi* or “no peak, no point, no meaning.” It is the terminology adapted when referring to male-male sexual stories and the acronym derived from the phrase refers to the nature and character of these stories: “no peak, no point, no meaning” then is describing the lack of content and development. As one can see in the literal translation of the term, at least historically speaking, yaoi did not come with a lot of subtext or justification, and was legendary for its lack of plot and abundance of blunt, non-subtle eroticism.

This leads Maygra<sup>2</sup>, a prominent figure in both slash and yaoi fandoms, to argue in an online essay that yaoi is slash, but slash is not yaoi (2000b):

Because slash, more often than not, needs a reason. It needs subtext, it needs a (cringe) excuse [...] that is why yaoi can be slash but slash is rarely yaoi. Because yaoi can exist without explanation. There may be a framework, but there doesn't have to be [...] Yaoi is richer – if only because it isn't burdened by explanation. Slash is almost more self-conscious. (Maygra 2000b)

While Maygra admits that the boundaries may be blurry occasionally, she argues that slash is always an interactive search for subtext and for justification of a relationship between two actors, while yaoi does not need to justify anything and may indulge everything. Though this may be true historically, both slash and yaoi have changed so much that this distinction no longer works: both yaoi and slash fandoms have produced so-called PWP (or “Plot? What Plot?”) fictions, and both have generated novel-length epics. Yaoi- as well as slash authors indulge in fantastical pieces situated in alternate universes (or AUs) as well as in strict episode, movie or book-specific texts.

A distinction between yaoi and slash may still be drawn, but not along the lines of content. As yaoi has come from Japan, and is a term often used by writers and readers of Japanese animation (or *anime*) slash, I distinguish in this project between slash and yaoi by using the term “yaoi” specifically for Japanese-media-based fandoms in particular. Yaoi and slash may be

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<sup>2</sup> While collaborators' names are changed throughout the text, Maygra and other prolific writers are left with their online names, because they receive wide recognition as a fan, and use the same name to write self-reflective essays about slash.

essentially the same, but what is interesting are the ways in which these terms are used. Exceptions to my general usage of both terms may happen if a collaborator calls a fandom, or a fiction “yaoi” even though it is western-based. In such a case, the act of calling it “yaoi,” will tell us more about the person who is using the terminology. (For example, she/he may be using the term “yaoi” because she/he is not only a fan of slash/yaoi, but also a fan of Japan, and thus uses Japanese words in everyday context). In fact, the term has been used in English-speaking Internet domains to such a degree that it has become adopted into common fan-language and terminologies.<sup>3</sup>

As discussed in several academic studies (the most prominent are Bacon-Smith 1992; Jenkins 1992; Penley 1991), the large majority of slash/yaoi fans are heterosexual women who engage in the online community either through creation of fanworks (such as fanfiction or fanart) about these characters or through reaction to or appreciation of these fanworks (reactions range from editing and critiquing, to simply perusing). The slash fandom, existing since the seventies, has been a very personal and magazine based fandom before the Internet. Earlier studies investigating these so-called “zine fandoms” were frequently conducted in direct face-to-face interaction with the female authors. This prevalence of women is reinforced by fans’ profiles online: most of the fans actively participating are women, and the few men in

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<sup>3</sup> This is one of the reasons why “yaoi” as opposed to other terms derived from foreign languages will not appear italicized; it has become, essentially, common to use in every-day fandom conversation, and the genre has a very large Western following, but is equally understood by slash-only fans.

the fandoms are well-known. Slash- and yaoi-conventions (or conferences), to which fans may travel if they have the time, support evidence that fans are mostly female. Minotaur, one of the few men in the fandom, is renown for creating a database answering questions about homosexual intercourse, and records his experiences at his first slash convention accordingly:

Anyway, when I went to my first slashcon a couple of years ago, I was shocked and dismayed to discover that I was the only guy there. I'm still amazed that there are so few guys into this stuff. So there I was, sitting innocently minding my own business, with all these insane (in a good way, mind you) women wandering around talking about queer sex.... the next thing I knew, I was being shoved up against a wall and peppered with "Can two guys..." questions.  
(From *An Interview with Minotaur* 2000<sup>4</sup>)

Furthermore, the equivalent of yaoi specifically, in Japan at least, is a genre produced commonly by women for women, although under a different terminology (Thorn 1993).<sup>5</sup> One of the more common terms, *shounen ai* or "boys' love," is frequently used in Western fandoms either as synonym for yaoi, or as a juxtaposed term, connotating soft "boys' love" as opposed to hard sexual description.

Most theories tend to structuralize, categorize, and over-generalize slash fandoms. That is "the nature of the beast," but it does not keep us from striving for more complexity and analysis. Depending on which field the scholar is from or writes for, the theories will be, obviously, angled in that

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.geocities.com/cc\\_ssd/minotaur.html](http://www.geocities.com/cc_ssd/minotaur.html) -- last accessed 12/08/2003

<sup>5</sup> Commonly known as *shounen ai* (boys' love) or *june* (named after the pioneering male/male manga magazine published in Japan), both of these genres are usually published as *shoujo manga* or comics for girls.

direction. Slash has been explored by several scholars, often opposing each other in an attempt to “translate” the meaning of slash to their academic audience in general and their field in particular:

Men are the alien, the other. Surveys conducted within the community, as well as my own observations, indicate that a high percentage of the women in fandom were not involved in relationships with men at the times the surveys were taken, and many considered themselves celibate. Some of these were divorced, or post-relationship but others had never had a long-term, loving, sexual relationship with a man. A small but still significant number of the women in media fandom suffer from extreme, health-threatening obesity, and that group tends to cluster in the homo-erotic genres. (Bacon-Smith 1992:247)

Camille Bacon-Smith sees slash fandom as a subset of the fanfiction industry, and as a general playground for women. Based on her research at conventions and panels she sees slash fans as conversely 1) identifying with one of the men in the fictionalized relationship: “Many slash fans declare they write about men together because men, holding power, can relate to each other as powerful equals” (Ibid. 249), or 2) benefiting of the lack of a character they would have to identify with:

Equally important, as one slash writer reminded me, no one expects her to have firsthand knowledge of male-male sex. A few fans, including some married women, have privately admitted that they don’t write heterosexual erotica because they are afraid everyone will know that they have been “doing it wrong all this time. (Ibid. 248)

The main point in these theories lies with contemporary gendered stereotypes: Slash enables women to play out ideas of a relationship of



equality and beyond social stereotypes, as heterosexual fiction can never allow them to do so. These theories are valid indeed, but with limiting factors as 1) they apply for some, but not all, or even the majority of fans, and 2) they explore the possibilities slash offers women *especially in the first instance of exposure*; they do not review the reasons for *staying* and being a fan. Further on this ethnography will attempt to indicate what “being a fan” may mean to different individuals, and how each fan may derive very different kinds of pleasure from their activities, as well as from the fan-texts they peruse. Additionally, the question “why slash?” often translates to “why do so many heterosexual/lesbian/bisexual women write about two men?” and that question limits itself automatically, I think, to the beginning of a fascination, rather than the examination of aspects of a shared identity.

Bacon-Smith criticizes fellow-scholar Henry Jenkins’ falsely positive view of fandom (as a production), and disapproves of his obvious political (and academic) agenda. Ironically, many fans have reacted by far more negatively towards Bacon-Smith’s theories, and positively towards Jenkins’; Bacon-Smith has been criticized by fans for her detached adoption of the position of an “aloof and lone ethnographer.” She does justify her methods, yet clearly disapproves of many of her “informants’” practices, such as the writing of fanfiction in the H/C genre (or Hurt-Comfort, in which one character is hurt psychologically or physically, and the other character comforts him), and immediately relates them to the sexual issues her

informants may experience actively, or are burdened with subconsciously by society.

Quite by contrast, Henry Jenkins actively becomes a fan, and is writing *for* an academic approval of the value of fandom. His theories are very fan-oriented: A development in this direction is very clear, when his earlier work *Textual Poachers* (1992) is compared to a later text co-written with Cynthia Jenkins and Shoshanna Green, “Normal Female Interest in Men Bonking” (Green et al 1998): While he already attempts to give the fans more voice in the former, Jenkins’ writings are very much bound to an academic theoretical framework; he is already following a very specific agenda of justifying fandom to the academic community by over-emphasizing the creativity and productivity of fans, and of distinguishing “active” fans from “passive” mass audience. In a passage cited further on in section II.A., Jenkins emphasizes that there is no line between artists and consumers in fandom, and that fandom, in fact, provides its members with such encouragement that they may discover skills they had not noted before. He goes on to say: “Fandom does not prove that all audiences are active; it does, however, prove that not all audiences are passive” (Jenkins 1992:287).

In “Normal Female Interest” Jenkins identifies himself as a slash fan, who does not wish to force his fellow-fans (and thus part of his life) into a restrictive framework, and uses long unedited statements of slash-fans to convey reasons for the ever-monumental “why slash?” In doing so, he simply

uses his authorial position to loosely connect these statements together. Through the fans' words the authors examine the role TV plays in the creation of slash, the re-creation of gender, the role of misogyny, the issue of homosexuality, sex/fantasies, and the freedom of slash as a platform for the expressions of individuality. The conclusion, two excerpts from fans Morgan and Barbara, brings the diverse topics together, as much as they can be brought together, but leaves the reader floundering without a common denominator (Green, Jenkins & Jenkins 1998).

As a fan-scholar, Jenkins finds himself in a precarious position in the middle of a very active power structure; torn between both academia and fandom, and ultimately between the dichotomous "good" and "bad," Jenkins' as well as Bacon-Smith's agendas narrowed the effectiveness of their respective texts. As I am aware of my position as both fan and academic, I would suggest, with Matt Hills, that a scholar-fan/fan-scholar's duty lies in giving neither fields or "modes" priority over the other;<sup>6</sup> in other words, neither should theoretical frameworks distort the reality of fandom, nor should fan agendas distort theoretical frameworks. By focusing on the particular and always returning to it, or by focusing on the persons, and not extrapolating ad absurdum, Anthropology's theoretical framework is centered around, and originates from, the particulars and details of life.

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<sup>6</sup> I use both terms, because I see both terms as applying to myself. Though Hills did not go into this detail, fan-scholar versus scholar-fan are not simple one-dimensional roles, but come as a spectrum. In my own case, both modes of identity of academic and fan were distinctly separate up to the beginning of this project. Consequently, it does not matter which label is used to identify my person, as the difference between both is but a slight shift in perspective.

Far from arguing that previous theories have been wrong, I nevertheless believe there has been a certain fixation on answering the first layer of “why?”: Why are women writing this? As there is no comprehensive understanding, the results often overemphasize feminist and media studies perspectives.

Thus, slash is not an unexplored fandom, and currently many texts analyzing yaoi are in the process of being written. Among them, one may find theories regarding women’s wishes and fantasies for a partnership of equals, or discussing the Internet’s function as a forum of liberty which women may utilize by expressing, exploring and experimenting with their sexuality. Academic work on yaoi may also express these questions, and add to that by exploring the growing popularity of Japanese texts and media in the West. Other works may try to achieve an understanding of the significance of fandom to fans by analyzing a specific locality, such as the Star Trek slash fandom.

It is not my wish to criticize the validity of these existing theses, but to improve upon them. The question “why slash?”, though highly interesting, should not limit our discussion of slash. It is true that that eroticism is a trait found very frequently in fanfiction and fanart. It is also true that established theories are valid. Yet, even risking the danger of sounding overly repetitive: slash and yaoi fans, though sharing a sense of community through self- and community-definition, are 1) often involved in several slash and yaoi

fandoms, and are 2) people outside of their fannish activities, though not uninfluenced by the latter, and 3) from a wide range of ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Because each slash and yaoi fandom is different in tone, language, interaction and rules, each is a subculture unto itself. Thus, a fan, generally engaging in several fandoms, adapts to each and is influenced by each. As each fan has different attitudes, backgrounds, and is a person in and of her/himself, I wish to expand beyond a methodology of theory, oversimplification, and generalization. This leads me to an exploration of motivators and a differentiation between the psychological and the cultural; a fan may very well have immersed her/himself into a fandom for a specific reasons, such as the wish to explore boundaries of gender and relationships, but will decide to stay in a fandom for completely different reasons, such as the transformation of self and the development of a fan-mode of identity – inherently cultural components.

This formation of a mode of identity works both ways, as a moment of self-realization and self-labeling, as well as a term supplied to one by others. The social stigmas applied to people who are “fans” are interestingly enough both categorical and liberating: Slash fans are equally attacked by academics (e.g. feminists), general fans of the source text slashed, and media creators. However, once marginalized, there are certain freedoms granted to fans in general and slash fans in particular: if fans behave outside of social norms in

public situations (such as squealing in a movie theater, or holding forth for lengthy time periods on a fandom-specific topic) people may roll their eyes, but if it is known that these persons are fans the reactions are limited in extremity. Because fans are expected to react against certain social standards, and because they are marginalized as “fans,” they are also given the freedom and an excuse to act in these ways. Similarly slash fans – if “out of the closet” and known as such – are allowed to talk about sexuality, gender and homosexual topics in ways that are unusual, and rare for people not of the fandom.

This is only one illumination of the interactions between social paradigms and boundary cultures, a topic which has been discussed by fans online many times, but is only brushed on in this text. When fan-mode interferes with other modes of identity or with the cultural environments in the narratives further on, further glimpses of these interactions can be derived. The aspect taken from this example is simply that the formation of a mode of identity, though internalized, is not unaffected by external factors. This mode will often be transformed, and sometimes amplified, by these external factors.

#### *D. How-to guide for this text*

##### 1. How-to-write or the required methodology section

As I approached this project in small steps, one of the issues I was faced with was what *kind* of ethnography and/or narrative I would be dealing with. This was a key issue, complicated even more by my complete awareness

that writing in and *for* Anthropology, I would have to face the fact that my discipline, as a lens through which I observed, read, and projected, was only *one* lens, after all. How this text has been written innately affects how the topic in question is received. Yet even more so, the concepts of ethnography, self-ethnography and culture, have been loaded with additional connotations, as the opposing sides, both those advocating self-reflexivity and those criticizing it, have assumed strong normative stances, dichotomizing a “good” self-reflexive ethnography and a “bad” objectivist one – and vice versa. As the researcher is faced with the need to justify her/his choices throughout the course of research and text production, writing an ethnography, far from having been the simple matter it was in the past, has been increasingly caught in a politicized environment of factions. Though I would, naturally, prefer to leave this text as is, this would miss the point of translating the meaning of a fan-identity to an academic audience. In order to do so appropriately, it is necessary to clarify what methodology was used in the process, or in other words, in what context I encountered fans and in what context I let my fan-mode and my academic-mode meet each other. Yet, facing this need to clarify, it is necessary to pass by the discipline, or rather pass by the concept of social analysis, and to acknowledge where in Anthropology this text is situated. What follows immediately then, is a sketched outline of the changes some key concepts have undergone in the last twenty years, a “crash course”

so to speak. Once this context is established, the methodology of this text will be laid out.

If ethnography once imagined it could describe discrete cultures, it now contends with boundaries that crisscross over a field at once fluid and saturated with power. In a world where “open borders” appear more salient than “closed communities,” one wonders how to define a project for cultural studies. (Rosaldo 45)

In the above excerpt from *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (1989) Renato Rosaldo briefly summarizes his exploration of a turning point in the discipline of Anthropology: The discipline’s shifting notions and definitions of “culture” were a key issue in the ‘80s and ‘90s, and still are to some degree. Where once we have worked with a singular and ethnocentric concept of culture in the style of Tylor and Spencer, time moved the discipline towards objectivism, but left it with the concept of a homogenous culture. Some decades later, and we argue for cultural patterns, which enable us to flee (but not abandon) last traces of imperialistic ethnocentrism, while still maintaining a sense of human commonalities. As culture moves from the concept of a homogenous community to the notion of multiple border zones, the concept of the subject is directly affected, and that of ethnography is indirectly so: Regarding the former, it seems very obvious that a change of the concept of culture would directly affect the notion of the subject (the object of study in the classical approach). As Rosaldo argues, the “concept of a multiplex personal identity” began to join “its predecessor, the ‘unified subject’” (Rosaldo 166). Parallel to these changes, there is a change



in ethnographic narrative, which has been undergoing a trend toward a more self-reflexive stance. Naturally, our notions of key concepts towards which we gear a socio-cultural analysis must not only inform methodology and research, but will ultimately impact on the process of writing itself. We can then discern two trends of writing, formal versus self-reflexive, which ironically bring us back again to an academic debate of “objective” versus “subjective,” which places both terms on opposite ends of a scale that reaches from “good” to “bad.”

Though it was tempting at the onset of my formalized research to establish an “objective” line, through which I would gather material entirely unconnected to my own identity as a fan, and which could possibly have allowed me to take the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular out of my writing, I soon realized that “objective” as that approach may have been, it would have been a equally flawed as it would have forced me to deny a large amount of data either directly or indirectly connected to myself. Based on this realization, my text aims to neither establish itself as neither “objective” nor “subjective,” but rather orients itself towards complexity. Drawing on the self-reflexive narratives with emphases on personal testimony and personal experience particularly advanced by feminist Anthropology, and specifically influenced by the manifestation of these narratives in *Women Writing Culture* (Behar & Gordon, 1995), I firmly believe that in order to write a *complex* ethnography, in this case at least, it is necessary to include myself as both, the

academic and the fan, rather than to exclude my figure or to veil its complexity manifested in the various roles I had to take on.

In a recent interview for his university's online journal of cult media (*Intensities*, Cardiff University), Matt Hills and Henry Jenkins discussed a plethora of contemporary issues in fan studies as well as each other's works in that area.<sup>7</sup> Bringing up the relationship theoretical framework has to field research, Hills underlines that what "counts as the real will be different," depending on the researcher's background, training and theoretical tendencies. Not necessarily consciously, these factors will influence the researcher's perception of field data as it happens, or in Hills' words:

[...] they would *see* different things: that person twitched then, or they held their body in that way, or they spoke in that way, they were excited about this, anxious about that, they got that word muddled up ... these things might matter to a psychoanalytic "empiricist" but not to a certain type of "empirical" sociologist. (Hills 2001)

Jenkins follows this line of thought by giving a practical example from his Research Methods class: Using a video interview he did for *Textual Poachers* in which he interviews a fan song writer about her fannish involvement, he shows his class the two different levels at which the fan writer replies. Though her initial answer regarding motivators is that she had started writing songs because of her father's death and the emotions involved in that, she also discusses her involvement with the fan-community and the creation of songs

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<sup>7</sup> This interview was found online and was last accessed in February 2004, but is at the moment unavailable due to a restructuring of the site. The site's usual domain is <http://www.cult-media.com> and houses Cardiff University's online peer reviewed Journal of Cult Media.

very analytically thereafter. Jenkins demonstrates how Camille Bacon-Smith would use the first notion for her analysis, whereas he used the second piece of the interview for his book. The problem he presents to his students, Jenkins explicates, is the process of deciding what aspect of the data at hand to use.

Arguing that all aspects are necessary to some degree, he concludes:

To my mind the value of ethnography is not ultimately that it allows you to talk to “the real” but that it introduces notions of dialogue and accountability. And different ethnographic methods arrive at dialogue and accountability in different ways. (Henry Jenkins in Hills 2001)

This sentiment rings especially true, if we consider the nature of an ethnography more closely: the genre functions as a translation, as a mapping out, and only becomes an intellectual manifesto, if the personal agendas of the researcher receive more priority than the reality of the ethnography’s protagonists. Inasmuch as the depiction and translation is informed by the researcher’s context, complexity is even more desirable in order to allow for a greater accountability.

This ethnography then consists of three interconnected areas: cyber-ethnography, offline ethnography, and self-ethnography. As both the lens I inherited from my discipline as well as my need to approach the issues of motivation and identity informed my research, I chose to begin my work with and focus on individuals rather than specific fandoms (e.g. the *Harry Potter* slash fandom) or localities (e.g. mailing lists, web archives or LiveJournal). Following these fans’ movements in different cyberspaces and through

different fandoms, as well as observing offline fannish interactions, I attempted to depict a semblance of these individual's fannish and everyday realities. What was originally meant to be a cyber-ethnography, experimental in that I had planned to solely utilize online means of observing, soon progressed to a hybrid of cyber and offline ethnography. Similarly, my sample of individuals, if they may be called that, was narrowed down to women attending my own college. This means that the individuals I worked with shared my own age range and possessed a certain level of education, both aspects many fans may not have. If my project had had a different focus and/or objective, this might have falsified my findings, but since my prime purpose was to translate the meaning of "being a fan," the limitations of this sample only had a positive impact; it is because I had offline access as well as online access to these fans, and furthermore because I had knowledge of their lives outside of fandom (precisely because parts of our lives in college overlapped) that I could map out a more complex picture throughout my research.

My focus on offline ethnography was generated by the need to acquire fuller information than electronic means such as AOL Instant Messenger conversations and e-mail would allow me. Though these procedures yielded satisfying results in quantity, the need for elaboration was soon apparent, as I was always aware that besides talking to me in one Instant Messenger window, my friends were most likely multi-tasking by doing homework or surfing the

web. In a way the nature of conversing over Instant Messenger, namely in concise and few sentences, added to this issue. Following up on the need for more elaboration and detail on some of the sentiments expressed, I began to resort to more traditional face-to-face interviews.

Once I had committed myself to strive for complexity, I began a self-ethnography, as well as attempted to heighten my awareness of a self-reflexive stance. This was absolutely necessary, not simply because of my decision to include myself in this project, but also because of the connections I have to the fans I worked with, who were either long-term friends, or whom I have formed friendships to, partially due to both our shared reality/ies, our collaborative work and in a way due to our shared fan-mode of identity. This self-ethnographic stance is suffused in all aspects of this text.

The decisions I made for my research were implicated throughout the process of writing this text. As any empirical paper is nothing but a heavily moderated compilation and abstraction of data, I aim to mirror the process of this compilation by preserving long excerpts from online journal posts and online essays written by fans, as well as by relying on passages of transcribed interviews. The structure and layout of this text is then as much a reflection of how it was researched and written (as illustrated in this section) as it is reflective of the medium (online) and its communities (interactive). The reflection of medium and communities will be further explored in the following sections. .

## 2. Localities

The fandoms discussed are cyberfandoms, which are located online. Many anthropological theories attempt to deal with the implications of the Internet on Anthropological research. Many are brilliant, and should be carefully examined. However, the purpose of these paragraphs is to outline the primary issue of approach researchers will often face online, as well as to introduce and emphasize the connections between locality, activity, connections formed to others, and, ultimately, identity.

The Internet did not invent fan groups; they were thriving long before computers existed. On the other hand, the Internet has changed them, and for those with Internet access, *it has changed what it means to be a fan* [emphasis added]. (Baym 2000:215)

This passage from Nancy K. Baym's *Tune In, Log On: Soap, Fandoms, and Online Communities* illuminates the change fandom has gone through with the advent of available Internet localities. Truthfully, in "classic" fandom thirty years ago fans still managed to connect face-to-face at fandom-specific conventions as well as across miles through textual correspondence. In this sense, the methods to accomplish participation and/or connection have not changed *conceptually*. However, the advent of the Internet as a tool enabling faster email exchange, real-time conversation, and larger storage space for not just fanfiction, but also for private thoughts published semi-publicly and for exchanges, affected the structures and social conventions by which fandom had been governed. For a mode of identity that is heavily

affected not simply by the object of worship, but more strongly by the act, the change this act undergoes with a translocation, equally affects the process of identity formation.

Consequently, *being* a fan thirty years ago, though related to the concept nowadays in appearance and activity, significantly differs from what it means to be a fan in the here and now. It has become easier for an individual to be a fan of many media, to connect to other fans (actively or passively), and perhaps more importantly to immerse him/herself in this different world. This facilitated immersion may account for the growing number of people who become exposed to the deeper dimensions of a source text they may have initially only “liked”: as they research this source text in an online setting, which will *a priori* connect them to a spider web of links, a plethora of both production and consumption possibilities becomes available to them. Paired with the constant notion and presence of an existing matching fandom community, the processes of being and becoming a fan, as well as being a part of fandom, the world a fan is associated with, have evolved considerably. This is perhaps best illustrated with a term used in the introduction of this text’s “From Pleasure to ID” section: the fandom-specific term “to gafiate,” originally derived from the acronym GAFIA (Get Away From It All), has mutated from a connotation of “getting away from real life,” to its meaning today: “getting away from fandom,” exemplifying the excessive accessibility of fandom nowadays.

How then does a locality affect our activities (or lack thereof) and what are its implications for the formation of a fan-mode of identity? In the following paragraphs these localities and their structures are more thoroughly discussed; I will explore the connections between activity and identity formation in later sections.

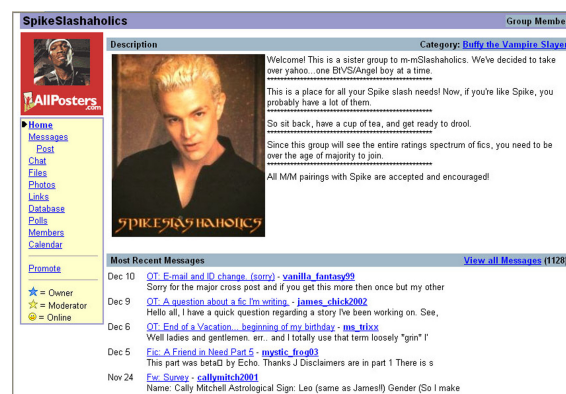
Wilson and Peterson outline the possibilities for anthropological research in cyberspaces in *The Anthropology of Online Communities* by offering the reader traditional themes such as identity, community, and power concepts (2002). The article is a respectable survey, but all too readily adopts previously stated theories of power, class, and culture without examination of their current relevance. There are several points that may be attributed to an overly discipline-traditional approach to researching the Internet: Most pointedly, the use of the word “cyberspace” as a singular location only is jarring as there is no singular “space” and certainly not prevalently in a geographical context. Truthfully, the authors do use the term “virtual spaces” at the conclusion of the text, but the change from singular to plural leads the reader to think that the authors are not consistent in their understandings of the dimensions discussed. In fact, we can and often do perceive the Internet as one large space; an “online” to our “real-life” or “offline.” The point is, there are vast differences between the concept of a single space and that of multiple, infinite spaces. The authors seem to perceive those smaller “virtual spaces” as a semi-reproduction of the smaller partitions of the real-life world.



This is emphasized by how they view Internet culture as a sort of cultural reproduction rather than formation or reformation. It does show a cultural value-scale on which Internet culture falls lower than physical and off-line culture. This idea is affirmed by the authors' notion that the Internet misses socio-cultural practices, and that cyber-research must be brought back into social and geographical spaces: concepts of power, socialized, racialized and gendered power, along with the social strata of the individuals offline play an important role.

This idea of a cultural reproduction online may be a little hasty, as, with time, the Internet has taken on a life of its own as a medium in which new cultures and communities develop; it is not one large space, but is made up of a plurality of cyberspaces. This plays an important role because within the slash fandoms several groups of people will move in spaces, and each space is distinct. When I first became involved in the fandom, interaction and production were predominately held on personal web pages, but as the slash

fandom expanded and became more networked, it moved into additional and different spaces, such as LiveJournals, archives, and mailing lists, etc. The personal contact in each of



**Figure 1- A Mailing List featuring Spike from BtVS**

these spaces is quite different: LiveJournals/diaries and mailing lists are very personal; one sees *things* as they happen, and can immediately reply, input and interact. Mailing lists will have a specific theme, fandom or pairing, and the authors email is sent directly to other fans' email inbox. Diaries and LiveJournals are very interactive online journals, and networked.

Archives are very different; already finished or simple databases into which creators can input their works, they are more impersonal: They usually involve many authors, genres, characters and/or situations. Sometimes they will



**Figure 2-The Smallville Slash Archive**

involve different fandoms on the same web space. They will often carry the authors' email contacts, but function in a more passive way, very similar to a library.

In a way, LiveJournal has moved the concept of an online diary from a private domain published publicly to a tool encouraging networking.

LiveJournal is based on an open source code, a code published publicly and free to others to experiment with, add on to, or simply utilize. Consequently, many different journal domains emerged, utilizing the LiveJournal code.

LiveJournal was still seen as the best domain, as it not only is free of advertisements, but at that time was also not completely open to a full public

participation: In order to limit server traffic, LiveJournal instigated a code-system, allowing members to pass on codes to friends or to keep these codes for themselves. These alphanumeric short passwords would allow that friend or the member in question to open a free LiveJournal account.<sup>8</sup> As LiveJournal acquired the financial means to expand its servers and business, the issue of server traffic was no longer relevant, which caused the management to abandon the code system. This abandonment of the code system was not undebated, and some online journal domains utilizing the LiveJournal source code still operate on it.

The way in which LiveJournal, and other journals based on LiveJournal's structure, have moved the concept of an online journal even more from a semi-private into an increasingly semi-



**Figure 3: A LiveJournal post with threaded comments**

<sup>8</sup> LiveJournal also allows the option to have a paid account. At the period that the code system was still utilized, these paid accounts had additional benefits: they allowed for customizations of friendslist (i.e. the individual would be able to elect certain people from her/his friendslist and could publish certain posts viewable to only these people). Other options included certain pre-made journal layouts as well as individual layout customizations, additional “userpictures” and so forth. While codes were still the main vehicle to receive a free account, another benefit for paid journals was that they would receive a certain amount of free codes. After codes were abolished paid journals still maintained a number of benefits, though, clearly, a “wealth” in terms of codes was no longer one of them. Neither was allowing customization of friendslist groups.

public sphere is very distinct: Though some online journals allow for comments by others online, LiveJournal's comment function is very distinct as it operates in threads. The original poster can, thus, engage with some of the people commenting on her/his post, mimicking a face-to-face or one-on-one interaction. Others may participate in these threads occasionally, but the comments are clearly a "reply-to" another comment and/or post, and thus to the person who posted that comment/post. Unless "screened" or made invisible, however, these mimicked face-to-face interactions are clearly visible to others accessing that page.

As a LiveJournal is still presumed to hold a certain diary or journal function, the mix of private and public connotations may lead to confusions and may even instigate certain practices. A fic posted on an individual's LiveJournal may not receive the same range of (often constructive) critique that it would receive if posted to an archive or on a personal webpage. This behavior is sometimes carried over into so-called "communities," LiveJournal community accounts, which allows multiple members entry-posting rights. In the case of these communities other factors may account for the lack of critique: the passage of time and the purpose of the community. These communities are, akin to mailing lists, often centered around a specific theme, and are utilized for discussion as much as for posting produced texts and art. Furthermore, as more entries are posted, earlier ones are pushed back and on to another page as there are only a certain number of posts per page, so that in

order to find an earlier post, one must click a link and go back to the previous 20 (or 25) posts. Unlike in a fanfic archive, LiveJournal's search functions are only marginal, and stories cannot be found by author or genre. Perhaps it is this "fleetingness" of posts and the lack of a sense of permanence which may cause readers to not put as much effort into comments and critiques.

This is an issue that is not undebated within fandom as some fans have complained about the slew of hyper-positive "I love it! I love you!" comments fanfiction generally known as low quality have received. However, even some of the more involved and active fans have admitted in discussions on LiveJournal concerning this topic that they felt uneasy commenting on a "private" journal with critique, unless that critique was expressly invited by the author. In this sense Jenkins' model of supportive peer-review often becomes defunct, as some authors discourage even partially non-positive critique on their personal webpages in their fanfiction's author's notes section.

### 3. How-to read

Interesting, to say the least, that this text needs a reading guide, but there are some details of this ethnography's core left unexplained that might benefit from being voiced. One of these is a number of "interactive" boxes strewn across the following chapters. They are, essentially, paragraphs of talkbacks and reactions I asked of my friends, the fans featured throughout this ethnography. Having once established my key concepts of framework, having underlined both self-reflexivity and complexity, I have become

increasingly aware of my connection to others, and in a way of their cooperation throughout the process of writing this text. The question that came to mind occasionally was, indeed, to what extent I deserved the authorial position I held. Perhaps this is one of the fears and insecurities that led to classical Anthropology's dread of "becoming native." But to an even greater extent, I would argue, this unease sprang from the notion that holding such an authorial position would inevitably equate the silencing of those I wrote about. Hills' words of warning regarding the precarious situation of fan-scholars and scholar-fans and the attention they should pay to both of the contexts in which they operate sprang to mind. After having witnessed multiple discussions in fandom about banalities, as well as deep meta-discussions about theoretical approaches to slash, and always having been aware of the highly interactive qualities of the Internet (even to those lurking passively), taking on an authorial position was precarious: the medium of this text is paper, and, together with the conventions of academic writing, does not lend itself easily to interactivity. Though not actively silencing the voices of those I worked with, I had been the only one to hear them comment on the drafts of this manuscript, and was, to a degree, obligated to lend them voices on this medium. Not doing so would have, essentially, denied both the medium and the communities of online fandom.

Attempting to develop some ideas to incorporate such interactivity if possible, I had been nearly on the verge of giving up, thinking that my

academic audience might find such an interactive text perhaps too experimental. Two things happened that caused me to reconsider. The first was when I went over a copy of *Interview with Henry Jenkins*, and found my notions affirmed to a heavy degree. Discussing the tendency of academia to deal with audiences as passive, Jenkins jokingly explains:

It's a problem, I think, for the field: we need, to some degree, an audience that shuts up so that we can tell them what a text means! [...] This is the academic privilege: we assert ourselves in the middle of this relationship between texts, producers and audiences, and in order to define our own role have a need, I think, to keep silencing the audience in some way, or to marginalize it, trivialize it, even when we're talking about it as active. (Hills 2001)

Further on Jenkins discusses both of his texts mentioned in section C, *Textual Poachers* (1992) and "Normal Female Interest in Men Bonking" (1998) in terms of the dialogue the first incited in fandom communities and the second incorporated in the text. Mentioning the process of circulating the manuscript for *Textual Poachers* in fandom circles for feedback, he explains that:

What I regret now is that I rendered a lot of that [the process of circulating the manuscript and receiving feedback] invisible. It would have been much more interesting to integrate the back-and-forth dialogue within the text itself, but there are only a couple of places where I acknowledge that process. Since then I've really looked at how to create a dialogic text that reflects a plurality of voices, and "Normal Female Interest in Men Bonking" (1998) was a model of a dialogic text, and yes, I do have a piece in there because I was part of the fan community that I was drawing on, but I don't label it as somehow distinct from the other fan voices there. (Ibid.)

The problem with this sentiment, for me, was founded in my recollection of reading “Normal Female Interest” and finding the lack of an authorial position disorienting. The abundance of fan statements contained in the text is only loosely connected together, and rarely understandable in their organizational structure. Each opinion and fan’s voice was interesting in and of itself, but as a complex whole left me hanging.

The second instance that caused me to reconsider some attempt at interactivity was the increasing feedback I received from friends, and the wish to display their input. Realizing that this text could only benefit from some degree of experimental exercise, and resolved to attempt interactivity, but at the same time not lose my theoretical and *textual* framework, I decided to create certain interactive spaces. Circulating my manuscript, I asked each fan who was willing to “react” to pick a section, if it spoke to them, and to “write me back.” Though some of my friends had problems with this, asking me for more guidelines or explanation, in the end everyone who wished to chose a section and reacted. These paragraphs are contained within the “interactive” boxes throughout this text, as a reminder that the fans described throughout this ethnography possess voices of their own, beyond mine, as well as a reflection of the interactivity latent in both the online medium as well as its fan communities.

This text is then readable as both a trajectory, inasmuch as each section builds on the one preceding it, as well as a networked, or perhaps



linked, text with the connections of people, spaces and fandoms expanding to the horizon if followed. As it follows the fans and attempts to translate their activities and parts of their lives, it can, and should perhaps, be read as both, in order to gain a dual perspective.

## II. Fandom and Fans

### A. Introduction

In order to attempt a translation or ethnography of what it means to be a slash fan, it is crucial, as has been stated previously, to understand that slash fans are, essentially, *fans*. It is necessary then to return to the concepts of “fandom” and “fan.” In the following sections, I will discuss fandom in general and slash/yaoi fandoms in particular.

Fans are people who attend to a text more closely than other types of audience members. Texts provide a focal point through which fans can identify to which community they belong. They might even adopt ideas, beliefs, and values (or ideology depending on how you look at it) that they feel the text valorizes. [...] Some fans choose to congregate and share their interests either by talking, writing, painting, or singing about them. Others are “lurkers,” either unable or unwilling to actively participate in a community of fans. Some are fans of a star, some are fans of a fictive universe, some are both simultaneously; the type of affiliation depends on the text in question. This instability stems from the fan in question. (MacDonald 136)

In *Uncertain Utopia* Andrea MacDonald discusses fandom through computer-mediated communication by focusing specifically on a fan USENET newsgroup for the TV-show *Quantum Leap* (1998). The passage cited above, gives MacDonald’s definition of a “fan.” The process of defining “fan” by juxtaposing it to other types of audience members is very popular in theoretical works as well as often used by fans. A good friend, Kira, mentioned that she had heard of a fandom theory which identified fans versus

consumers: Consumers only passively read/watch/passively partake of a series, whereas fans are productive. Productivity in this case is any activity in a spectrum of multiple possibilities: writing analyses/fanfiction or simply fantasizing about the characters. Kira liked this theory as it spoke to her in the way she personally defines the difference of what she is a fan of versus what she simply reads or enjoys. Giving a specific example, she mentioned that she “might watch *X-Files* whenever its on, but that's about it,” whereas on the other hand Kira has produced quite distinctive fanfiction for various *manga* (Japanese comic) fandoms, as well as essays.

These theories of fandom and production may very well stem indirectly from the various fandom studies texts written by Henry Jenkins. Following De Certeau’s motif of a poached, nomadic culture, Jenkins underlines the level of productivity within fandom, perhaps, as mentioned, in order to emphasize positive aspects of fandom to his (unconvinced) academic audience. In *Textual Poachers*, he argues that:

Fandom recognizes no clear-cut line between artists and consumers; all fans are potential writers whose talents need to be discovered, nurtured, and promoted and who may be able to make a contribution, however modest, to the cultural wealth of the larger community. In researching this book, I spoke to women who had discovered skills and abilities that they had not recognized before entering fandom; they received there the encouragement they had found lacking from their interactions with other institutions. (Jenkins 1992:280)

Ultimately, he concludes for his academic audience that fandom does not prove that all media audiences are active, but does prove that that not all

audiences are passive (Ibid. 287). More than ten years later Jenkins still argues for the benefits and positive effects of fandom due to its members' productivity: in an article in MIT's Technology Review titled "Why Heather Can Write" Jenkins outlines to his semi-academic, semi-business-oriented audience the benefits of the *Harry Potter* fandom for the writing skills of teenaged fans. Fanfiction as a communal writing process, he argues, provides teenagers with practice, and fellow-fans present a friendly and warm environment of peer-review, which these fans may not necessarily find in their formal school-settings. As he points out, the same instances of informal teaching happen in many other online communities, such as anime fandoms, where fans "teach" each other "Japanese language and culture in order to do underground subtitling of their favorite shows" (Jenkins 2004).

There is a problem with such a sentiment; it emphasizes the activity of fandom versus the passivity of a general audience, not taking into account, that the same person may very well be fan of one thing, but will passively consume another thing, as illustrated by the example of Kira mentioned above. She herself has integrated the idea of activity and passivity in the same individual body with her personal definition of fandom. Jenkins' notions of fandom as production, are realistically speaking overly simple and generalizing. These theories do not recognize that a fan may find more pleasure and happiness in lurking online rather than sharing productivity. And finally, they do not acknowledge that a fan may be a passive lurker in some

fandoms, and an active member in others. Truthfully, every fan will actively fantasize, the lurkers online equally to the ever-elusive offline fan-alone-in-a-vacuum. “Being a fan” in general, is not inherently bound to a community, however “being an online fan” is.

Nonetheless, Henry Jenkins’ work is, in a way, a milestone for media and fandom studies. Precisely by overemphasizing fandom’s productivity, Jenkins has re-formulated a concept of fandom that expands beyond an image of people fanatically obsessed with low-brow pop culture and underlined aspects of community and productivity. It is only through such an effort that fandom becomes acceptable as an object of study, and it is only through his “outing” as a fan, that Jenkins can open the way for fan-scholars and scholar-fans to theorize across the two contexts.

The term “fandom,” however, may take on several additional meanings, depending upon who uses it. For some, it is simply the name of the thing they are fans of, for others it is that group of fans, friends or not, who love that show or book. Some may associate the term “fandom” with fan production, i.e. websites, fan art or fanfiction though they may never be in contact with those who produce, others may not even conceive themselves as a product of fandom, simply because they perceive fandom as productive and themselves as solely consuming (though those latter would probably still dub themselves “fans”). The concept of fandom has been theorized by academics as well as fans, or by people who are part of both groups.

In an online exchange with Mel I asked her what fandom meant for her, and how, if at all, she could explain the term itself to someone for whom it has no meaning. She told me outright that she really did not like defining it, as fandom did not have a meaning or definition for her, “It just is.” When I asked her to try to explain it to me, as if I was someone who had no idea what fandom was or *meant*, she answered in her first line that “fandom is where I spend a lot of my time -- online, reading.” She also explained that fandom was a group of people who came together to “talk about a show or book or something, some sort of media that does not belong to them, but that is in the public view.” Some of these people have discussion on the details or plot (or whatever) of that thing, others write stories, some just sit back and read the discussions or stories, “but they are all part of the group.”

While Yuri roleplays the character of Harry Potter online on a LiveJournal game and is active in several fandoms, Mel mostly interacts on mailing lists, where she edits other people’s fanfiction. Ash has stopped reading fanfiction a while ago, because it became too tedious for her to find good texts. She has stopped writing, because she could not be bothered any longer. Also, she often expresses her dislike of “fandom” in relation to “fangirls,” who she hates. Ash distinguishes between “fans” and “fangirls”; the latter are thirteen-year-old emotional and hysterical teenage girls, who, as she says, are invading every fandom. However, Ash has met people online, and is friends with them. She will frequently roleplay with her friends and is

proud of her ability to slash everything in any setting. Jen is an excellent example of an academic fan: she uses the emotions invoked by the stories she reads, as well as the narratives, for personal self-analysis. Barb is a very opinionated fan, and very open to her friends and acquaintances in real life, but mainly lurks (is online without reacting actively).

Faced by the necessity to define fandom academically, I would initially simplistically define it as the thing one is a fan of, as well as the group of people who are fans of that thing. However, when Mel, and many other fans speak of fandom, attempting to explain the term to someone who is a complete stranger to the communities, they will often associate fandom with more than a media or than a community; fandom will often hold a temporal association (the time spent on/assigned for fandom), an association with a locality (LiveJournal versus archives versus other outgrowths), as well as with the people involved, their productive fan creations, and the media(s) one is a fan of. In Mel's case her first sentence associated fandom with time, but then also discussed fandom as a group, whose members, however passive or active, take part in a group identity. As I will attempt to demonstrate throughout this chapter, "being a fan" and being part of fandom, very naturally encompasses all these categories of associations (and many more), due to the set-up of online fandom; this is also partially due to the fact that "being a fan" is only one mode of many within the individual.

## *B. Activities*

### 1. Intro

There are many ways for fans in general and slash fans in particular to live out their fandoms; what for one is fandom is not necessarily so for the other. Some fans write fanfiction, some correct and edit others' fanfiction; some fans roleplay on a one-on-one chat basis, in a multiple-character chat or on an online journal that allows for comments to each entry (such as LiveJournal or GreatestJournal). Some fans will write essays on slash or specific media (this book or that TV-show) that they are fans of; others will indulge predominately in highly analytical discussions of either text, sub-text or fandom in general (so called "meta"). Some fans will go to conventions; others may never step beyond the online locations. Some fans are active, if "active" means something such as "giving external signals of their existence," others are passive, they are online "lurkers" who do not involve themselves in online discussions, do not make online connections nor form friendships, or do simply nothing but consume others' fanfiction or fanart. Often a distinction between "fan" and "consumer" will be made by stating that a fan will consume actively and productively. In other words, a consumer experiences passively, whereas a fan will have either an actively external reaction (writing, art) and/or an internal (reflection, daydreaming).

It is difficult to draw a line between "fan" and "consumer," as their definitions are anything but rigid categorizations, and there is no way to prove that a "consumer" is simply just that on a general basis: the only way one could realize this, as their fannish activity may have no external action



accompanying it online, would be to talk with each individual to determine whether they simply consume the media in question or are a fan of it. An interesting question that accompanies the work with online fandom is that of the “lurker”: as they rarely give an external signal of their activities, they are often excluded from fandom studies, similarly to the way a consumer is considered something completely different from a fan. Unless one has acquaintance with lurkers offline, one cannot possibly account for her/his fannish activities or fannish connections with others. Another complication is given by the fact that, similarly to the fact that a person can be a fan of one thing and a consumer of another, one may lurk in some locations, but be quite active in others. And of course a complete lurker online, may be quite an active fan offline (which does not in any way discount their online fan-life – it is equal to their offline fan-life, *if maybe not as dialectic*).

Fandom is wanting to know more about a story, a character, a situation, whatever. It's something that pulls you in and intrigues you and causes your imagination to fire more than usual. Depending on how that imagination comes out, it may or may not require a community.

Ka is neither a slash nor a yaoi fan, but she has been a fan of Japanese- and Western-based media from an early age on. As can be glimpsed from her definition of fandom above, she is a fan who enjoys the subtleties, facts and details of the source text. However, Ka's fandom is centered around the source text to such a degree, that she will not break out of the boundaries of the specific universe given in a show. In other words, she does not move out

of canon, a term which refers to the events, plotlines and character developments *within* the source material. Canon is often juxtaposed to “fanon,” or developments established within fandom, and there is a complex and subtle tension between these two concepts, which will be discussed further on in the sections dealing with fanfiction-reading and –writing. One can summarize her activities as a fan as obsessively watching the work in question, accumulating collectibles, and roleplaying. Ka will watch the show or series to the point of quoting lines and answering trivia questions; she will collect paraphernalia for the sake of having them rather than because she wants to use them. She gives the example of buying “*Sailor Moon* [a very popular Japanese anime] underwear intended for five year-old girls and stuffing them in a drawer somewhere without ever taking them out of the package.” Ka does roleplaying, though never a character already existent in the universe. Rather, she has been playing a unique character with other unique characters in the *Star Trek* universe for a long period of time. She explains, “in these sims [short for simulations], a character with any kind of connection to a character appearing in the series] has a kind of newbie aura to it, and any characters directly lifted are completely rejected.” All fanfiction she has ever read is *anime*-based.

If you want me to draw any conclusions from this stuff, I'd say that my brand of fandom is to rabidly pursue the canon of the series, and then use that to act out unsatisfied wishes for the franchise that are as completely independent of the stories already presented as possible. Because thinking of it like that helps explain to me why I hate yaoi/slash and

*Harry Potter* fandom, since I find them either sycophantic or delusional, though really their emphases are just arranged differently than mine.

As we were walking to a movie screening, Ka remarked to me that she would have to sit far away from my group, as we would certainly behave overwhelmingly hyper and “fangirly.” “Fangirl” is a term that will come up more frequently in this text, as it is used in both capacities: to accentuate one’s actions, as well as to distinguish oneself from “fangirls” who are painted as brainless and ignorant teenage girls. Interestingly enough, both ways to employ the term are often used by the same person. A fan may for example post a diatribe about a “stupid fangirl” on her/his LiveJournal one day, but may write a very excited and only semi-coherent entry another day and clearly label it as being “fangirl-mode.”

The conversation turned towards slash in particular, and the very intense fascination so many girls experience when first encountering the genre. Ka related that she had tried to read some slash, but that it did nothing for her. She could not explain why that was the case, or why she was often the only one who did not like it. Though one could frequently refute Jenkins’ analysis of the formulaic structure of fan-fiction, and in doing so demonstrate that fanfics *will* break out of the formulated structures for the most part, the truth is that there is one aspect which most slash fanfics share: the stories are mainly centered around and written for the purpose of exploring the theme of human relationships and connections. This is taken on at a variety of

mutations and intensity: romance-novel treatments of a perfect bonding get as much screen time, as the deep levels of hostility between two mortal enemies, and while some plots may be action-driven, others are purely internal. Yet the overwhelming theme which appears in almost any slash/yaoi fanfic is that of an interpersonal exploration; even if the text is nothing but a soliloquy, the narrator does not exist in a vacuum – what, after all, could induce a soliloquy but external factors?

In what I have known of Ka in a fan-sense, rather than as a fellow-academic or fellow-Japanophile, and as well as what may be gleaned from her above statements, the emphasis for her lies more on the facts, and the world, rather than the characters; her fandom, once removed from the screen/book, is acted out in its canon-universe, or imagined location, rather than through its protagonists. Slash/Yaoi, for the most part, does not exist outside of the protagonists featured in the source text.<sup>9</sup> In this capacity, slash/yaoi does not synchronize with Ka's expectations and activities in fandom.

Yuri is predominantly an *anime* and *Harry Potter* fan, and an avid slasher. She has roleplayed for a long period of time, starting with various fantasy roleplaying games. At this point, she roleplays in a *Harry Potter* game held on the LiveJournal domain, reads *Saiyuki* (2000) fanfiction, and has designed her journal layout based on her favorite character from this *anime*.

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<sup>9</sup>This has recently begun to change, as more sites advertise “original slash fiction,” featuring original male characters. The growing numbers of these original slash fics have incited various discussions within fandom about the definition of “slash” and whether that definition extends to a work that is not fanfiction. There has been no synthesizing conclusion as of yet.

We were talking recently about our favorite Japanese *anime* and *manga*, and I noted that I had not been caught up by a new *anime* to the degree that I used to. I hazarded that “in the old days,” i.e. before Japan and all things Japanese became hip, the pool of *anime* and *manga* accessible to us was limited and therefore it was easier to pick out the “good” series in the choices presented. Recently, many *anime* and *manga* have been licensed for sale in America, including some *shounen ai* (boys’ love) *manga* and *anime*; furthermore, the amount of *anime* offered on Cartoon Network’s *Adult Swim* (late night adult programming on this TV station) has increased significantly. Yuri and I are both *anime* elitists, in the sense that we both refuse to watch dubbed *animes* or read translated *manga*. Though this has not been the case for me as long as it has been for her, studying Japanese at college has helped to build this “snobbishness.” As opposed to myself, Yuri always manages to find a series to catch her attention, and “hops” fandoms fairly quickly. She does, however, have long time favorites, such as the (for *anime* fans) legendary *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995) or *Revolutionary Girl Utena* (1997).

Yuri was also the first to reply to my plea on my LiveJournal for fans’ personal definitions of fandom. As she has been working with me for a long time, she knew that I was not looking for the “one” definition – we both agreed there was not just one definition and explanation. She also knew that I was not looking for a statement by an authority, and again, we both agreed that every statement would hold authority. An excerpt of her answer to me:

I guess for me, fandom means community. Sometimes (when it gets big/corrupted) it can become a negative thing-->a hierarchal group of people with tendencies towards elitism. Fandom can also be bad because of the explosive tendencies of members in discordant fandoms (it's comparable to religious arguments). But I like fandoms, because even with the bad things, I like having the base of people with shared interests [...] Most of the time, I just enjoy the fruits of other's labors (as well as the original products). If there wasn't such a thing as fandom, though, I'm not sure that there would be these entertainment opportunities (b/c I associate fandoms with not just a group of people, but also of the products of the fans)-->fiction, art, shrines, etc.

In this post, Yuri approaches many facets, details and issues of fandom: community, production, consumption, and tensions. She goes on to say that, to her, fandom is the lifeblood of the shows she watches/watched, the community and the fruits of its labor the thing that would tide her over until the next *Harry Potter* book, the next installment by this *mangaka* (or manga artist) or of that *anime* series.

## 2. Angst!Harry and Slut!Draco - or Roleplaying in a Harry Potter game

Yuri has been playing RP games for a very long time, in all possible Internet-related ways: bulletin boards, emails, chats or AOL Instant Messenger, and on LiveJournal. She has quit all of her mail-based roleplaying games hosted on the Yahoo groups mailing list domain, because she was annoyed at the players who participated in these games. When I asked her whether they were too young (a complaint frequently brought up against “fangirls”), she replied that that was not necessarily the case, but more so that

they had no sense and the plotlines became more stupid, and additionally so with people changing all the time, i.e. quitting the game or coming newly to the game.

Yuri's newest game is a *Harry Potter* RPG, in which she plays Harry. It is her favorite so far, because it has more good players (i.e. players who keep the game and protagonists in character), is better organized (and has strict rules) and happens with a better frequency. The game is generally played on AOL Instant Messenger, but is based in LiveJournals: A main community journal is used to post logs or summaries of games between players, or general notices by Hogwarts' staff and headmaster; messages (or "owls") to other players are posted here as well, and sometimes the main community journal will be used for play (by using LiveJournal's "comment" function to specific posts). Every player does have a journal for their character(s), and this is used, as a regular journal would be, for personal entries or specific messages to friends. The characters' journals' names as well as their screen names for Instant Messenger are chosen to be reflective of the character. The *Harry Potter* RPG is not a yaoi-game, but is yaoi-friendly: the Harry that Yuri plays is not decidedly gay or straight.

There is also an OOC community journal, and often an OOC community chat. OOC means "out of character," and is a phrase in which players may communicate beyond their character's scope in general, and on a more personal basis in particular. Yuri describes the function of this OOC

community in the following:

Yuri: And then the OOC community group for out of character things, not play, just for messing around.

SY: What do you mean by messing around?

Yuri: Just stuff I can't describe it...whatever we feel like posting there...

SY: Anything at all?

Yuri: It's the same as...not the same as *nraged*; *nraged* is only about the game, and ours doesn't have to be game-related. It just has to be generally related, like if someone sees a funny piece of art, or a Prisoner of Azkaban trailer, but also if two people have funny OOC chats they'll post that.

It is interesting to me that Yuri mentions *nraged* as a reference point:

*Nraged* is the OOC community used by the organizers as well as the fans of one of the oldest and very popular *Harry Potter* RPGs, *Nocturne Alley*.

*Nocturne Alley* is a very admired LiveJournal community RPG that has managed to gather a dedicated audience and helped revolutionize the ways in which RPGs are played and chronicled on LiveJournal. It is played roughly in the same format in which Yuri's RPG is held, but it was one of the first to use this format, and is far stricter in its use of OOC behaviors and expressions.

Though Yuri follows *Nocturne Alley* and enjoys reading it, she mentioned to me that the characters are mostly played out of character, although we also discussed that J. K. Rowling did not exactly give her characters much depth before the 5<sup>th</sup> volume of *Harry Potter* came out. *Nocturne Alley* was already a well established game before the 5<sup>th</sup> book, and after its publication the RPG has gone AU – or Alternate Universe – as too much had occurred in the game, and it would be near-impossible to adjust the game timeline to fit the events of



the 5<sup>th</sup> *Harry Potter* book. In any case, *Nocturne Alley*, is very famous, due to the good playing and its originality. Though Yuri's game is an AU as well, the protagonists, she explains, are played more in character.

The fact that *Nocturne Alley* moderators (or the individuals organizing and controlling the game) are strict with OOC usage, but, at the same time, the characters displayed are out of character with the characters of the source text seems contradictory. The problem posed is the definition and usage of OOC.

“OOO” is defined in Kielle's *Fanfiction Glossary* (see Appendix C) under “out of character” as:

For a fictional creature, acting in a manner not consistent with his/her/its established personality. This can be on purpose for a plot device or, more often, merely due to bad acting/writing. Often abbreviated to *OOO* or *ooc*.

“OOO” when used to describe a fanfic is, generally speaking, not a positive term in the least. When the term is adopted into and adapted for other fandom activities, its connotations may shift and be extended. In this RPG context we are talking about two very distinct concepts of OOC-ness. The first is connected to the characters of the source text, and the second is connected to interpersonal (i.e. the players') interaction. The former, may be good or bad, and conversely denote “good” or “bad” playing. In the case of *Nocturne Alley*, the characters are out of character, inasmuch as they often differ significantly from their depictions in the *Harry Potter* books. But because *Nocturne Alley*'s players are notably above average in the quality of their roleplaying, because they have created complex, multi-leveled characters, and play them

consistently according to their character traits, OOC is not “bad” in this game’s case (and the fact that the game is obviously AU only aids this notion; the events in the game differing from those in the books give excuse to different personality traits). In other words, one could say that the protagonists of *Nocturne Alley* are kept consistently “in character” *within* their created OOC-ness.

The second concept of OOC, which is used in Yuri’s game, is as much part of the game as the playing itself – it can be characterized as OOC *interactions*: The OOC community and the OOC chats are as much part of the fun as the in-character-interactions. Sometimes, when I am online on Instant Messenger, Yuri will send me little pieces of the OOC conversations she’s having in a chat room, and they are very funny. If I tried to explain how funny it is, I would probably say that these conversations are expressions of “hyper fangirl-mode,” exuberant and excited in the interactions, though the fans in questions might not identify as the stereotypical teenage “fangirl” at all: It is still a mode in which exchanges run along specific terms. OOC, in this sense, is different, as it does not refer to a deviation from the characters in the source text but rather functions as a mode: juxtaposed to being IC (implying the act of playing) OOC is used in Yuri’s game to connote being outside of the game. It has nothing to do with the playing of the game, except for its occasional use to discuss game politics and plotlines. It has, however, everything to do with connecting to others beyond the mere game, as will be

discussed in the following sections. I am using an excerpt from one of the OOC chat-rooms to exemplify several points:

**Lisa's Player:** they [another HP-RPG] don't shag though..  
ooc at least..  
**Draco's Player:** The fools. :O  
**Ron's Player:** Do they go OOC? :O  
**Lisa's Player:** Though the IC [i.e. in-character] shagging..  
**Lisa's Player:** Yes.  
**Ron's Player:** Do they have Quidditch?  
**Draco's Player:** Wow, IC shagging?  
**Ron's Player:** And knickers?  
**Draco's Player:** XD  
**Ron's Player:** And FIREBOLTS?  
**Lisa's Player:** IC Shagging.  
**Draco's Player:** Everyone has knickers, Ron!  
**Draco's Player:** Except you!  
**Draco's Player:** \*steals Ron's knickers\*  
**Lisa's Player:** Harry shagged Terry ic. o\_O  
**Ron's Player:** Yes, but not everyone *steals* knickers.  
**Ron's Player:** \*had no knickers to begin with\* XD  
[...]  
**Harry's Player:** who did i shag?  
**Harry's Player:** ic?  
**Ron's Player:** You shagged me.  
**Ron's Player:** And we had Craco.  
[...]  
**Draco's Player:** No no, Harry. There's an LJ game where I  
play Harry.  
**Draco's Player:** And everyone there is just going 'Whee,  
let's shag!'... except Harry.  
**Harry's Player:** \*dies\*  
**Draco's Player:** Harry's like... 'Fuck you lot. I'm going to  
fight Voldemort. >\_>'  
**Harry's Player:** lol  
**Ron's Player:** xD  
**Harry's Player:** ...  
**Harry's Player:** no comment.  
**Draco's Player:** And they're in this big orgy, like 'OKAY,  
HARRY!'  
**Draco's Player:** 'HAVE FUN!'  
**Draco's Player:** 'Pass me the lube.'  
**Draco's Player:** '...'Kay.'

In this chat excerpt, the emoticons abound: “XD” shows a laughing face, “:O” indicates open-mouthed disbelief/astonishment, and “o\_O”

exemplifies similar sentiments with two different-sized eyes. A lot of common turns of phrases particular to this chat are used: everyone shags everyone, if only metaphorically in the OOCs; Harry induced knickers-stealing in a taunting episode with Draco, which was picked up by every player in the game and is referred to in this excerpt; the mentioned “FIREBOLT” is not just a simple broom brand (from canon) here, but an in-joke reference to Ron’s penis. When Harry “\*dies\*”, he dies of laughter. However, these game-specific practices and terms are not necessarily created within the game itself (but one of the players may use it, and others may take it up), nor is its use restricted to the game only.<sup>10</sup> Quite contrarily, these terms and practices travel rapidly. When Yuri was still very new to this game, I remember being astonished as “\*dies\*” and “\*shags\*” would be inserted more and more frequently into our Instant Messenger conversations, and it took a bit of time to comprehend the meaning of “\*dies\*.” The first time I watched Yuri roleplaying, I finally understood where these terms had come from, yet was still unsettled as I noticed that I had begun to pick up this habit and was using it occasionally as well. This observation reinforced once again my own notion of the speed of cross-boundary transformations fandoms experience, in that several terms used in one fandom alone may become part of general fandom, as they are passed on.

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<sup>10</sup> Surrounding asterisks signify an action or emotion within, which is usually written in 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. This is a practice which originated in RPGs, but is now commonly used in any Instant Messenger conversation, not necessarily between fans only. Instead of asterisks, other signs or symbols may be used: Ka used to denote actions with a surrounding “::”; some others might use “<” at the beginning and “>” at the end.

These OOC chats in Yuri's game are often very flirtatious, and frequently have a slashy overtone – not surprisingly, as the game is yaoi-friendly. When I asked Yuri how she would elucidate the flirtatious overtone in the chats, she explained that almost all players were female, and that she was unsure of only a few players' gender. Technically, this game's players are not allowed to talk about their personal identity in the games and should not disclose other players' personal info to the group. The only reason that Yuri knows more about some players, and even has them as friends on her private LiveJournal, is that six players who were with the game from the start, exchanged LiveJournals at a time when the game seemed to be in a slow downwards spiral. "There was this unspoken fear that we would lose touch and the game would die." The reason that there is such a code against sharing personal information is simple: Some people want to get too personal too fast, and quickly move from "fun" to "scary." Yuri narrates how the game's initial founder, the person who played Sirius, had a game in which someone was stalking her – another player who just went too far. A certain level has to be established, especially in a newer game. The six who exchanged journals were, after all, part of the game from the start on, whereas others have joined only recently, after the game leaders switched and the game revived.

In any case, the flirty overtones of the OOC chats are rather interesting, as is the fact that the players will refer to each other as "he" or with their characters' names. Yuri knows, for example that Ron's player is a girl named

Lisa, but she still calls Lisa “he” and “Ron” as those are the terms that she is used to call her by. Yuri in the form of Harry as well as Ron’s and Draco’s players have known each other from the very beginnings of this *Harry Potter* RPG and know about events in each other’s daily life, but they are simply “Craco, Harry, and Ron” to each other (Craco being the nickname the RPG players use for Draco – Yuri mentions that it might have been an OOC typo, initially). When Yuri tells me about something Draco’s player writes about in her “private” LiveJournal, or rather her non-game-related journal, she may refer to her occasionally by her LiveJournal username, but will usually tell me that “Craco” or “Draco” posted this link or that article.

At the same time, the flirting in OOC is not so much a flirting of the characters (as the only flirting in this game for IC consists of clumsy teenager exchanges), but more so a flirting as players. In other words: though flirtatious OOC exchanges are exchanges between players rather than characters, they are also operating with the characters’ gender rather than with the players’.

Yuri explained it in the following manner:

It’s just like we’re wearing silly masks and we’re running around, but it’s still...It doesn’t mean anything, because it’s not like... it’s just like friendship; Do you know how little kids touch each other and the way monkeys do? It’s kind of like that. It’s friendship, but it’s safe cuz it’s online. Because it’d be weird and mary-sue-ish if [Yuri] was flirting with Ron. It’s more like Harry!mun is flirting with Ron!mun, but not like [Yuri] flirting with [Lisa]; it’s a sort of different level.

The flirts and innuendo are, after all, not meant as a come-on to another player

nor as an act for the game specifically, but more as a living out of fandom (and slash-fandom in particular when a slashy tone is used), and a way to connect, not necessary as character to character, and only on a very specific level as player to player, but more so as “Harry!mun” to “Ron!mun.” Though I have roleplayed occasionally in the past, I do not have experience with LiveJournal games, beyond reading them, and this is the first time I came across the term “mun.” Essentially, it is an abbreviation for “mundane,” so “Harry!mun” is “Harry-mundane” or the person behind the character Harry. It is a way for the players and HP fans to connect beyond a simple game, but with their “masks” on. As it should be: the “mary-sue,” or the fan who inserts herself into the story for self-gratuitous reasons, is considered one of the most shunned things in all fandoms, be they general or slash/yaoi. It would be out of line if Yuri was openly flirting with the character Ron in a way that would be obviously “mary-sueish.” And as a heterosexual woman, she has no interest in flirting with the female player of another character; it is, as she explained very aptly, “friendship.” The connections formed in this way are, as will crystallize slowly throughout the reading of this text, very complex and layered: In some aspects they are very frank and supportive – as deep as offline friendships – and in other aspects guarded and superficial. These connections and relationships will appear more often throughout the text.

In terms of fan-language, one will run across such terms as Slut!Harry or Angst!Harry frequently while searching through fanfiction or reading

discussions: similarly to the term Harry!mun, the exclamation mark denotes emphasis as well as connection. Frequently the characterizations of a protagonist will differ from that character's profile in the original text or canon, and, often, specific characterizations will be taken up by others and used consistently in fanfiction. The expression "fanon" is all-around, and stands for that which is no longer the canon of the original text, but has become the canon of the fandom. To keep with the *Harry Potter* fandom, the character of Draco Malfoy is characterized frequently in multiple layers and quite differently from his somewhat flat description in the canon of the *Harry Potter* books. If a story featuring an angsty Harry, who yields to bouts of depression, is successful enough, that characterization will be frequently picked up by others, and "Angst!Harry" as a shortcut to describing part of the story has been born.

Referring back to the *Fanfiction Glossary*, we find "canon" defined as "an adjective referring to a character, event, plotline, etc. which happened "for real" -- the actual professional source material" while "fanon" is explicated as "information or characterization that has never been confirmed in *canon* but is accepted as such by fans." Fanon is a frequent topic of discussion within fandom; some fans revel in it, others abhor it. The concept of fanfiction and fandom osmosis, as depicted with the "Angst!Harry" example and the traveling of fan-language, is not undebated either, and closely tied to fanon formation, as fanfiction is generally seen as communal writing. In the



discussion of both themes in the next section, the reader can see the emergence of a problem arising out of this communal process and the key issue of canon versus fanon: plagiarism by accident.

<i>Interactive: Eiko</i>
<p>Becoming a member of Yuri's RPG, many things have struck me about it. The first thing that surprised me was the disproportionate amount of time spent in OOC chat, rather than IC chat. As it is a role playing game, and the purpose therefore, is to roleplay I would have thought that the amount of roleplaying chat would be greater than that spent OOC. However, long conversations will continue in the OOC room, and sometimes people will repeatedly request IC chat to no avail. There is also a fair amount of OC chat [another abbreviation for "OOO"] over in the IC room, placed in brackets to denote it as such, and often it will take a while for the IC action to begin. While this can at times be frustrating, it also reinforces the idea that we are not participating simply to RP, but to form connections.</p> <p>Another interesting aspect of RPing which I was discussing with one of the players the other day is how the characters you play have a tendency to run away with you, and take on a life of their own. Both of us admitted that our characters were shaping themselves in ways which were not included in the characterizations we had originally intended. We concluded that, in RPing, as in real life, characters are shaped by other characters they meet/interact with.</p>

### 3. Writing Fanfics - or fandom from an author's point of view

Dinah is a fanfiction author in the *Harry Potter* fandom: She writes general fiction, but has also written slash fiction, and appreciates slash when she can see it in the canon. She reads both slash and gen fic. As an author who

invests into the fanfiction she writes, it is important to Dinah to adhere to the canon offered in the original text as much as possible. Fanfiction is often an outlet fans will use to explore alternate storylines or to investigate “what ifs,” and, in that sense, fanfiction in general and slash fanfic in particular expand and sometimes operate outside of canon: No fanfic will be an exact replica of the source text, but rather builds on it, and evolves in a process which is more often than not communal.

Slash fanfic as a whole is a matter of personal interpretation, and though Dinah has written some slash fanfic for a specific pairing, she does not see many other pairings; she explains this interpretation as subject to each individual’s viewing of the source text:

I think slash writers often find the subtext in the books, so a popular pairing is Remus/Sirius: People see that they were best friends when they were young, now are lost souls, and so “let’s re-unite them!” It all depends on events and how you interpret them. I don’t see Harry/Draco at all, I think it’s ludicrous; I don’t see Harry/Ron either, even though they’re best friends. But they’re just best friends, and that’s how I see it.

Even though Dinah is very much into the *Harry Potter* fandom, she hesitates to proclaim her status as a fervid fan: While she knows all the news and gossip, she says, she doesn’t consider herself as into it as many other people do. Though her involvement with the source material is equal to that of other fans, and she has managed to find a circle of connections and friends within the HP fandom, even being known by name for her fanfic, there are several issues that prevent Dinah from feeling fully involved in the wider community

of HP fandom, two significantly. Firstly, Dinah hasn't read "all the 'famous' HP fanfiction out there, and fandom mostly revolves around fanfiction." This explanation fascinated me, because, though many slash fans would agree with Dinah's notion of fanfiction as the heart of a fandom, it seemed to me that Dinah's view of fandom was "fic-centered." When I asked her to define fandom to a complete stranger to the concept, she elaborated that she would first explain what fanfiction is, and then deepen this by clarifying that fandom was a community revolving around fanfiction "or other things relating to the books."

In each slash fandom there are certain "traditional pairings" and their counterpart "non-traditional pairings." These traditional pairings are often either derived from the amount of subtext seen in the source text – in other words, the two male heroes of a cop-show or the two characters with the most charged interaction – or according to likelihood and/or aesthetics. An example for that is given in the *Lord of the Rings* (2001) where there are fanfics pairing the elf Legolas with the dwarf Gimli, but the overwhelmingly "traditional" slash pairing due to aesthetics is that of Legolas with the human Ranger Aragorn. In the *Harry Potter* slash fandom two of these traditional pairings are Harry and Ron, as well as Harry and his enemy Draco, and consequently the overwhelming part of fanfics are centered around these pairings. Most of the "famous HP fanfiction" Dinah refers to are Harry/Ron or Harry/Draco, but since Dinah does not read these pairings, she cannot participate in

discussions of and references to them.

As an author, it would seem natural for Dinah to feel as a part of fandom – authors are by far the most visible of fans, and often also among the most prestigious BNFs or Big Name Fans, who are generally well-known to other fans in the fandom. Authors in general, and BNFs in particular, have fans of their own, other persons who read every story the author writes, draw fanart depicting scenes of the author's stories etc. Dinah mentioned having a stalker on the Microsoft Messenger program (another Instant Message platform) who started up conversations repeatedly and who said that she was a character Dinah had created in a fic. Though given this attention and interaction, and though Dinah does see herself as a HP fan, she doesn't see herself necessarily as involved in the larger fandom of *Harry Potter*. This is an interesting and at the same time very personal distinction between fandom as a personal space around a source text and fandom as a complex, interactive community with set standards.

The second issue for Dinah is canon, and the standards to which she holds herself as a writer. The problem, she maintains, is that J.K. Rowling, the author of the *Harry Potter* series, is so involved in fandom, and participates in many chats with fans frequently, that while, as a fanfic writer, one is set within the limits the source text and/or the author creates, in this case, these limits are always changing. A story with a plot outside of canon must or should be labeled as an AU, an Alternate Universe fic. Often the characters

will be portrayed as OOC, and a story with these types of character may be very well successful – managing to either create a new fanon or fall into an existing one – or may be badly received by other fans. Dinah’s standards are set very high as she believes these types of stories should not happen if the writer wants to be taken seriously. The problem, for her, lies in the motivation of gaining a large readership; and whether or not this motivation exists is a moot point for Dinah:

The thing is, you can write for yourself and that’s fine, but if you post it anywhere, even if you say you write for yourself, you’re writing for an audience. Once you do that, you have to see that you’re not just writing for your own expectations but for others’ expectations. You can’t claim you’re writing for yourself.

Writing fanfic is anything but simple for her, as this issue creates an inner conflict within the author; though fanfiction is “writing for wish-fulfillment,” the personal wish-fulfillment may frequently be at odds with either canon or fanon. Though an author may dream up a story for herself that is immensely satisfying but OOC and off-canon, and this story may be perfectly legit, at the same time there is another group of authors who write for wish-fulfillment but within the structured realm. Inasmuch as Dinah was referring to canon as the structured realm, the same thing applies equally to fanon: a story which resists both structures, and at the same time the various wish-fulfillments of the communities who use these structures, can only be successful if the writing quality is superb. Once it has been accepted as a successful and good fanfic by other fans, it will often be recommended as an

outstanding fic on various websites. A story following the given structured realms, on the other hand, may be only moderate in writing quality, but successful in any case.

In a LiveJournal post titled *Canon, Fanon, And Why I love Both*, Darkkitten posits the notion of writing fanfiction as a game: She explains that the game, like cards, could be played in various forms, alone, with a collaborator or anything in between, and that the object “of the game of fanfiction” is to write stories borrowing from a pre-existing source. The rules of the game, she explains, are simply that the characters must be recognizable to a specific (if to a very little) degree, or in other words that at least some nuances and given characteristics outlined in canon have been utilized. However, *how* one borrows from the source text, and how one utilizes it, Darkkitten explains, is not part of the “rules” inasmuch as it is an indicator of how the game is played:

As to borrowing from canon accurately and well, or writing the stories themselves accurately and well... those distinctions, IMO, are part of *how* the game is played. Even the sorriest, most badly spelt Mary Sue on ff.net is still fanfiction, and its nine year old author is still playing the same basic game the rest of us are. There are, however, many many groups of players, and many subgames, and many different sets of rules.

Canon is essential for all of it, or else you are not writing fanfiction. But the degree of departure allowed from canon varies enormously, depending on who is writing and what they want to achieve. So you have authors following rulesets all the way from “Not one thing stated in the text may be altered under pain of death” to “Hey, I wanna write two hotties having sex, I didn’t read the HP books but I read some Harry and Draco stories on LJ, good

enough, let's go!"

Canon is, without a doubt, the source for all that is fanfiction. Yet, the degree to which it is used as frame of reference or as base on which the author can base her/his interpretation is widely variant. For the production of a fanfic, the author does not necessarily have to consume the source text, but may exercise a second-degree interpretation by using existing fanfics as a source text. A fan does not necessarily have to be a fan of the source text either, but can be a fan of fanon, as will be further demonstrated in sections 5 and 6.

It is this formation of fanon, and its interaction with canon which gives rise to many debates within fandom. Darkkitten defines fanon as "ideas related to a canon universe, such as details of character background or behavior, which are not part of the canon universe, but which multiple authors incorporate into their fanfiction." She explains that fanon comes most often "from widely read fics, but it doesn't have to." It may come from discussions, debates, or challenges issued by one fan for other fans to write a certain kind of fanfic. Very honestly, she manages to sidestep and level out possible debates of which has more validity, canon or fanon, by demonstrating the reasons for liking both: canon, as can be seen in the excerpt above, is essential to the game of fanfiction, while fanon is somewhat akin to a communal consensus, a group effort to fill possible holes within the canon of the source text, and, most importantly to Darkkitten, an indicator of widely preferred and widely read stories:

So fanon is a window into what alterations and additions to canon largish groups of fans tend to invent, select, and adopt as their own. One of my biggest interests re slash (as well as fanfic in general) is where people derive their reading pleasure, and fanon gives me a nice way to get at that issue.

One of fanfiction's largest problems is that of plagiarism. Apart from whole stories being lifted, with only the author's name changed, there is also a subtler nuance to this problem. Recently, some people have been accused of plagiarizing, but have been found to have done so by accident; their fics display some elements of another story, or their characters seem to have been taken from another author's character-portrayal. Dinah reads fanfic, but prefers to read them in fandoms she does not write for: Instead of reading HP fanfic, she will read slash and gen (general) fic for *Wolf's Rain* (a Japanese anime – 2003) or *Pirates of the Caribbean*. She is “afraid of absorbing that stuff, and putting it into [her] own and be accused of plagiarism.” She also is aware of the rampant fanon character interpretations, which she attempts to avoid, as she wants to use her own interpretation of the HP protagonists.

*Interactive: Mel*

Did you know that there is a specific group of people who look for/investigate plagiarizing? PPP (Plagiarism Police Patrol) started for anime-based fandoms, where there was a huge problem with copy/paste plagiarism, and has since grown into two separate groups, the PPP, and the PPP2 (non-anime fandoms). Plagiarism is actually a bigger problem in fanfiction than most people realize. Since nothing is *officially* copyrighted, there is not much a person can do to protect his or her writings. It is up to the readers and the community to spread the word and report problems like this to archive moderators. PPP and PPP2 do this on a larger scale – they



use several different ideas of plagiarism, and send "official" reports to the original author and the plagiarist, as well as to mailing lists within the appropriate fandoms and to archive owners. They keep files on people who have plagiarized repeatedly. I was a member of the PPP for a short while, but it takes a lot of time and effort -- these people were very thorough with investigating possible plagiarism. They were also very knowledgeable about the fandoms in which they read. Something that I found interesting about them was that everybody read everything that was brought forth, no matter what the fandom or pairing. Unless they had serious issues with it, they still actively participated.

You also had asked me earlier about fanon versus canon stuff? I didn't know what specifically you wanted me to talk about, but I can understand why Dinah wouldn't want to read a lot of fics in the genres/fandoms she writes in. I think that the two fandoms that have the largest canon versus fanon debates and issues are Harry Potter and Buffy. My personal favorite of the two are the Bonding issues. I can't help but wonder if it is something that moved from one group into the other, based on the fact that both fandoms deal with the whole mystical realm. Both should appeal to the same group of people, and have a lot of things in common.... namely magic. In Buffy fanfiction, the idea of some sort of bonding ceremony between vampires, or a vampire and a human, has become a huge genre of sorts all of its own. Usually, it involves sex and/or ritual involving blood (since it is about vampires) and biting. The ritual is rarely the same from story to story; in some, it is the bite itself that makes the "claim" and in others, it is the ritual that magically binds the vampire and his chosen. The idea of a Consort or Mate is not something that is part of canon, at least as far as I know, and yet it is in probably 3/4 of Buffy fanfiction, both het and slash. It is the same with HP fics -- there are a lot of "magical bonding" fics that are very similar to the fanon Consort bonds in Buffy. They take the form of anything from a marriage ceremony backed by a magical tie to a magic spell backed by sex. But, seeing as the characters in HP are all underage, there is no basis for this in the books. So where did it come from, if not from another fandom?

The only thing I can think of is that there is a bond between Voldemort and his Death Eaters, but that bond is a mystery to readers, other than the fact that it is a connection between bad guys. Just about everything known about the Dark Mark is fanon, along with the idea of magical bonds.

#### 4. Comma splices - or fanfiction peer review

When Mel wakes up, she usually goes through her morning routine: brushing her hair, teeth, and putting on clothing. Checking her email is on the list as well; going through it, she has a mental dialogue of, “Spam, spam, spam, eww, crap, crap, Xander and Andrew?! Why??? crap, oooh! Nice fic!” Mel is a slash and yaoi fan: she reads fiction, sometimes edits for writers, and replies with comments and critiques. She is signed up for approximately twenty-five mailing lists with themes of different pairings or fandoms, for example “nummytreats,” a mailing list to which fiction about Spike and Xander from the TV show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is posted. Throughout the day at least ten fics are sent to Mel’s school account alone, notwithstanding the replies, comments and simple ordinary messages by the mailing list members. Mel also has Hotmail and AOL accounts, which she has to check daily; if she did not, her Hotmail account would bounce, due to the large amount of new messages in her inbox. Mel usually starts reading before her classes – normally at least one fic - then goes to her courses, has lunch, hangs out with friends and goes to her extra-curricula. She is a senior in college, and

keeps very busy. Once back at home with free time (and sometimes without free time, for the sake of procrastination) she goes through her email periodically.

Mel's currently active fandoms in which she reads slash fanfics are the shows *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (or BtVS), *Angel* (1999), and *Smallville* (or SV; 2001), as well as *Harry Potter* (HP) and the Japanese *anime*-based *Gundam Wing* (USA 2000) (also seen as GW). Though she has written fic in the past, she now mainly betas for other people. A beta-reader is a fan who reads authors' fanfiction before they get published, and edits, critiques, and comments on it. There are four recent fics Mel beta-ed. The first was a Buffy-based Xander/Spike oneshot (or a fic which does not have several chapters), second was a short *Harry Potter* story with only a few chapters, third was a *Gundam Wing* fic, and lastly one in the *Lord of the Rings* RPS fandom (or LOTRIPS for short). RPS is an acronym for "Real People Slash" and is used for fandoms in which "Real People," as opposed to fictional characters, are slashed.<sup>11</sup> LOTRIPS, for example, is a variation on the *Lord of the Rings* slash fandoms. It bases itself off the movies, but primarily deals with the actors as they are in real life. If the LOTRIPS fic deals with the movies, it will

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<sup>11</sup> Fans often debate whether popslash, or slashing pop boybands, falls into the RPS category, or whether the characters presented in the media are purely fictional and are not reflective of the real life person. The fact that some fans are popslash fans, but do not feel comfortable with RPS in general and LOTRIPS in particular only serves to fuel this debate. Most of the people I have worked closely with do not feel that there is such a gap between popslash and RPS. Another interesting bit of information regarding RPS is that it sparked the use of a new word FPS or Fictional People Slash; since real people are used in RPS, and since RPS is a form of slash, one could differentiate between these two forms of slash by using the two acronyms. I have seen the term FPS mostly used when juxtaposed to RPS.

generally focus on the movie productions and how they affected the relationships and bonds between the actors. As the *Lord of the Rings* actors had extremely well-functioning interpersonal relationships throughout the duration of the filming, slashers invariably find much material and subtext for RPS – and whether this subtext is imagined or not, is, after all, a very subjective matter.

There are several ways in which the specific authors found out that Mel was willing to beta fanfic: when she joined several lists in the summer, and had nothing else to do for a couple of months, Mel emailed the list that she would beta. Sometimes people will send out a request for a beta-reader to the lists, sometimes word-of-mouth works as well, such as in Mel's case, where one girl she used to beta for told another girl, who then approached her about beta-ing. Mel is also on a Spander (Spike/Xander in BtVS) mailing list, where they have a list of people willing to beta.

Talking about this process brought up the infamous Camy, of whom I had heard several times already, when Mel vented on Instant Messenger to me. Apparently a young LOTRIPS writer Camy's descriptions were so off-base, Mel had to send her to Minotaur's Slash Guide to read up on the mechanics of sexual intercourse between two men. Minotaur's website was created precisely for the purpose of answering questions about male homosexual intercourse slash and yaoi writers may have.

I have NO IDEA how I ended up beta-ing with Camy [...] [She wrote a fic] with very wrong pairings, and she tried to

make it have a plot, but it didn't, and she tried to write sex, but she's 15 and a highschooler. At some point or other I had to tell her about anal sex. She used shampoo as lube and Vaseline together with a condom. [...]

Mel had remarked to me on several occasions on Camy's pairings, which she describes as unexplained and arbitrary. At our last session she described the last fanfic she had beta-ed for Camy up to the point of our conversation:

Unfinished, and it started out with Dom/Elijah [Dominic Monaghan and Elijah Wood], and Billy/Orly [Billy Boyd and Orlando Bloom] and then went all over the place in terms of pairings, because apparently Dom/Elijah made this agreement that they could be with other people as long as they didn't come. When I sent it back to her it was the end of August, before I came back to school, so I don't know where we are right now. She has lots of problems with verb agreements, and very, very short sentences consisting of five words...but she's a high school student.

Though she really only betas in her own fandoms, Mel will accept all kinds of submissions when it comes to beta-ing, without any restrictions on the kinds of pairings authors explore. However, when reading for herself, she will read only specific pairings or is subscribed to Mailing Lists - or MLs - for specific pairings and themes. She also does not demand a specific level of quality of the people she betas for her. Consequently, she is often astonished at and disbelieving of the things she encounters, some of which she sees as plainly "wrong!" Her enflamed outcry was nearly comical, and I asked her to elaborate:

SY: So what do you see as "wrong stuff"?

Mel: Comma splices, oh my god! And then there are the fun split infinitives...Harry/Voldemort [the unlikely surprise-pairing in a fic she beta-ed]....people's versions of

LOTRIPS are very frightening, just because they're like, "Oh! Pretty boys! We'll just stick any of them together the way we want them and we don't need to use any reasons whatsoever!" [...]

I thought it amusing that Mel was so outspoken against the Harry/Voldemort pairing and the unjustified pairings in the LOTRIPS, which she both saw as extremely OOC. In my interactions with her, I had found previously that she did not mind OOC fics, as she would read them, but generally not send them to me when I asked her for fic recommendations. She knows that I prefer finished works with in-character interactions and a decent plot. We did discuss the amount of OOC in fanfic and how the degree to which protagonists were in-character or out-of-character was rather subjective. At the same time, the characters used are pre-written with specific personalities and characteristics, and therefore there is a line, however fluid, between a character interpretation and a complete divergence from the original characters of the source text. When I asked her about the OOC fiction she does read, Mel explained that she would read them because the stories were generally funny and reasonable. She elaborated with:

There are two different ways you can think of it: you can think of it as OOC, or you can think of it as an original character, and to save time you paste the name and face of a pre-existing character on him.

Sometimes it is rather obvious when an original character wears the mask of a pre-written character. Interestingly, however, most of the time she is easily able to overlook the divergence. Mel explained she had discovered that people

just acknowledge that the character written about is supposed to be, for example, Elijah Wood, but do not go beyond that point of acknowledgement. In other words, because the character is labeled with an easily identifiable name and face, OOC-ness may very often be overlooked; the author has some leeway in the degree of her/his characterization efforts, as the character already exists. Mel sees slash as OOC (as it is outside of canon), and RPS equally so – to her, “it is a spectrum.”

She laughed as she elaborated that it really was about the degree to which one decides to stoop. The amount of OOC fics she reads recalls one of the reasons why she got into slash in the first instance: needing more reading material. “If it’s written, I’ll read it – or at least I’ll try to read it,” but if it is too much for her, she will never go back. We differ in that aspect, as I only read specific fics, and there are some genres, pairings, and a certain degree of quality writing I expect and demand from my reading. I refuse to read anything that seems to be badly written, or too Alternate Universe, whereas Mel will at least read it once, before she decides whether she can go back for more. Equally, she is more tolerant of OOC and a wide range of writing skill than I am.

For every one to two pieces she will beta, Mel will read at least five to six pieces of fanfic, depending on her schedule. Though it would seem that that is not very much beta-ing, the truth is that as a process it takes a certain amount of time. The authors send a chapter, and Mel will read it through once,

and mark the things that really stand out. Going through a second time, she will read about seven to ten pages at a time and edit them in depth. It takes her about an hour or two to beta ten pages. It generally takes Mel one or two weeks to edit and return a chapter/fic to the author. The process of beta-ing is anything but regular: Very few authors have a regular writing schedule, and a work in progress may take months in between installments (for example Camy's LOTRIPS fic, which, as she mentioned, has not continued since the end of August). Similarly, a beta could get 3 chapters one week, nothing for several months and then another 5 chapters at once.

#### 5. Not typing out loud? – or the nature of lurkers

Due to the way online fandoms are organized, researchers are generally confronted with a very big issue; people who attempt to analyze fans and their habits very much have to rely on either open public forums or have to become a member of mailing lists. Either way, there is a very large portion of people fan-scholars and scholar-fans can never see online; they are “lurkers,” fans who “lurk” online without reacting in an active electronically tangible way to ongoing discussions or fanfics. Lurkers' activities may possibly be catalogued if they choose to reply to online surveys, but on a deeper ethnographic level, they are, more often than not, overlooked. For example, in the Jenkins theories of fandom as production, or in the various fan-scholar and scholar-fan theories incited and influenced by Jenkins, the question is really whether productivity is such an inherent part to being a fan.



Though many would answer that “most” fans they know read and write to some degrees, experience and observation has convinced me that there is a very substantive proportion of fans who only “lurk.” Often I have seen one-time posts on Bulletin Boards or on LiveJournals from people who have obviously been frequenting the localities and are acquainted with the interactions of that locality, but start their post with sentences such as “I’m usually a lurker, but...” For some reason or other they will choose to come forth and speak out about something, but usually do not feel the need to be active. When fans theorize in the vein of Jenkins about the majority of fandom reading as well as writing, what might be true for what they can see does not necessarily cover that invisible portion of lurkers.

Eiko’s main fandoms, which she is actively engaged in, are *Harry Potter* and Popslash (specifically *Nsync* slash). When I write “actively engaged,” I do not necessarily mean that Eiko openly discusses or writes, but rather that these fandoms are currently active, as opposed to “standby” mode. Eiko describes herself as “very much a lurker.” In *Harry Potter* fandom, she reads slash fiction, but has not written direct reviews to the authors except once at the very beginning of her interest in HP slash. She does, however, recommend good fanfics on her LiveJournal (i.e. with her friends as the intended audience for these recommendations). She also draws fanart for *Harry Potter*, which she does not post. When I asked her why she didn’t, she replied that partially it was because she had no scanner, and partially, she

supposed that if she had something that was good enough to post, she might post it. She also does not participate in meta-text theorizing; though she likes to read other fans' detailed theories on everything, and their involved debates over character motivation, these theories and debates are evolved to such a degree that she does not feel free to "jump into the middle." She feels she is not involved enough in order to have methodically thought out ideas, partially because she is not a writer. Besides reading popslash, she does write fanfiction, but these texts are written for friends, and so they are emailed, not posted to her LiveJournal. (However, Eiko did post a short Gackt/Hyde fic, slashing two famous Japanese pop-stars, only a short while ago to her LiveJournal; her friends who are fans of the two singers as well, myself included, are also on her LiveJournal friends list).

Though Eiko was a *Harry Potter* fan before she started to actively search for *Harry Potter* slash, her involvement with the popslash fandom evolved in the opposite manner: With pop-slash she read a story and liked it; it was only after she had read more stories that she began to listen to the music. Originally, she was "into them in the fiction but not as a group." Similarly, she says, she likes fanon-Justin (i.e. the Justin Timberlake characterized in the fandom, as opposed to the actual real-life person of Justin Timberlake), and did not listen to Justin Timberlake's music before she came to popslash. Eiko summarizes this succinctly by stating that "all of [her] liking for him comes from liking fanon-Justin."

For both of these fandoms Eiko frequents LiveJournals as well as web archives (both big and small). In terms of official sites, she will visit the Leaky Cauldron for *Harry Potter*.<sup>12</sup> She does not subscribe to Mailing Lists nor does she “watch” communities (a term used on LJ for actively subscribing to community journals and putting them on one’s friends list), but she will visit some LiveJournal sites regardless. Often she does not visit official communities for HP, but will rather go to Maya’s friend list (Maya is a prolific writer in the Potterverse, the affectionate name given the *Harry Potter* slash universe). This is very much a community in itself, she explained to me, as all of the HP people are drawn together there. A friends list becomes a community in that way, even though it is not nominally a community account (i.e. one journal to which multiple members have posting rights).

Eiko is actively involved in a couple of fandoms of Japanese pop divas. These fandoms mainly interact through Bulletin Boards, and Eiko participates in the discussions about these pop stars. Topics include what these stars have been doing recently, and how fans would like to see them evolve in terms of music and style. For the all-female group *MAX*, there used to be a fem-slash following, i.e. a group of fans who would slash the women of the band in various pairings, but this fandom went underground once the band members got computers and went online. Some of the fem-slash fans were concerned that *MAX* members would find these fanfics and become upset. In terms of temporality, the peak of this fandom was at a time with less

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<sup>12</sup> The url is <http://the-leaky-cauldron.org/> Last accessed 05/04/04

automated archives and before LiveJournal became popular, so that it really just consisted of one personal webpage of a girl who would archive the fanfics sent to her. As the owner of the site did not want her favorite music stars to be confronted with these kinds of narratives about their personal lives, she decided to shut down the archive. Once she decided to close down the webpage, the *MAX* fem-slashers dispersed. Since then *MAX* has grown a bit less popular in Japan, and the English-speaking fans are rarely newbies, or new fans.

Several factors explain why no new *MAX* fem-slash archives have emerged: temporally speaking, as already mentioned, the peak of the *MAX* fem-slash fandom happened at a time in the history of Internet development, when “surfing” was not quite as easy and codes were only at the beginning of their development process (which is still ongoing). Big web archives serving a whole fandom, with databases searchable for specific pairings, genres and ratings, have only become widely circulated once the codes were simplified to a specific degree and available to use online. Earlier fandoms often existed only on personal websites. Since the *MAX* fem-slash fandom was collected in one locality, the fandom went down once that one webpage was closed. Quite obviously, space and time are linked in distinct and complex ways on the web, but now that there are the spaces, means and ways to create a *MAX* archive, we have to consider people. Though fanfiction is available for every fandom and in overwhelmingly many spaces, the truth is that most fans do not write,

and even fewer fans will publish what they have written. The enormous success of the *Harry Potter* series ensures a huge HP fandom with pairing-specific, genre-specific, and character-specific subsets of fandom. This is the case, even if we conservatively estimate that only 20% of all fans (who in return are only a specific percentage of all audiences) will write. The number of people involved in the *Harry Potter* English-speaking trans-national online fandom (let alone in cyberspaces utilizing languages other than English) would still be large enough to account for the plethora of fanfiction available on the net. *MAX*'s fandom is by far smaller, given its decrease in popularity in Japan, and the Japanese-only songs which somewhat limit an English-speaking target audience. Thus, when the active fans are singled out, they are of a much smaller number.

It is interesting, in any case, that Eiko is a lurker in some fandoms but active in others. As one of the reasons why she only lurks in her slash fandoms (both HP and popslash) at the moment, she explained that it was a question of what she feels she can contribute to the fandoms: for the *MAX* and other Japanese pop fandoms, she could actively bring something to the community as she had been several times in Japan and had access to information about the groups before that information became accessible on the English speaking net; she also held the role of a translator. The *Harry Potter* fandom is so established and big that she feels as if there is nothing new or insightful that she could bring to different fan groups that has not been said

before. In terms of writing she echoes Dinah's concerns about characterizations and existing fanons:

The reason I don't write *Harry Potter* or Popslash, aside from friends if they ask me to, is because both of them are fandoms that I feel like my characterizations would be influenced by what's there. I feel like my characters would only be knock-offs of fandom characterizations already out there. As far as popslash goes, I eventually caved in and started liking the music, but originally I was only into the fics...so I don't know enough about the people to write anything that's in character.

Barb is an online lurker as well, and her main fandoms are *Harry Potter*, and the TV shows *The Sentinel* (1996), *Stargate*(1997), *Angel* (1999), and *Buffy*. She started off in *Sentinel* in 1999, and was reading in this fandom exclusively for almost six months. Shortly before she left for a bicycle trip to Europe around that time, she discovered *The Highlander* (1992) and branched out into that TV-show's fandom. In doing so she was following a set of fanfic authors who had started off with *Sentinel* fanfiction, but then started to expand their fandoms, "because if you have a good author who writes really good fiction in one fandom, you will read her new stories even if they are in other fandoms." Barb finds the stories she reads mainly on several LiveJournals which she, in her words, "stalks" (i.e. she has not put them on her friends' list), as well as from specific author's websites. She doesn't frequent main fan archives because the overwhelming percentage of the fiction archived there is bad in her eyes. She also uses so-called rec pages, in other words human filtration or fic recommendation pages. Frequently she will therefore read the

authors she likes, and then utilize *their* rec pages. She uses official websites if she is still trying to understand basic points of the source text canon, but does get bored by it soon. “I figure I can pick up the canon as I go along, and also the fanon the same way.”

I was discussing Eiko’s reasons for lurking, or rather for not de-lurking, with Barb the other day, and she found that she sometimes had that feeling of uselessness at large as well. It did not seem to be her main incentive for being a lurker, and so I asked her why she never came out to be active online, in the same way that she is active with me and all of her friends offline. She explained that she wasn’t quite sure, which may be very well part of the problem, and that she had always been a lurker. She took some time to reflect, and then hazarded that there were probably a couple of reasons for why she was a lurker. One reason she mentioned was simple shyness, which didn’t significantly diminish for her online, and so to email some author without a reason is out of the question for her. The second reason was an external factor, which indirectly contributed as well to involve Barb in online fandom: at a certain point during high school Barb had Lyme Disease, which made it very difficult for her to talk or interact with others. She explained that there were some people in high school that she could have interacted with if she had not had Lyme Disease, and having it, in a way, changed her fannish evolution in that a lot of what she was doing was lurking online rather than interacting with offline fans. Talking about this time, she mentioned her

mother, who was very concerned about her sitting in front of the computer and acting like a “stereotypical geek,” as well as not interacting with others. This wasn’t very much possible, Barb maintained, as with the disease it was very difficult to say anything beyond “I like this.”

In a way I could also discern some effects this period had on Barb’s own brand of fandom, or the way she defines fandom which causes her to call herself a “fandom snob.”

The problem is that when I tend to talk about fandom, I tend to talk about people who read and write fanfics, so I don’t tend to think about cons so much, even though I know they’re a fairly large part of fandom. So the mindset is sort of appropriation of the text...and this goes back to Henry Jenkins [...]

Barb’s fandom is very fic-centered, and in a very specific way based online, in a medium that she grew up with and could find entertainment in. Fanfiction is also published in hardcopy fanzines, but Barb sees these, along with cons (or conventions) as part of a more traditional fandom.

The third reason she brought up for being a lurker was that when she first started out in general online fandoms she was fifteen, at a period in time when the Internet decency act was passed; mailing lists started being a lot more careful about the ages of their members, and they were very strict about all members being 18 years or older.<sup>13</sup>

In a way it was very interesting that Barb painted such a dichotomy between online lurking versus offline friendships; while I am a lurker myself,

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<sup>13</sup> The Communications Decency Act was passed in 1996, but was revoked by the Supreme Court a year later, in 1997, on the grounds of being unconstitutional.



who does not participate with other online friends unless I know them from real life, I knew that almost everyone de-lurked at some point, even if they only meet a few people online, or if only to post a small message or opinion. I had noticed within myself that over this past year I have grown more accustomed and open to the notion of approaching people online. Since I have come into fandom around 4-5 years after Barb did, I was curious as to whether she had established any connections with other fans online. She mentioned having emailed people a couple of times, but not ever having gotten to know them. Partially, the people she would like to know better are BNFs (Big Name Fans), who might be older, or might have been in fandom for a considerably longer time. To take up contact with such people would be intimidating. As I wondered whether she felt that she was opening up online a little bit more since she started having a LiveJournal, she looked very reflective, and stated that she might have a little bit, but did not know. She mentioned getting to know her good friend Mary in real life and how that had impacted on her online: “Like when I met Mary [in real life], I friended her [on LiveJournal], and suddenly I ended up with eight people on my friends list instead of three.” Fan-mode is certainly a very important mode in Barb’s life, and, as will be more fully detailed below, is in certain ways her “default” mode as well as a way to find close offline friends. As we have already seen, it is very possible for a person to lurk in one fandom, but be active in another; further on we will

see that online interaction does not necessarily reflect on offline relationships. It is very easy to be a lurker online, and an opinionated fan-friend offline.

While talking to Barb, we were at one point discussing her reasons for lurking, and I realized that not only will many people have their own reasons for lurking, but most people, in fact, do not necessarily have, nor *need*, a reason. The way one lives out one's fandom is dictated by rules and language, cultural aspects in short, which people in this fandom share; quite similarly to real life, it is still up to each individual to live out fandom in their own way. Maybe it would be favorable to bring up a comparison to American academia in this case, not as a way to contrast, but as an aid to better understand this point: Many high-profile universities demand that the professor they hire have published at least a certain number of books and/or articles. Academics who publish constantly and attend conferences in their fields are high-profile and even if such a high-profile academic published constantly critiqued papers, she/he would still be known under their name. But how does this count in the large number of academics not tenured at high-profile universities nor overly active in their semi-official peer interactions? Admittedly, there is a large difference here, driving home the point that this comparison is only a mental aid: while academia is a profession, if somewhat prestigious and laden with idealistic notions, it is, in a way, a job. Fandom is acted out mostly for wish-fulfillment; it is a process, in which, naturally, others may be involved, and one can achieve prestige as a BNF. In a way, a fan will not lose her/his mode

of identity as *fan*, much as an academic would probably never quite lose that mode of identity. The difference is exactly that: they are different modes of identities, which may at times become entangled, but ultimately a fan never *has* to socialize or achieve. It is not a profession.

## 6. Reading habits

Online fandom is in a very specific way fic-centered, inasmuch as most online fans do read fic, and in that a fandom's language is acquired through a process which may absorb certain phrases and terms from well-received and famous fics, as well as from the fellow-fans one interacts with. The speed with which this language evolves and mutates is dizzying, but certainly not impossible to follow. There is, additionally, some leeway a fan has in terms of language, as there exist many possible ways to express something. For example, if one wishes to express that a specific fic is a romance story in which at least one underage party is involved, there are several terms one can choose from; for example: chanslash and shotakon (both are derived from Japanese terms, though they are also used in Western slashfic). In how these terms indicate an idea, rather than have a common definition used and shared by all fans, we can see the differences in terminologies, and the variances of meaning applied to a certain term that indicate a common understanding as well as an individual interpretation. Another example illustrating this is a discussion I recently observed on a fan's

LiveJournal. She posited the question of the definitions of non-con (or non-consensual) versus rape, both commonly used in fics' headers and warning categories to indicate that the story below would contain elements or narratives of non-consensual intercourse. The ensuing discussion demonstrated the lack of a common exact definition: Some fans commented that "non-con" indicated situations between the two protagonists, in which one of the protagonists is unsure of his wishes, and is persuaded to have sexual intercourse, as opposed to being "raped." Other fans maintained that they used "non-con" in the same way they use "rape." Still others discussed "non-con" in light of the problematic of a psychological wish to read rape-fic and the cultural connotations the term "rape" carries. According to Kielle's Fanfiction Glossary, in regards to non-con, "the jury is still out on the shades of meaning here -- some say non-con is just another word for rape, while others see the two terms as subtly different."

Shocked? Don't be. Everything is not light and happiness in fandom. But likewise the Internet is not a den for the depraved. The truth is that there exist many stories in even more genres, and one will come upon a wide spectrum of happy or scarring fics while working one's way through a library that is spatially, and in terms of portability, so very different from what we are used to in real life offline. Rapefic and non-con fics can come to mean a spectrum of things, and the focus of the story cannot be derived from the categories of warnings. Whether a non-con fic is focused on the act of sexual

aggression (and, depending on the degree of torture, may be additionally labeled as “dark”) or whether the story starts with the beginning of the aftermath of a sexual aggression (in which case, depending on the plot line and fandom, it may be also categorized as “Hurt/Comfort”), is up to the author of course. Some people who read non-con read it because they have rape-fantasies, others read it because they like angst, and even others just read it as they would read any number of different genres, expecting a struggle for psychological balance and a happy ending. As Red mentioned to me the other day, “I have read fics who just have rape in them because they need the angst; they’re very fluffy, and they still have rape in them, just because people couldn’t figure out how else to put angst in.” What is most interesting, to me at least, is not the existence of rape, darkness and pain in fanfics; there are as many funny and fluffy fics. It is the shared conventions of labeling fics, of having categories at the header including rating (G-NC17 mostly) and warnings (angst, fluff, dark, death etc.), and the notion of good etiquette to put up these warnings in one’s stories, as well as the formation of a common code of language and terminology that enables the sharing of “keywords” which convey larger ideas. In a very real sense, most of the terms various fandoms have coined have this meaning, and if the reader refers to Kielly’s *Fanfiction Glossary* in the Appendix, she/he can see many of the most common ones, categorized according to fandom, but often used cross-fandom (as fans are rarely monogamous online).

The participation in these shared fics (the act of recommending fics to friends, discussing them with friends, or using fic-specific references) is part of how a certain community identity as well as an identity of self, or a specific fan-identity, is built and acquired. As these modes of identity are fed back into a larger public space, and external factors such as real-life occurrences (e.g. the recent high-profile debates over gay marriage and over the implied homophobia of certain slashers on LiveJournal), changes in the original source text and canon (e.g. when J.K. Rowling holds online chats with her fans), and additional new fics come into play, the fandom as a community is in a constant process of change which in turn feeds back into the various modes of identity.

This makes for an interesting separation between a personal sense of being a fan versus being part of a fandom. When Dinah restricts her self-definition by explaining she is “not really such a fan,” she does not mean that she is not a *Harry Potter* fan, nor that she does not follow the external information or rumors about *Harry Potter* productions, movies, and book developments. She means that she does not read a large part of the slash fanfiction put forth in the *Harry Potter* fandom, which are “famous fics.” As she cannot see a Harry/Draco pairing, she misses out on one of the most common pairings and a large part of the common readings in the HP fandom. She cannot be as much part of the larger *Harry Potter* communities, but has

found friends through her activities as an author at an archive, which organizes chats.

On the other hand, being a lurker does not equal a sense of oneself as outsider. Though Eiko lurks in the HP fandom, because she feels that there is not much she can contribute that would be original or worthwhile other fans' time, she feels no less a HP fan for that. By contrast, in popslash, she was not a fan of the source medium or the music groups in question, but rather became interested in the music after she read fanfiction that she liked. In that sense, she was part of the popslash online fandom, before she ever became part of the actual pop music fandom.

Keeping both of these views in mind, I asked Barb in an interview on her personal position:

SY: So what do you think about this “being a personal slash-fan” versus the community?

Barb: [...]You've got people who take the text, and read the text and read what Rowling says, and who don't read the fic, who don't read the meta [meta-text analysis & discussions in fandom] ....but they're still fans. And I think they're a different kind of fan: Unless they're talking about the meta on their own with other people in real life, it ends up being a shallower interpretation.

SY: So about Dinah and Eiko's views on this?

Barb: Their views make sense...I'm a very dedicated lurker. I'll occasionally delurk if someone asks a question no one has answered yet. [...] I don't participate in *Harry Potter*: I'll watch it, I observe it, but I won't post, I won't crit [critique]; I'll read what other people write and every once in a while I might give some feedback.

SY: Do you feel as part of it? As part of the community?

Barb: I don't think I'm part of the *Harry Potter* fandom community, and I'm comfortable with that.

Barb sees herself as a fan, and fan-mode is undeniably a very large part of who she is and how she lives her life online as well as offline. But being part of a fandom community means being active and participating in active interaction with other fans online or offline– in this sense the concept of fandom takes on an additional connotation of a very specific locality (i.e. online in our case) and community does no longer imply any way of productive interaction with the source-text and the shared fan-texts, but takes on another dimension of active or reactive online actions by the members of that community.

Unfortunately, the terms used are anything but solidly defined; fandom is multi-layered in its engagement with source-texts and fan-texts, and similarly implies multiple communities, or sub-fandoms. Being a fan does not necessarily imply being a fan of the source-text, as one can be a fan of the fan-texts, or, of course, vice versa. Equally, it does not necessarily mean active (as in online traceable) involvement with a community. It is not really an inadequacy of theoretical methodology which denies us a clear and simple definition of these terms, rather, it is a testimony to the constant process of development and growth of this small part of the online and offline world. Instead of being set back by what we deem contradictions in definitions and explanations given to us by fans, we should see these discrepancies as details and particulars pointing out the various spatial, temporal and modular dimensions of a larger whole, which are always in formation and re-



formation. In the same sense that these multiple meanings may deny us the power to categorize, at the same time they will emphasize our potential to map out.

What does fanfic and reading have to do with this? Yuri reads fanfiction all the time, though sometimes she will read it less often if she has other input possibilities: “For example, I get my hands on the entirety of *GetBackers* (a Japanese *anime* – 2002); I’ll watch that instead of reading fanfic, and after I watch it, I’ll move into fanfic.” Yuri does, ultimately, prefer canon to fanon, but there are two fandoms in which both, official and fan-texts, are equally satisfying to her: *Saiyuki* (2002) and *Harry Potter*. As she explained to me how she goes about reading fanfic, she opened an Internet Explorer window and went to her book-marked favorites. She showed me her “fanfiction” favorites folder, and explained that she went to the top ten displayed URLs every day, and only resorted to the others in case she was very much bored. She also visits very large multi-fandom archives such as fanfiction.net and mediaminer, as well as goes to regular archives. In the multi-fandom archives, she searches for *Saiyuki* first, and once she has depleted those fics, she moves on to *Fruits Basket*, followed by *Rurouni Kenshin* (both popular anime series; *Rurouni Kenshin* was aired in the USA 2003). At the point of this conversation, she had just started looking into *GetBackers* fanfiction, after she had begun to screen that *anime* at the college’s weekly *anime* nights.

Yuri also has a very particular taste in fanfiction and the fandoms that she wishes to find fanfiction in. Consequently, she does not really follow other fans' fic recommendations, as she finds that many people will like certain fics, which she doesn't enjoy reading.

I only read PWP [plot? What plot? – sex-centered fanfiction] when I'm at my wits' end and there's nothing else to read. Even then I'm very, very picky. I hate fics that have sex in them, I hate fics that say "I love you" and I hate an abundance of kissing ...especially in historical [settings] such as in historical anime ...pre-1940s essentially. So I don't like smut fics. I don't really like yaoi, I like shounen ai.

Yuri's fandoms are mainly Japanese media based: when she speaks of hating "I love you" fics and "kissing" in fics she is referring to the slew of *anime* fics who use the Japanese phrase *ai shiteru*, a very emotional and deep way to say "I love you" which a Japanese person would not use in any resemblance of frequency, quite contrarily to the way fanfic authors display in their fiction. Equally, before the 1940s kissing was not a common cultural custom in Japan, and thus in a way is often an anachronistic plot movement. Maybe this would be more tolerable to Yuri if her fandoms, in the sense of the source texts, were placed in the contemporary, but as it is, *Saiyuki* is placed in a semi-fantastical but roughly medieval Chinese setting while *Rurouni Kenshin* deals with the Meiji restoration.

When she specifies that she doesn't like to read yaoi, but prefers shounen ai, Yuri is reiterating once again that she does not enjoy reading sex-centered fics as much as other genres: she prefers "boys' love" to "no peak, no

meaning, no climax.” What is interesting to me is that Yuri enjoys and strongly prefers specific genres which she will seek out in every fandom, no matter how different the source text. Leaning towards “angst” and “gore,” these fics are the first she will search out in any fandom. Angst according to the Fanfiction Glossary is a general fandom term, which

Refers to the emotional wounds suffered and/or borne by a character, especially if they spend pages moaning about their miserable life in great detail. Can add intensity to a story or turn it into one big long pity-party. Warning: angst can be addictive!

In my experience, often certain genres will flourish in some fandoms, while not being as popular in others. Certainly, the genres will read “differently”: an emotionally charged fic, in which the main character is tortured, will read differently at large in the *Harry Potter* fandom, where there is a certain dark if fantastical element, than it will in a cop show, with its human criminals.

Yes they read differently, but I always go for the same thing, which is angst and gore. So on fanfiction.net and mediaminer, when I get into a new thing, I first search for “tragedy” and then “angst” and then very last, I’ll select “romance” or “hentai” [sexually explicit fics].

Some of Yuri’s fandoms have prevalently fem-slash pairings, such as *Revolutionary Girl Utena* (1997) or *Final Fantasy X-2* (a Playstation II game - 1998). Though she “roots” for the fem-slash pairings either hinted at or openly displayed in the canonical source text, she does not want to read up on them.

She explains this in the following:

One of the problems with slash is: a good portion of the fandom is sexual, so that leaves you with a relatively small

portion of non-sex fics. So on ff.net, *Saiyuki* has 1750 fics, probably about 900 or more of those fics are gonna have sexual contents - and as I told you I don't want to read about sex that much. So 25% of the rest will be shit (marysues or self-insertions), so then you have 400 left, and amongst those: bad grammar, bad plot. So in the end you don't have that many good fics left to read, and that's in a fandom where I like the pairing. So in a fandom where there's fem-slash, and that doesn't appeal as much to me, it's not worth it to trudge through all this stuff.

Yuri's preference for yaoi over het (heterosexual) and fem-slash is a very straightforward one: as a heterosexual woman, her enjoyment is derived from a story plotting out and focusing on male reactions; fem-slash is obviously female-centric, and het, in general, focuses more on female reactions. "When I have sex, I focus on the guy, and so, whenever I read something, I want to focus on the male."

Yuri's preference for yaoi extends to the *Harry Potter* fandom, which unites many slashers who came to it from both Western and Japanese fandoms. She explained to me that the fandoms she preferred were often ones in which a dominant character became submissive. This is interesting to me, because that is generally not what I focus on, more on which can be found below, yet some of Yuri's and my fandoms intersect. It is in a way a part of the source text on which Yuri focuses, much like I will focus on different but very specific aspects and details. It is that subtle and balanced power play of dominance and submission, or the Japanese *seme* (top) and *uke* (bottom) respectively, which is not simply sexual but goes beyond that, to which Yuri is pulled. In her own words,

It's not something that's immediately describable about "nihon no koto teki" ...that's the best way to describe it – I would say "japanization" but that sounds stupid and western and I hate that term. Subtle violence [...] There is something bitter-sweet about it.

If I attempted to translate "nihon no koto teki," in the way Yuri uses it, to a stranger, I would roughly call it "Japanese-style concepts." The concept of a very delicate and balanced interplay between dominance and submission, power and vulnerability, beyond the sexual, is what Yuri likes to read most. This can be found, in fact, more frequently in yaoi than in slash, though there are blurrings and parallels between similar concepts in both. In my own experience of slash, these power structures can be delicately described and balanced in a manner that is "Japanese-style," but these fics are the exception. Western themes in traditional slash stories that deal with similar concepts are usually centered around concepts of BDSM and Domestic Discipline, or concepts of someone who is a top versus someone who is a bottom, all of which are by and large more focused on the sexual. *Harry Potter* is not the only fandom which unites both yaoi and slash writers, but it is, at this point, certainly the largest. HP slash does not necessarily have to be, but frequently is, slightly different from traditional Western slash. To Yuri, this "delicate something" she is looking for is quite intangible, an emotional and visceral reaction – "you feel it more than you can actually think about it." It comes as no wonder that, as a fan of Japan, she would use the Japanese language to convey these images, and that I could equally understand her implied

meanings.

Barb mentions that she will read anything as long as it's well-written, even het fic, though it has to be a pairing that doesn't squick (fan-speak for "disturbingly nauseate") her. However, to her, most of the canon pairings will do exactly that. When I asked her if she could specify why this was the case, she had a few problems but then explicated with: "It's one of the things where you find out 'oh look, you don't have to do canon pairings! Byebye!' I haven't read canon pairings in forever." This is very reflective to what Barb sees as her view of fandom, and for which she found an academic reflection in Jenkins' theories, namely the appropriation of the source text. The fan mindset she sees at the heart of fandom is inquisitive, curious, possessive of the source text, and creative in its interpretation and/or mutation of it. It is through this mindset that she connects most easily to other people, as will be discussed below. And in a way it is also deeply ironic that that mindset extends to an appropriation of academic theory *discussing* that mindset.

In terms of reading habit, therefore, Barb is very open in terms of pairings and interpretation, though she does have certain standards that she expects fanfics which she reads to have. She tries to read fanfics that are IC (note again that IC is not the same as canonical), and that at least attempt good grammar. Also, she does not enjoy stories which diverge from canon without giving a reason. She will avoid angsty fics if she can help it, but, if they are recommended by a friend or an author she enjoys, she will read them

nonetheless. However generally, she attempts to “avoid the heavy, scary torture.” Equally, she will not search out death fics, or fics in which a major character dies, but will nonetheless read them, if she is reading the works of a specific author and a death fic happens to be one of them. As it should be very clear from these descriptions, as well as the previous sections in which Barb was mentioned, she will read fics which are recommended in one way or another, but will not search them out on large multi-fandom or fandom-specific archives. Barb has a strong tendency to find authors that she likes, work her way through their fiction, and then search out the works that *these* authors like; if they please, she will have found another author to read, if they do not, she will try again. Rec pages are very useful in this sense, as they provide more than a brief summary, and very often include descriptions of *why* this specific fic appeals to the individual reccing (or recommending) it.

Barb explains that in a way the most easily accessible slash fics are R- or NC-17 rated stories, as “sex tends to be fairly ubiquitous” in the fandom. This certainly agrees with my experience and reading within multiple fandoms: though I am not necessarily a fan of all the fandoms I have read, I have still sampled many stories of fandoms that are not mine in the last four years, some of them out of curiosity (Euro Alternative music slash) and others due to stunned disbelief (popslash, classic novel slash, bible-slash...). As far as Barb’s reading habits extend to many fandoms, and even more genres, both literature-categories (drama, comedy) as well as fandom-specific genres

(hurt/comfort, incest slash), it is not that she looks to a specific fandom for a specific genre, but rather she will be in the mood for a specific fandom, such as *Smallville*, or *Sentinel*, or be in the mood for specific characters – in other words, “I’ll read what I wanna read when I feel like reading it.” This is a sentence which, in a way, aptly describes Barb’s initial involvement with fandom, as well as her current view of it as a text-appropriating medium a la Jenkins.

Eiko’s reading habits are quite different from Barb’s and Yuri’s, but somehow manage to synthesize aspects of both. Eiko reads fics depending on her mood, but believes that there is an atmosphere fics have in each fandom that is very different. She explains that popslash fics tend to have a more lighthearted character, whereas *Harry Potter* fics have a darker and heavier atmosphere. The question for me was whether that was what she ended up looking for or whether most authors would produce fics with such a specific tone in general in each fandom. She explained:

Well it is what’s out there and what I look for. It’s a chicken and egg thing: I look for that kind of thing, because I’ve read it before, but I think it’s what the fandom is conducive to... So, the threat of Voldemort and the other-worldliness of magic and that kind of thing. Whereas popslash is this [our] universe, but a different lifestyle – but there isn’t anything conducive to big drama other than things about the characters themselves.

Eiko doesn’t read death fics, and usually reads fics for certain pairings, so she will read mostly Harry/Draco fics for example, or Justin/Chris (from the boy group *Nsync*) in popslash. Sometimes, she mentions, she will have “a



mood” when she will want to read something different, “like last night, when I all of a sudden wanted to read Lucius/Snape, which tends to be very dark.”

What is interesting about the pairings that she enjoys, is that they have a wide range of possibilities to them: both Harry/Draco and Justin/Chris can have fics written about them that range widely from fluff (or easily-digestible “cute” fic) to angst (or heavier cost, psychologically dramatic fic). They reflect the kind of fic that she likes in general, a more diverse and original kind of fic, rather than a replica of the canon source text. Admittedly, most fics are written for the purpose of adding on to and exploring the source text. But when Eiko says that she will more often look for novel-length *Harry Potter* slash, which by default is more detailed and in which the author has a very rich take on the world of HP, she means equally that she wouldn’t as much enjoy such a long fic if it resembled too closely Rowling’s creation.

When you’re dealing with a fandom, especially *Harry Potter*, with that kind of canon, for me, the purpose is to use it to fill in the points that aren’t so fully explained in the book. It’s because it is its own universe, but in canon it leaves a lot to be elaborated in. So in that case it’s not as interesting to read fics that are close to canon.

For me personally, I used to be, as will be narrated further below, serially monogamous in my fandoms: I would read fics in only one fandom at a time, and with very specific pairings. Once these constraints opened up however, I found myself attracted to both fics of shows I was a fan of, as well as fics in a fandom, in which I had not perused the source text. My very first fandom in which I read yaoi fanfic, was the Japanese animation series *Weiss*

*Kreuz* (1998), a show which I loved. My second one however, though equally a Japanese *anime*, called *Gundam Wing*, was a fandom to which I came through the fiction rather than the source text, and I have refused, up to this day, watching the show itself. This is partly due to my mindset as a beginning slash fan at the time that I first started reading *Gundam Wing* fic: I could not comprehend the mindset most yaoi and slash fans had of slashing every random pairing, as I perceived it, in every random show, book or movie. The creators of the source text held the authority and copyright to the text (and thus to the canon in my eyes), and fanfiction as a derivative of sorts should follow along these lines.

As I was enjoying the *Gundam Wing* universe and started to learn more about it, I knew of the (romantic) facts of the show: One of the oldest myth within the *Gundam Wing* fandom has been that the producers of the show did not create romantic pairings on purpose, as they were attempting to appeal to a wide audience: The show itself is considered a *shounen*, or boys', *anime*, but the alleged lack of heterosexual pairings is supposedly aimed at the *shoujo*, or girls, audience. Whether this rumor really has substance, is not the point, but rather that this has been one of the myths perpetuated since the very beginnings of an English-speaking *Gundam Wing* yaoi fandom is of importance. Both yaoi as well as het fans seemed to know the canon in utmost detail and would use specific plotlines and scenes to argue their standpoint. As I enjoyed the yaoi fics, and really liked the fanons built for the main

characters, I was afraid that once I had watched the *anime*, I would have to concede that canonically there were main heterosexual relationships. Once that happened, I would have had to concede the validity of my preferred slash pairings to my notions of the canon and source text as the *original* or invariable.

Interestingly enough, as my fandoms expanded, and I chose to read more fics from different fandoms at once, this rigid notion of the source text canon versus the fanfic fanon diminished. I had read too many Alternate Universe fics at that point, and had seen fandom, fics, and the permutations in both as only another dimension or variation on canon and source text. Nonetheless, I am rigid and picky in the fics that I read: I prefer to read long fics that are very detailed, and grammatically correct. I do not have enough patience for what I consider bad fics (but many other fans might praise as good): out of character fiction (in terms of canon *or* fanon), without a reason supplied; bland and unoriginal writing; fics that are not well researched. I do not read death fics, and sometimes I will not read specific off-canon fiction (if it is obviously anachronistic or poorly researched) or specific genres, such as, besides death fics, male pregnancy fiction. Similarly to Eiko I tend to read specific fics and specific pairings in specific fandoms, and these fics do happen very often to be in prevalent genres of that fandom: *Harry Potter* fiction, as already mentioned, tends to be written in a somewhat darker setting. I, too, enjoy reading Harry/Draco fics in terms of the range of

diversity to be found for this pairing.

*Interactive: Yuri*

The rape fantasy is a psychological phenomenon that has been a hot topic for many years. The popular idea regarding this is that most girls in the early developing stages of puberty do not know where to place their sexual feelings and are ashamed. Therefore, though they do *not* want to be raped, in their fantasies it is the only acceptable way to work through their sexual feelings. Why, then, do adult female fans pursue "rape fantasies" in fanfiction?

I offer this analysis. In an overwhelmingly female pool of fans, the chances are high that many have had a sexual encounter (whether harassment or actual assault) which left them feeling scarred and vulnerable. They try to work out these painful feelings, to find a way to cope with loss of strength. While fans who have undergone this experience in specific are working out these feelings, they often turn to rape fics\*. In rape fics, obviously one character will be laid open--made horribly vulnerable, and it appeals to the fans due to their recognition and understanding of that fear and shame.

Not only that, but as far as rape in slash/yaoi is concerned, the victimized party is male. Men, as most all humans are socialized to believe, are the epitome of strength. Therefore, to destroy that strength appeals to the female slash fan because it creates a being who was strong, but is now as weak and emotionally frail as the reader. It helps the reader to come to terms with her own vulnerability; therefore, the reader gains insight from how the victim faces his tragedy. That is why I believe women readers seek out rape fics.

\*I personally do not believe that non-con and rape are the same thing.

*Interactive: Dinah*

You wrote about controversial fan fiction, like RPS and non-con and the grey area involved with them: whether these subjects are reasonable to write in fanfiction. Personally, I feel uncomfortable reading either type, but other feel fine about writing it. There has been complicated issues involving fics along those lines, and with

other groups “censoring” or “blacklisting” material from being archived at sites and such. For instance, Fanfiction.net used to be open for fanfiction of all ratings, but within the last year they banned the NC-17 category on their website, due to reader complaints. Some writers were angry that their work was removed from the site, but it was a decision made by the FF.net staff in order to regulate what kind of material can be archived on the site. Before that action, FF.net also put up warning for fics rated R or NC-17 to try and prevent minors from accessing these stories.

Another example from the Harry Potter fandom was when a group of writers from the SugarQuill started to list authors who wrote “inappropriate” fics, including authors of R or NC-17 rated works. This was done so in an attempt by the group to make a list of stories parents should be wary of letting their children read when looking for fanfiction. When the authors discovered that they were “blacklisted,” a wave of flames, wank, and e-mails attacked all members of the parental control group. It became so controversial that the listing was shut down within a month or so.

Both examples show that freedom of writing, versus “online decency” is an active and lively debate in fanfiction. While writers are free to write whatever they would like, if they chose to post their work, it is open to censorship and restrictions if it goes “over the line.”

On the topic of rapefic, many people have different viewpoints on it. On one side, some people think rapefic is equivalent to pornography: that it degrades the victim and such illicit situations should not be touched upon. Some writers of rapefic use it as an excuse to create conflict; most of these stories turn out to be poorly written and explicit. Others think that it can promote violence by glorifying rape and sexual abuse.

On the other hand, rapefics have been written by writers on many different levels. Some stories have been very insightful to the psychological and emotional damage of the victim. Or it could focus on the recovery process, and therefore be a positive way of portraying a victim overcoming the demons of the past. In fact, some writers write it as a way to confront their fear. I have seen discussions on the topic on message boards, and there have been even a couple of rape

victims who admit writing rapefic as a therapeutic way to deal with their own experience.

This one topic shows that controversial subjects such as rape, incest, physical and emotional abuse can be addressed in fanfiction for many different reasons. At its best, it is a way to show character growth and development, and handles the topic in a sensitive, multi-faceted, and informative manner. At its worst, it is a cheap and callous method the author uses to get two characters to hook up in a “hurt/comfort” fic.

Slash itself is a controversial topic, particularly in Harry Potter. Although some slash ships have a large following, other people in the fandom abhor any slash at all, because they think homosexual themes should not be associated with “children’s books.” In other fandoms, slash may be more acceptable, like when the characters are canonically gay (like several characters in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), or when one character strongly suggests homosexual overtones (like Capt. Jack Sparrow from *Pirates of the Caribbean*).

### III. Exploration

#### A. Psychology and addiction – slash in the first instance

Many fans cannot remember the first slash fic they ever read; but if one does not know about the existence of slash, and stumbles upon it accidentally, what kind of emotion must that very first piece of writing evoke? Undeniably the effect is very visceral and intense. To come upon slash is not as difficult as it seems, especially as at this moment in time it is impossible to do a search in google for the name of a specific series or certain books without a site containing slash/yaoi appearing among the first five links: the Japanese *anime Gundam Wing* (USA 2000), the American TV shows *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997), and *Xena the Warrior Princess* or the *Harry Potter* books (1998) are only a few examples of this. It has not always been like that. Only a few years ago, slash and yaoi sites were less frequent in number, and slash/yaoi was a lesser visible subpart of fandom rather than the overwhelmingly visible part that it is now.

I cannot recall the first fanfic I ever read, nor how exactly I found my first yaoi fanfic four years ago. I remember liking a specific *anime* series very much (*Weiss Kreuz USA* 1998), and I remember that the first yaoi fics I ever read were *Weiss Kreuz* fics. I suppose that I must have come across these yaoi fics while researching the series, as I do not recall reading general fanfiction *before* I ever read yaoi fic. Soon, I found a link to a page called “AnimeRose’s

Yaoi Links Garden,” which contained over 500 links to yaoi sites for various *anime* series.<sup>14</sup> This all happened during my first year in the United States, a time during which I suffered from a couple of bouts with depression and had unhealthy sleep cycles (part of the reason why I cannot really remember how exactly I stumbled across slash). All I can recall is that I went through most of the links rapidly, reading until exhaustion in order to be able to sleep. It was a matter of escapism, nothing more or less. One of my first impressions of slash/yaoi was its gender-bending qualities, and certainly that appealed to me. However, it would be too easy to say that this property was my sole reason for getting into slash; at that point, though I had not taken an Anthropology class yet, I had already started to reject the dual-pole definitions of gender as a social rule cast in iron. Rather, slash seemed to have happened incidentally: though my first impressions were positive, and though the aesthetics and visuals fanfics conveyed were new and beautifully different to me, the main properties of slash that had me reading every night or whenever I could were that it was well-written and had characters that I knew and liked. I needed the routes of escapism it provided, and though science fiction novels provided me with the same means in the past, slash/yaoi was far easier to read and did not require as much active intelligent involvement on my part.

Of course I was not capable of making these observations at the time;

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<sup>14</sup> This page has changed domains as well as webmasters several times, but still, essentially, exists. Now renamed to “a night of yaoi,” and found on several mirrorsites (i.e. accessible from different URLs), it boasts a new layout and structure. One of the URLs it is accessible from is: <http://www.geocities.com/animerosegarden> - last accessed 05/03/04



emotionally speaking, I wavered between visceral happiness and the need to remove myself at large into a different world. It seemed to me to be an addiction, the escape yaoi fic provided was something that I would crave at every moment that I could, to the point of neglecting my sleep, or my social activities. This has passed, as other modes of my identity re-established themselves in priority, and my fan-mode took a backseat when it needed to. In a way, I have become more open-minded, as I expanded my fandoms beyond the “serial monogamy” I had gone through for about two years to an interesting polyamory. The gender-bending qualities of slash/yaoi are still there, as is my own particular brand of penis-envy, but as I have grown into the culture – as we all do, in any culture – it has become more than simple external factors and internal visceral reactions (or psychological motivators); though these still exist, more important are the cultural factors which established a sense of slash-fan in me, a fan-mode with all its accompanying rules, languages, and codes that has become as much part of me, as every other mode I could label.

Red has only recently come in touch with slash/yaoi, but has already developed reading slash fic into an obsession. She came in contact with the genre through my research on it: She had seen some *Harry Potter* slash pictures I was preparing for a presentation. After I left, she looked for more, and she liked them. One of the links she found led her to a story, not a picture, and though it was very short, it was apparently very good.

With her as well, there were several external as well as internal factors: She liked the first one, and it evoked very deep emotions in her, but moreover she narrates needing a distraction at that point in time, and that need was reason enough to continue reading. In terms of the internal, Red explains that she cannot remember which fic she read first, but that “it was hot in [her] mind and the characters were old and hot [i.e. not too young in the fanfic].” That first feeling was that fanfic was new and different from anything Red had read before, and that it was by far more interesting than the *Harry Potter* books, because that fic was not a piece for children. Red laughed as she said that this had happened after having watched the movie *Steam* or *Hamam* (1997), a Turkish-Italian co-production, and that it made sense at the time, because she could picture the story and the characters as well as the homoerotic interactions very well. I was confused at this point as there is only one homoerotic kiss in *Hamam*, but I understood that the fics she reads are rather explicit, and so I asked Red how she could have pictured the fic with the little footage *Hamam* had given her. She maintained that it had given her more of a base to picture things than she had had before, and that in *Hamam* both male protagonists were very attractive as well, “so there was a parallel, too.”

That timeline Red drew between first watching *Hamam* and now reading Harry Potter slash on a daily basis is interesting to me: We had watched the movie together at the very beginning of this project, not as part of

it at all, but simply as a regular movie night between friends. Red had such intensely fascinated and positive reactions to the movie and the very subtle homo-eroticism displayed in it, that I was astonished: She had told me that she had several very close gay friends, who are affectionate with each other in bars, but that this had never had such an impact on her as the few hints and the one kiss in *Hamam* did. Partly this was due to the fact that she found both male protagonists attractive, partly because the plotline hides the homosexual relationship until the near end of the movie when viewed the first time, and most likely because she neither saw a typical gay stereotype in either of the protagonists, nor was it at the heart of the plot. In other words, though the viewer does discover the existence of it, the movie itself does not center around the relationship in question, nor does either male protagonist fall into a social stereotype of “gay” behavior, and, most importantly, the relationship – as it is relatively marginal to the movie – is not embedded within the usual sociopolitical discourse and politicization of homosexuality.

But apart from all this, what fascinated *me* was the gut reaction Red had to this movie, and I started to suspect that it may hold some parallels to that initial emotion instigated by the first slash fic a fan ever reads. I asked her whether she would not write a stream of consciousness for me, illustrating these raw feelings incited by the movie, and am quoting it in the following:

touch-sense

Freedom, express emotions, release the cosmic need,  
unrestricted by society and self-consciousness  
Beauty and beauty—the triumph of exquisite and unreal

over the pure sexual physical act  
Makes you feel independent—you can experience on your  
own to find your inner sex drive.  
Ungendered unity  
No obstacles—no differences—pure act of love—no  
presumptions and assumptions for either one.  
To fight with desires and win over the natural law and  
follow the call of your inner self.

I will leave this piece untouched; if the reader attempts to remember it, she/he  
may find its pure sentiments echoed in other, more composed excerpts below.  
Suffice to say that it conveys the deep emotions of a person touched by  
something completely new and different; it is the visceral reaction to a new  
concept and world.

About four months after this, and at this moment of time, Red has  
discovered HP fanfiction, and is reading on a daily basis. I was curious how  
the initial fascination with a homoerotic theme has changed. The pleasure  
each slash fan derives from their indulgence is very subjective and personal:  
some may thrive on the interactions with other fans, others may simply enjoy  
reading, but even in that case, what that pleasure is based on or made of  
depends on what kinds of fics they read, be they romance, suspense, cross-  
overs with over universes or even sexually risqué. I wanted to know what kind  
of pleasure (and obsession) that first fascination Red felt had transformed into.

SY: What kind of satisfaction [derived from slash] is that?

Red: I create worlds with it. Worlds that are my  
worlds....worlds in which I exist with the slash.

SY: Can you elaborate?

Red: I imagine what it would be, if I had been there, if this  
is an AU that you can be a part of...or you're a part of it,  
but aren't aware of it.

SY: Like a self-insertion?

Red: No no no, I'm not active in these universes...meaning I don't talk to them and so on...I just imagine that it is real, that it's an AU, that you could make one step and you'd be there.

SY: That's the satisfaction?

Red: So, of course distraction, too...and I won't mention the other satisfactions, you can picture them yourself.

SY: Such as sexual?

Red: ...obviously!

SY: Aestheticism of the male body?

Red: oh yes, a lot, of course!

SY: Addiction?

Red: yes!

The pleasure Red derives from slash is complex: as she mentioned throughout, the visualization of *what* she reads is very realistic for her; this extends from the simple attraction of the male body to a deeper sexual level. Moreover, the possibilities of another world, which she had only guessed at in her stream-of-consciousness, have been fully realized: the distraction that she had needed during that first period that she started to read, she explained, had a lot to do with needing an escape from the real world, school, and people. She needed something to associate only with herself, not to connect to other people with, and slash offered her this mode of escapism. Both external and internal or visceral factors played a role in this process; in her mind she can build different worlds that are hers, but at the same time no less human than real life.

These sentiments of aesthetics, unity and watching a different world are echoed by Maygra in an online essay she wrote about the "Why and Wherefore of Slash." The following is an excerpt illustrating themes of

interhuman connections and the wish and illusion to be on the *inside* and to *watch*, even if only in one's head and on the screen:

Viscerally, there is the appeal of two beautiful male bodies, entwined in an embrace that makes my breath catch whether I am reading it being described or looking at an image. Symmetry and grace, strength and form. (Still bowing to the [Feminist] Apologists, I get the same kind of reaction in a different part of my brain when I see a picture of a mother embracing her daughter, or women embracing each other. Non-sexual Symmetry and continuance.)

Intellectually, I don't see myself in those two men, but I see myself *there*. Not as voyeur but as an emotional reaction to something that makes my heart ache to be what they feel. Even if I am writing what they feel. There is a connection between two men that I believe a man and woman can never reach. A connection between two women as friends or lovers that men will never understand and a man and a woman can never share.

However, I can understand those connections between a man and a woman and a woman and a woman. I can never know what, precisely, two men can feel for each other. (Maygra 1999)

Maygra also drew MacGeorge, another prolific author into slash. MacGeorge used to write gen fanfiction before she started writing slash, and in an online essay debating the why of slash she narrates her entry into that genre:

I was first exposed to slash well after I started writing *Highlander* fanfiction. My initial interest was in this wonderful heroic fantasy world featuring a gorgeous, dark, angst-ridden hero who had faults, but was a genuinely "good" man. Like many others who write and read heroic fantasy, it was not about admiring such a hero. It was about wanting to *be* such a hero. Strong, sensitive, caring, stoic, driven, conflicted -- all those traits so common to our (or at least my) fantasies.

Then I fell into the clutches of the wonderful and talented Maygra de Rhema who had the good taste to actually like some of my fiction, and who gently urged me to read this stuff called "slash." My first reaction was

“eeeeuw!” But that was before I read what she had recommended, and (more specifically) read what she had written.

Much to my surprise and no small discomfort, I was first intrigued, then drawn in, then sucked in (if you will pardon the expression) to the unique universe of slash fan fiction. All the time I was reading, and then actually writing, these strange relationship stories, I ruminated on “why?” it should be so fascinating and, sometimes, such a turn on. (MacGeorge 1999)

Attempting to analyze her “fall” to slash, MacGeorge read essays and papers dealing with the possible motivations for heterosexual women to like slash. Though not quite convinced that the theories she read about applied towards her, MacGeorge establishes two premises. The first one states that women enjoy thinking and fantasizing about men, but that equally many women would be embarrassed to admit the enjoyment of such a pastime. Secondly, she maintains, women are self-conscious and self-critical of their own physical appearance, and thus, when reading a heterosexual piece between a male and a “perfect” female, MacGeorge argues that it does not get her “viscerally excited because [she does] not identify with that lovely female. That's certainly not who "I" am, or who I could ever even truly fantasize about being.”

But if you combine the elements of two gorgeous male bodies, complex personalities and relationships that allow both romantic love, as well as the rough-and-tumble "just fuck me because we both want it so bad" alternatives, you have incorporated all the desirable elements of physicality, emotion and circumstances, and you have provided an opportunity for *total suspension of disbelief*. [...] That is the essence of true fantasy. A lifting out of oneself. A lovely and uplifting moment of wish fulfillment. I am gorgeous

and strong and heroic and loved, without any of that nasty backpack of self-perceived faults that might intrude if the situation were in any way comparable to “real life.” (Ibid.)

It is very clear in these passages that MacGeorge is writing for herself mainly, but for that perceived target audience of heterosexual women and fellow-fans in particular; It is one of the first meta-texts I had ever read, and I read it about four years ago, near the beginning of my own infatuation with fandom. I remember then that it captivated me and that I thought I agreed with her premises and conclusions. If she was not writing for all sorts of non-heterosexual-females who equally enjoyed slash, I thought, that was unimportant, as the majority of fans were of that persuasion. As we fast-forward yet again, some fans are getting very tired of the “why slash? Why women?” questions, as they maintain that slash/yaoi fans are of a variety of backgrounds, hetero-, bi- or homosexual men, women, or young adults (I have recently stumbled across one or two heterosexual male fans on LiveJournal – and these of course are active fans). Truthfully, the fandoms grow increasingly politicized, and there are many new theories brought forth by fans, some debating “why slash?” others asking “why not slash?”, in all permutations and from all fields.

I found MacGeorge’s initial reaction to slash (“eeeeuw!”) fascinating, when reading the essay for the first time; it was completely different from my own reaction, and from Maygra’s vivid descriptions of hers. As I was talking to Barb in one of our hours-long interview sessions, I realized that she did



have that initial reaction to slash as well, though now she is very much a fervid slasher and debater, with whom I can spend hours discussing characters' personalities and nuances.

SY: What was your first slash in? Your first impression of it?

Barb: Well, I was reading *Gossamer*, an all inclusive *X-Files* archive, which had a whole lot of slash, and so I would come upon something not clearly labeled, and stumble in, and say, "oh my God!" and stumble back out again. [...]

I don't know how I got there, probably googling *Quantum Leap* fics. So, I read Russet MacMillan's *Quantum Leap* fics...and then I went to her main page, and I think I read her *Sentinel* stuff...and all of that stuff is slash, there are only two gen stories. That [her usual work] starts really, really low-key...it was like "oh of course they're having sex! Of course, of course!" and so it was really basic

SY: Did you have any visceral reactions to it that you can still remember?

Barb: I skimmed the sex over the first month or so...and I think it was just...I read stuff because I like the characters. Having read Russet's stuff, I liked the characters...and at the time, the only archive she linked to was the *Sentinel* slash archive. So I just ended up reading that because it was what I found. To start out with. I don't know what my visceral reaction was, except that it [slash] was good stuff.

Barb did not share Red's or my initial reaction of fascination to slash, but required a gradual osmosis of the genre in order to learn to appreciate it. Once she had absorbed enough of the material, she assumed the same appropriation of it that she would over other literary texts. In a way, she did not go through that period of "addiction" observable in so many slash fans, once they initially encounter and accept the genre. When I brought up this first encounter with

what would become a fan's first online fandom, I asked Barb about her own experiences:

SY: What was your very first fandom in which you read your first fics?

Barb: I read *Babylon 5* gen for six months to a year and then *X-Files* for a very long time...

SY: Did it feel to you like an addiction?

Barb: At the time, I approached it as having finished everything in the public local library, and there was the Internet as my own big library.

At this point I attempted to explain my addiction-question, by relating my own experiences with my first online fandom to Barb. I explained that I had immersed myself completely into the act of reading, to the point of shifting priorities. I also related that I had witnessed many debates online speaking of slash, or fanfiction in general, as an addiction.

Barb: Not that way. It was no more priority...it was pleasure reading, it just happened to be on the computer instead of hardcopy, so the time I used to spend in Barnes & Noble and libraries shifted to the Internet.

SY: Well at that time, I was using my leisure time and then some.

Barb: I've always used my leisure time and then some.

SY: So, you're saying you've always been addicted?

Barb: Yes, I've always been addicted to the printed word.

What kind of addiction is it then, and does it deserve that term? Speaking for myself, I had "always been addicted to the printed word," compelled to finish a book, even if it meant I would get no sleep that night, or if it meant I had to neglect my homework duties throughout middle- and high school. What was different about the compulsions that overcame me while reading mountains of fanfiction for long stretches at a time? A new factor was the accessibility,

which Barb has remarked on in the previous excerpts, of the Internet, in that it was available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, at least in my school setting. But it is not only this contrast with a library's regular open and closed hours, which makes up a different kind of accessibility, but also the lack of a "checking out" process, or rather the replacement of the same through a couple of clicks. This gave new meaning to the compulsion to read, as material was available in abundance, need not be processed through a lengthy procedure worth the mention, and was not bound to a specific location: wherever there is a computer with an Internet connection, there is a net of reading materials.

And so what prompted the motions of an addiction (I say motions, because I do not think it is an addiction as we would commonly define it), was primarily a sense of fascination sparked by the texts that I found and their format, as well as the fascination that I had in the initial source text. But secondarily, (and longer-lasting than a simple fascination) my addiction was prompted by the nature of the medium through which I accessed these fan texts. In my own evolution as a fan, this was sparked by yaoi fics of a specific Japanese *anime*; though I had been a fan before, I could "feed" my fan-mode even more once I had chanced upon those sites of the net dedicated to the media I was/am a fan of. Similarly, for Red this addiction was sparked by *Harry Potter* fics specifically. As we talked longer about the subject of

addiction to fanfic, she explained how reading slash in general, and as an act of escapism in particular, is impacting on other areas of her life at the moment:

SY: And the addiction doesn't seem like it's going to get under control anytime soon?

Red: No! Especially here, where there is nothing that can stop me [ref. To LAN network]

SY: You mentioned that reading gets in the way of your social interactions? How so?

Red: Yes, to some extent.

SY: How?

Red: Umm, now that I have this, I don't need to be too close to many people, or to interact a lot with them and to go to places blablabla. So, a few close friends are enough, because I have this inner world with me

SY: But I still see you hanging out with a lot of people?

Red: Yes, but I'm not deepening these relationships.

SY: Would you usually?

Red: Well not quite, but it would become something more than acquaintances maybe.

It would probably be too much too soon to attribute a fan-mode to Red; though many fans have some problems self-defining as such, their issues with definition usually stem from exactly that: problems of a common definition. The questions whether slash-fans are writers, readers, active or inactive persons, fans of the source text or fans of the derived fanfiction, and whether, thus one who is not a writer, reader, active or inactive can call her/himself a "fan," are questions that are frequently debated. Red, however, has not reached a point or a saturation level, despite her large intake of slash fanfic, to identify as a fan, or to come to terms with this part of her life. "Being a fan" is, after all, not an instantaneous act of acquiring a new mode of identity, but rather a process, in which external as well as internal factors play a role. What

slash fanfic did for Red and me, it did not for Barb, Eiko or even MacGeorge. Barb and Eiko had been exposed to online fandom and fanfiction before they ever read slash. Eiko's phase of "addiction" was not in slash fandom, but in *Sailormoon* (1995) (though that fandom has a lot of femslash fiction), during the time period, in which she was watching that Japanese *anime* and wanted to learn more about it. Barb's "addiction" if I can use that term though it was more a relocation of a prior existing addiction was in *Babylon 5*. However, during that relocation occurred also the spark of a process, which would lead to a formation of an identity mode. Similarly, Dinah narrates that when she started to take her first steps into fandom-world, she "really thought it was an addiction," as she could not concentrate even on her homework.

#### 1. Issues of control

I wondered whether what I thought of as an addiction was as overwhelming, and impossible to abstain from as other addictions. I thought that Red, who was going through that phase as I was researching this text, could tell me more about the "symptoms" that she felt, and so asked her why she thought that she was addicted to slash. She mentioned that the frequency and time span she spent reading was overwhelming:

Even if I don't have the needed resources to get to slash, I try to find the ways [to get access to slash], and I spend all my time trying to find the ways. And then I feel really distraught when I haven't read slash for a long time [...] I mean that I feel nervous, impatient,...lost....consumed by the people around me.

[...] I'm in my inner world, and I have means to disconnect from the people of the outer world and from myself.

As we went deeper in our conversation, Red explicated these feelings of an “inner world” in which she could disconnect from all of her “real-life”; she explained that slash creates almost a “glitch in time,” in which the reader finds a harbor, a safe haven where she/he can just be. For those of us who have had the experience of living a book, while reading it, this illumination may sound very familiar. The differences are that the source is one of a new genre one finds, as if picking up one's very first mystery novel, and then another one, and yet another. Additionally, as explained before, it does not nearly involve as much in terms of actively moving oneself physically from one place to another. The sole movement carried out, though very real in terms of online movement, is “surfing” the web.

The one factor nearly always associated with addiction is that of a lack of control. Since one does not usually describe “bookworms” as “addicts,” the question whether this “addiction” to slash fanfiction is truly that begs to be asked. Looking superficially at my narratives of Red's current situation and of my own first stages as an online fan, one could maybe make this statement. But, for me, this stage of frenzied escapism and reading has passed, though it comes back in spurts, something, which I observed in many other friends, such as Yuri or Eiko. The latest spurt for me was being gripped by a historical *anime* this last month. *Peacemaker Kurogane* (USA 2003) is an *anime* set in the late Tokugawa era of Japan, and its main characters are based on the

historical members of the *shinsengumi*, a group of warriors employed by the *bakufu* (essentially a military government) to patrol Kyoto as a semi-police group, and standing in opposition to the Emperor and his supporters. Having swallowed down the episodes, and astonished that all characters of the *anime* were, in fact, portrayals of real members of the *shinsengumi*, I ended up researching the background of the *shinsengumi* intensively online for a couple of weeks. Admittedly, I did not look for fanfiction in the fandom, but this is because to some degree I do not expect good quality fanfiction for such a new series in the English-speaking fandom, and to another degree because I have limited my reading of fanfiction as this project progressed; partly not wishing to over-analyze all my movements in fandom, I have mainly continued to read fanfics in fandoms I am very familiar with. Partly, I have grown weary as my fannish and academic modes of identity mingled, as they had been completely detached until I began to consider fandom as a subject area for this project.

I see similar spurts in other fans, sometimes indirectly in fanfic reviews posted on their LiveJournals, sometimes directly, talking on AIM. When Eiko and I banter about the *Harry Potter* character Draco Malfoy and his addiction to caffeine (referring to the portrayal of Draco Malfoy by a popular fanfiction writer called Maya), or when she sends me very “slashy” pictures over Instant Messenger, I know that she is online searching out things. I may not be with her while she is looking for sites, but I participate to a certain degree, as we share some of the same fandoms. When Yuri sends me

an excited IM or comes to my room to tell me that she finally managed to download this episode of *Saiyuki*, or that long-awaited episode of *Peacemaker*, I, more often than not, go back with her to her room to watch the video and, more often than not, squeal “like a fangirl” (pardon the derogatory), or comment on the obvious “slashiness,” i.e. the ease with which one could slash them, of certain male characters. In this way, I have observed, it becomes easy to recognize patterns of behavior: when who will act in “fangirl” mode, what appropriate replies one should give during an AIM conversation with whom, does not require anymore active thinking on my part than the question of how to act in a classroom, or when I am at home with my family.

However, there is a certain control which one can exert over this kind of addiction: Often, one will hear that someone has “fallen out of” fandom, or that someone is taking a break, because of real life. Other times, fans will switch fandoms, if they get fed up with the interactions of people, or they might develop a new space for themselves. Mel provided me with an example for the latter recently. On one of her HP mailing lists, an author was asking for details and technicalities around a specific homosexual act. Rusty, a gay man and HP fan, answered in detail, and replied to additional questions asked by other fans. As this conversation went on for more than a week, several fans started to voice their unhappiness with the ongoing discussion. Partly maybe, because Rusty’s answers were too detailed and too realistic, partly because they were of an explicit nature, the list moderators stepped in, and asked



Rusty to cease, as these dialogues had nothing much to do with *Harry Potter*. Rusty was very aggravated, and decided to leave that mailing list, as well as create a new one on his own, which would also be a *Harry Potter* mailing list. A large group left with him, Mel included. Though she still reads the fics posted on the old mailing list, she participates far more frequently in the new one, which seems to be “friendlier” and “more open.”

Though there are such things as cult fandoms, or long-term fandoms, in other words something one has been a fan of for a very long time, and will continue to be a fan of, they do not necessarily involve constant involvement with that fandom. Simultaneous to always being a *Star Wars* fan with set opinions on the canon (e.g. rejecting the new trilogy in the process of being finished), more often than not, one will be obsessed and more “active,” in the sense of being mentally involved, with other fandoms. In a way, fandom behavior, and the act of being a fan is centered around the *object* of worship, as well as the *act* of worship, and both will overlap more often than not, but the *act* of worship is internalized; partly derived from behaviors absorbed from the communities online or offline, “being a fan” becomes internalized to such a degree that it creates a fan-mode of identity.

It is very difficult to control and/or turn off a mode of identity, a part of oneself. As I have discussed many active or passive activities fans will practice, I have attempted to show that even at her/his most passive, an online fan will be exposed to an ever-evolving fandom and fandom communities;

furthermore, even if she or he only passively reads fanfics, a fan will automatically partake in fandom-specific terminology and language, which will contribute to her/his introduction to what is most certainly a communal mode of fan-identity. In the following, I will discuss the connections that we make through fandom, be they online or in real life, as these connections constantly re-affirm one's fan-mode of identity. Elaborating, I will explore the connection between addiction and an individual's fan-mode, as well as the balance that exists between the two.

## *B. From Pleasure to ID*

### 1. Introduction

A fan can be both, alone or with others, as the main definition for "fan" has not carried us much beyond a distinction between "fan" and "consumer." In that sense, a fan is productive, whereas a consumer merely consumes passively. Whether this fan is productive, alone in his room, reading fanfic or dreaming up adventures, or together with other fans, discussing, writing, and participating in building a community, is, therefore, a moot point. After all, it does not matter whether a fan is alone, as an *online* fan she/he will be very well aware of the existence of other fans, and will be, as mentioned above, subject to influences initiated and propagated by these others. Many fans will connect to others at some point, whether online or offline. Interaction with others does not only result in sharing one's fandom and ideas with others, but consequently in sharing one's joy with somebody else. In addition, such

connections with others will only serve to reaffirm one's fan-mode, and to aid in its evolution. There exists, for most, a process which leads one from addiction (escapism and pleasure) to a formation of a mode of identity (a sense of community, and pleasure in being in that mode). In this medium (online) this process never ceases, and, thus, addiction, escapism and pleasure do play into one's fan-mode of identity.

What does change, is the priority given to one specific mode of identity over another. According to Kielle's Fanfiction Glossary (refer to appendix), "to gafiate" in old fandom, i.e. offline, convention, and fanzine based fandom, is derived from the acronym GAFIA or "Get Away From It All." As she explicates:

Once used to describe the act of immersing oneself in fandom to escape the *mundane* world, this verb has now come to mean the exact opposite: to drop out of fandom completely. It is also possible to gafiate from one fandom to another.

What Henry Jenkins has once described as the "Weekend World," a refuge of no less realistic properties than the mundane world, but at the same time completely different, has, linguistically at least, risen to even more "equality" with its evolution and relocation to new media. Many fans will announce their intention to leave – though many come back – either due to stress or problems IRL (in Real Life), or because they are fed up with the community interactions within fandom. Whether these fans have truly completely vanished online, is of course not easy to prove, as they could very possibly lurk as opposed to

being active. Online friends and acquaintances will generally respect these decisions, giving their best wishes and hopes that the person concerned may soon “return” to online fandom.

How does this fan-mode pertain to other modes of identity within the individual? As pointed out, online fans become, after a certain period of exposure to it, part of a certain fandom-community, inasmuch as “fandom” no longer solely implies that medium of which they are a fan, but also expands its connotations towards certain spaces, a time committal, as well as those other fans, who share that fandom with one-self. It is pertinent then to explore the connections we as fans form with others, and what niche we find ourselves in.

## 2. Connections we make (online and offline)

Writing this, I feel as if I am suspended in an intricate web of connections, which unfolds in front of me, connecting me to others, and these other fans to yet more individuals. I met Yuri through both, social events at college, as well as through the college’s science fiction, fantasy and Japanese *anime* club. It was these club’s events and movie screenings, which allowed us to connect to each other with a scheduled frequency. Both of us found yaoi independently of each other, but discovering that we had a mutual interest in this genre, as individuals as well as fans, allowed us to connect on yet another sub-level to a shared identity as *anime*-fans, students at a women’s college, and stressed undergraduates. Yuri had already been RP-ing for a long time

period as well as engaged in constructing websites online for her favorite characters and/or series, so-called “shrines.” She was connected to other fans on- as well as offline. Whereas, I lurked online, and interacted through club events with other fans offline, she was always very active in both realities. The most recent example for these online interactions has been discussed already: Yuri’s connection to members of her HP RPG, is based on a certain mix of “fictional identity” of Harry Potter, and Yuri’s personality. She interacts with some of her roleplay friends outside of the reality of the game, i.e. outside of IC or OOC chats, and has formed online friendships with them.

I have only recently felt more open-minded about online-connections and friendships, adding a couple of LiveJournal users, whom I do not know offline, to my LiveJournal friends list and have been added to their lists in return. A friends list, though it may be called so, is really, essentially, a list of journals that one reads, a very long webpage listing the posts made by the journals one has added to their friends list. In the process of adding these users to my friends list, I have given myself access to their journal posts to be displayed on my friends page; I do not have to specifically search out their LiveJournals, but can see them on my list. Furthermore, I have given these users the access rights to those posts on my journal that I do not make openly public, and which are coded to be viewable by my friends list alone. In this way, I willingly form a further connection to others online. Though in the past, I utilized this tool to allow myself further online connection to offline friends,

LiveJournal as a location achieves to project an image of private sphere as well as semi-private interaction to such a degree that it allowed me to form connections to a few people whom I do not know in real life.

Kira is a very close personal friend, whom I met at college in general, and subsequently club meetings in particular. During a very active period online, Kira has fashioned a reputation by translating a Japanese *manga* (or comic) called *Tokyo Babylon* (1991) into English via Spanish; she provided the first English translation of this *manga* online. In our, mostly offline, interactions, she had told me of this, but I never quite fully grasped the full concept of her fame, perhaps because, nominally, she is not active enough online in order to be a BNF. However, during a brief resurgence of interest in CLAMP the female *mangaka* (comic creator) consortium that created, amongst others, *Tokyo Babylon*, I came across a fan blog (another form of online diary). One of Kira's fanfics was recommended there, as well as her non-fictional essays. This well-known person was my real life friend?

At that period of time, I still assumed that it would be very difficult to form close connections online. Though that belief has passed since, as I my friends have told me how many screen names on their Instant Messenger Buddy list are of people whom they only know online, it has only been very recent that I have accepted that at face value exactly: One does not have to meet another face-to-face in order to form a connection. In fact, the online connection to another individual may very well be stronger, and more genuine,

than the real-life connections to other people. Why am I bringing this up? This year, Kira is abroad and has opened a LiveJournal account in order to keep her friends updated on her life. At one point, she posted a sad entry incited by the cultural shock she was undergoing. As I clicked on the link to comment to her post, I saw an anonymous entry, or rather a comment by someone who did not have a LiveJournal account, thus had to comment anonymously, but had signed her name. The comment read very “fan-girly” and I joked to Kira on Instant Messenger about it. She said that it was an online friend, whom she had known for a long span of time, since High School. I had never heard about this specific online friend before, and realized that I was not much involved in Kira’s online life nor did I know her online friends.

I wondered how many connections Kira had formed through online interactions, and e-mailed her some questions. Kira explained that she had two online-only friends at the moment, and several acquaintances (her online-only friends she defined as “friends” in particular, because interactions with them are acted out on a deeper personal level). My anonymous poster, Anne, is one of these two friends. Anne and Kira trade reading recommendations, but strangely enough do not necessarily share the same fandom interests. Kira’s other friend, Selene, however, complements her interests. Selene loves “hardcore boy’s love” (a genre which implies little-to-no plot, and abundance of sexual acts), whereas Kira enjoys great stories, and explorations of gender

relations in *manga*. As Kira is “not a bashful person,” she finds a lot to talk about with Selene.

In both cases, fandom brought us together, but it does not keep us together. Incidentally, both Selene and Anne have written fanfiction, but I have never read any of it...so you can't say that we are members of the same fandom community. I keep a private mailing list going that facilitates contact, but it is isolated from fandoms at large.

Kira describes her relationships with Anne and Selene as resembling real-life friends more than fandom community, as she is still in contact with both of them, though they do not read the same things. Kira sees fandom relations as very contrasting to that. She explicates that “if a person loses interest in a series and ‘falls out’ of the fandom, she will probably lose contact with members of the community as well.” I do not believe that connections formed through the means of fandom generally only pertain to that fandom. In other words, though interaction behaviors and language are very much a function of the specific fandom (though never in a vacuum – each fan will often exert and incorporate behaviors and language from multiple fandoms), the depth of connections formed within that fandom is not limited. Fandom-specific connections that are limited to fandom solely are, I would argue, akin to real-life business acquaintances.

As mentioned previously, Dinah does not feel as a part of the *Harry Potter* fandom, though she still continues to write. Partly, she explained that she has “fallen out of fandom, because there is so much canon, and so many expectations.” I elaborated previously how Dinah’s self-perception of being



“not much of a fan” is greatly linked to the pairing-specific structures of the HP fandom, and the communities that arise from these. But in the context of a formation of connections, Dinah has found her niche of fellow-authors and readers through a specific HP archive and its interactive chats and message boards. Some of the friends she has found through these chats are now on her LiveJournal friends list. As many of these friends are very involved in fandom, Dinah partakes in fandom through a daily ritual of checking LiveJournal. Though she feels she has fallen out of fandom, she still maintains ties to people of that fandom, and through them is kept updated on fandom-specific news and events.

To “gafiate” in classic fandom terminology or to “fall out of” fandom, as we have seen previously, is a choice made by an individual, to take a break or to leave either a specific fandom, or fandom activity/locations/interactions. Individuals with whom a fan only shares fandom-specific interactions may well be left behind. Returning to the business-acquaintance analogy, if one’s business is relocated or if a person decides to undertake a new business venue, she/he will very likely lose contact with those business-acquaintances with whom only one venue was shared. Unless the “gafiate”-ing fan decides to take a complete break from (a) fandom, *and* sever all ties formed through fandom, “falling out of fandom” does not necessarily equate the disengagement of deeper connections. In addition, one’s online friends do not necessarily share

the same mélange of fandoms one is a part of.<sup>15</sup> The maintenance of these connections then serves toward a deepening of one's connection on multi-fandom levels, the re-enforcement of a shared fan-mode of identity, but equally, and akin to real life friendships, as a process of getting-to-know-you – on more than a simple fandom-level.

My precocious assumption that connections online are somehow less strong or less equal to connections offline was inherently faulty. As I have argued that online culture is in no way a simple or lesser replica of offline culture, it should have been apparent from the onset of this project that online connections are, equally, not a simple or lesser replica of offline connections. Online friendships may fulfill many needs that offline friendships cannot. On a general basis, they provide different contexts, interactions, and topics than work-, school- or family-related contexts would. On a much narrower basis, they can provide a space of speech that is semi-public, but also semi-private. Such a space can often prove liberating inasmuch as it provides the willing with a *different* means of self-expression. In slash/yaoi an example of this would be, older female fans I have often seen comment that within fandom and with their online friends they are free to talk about sexual topics which they would not be able to share with offline (and, perhaps, more conservative

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*Small interactive: Yuri*

For example: I love *Harry Potter*, *Yami no Matsuei*, *GetBackers*, *Saiyuki*, *Furuba*, and *X* [all but *Harry Potter* Japanese media, often both *anime* and manga format]. “Draco” loves *Harry Potter*, *Yami no Matsuei*, *GetBackers*, *Furuba*, *X*, and *Captain Planet*. Don’t know if that’s useful...Also, she is a Draco/Ron fan, whereas I am (of course) predominately Harry/Draco.

regarding this topic) friends. However the italicized “different” above is a warning to not draw hasty conclusions. Real life and online fandom both provide equal opportunities to express oneself, yet both spaces are different. Social and cultural conventions still exist in fandom, but they are different (and online conventions are informed by offline regulations).

One example of a very personal connection online that baffled me the most but also incited me to ask a few crucial questions is Eiko’s relationship to an older male fan. Having met him through *MAX* fandom, Eiko developed a deep closeness to Russell. She refers to him as *oniichan*, Japanese for “big brother,” not only in Instant Messenger conversations with him, but also when talking about him. Russell, a young computer programmer with a nice income, sees Eiko as his younger sister, and bestows gifts on her, for example buying fan merchandise she wants at online auctions. I had learned about Russell as my computer crashed one day, and I had a couple of problems with the re-installation. Eiko offered to send her “oniichan” an Instant Message and ask him for help. Not only did this incident re-affirm a notion of meaningful online connections, but it also posed a few questions: Is it possible to not form connections eventually? More importantly, is it possible to be a fan and not form connections, to, essentially, be an online fan in a vacuum? These questions took on even more urgency, as I had had a conversation with Kira on her definition of fandom. Though she had initially defined “fan” in terms of the fandom or community, she sent me an email later, revising her opinion:

On the other hand, now that I'm looking back on this stuff, I don't think that a fan necessarily has to be a member of a fandom. It *\*is\** possible to be a fan in a vacuum--creating without any reinforcement or feedback from anyone else. However, most people, after the initial excitement wears off, need a community (fandom) to keep their own creative energies up. Thus, members of fandoms feed symbiotically upon each other's energies.

The problem for me that stemmed from Kira's notion of a fan in a vacuum was two-fold, a problem of definition as well as locality. Theoretically speaking, it *is* possible to exist alone and in a vacuum as a fan. A fan can spend years fantasizing on her/his own, creating stories within her/his head or writing solely for their own pleasure. Practically however, as we have seen, this is impossible in online fandoms. Even only passively consuming fanfics, a fan is always a receptacle of the larger fandom community, and consequently her/his fan-mode of identity is informed and re-inforced by the existence of that community. Kira, however, is speaking of an active community, a network of active connections, when she mentions "reinforcement or feedback." This would imply that lurkers, because of their lack of online connections, exist as fans in a vacuum and on their own. This is however not possible.

Even in the first few stages of avid addiction to reading fanfics, such as Red is living at this period in time, we have established a complex process of a formation of a fan-mode of identity, which involve ipso facto psychological and cultural factors, and never stagnates. Furthermore, I have described different lurkers' situations, including my own, hoping to have

advanced the point that a fan lurking in some fandoms, may be quite active in others, or that an online lurker can be very active and opinionated offline. Without arguing that there is no such concept as a fan living in a vacuum, I am merely trying to explain that I have neither worked with nor met such a fan.

I have, however, been blessed to work with Red, a lurker who does not identify as fan yet, and with other lurkers, who have been part of fandom for several years.<sup>16</sup> One issue I began to explore after my dialogue with Kira was that of offline friendships and connections: If I laid out these patterns for every fan that helped me with this project, much as I have done for myself, one could note two things: firstly, that there exists an infinite network between these fans, but secondly, that due to this, this text would expand into the never-ending. One notable example however, due to its remarkable intensity and extremity, is Barb's at first seemingly dichotomous distinction between online lurking and offline friendship, referred to in previous sections.

Though Barb does not interact online, she had also been incapacitated in terms of interactions offline for a long period of time. She explained that she had met the first fan she started interacting with offline only during the second semester of her first year at college. As she was writing "some godawful *Highlander* slash fic while waiting for German [class] to start," and

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<sup>16</sup> The irony of equating "defining as fan" with "being part of fandom" should not be lost on the reader. This is the place to note that both seem to come naturally as meaning the same thing. Additionally, I have observed that most fans will equate both, unless asked specifically to define the concept of "fan" in and of itself, without using the term "fandom."

a girl asked her what she was writing. Barb attempted to deflect by saying it was fanfiction, but the girl (and fellow-fan) simply asked what fandom she wrote in. As Barb had to take leave for two years, most of the friends she had found at that time were on the verge of graduating, or had already done so. She has, however, found a new circle of friends, and lurks online, as well as has interpersonal interactions offline. She explained that these interactions were part of instances of fandom, and cited her own life as an example:

[...] like what we do at the dinner table, and we discuss whatever. It's not always at the dinner table, but that's where it tends to start, because dinner is where we all find each other.

Because she kept emphasizing her fan-friends, and talking about fannish topics, I asked Barb why she only talked about fannish interaction. Quite spontaneously she answered:

I actually have more acquaintances that aren't fans. There's very little to talk about with them when they aren't fans, I could talk about classes, or living conditions. A lot of my conversation grows out of fandom.

I was baffled, as I knew there was much more to Barb than only her fan-mode. The first time I had ever met her, well before I knew that she was a fan, was at a mutual friend's birthday party. Conscientiously, she prepared the birthday dinner, and we talked about various topics, none of them fan-related. Some time later, this mutual friend advised me to talk to Barb about my project. The first time we met in that capacity, I had intended to only outline my objectives to her, but we ended up talking about fandom and discussing various topics

and pairings in our shared fandoms for over an hour and a half. Once Barb and I friended each other's LiveJournals, I was astonished at the contrast between the expressive girl I had met in person, and her posts of two to three lines on her journal. It was an affirmation of her lurker-status, yet at the same time allowed glimpses into other areas of her life: brief notices regarding classes, the woes of computer programming, and going to visit with her family at home were only a few indicators of her complex personality, an impression even more re-affirmed when we both took the same dancing class, and I was allowed to see yet another side of her.

If Barb's connections were truly only to fellow-fans, if her favourite and preferred topics of discussion were of fandom alone, that would be a denial of and contradiction to all other areas of her life that do not involve fan-mode. If Barb truly gave all priority in her life to her fan-mode of identity, she would not work as hard towards her classes, nor spend time on her other diverse interests. Why then did she emphasize her fannish interactions to such a degree? Why did she explain that only her acquaintances were not fans, a fact which I knew to be false? As I confronted her with a shorter version of my questions, Barb became quiet and reflective. Then she revised her earlier statements:

You're right, I do have friends that aren't fans, but I met them through other fans. Like Mary's roommate, who has written a slash fic but doesn't really read or think about it unless it's brought up; it's not very much part of her life, but she has a perverse mindset, which means I can talk about gay sex without things going bad.

[...]

I think it's part of the reason, why I don't have to explain fandom anymore. Because, if my friends are fans, I don't have to explain why a story of Q [a *Star Trek* character] is good to read about.

We do end up talking about a lot of stuff that's not terribly fannish, you end up talking about classes and you end up talking about this and talk about that.

Fandom, as one of the largest parts of Barb's life throughout high school, still plays a very major role. She went on to explain that not all her friends were fans, but that all knew what fandom was, so that she would not have to explain it, every time she mentioned it. Barb's fan-mode is the one she expresses most, but no longer as her sole mode of identity. Instead it serves as a means of connection to others.

It's a screen that I use for deciding who I want to talk to...because generally (and this is a really mean thing to say) but if someone hasn't found fandom by the time they're 25 they're not likely to find it. But [if they have found fandom] I don't have to explain sort of the *mindset* that comes with it.

If you're online and you're researching a show, that you're a fan of, it's inevitable to find fandom in the fanfiction way. If you haven't found it and you're online, then I'm not sure I want to deal with you, because you're not using the Internet the same way.

This seemed to be another occasion at which Barb's self-proclaimed "fandom-snobbism" reappeared. She had explained to me before several times that she was aware of the many ways in which fandom is lived and acted out, and emphasized the difference between "Internet fandom (journals or pages): writing and reading (on pages and in journals)" and "really traditional fandom (cons and 'zines, also magazines – i.e. pro-zines as opposed to fan-zines)."



“Internet fandom” is what essentially makes up fandom for Barb, allowing her to participate, albeit passively, in a larger context of fandom, which produces an abundance of material more communal than its offline tenets ever could have. As a filter, the requirement to know *of* fandom serves to allow a better connection and understanding both ways; the point is that, even if these friends do not really understand what it means to be a fan, the fact that they know of fandom provides Barb with some measure of security, while her friends, knowing about fandom may understand Barb’s shyness and character traits better.

Fandom is by no means the sole connector fans rely on, in order to build long-term social relations. A fan may very well be “possessive” of their own fandom, unwilling to share it with others. As I recently talked with Red about this topic, she mentioned that she didn’t want to share this world, and in fact had found herself unable to do so to a large degree (though the writing of this project has prompted her to discuss some keynotes and fandom topics with me). I believe that she intended to discuss this issue of connection in her interactive section. I have sometimes steadfastly refused to share one of my fandoms with others, the *Weiss Kreuz* fandom was one such case; resisting friends’ attempts to talk about fanfics, I claimed possession of it as “mine,” not simply because it was my first online fandom, but more so because I still enjoyed the feeling of “aloneness” that reading fanfics conveyed to me, and

wished to hold on to that world, in which I was removed from my own reality, a little longer.

Nonetheless, there is a keynote here of a shared identity and reality that would a) allow a fan to connect to others on the basis of shared factual information (about the show) or shared interest, and that b) informs the identity to such a degree that one may acquire a certain “mindset,” which Barb has mentioned, and which, in a way, affects the original term of “fanatic,” of which “fan” is an abbreviation.<sup>17</sup>

*Interactive: Red*

Having read your section on online fans and the connections people build even only on a virtual basis, I started thinking about how a friend like this is different from one you connect with on a face-to-face basis. For me having real friends only through the Internet is not an option. Although I literally can't live without computers and the web, I can't picture myself finding people online, who are as close to me as people I have met offline. Even now I have a lot of friends and due to the fact that I am in the states, some of them are really really far away, if realize that I can't communicate with them as well as before. I never chat with them and even writing e-mails is a sort of a difficult process. You made me think of the connections I am destroying – connections formed in the offline world, but due to the lack of personal interaction have become somewhat online based. I do not connect to people as part of a fandom, since I am relatively new to the whole concept, but I know from a recent experience that it is almost impossible for me to discuss fics with other people or connect with an already existing friend over fandom. I can surely talk about the concept of fandom, but not my activities in a fandom.

<sup>17</sup> Whether this connection continues to develop into a close friendship or relationship, on the other hand, is not necessarily affected by this sharing of interests and/or knowledge.

### C. Mindset

How can I map out this mindset Barb refers to? Clearly, in her case, it acts as a protective shield, though she does not necessarily only connect to people who have that mindset, as long as they are *aware* of the existence of online fandom, and subsequently what informs a fan's mentality. Something my friend Ash told me once comes to mind: she was boasting about her ability to slash anything in any setting, and, as an example, narrated having recently slashed two of her (older in age) English professors. Though I found this a bit revolting, and told her so, truthfully this was more because of aesthetic qualities and perhaps the thought that one should not really "sexualize" one's professors in that style, rather than the *idea* of slashing people at random in and of itself. Slash/yaoi fans are prone to see a homosocial subtext, which they transform into a homosexual subtext, where other kinds of audiences might not. Which pairings they might choose to see, and which subtext they may choose to identify, depends on the individual fan and their preferences. I say "choose" because it is a choice of sorts, and the preferences that go into it are informed by what a fan may like to read, and in turn how online communities inform the reading choices presented to the fan. The notions that go into these choices are in a way a natural safeguard preventing the fan from

“slashing ad absurdum.” Every fan has their “squicks” (or disconcerting/disgusting instances, pairings and genres) and their favorites, in other words an individual way of reading the texts presented and reacting to them.

The most relevant point to me is the connotations the term “mindset” carries with it. As we have watched the interacting processes of semi-addiction, control, community and identity unfold in the previous sections, the concept of prioritizing one’s modes of identity reappears: Inasmuch as the term “mindset” connotes nuances beyond a mere hobby or ritual, and reaffirms the details and trends mapped out in this particular ethnography, it also implies a deeper involvement with the material at hand to the point of obsession. Yet, as we have seen fan-mode is only one mode of identity, which co-exists with others. Perhaps it is when that mode only is given priority over a long span of time, when one forms connections to others solely through fandom, and when one does not function for a noticeable period of time within other modes that we catch glimpses of a “fan” who incited the coinage of the term “fanatic.”

#### IV. Interplay of modes – or conclusion

As I discussed possible conclusions to this text with Kira over the phone, she would have had me stop here. It would be easy to expand the previous section into a conclusion, to draw all points together and re-affirm once again the existence of a fan-mode of identity and the process through which this fan-mode is acquired and perpetuated. Kira would have me generalize by demonstrating, that all fans are different and individual, but they self-designate as fans nonetheless and thus share in a common reality and identity. She advised me to draw the obvious conclusion that *everyone* in some sense is a fan. Glancing back across this text, it seems to be an easy conclusion to draw; after all, the very first quote in section I.B already points us in that direction. But all such a proclamation would incite would be a philosophical discussion, and is by no means what I have set out with. Not only would it skew the focus of this text, but it would also distort the images I have painted with the lens I used.

Certainly fannish behaviours and emotions are mirrored in a non-fan's everyday life, most specifically in terms of an affective transformation. Arguing against Bourdieu's notion of aesthetic distance and its direct connection to high art, Jenkins reaffirms a very real connection between high art and fandom, certainly not in genre or expression, but rather in emotional affect:

[...] when you see that look of sublime pleasure on the face of someone listening to classical music, which is not about

holding it at a distance, it's about being awash in it, being affected by it, that's when that classical music consumption is connected to fandom in a very real way. Fandom is not about Bourdieu's notion of holding art at a distance, it's not that high art discourse at all; it's about having control and mastery over art by pulling it close and integrating it into your sense of self. (Hills 2001)

Though there are many similar instances that could be cited, demonstrating fannish notions outside of a fandom context, it is certainly not the purpose of this thesis to argue for a fan-mode of identity in each individual. The fact that some individuals identify as fans, and others do *not*, is important in and of itself. The risk of forgetting that these self-identifications and identifications by defining the "other," imagined as they may be, are *lived* realities is indeed too dangerous. It is often easy to forget that the texts we have written are but interpretations of fragments of reality, and that the frameworks we use are simple theoretical boxes, utilized to help both our audience and us understand that which is "different."

The purpose of this thesis was multi-leveled; what began as the translation of a fannish identity unfolded into multiple dimensions of space, time, individuality and community, as well as online and offline dimensions, and into the explorations of these dimensions through observing the individual fan. Striving to achieve a personal goal of complexity, I have attempted to discuss all of the dimensions involved in a fan-mode of behaviour, as well as demonstrate my own process of research. In this sense, my hope that this text could be, in return, equally utilized toward multiple purposes prevails. If it can

be used toward understanding multiple aspects, such as online locality, general fandom activities, or notions of identity formation, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

However, its relevancy to me is dependant on the simple strife toward understanding online fans as not only online fans, but to see their fan-mode of identity as simply that: one mode of identity. It is in contrast and in the interactions with other modes of identity that one can truly appreciate what it means to be a fan, and consequently what it means to the self to understand “fan” as a mode of identity. As Jean-Paul Sartre lectured to a Parisian audience in 1945:

To obtain some kind of truth for myself, I must pass by the other. The other is indispensable to my existence, as well as to the knowledge I have of myself [...] Thus, we discover immediately a world, which we call intersubjectivity, and it is in this realm that a human decides what she/he is, and what the others are. Moreover, if it is impossible to find in every human a universal essence of human nature, there still exists a universality of the human *condition*. It is not by chance that the thinkers of today talk more readily about a human’s condition rather than about her/his nature. By ‘condition’ they understand, with more or less clarity, the assembly of those *limits* a priori which outline her/his fundamental situation in the universe. The historical situations vary [...] What does not vary, is the necessity for her/him to be in this world, to be at work here, to be in the middle of others, and to be mortal here.<sup>18</sup> (Sartre 67)

Thus, within online fandom, one must not only perceive duplicates of fans, but also mothers, daughters, workers, teachers etc. It is only by humanizing fandom’s context, and by attempting to understand the *people*, in all their

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<sup>18</sup> Translated by author of this thesis.

complexities, rather than the *concepts* that we can truly understand not only the fannish disposition, but moreover the fannish self, and ultimately glimpse the complexities contained within ourselves.



## V. Appendices

### A. Appendix A: Fandom Directory

Title	Description	Date	Country
Angel	TV-series, Mutant Enemy Inc. [us] Kuzui Enterprises [jp] Sandollar Television [us] 20th Century Fox Television [us]	October 1999 – May 2004	USA
Babylon 5	TV-series, Babylonian Productions, [us]	January 1994 – January 1999	USA
Buffy the Vampire Slayer	TV-series, 20th Century Fox Television [us] Mutant Enemy Inc. [us] Kuzui Enterprises [jp] Sandollar Television [us]	March 1997 – May 2003	USA
CLAMP	A consortium of female mangaka or comic artists who have brought out several popular comic series		Japan
Final Fantasy	Game, Square ENIX USA Inc. Square Soft	May 1998 - ?	USA/ Japan
Gundam Wing	Anime, Sunrise Inc. [jp] The Ocean Group	April 1995 – March 1996 US: March 2000 – May 2000	Japan
Harry Potter	Books & Movies Books, Scholastic Movies, 1492 Pictures [us] Heyday Films [us] Warner Bros. [us]	Books – September 1998 - ? Movies – November 2001 - ?	Great Britain
Highlander: The Series	TV-series, syndicated network	October 1992 – May 1998	English
Lord of the Rings	Film trilogy: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001); The Two Towers (2002); The Return of the King (2003); New Line Cinema	2001-2003	New Zealand/USA

MAX	Japanese Girl-band		Japan
Neon Genesis Evangelion	Anime, Gainax Nas TV Tokyo Tatsunoko Productions Co. Ltd [jp]	October 1995 – March 1996	Japan
Nsync	American Boy-band		USA
Peacemaker Kurogane	Anime, GONZO	October 2003 – March 2004	Japan
Quantum Leap	TV-series, Belisarius Productions [us] Universal TV [us]	March 1989 – May 1993	USA
Revolutiona ry Girl Utena	Anime, GONZO	April 1997 – December 1997	Japan
Rurouni Kenshin	Anime, Sony Entertainment	January 1996 – September 1998 US:March 2003 – January 2004	Japan
Sailormoon	Anime, Cloverway international (CWI)(2000) DiC Enterprises [us](1995,1997) Optimum Productions	September 1995 – November 2000	Japan
Saiyuki	Anime, Studio Pierrot	April 2000 – March 2001	Japan
Sentinel, the	TV-series, old episodes currently screened on SciFi Channel, Paramount Television, Pet Fly Productions	March 1996 – May 1999	USA- Engli sh
Smallville	TV-series, Warner Bros.	October 2001 -?	USA- Engli sh
Star Trek	TV-series, Desilu Productions Inc. [us] (1966-67) Norway Corporation Paramount Television [us] – (1968-69)	September 1966 – June 1969	USA
Stargate	TV-series, SciFi Channel	July 1997 -?	USA-

SG-1			English
Tokyo Babylon	Manga and mini- <i>anime</i> (2 episodes), CLAMP Movic	Manga – April 1991 – March 1994 Anime – 1992, 1994	Japan
Weiss Kreuz	Anime, Studio DEEN	April 1998 – September 1998	Japan
Wolf's Rain	Anime, Bandai Visual Co. Ltd. [jp] Bones [jp] Fuji Television Network Inc. [jp]	January 2003 – July 2003	Japan
X-Files	TV-series, 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox Television [us] Ten Thirteen Productions	September 1993 – May 2002	USA

## B. Appendix B: Fanfiction Glossary

The Fanfiction Glossary FANFIC/DOM TERMS - by Kielle (kielle@subreality.com)		
/	Two letters separated by a / in the title or description of a story usually means that it's about romance between two characters whose names start with these letters. Yes, sometimes figuring out <i>who</i> those characters are can be tricky if you don't know the fandom well! Note: the word <i>slash</i> (see entry below) comes from this practice, which was often used to denote same-sex relationships back in the 'zine days -- the most famous being K/S (Kirk/Spock). However, the slash-mark itself can denote straight relationships too, ie. L/R (Logan/Rogue).	general
!	When used before a word, this is known as a "bang" and signifies "not." Example: POP-UP FANFIC_OK !MST_OK means "You can reproduce this story as a <i>pop-up fanfic</i> but you may not reproduce this story as an <i>MST</i> ." "!amused" = not amused, and so on. A holdover from a programming language, thus used mainly by techies and <i>dinos</i> .	general (rare)

	When used between a modifier and a name, is just a cute way of connecting the two concepts. I.e. Amused!Viggo, sulking!Egon.	
@	If you see this next to someone's name in an <i>IRC</i> channel, they have <i>ops</i> status.	IRC
<b>A</b>		
<b>A/A</b>	"Action/adventure" -- a story which focuses on fight scenes.	Harry Potter
<b>ABH</b>	See <i>Anywhere But Here</i> .	Star Wars
<b>ACAD, Acad</b>	Indicates a story taking place during the academy (specialized college) career of the characters involved.	Star Trek, Star Wars
<b>ACFF</b>	"Alt.comic.fan-fiction," a newsgroup spun off of RACMX many years ago in order to keep the loonies in their own bin. As to who exactly the loonies are, I'll let you draw your own conclusions. Sadly, this newsgroup has pretty much been abandoned to tumbleweeds and spam.	comics
<b>active fan</b>	A fan who gets personally involved in the fan community, beyond merely enjoying the source material. The latter is a <i>casual fan</i> .	Star Trek
<b>actorfic, actor-fanfic</b>	Stories about the actors themselves, as opposed to the characters they play. See <i>real-people fic</i> .	Xena, Roswell
<b>actorslash</b>	See <i>real-people fic</i> .	Xena
<b>adult</b>	Refers to tales which are inappropriate for children due to sexual content, violence, or mature subject matter.	general
<b>age statement</b>	Anything which makes the reader declare that he/she is legally old enough to access adult material. Often found in the form of a link that must be purposely clicked to access adult material, thus removing liability from the writer and archivist.	general
<b>AGoL</b>	"Ares God of Love" -- Ares' designation in certain alternate-universe episodes, abbreviated in this manner to differentiate him from Ares' normal nasty self (sometimes denoted as AGoW -- "Ares God of War"). Noted here because it's not an immediately apparent acronym.	Hercules: The Legendary Journeys
<b>AGoW</b>	"Ares God of War." See <i>AGoL</i> for full explanation.	Hercules: The Legendary Journeys
<b>alternate universe</b>	Imagine a universe slightly different from ours... All fictional settings and the variants thereof are said to take place in alternate universes, as if they're actually real but can't be seen or reached except by the imagination -- or by crossovers. ;) Sometimes this term is shortened to AU or A/U in other fandoms; however, the concept is universal. See also <i>Elseworld</i> (DC/Marvel) and <i>uber</i> (Xena).	general
<b>AMV</b>	The acronym for <i>Anime Music Video</i> .	anime/manga

<b>ANC</b>	"Annoying New Character" -- an author-created character who (obviously) annoys the hell out of readers. Often, but not always, a <i>Mary Sue</i> .	anime/manga
<b>angst</b>	Refers to the emotional wounds suffered and/or borne by a character, especially if they spend pages moaning about their miserable life in great detail. Can add intensity to a story or turn it into one big long pityparty. Warning: angst can be addictive!	general
<b>angstfic</b>	A tale, generally a <i>vignette</i> and often first-person, which ruminates on the heavy emotional repercussions of a character's ruined relationships, life, month, day, hairstyle, etc. 'Ware suicide.	general
<b>anime</b>	Short form of "animeshon," the Japanese phonetic spelling of "animation." While technically it refers to all animation, anime fans reserve "cartoon" for Western fare. The old term <i>Japanimation</i> is considered offensive, both racially and as a lame pun. See <i>manga</i> for the difference between the two mediums.	anime/manga
<b>anime music video</b>	A fan-production wherein scenes from a favorite show are spliced together to an appropriate song. Considered a creative outlet as much as fanfic or fanart. Often abbreviated to AMV.	anime/manga
<b>Annoying Original Female Character</b>	Any <i>Original Female Character</i> who's, well, irritating as all hell. Usually a <i>Mary Sue</i> . Often abbreviated to AOFC.	general
<b>antific</b>	A story in which an author abuses and/or kills off the cast of a show, book, or story he/she dislikes. Rather childish, but sometimes funny.	MST3K
<b>Any Two Guys</b>	A poorly-written <i>slash</i> story which is so generic that if you changed the names and a few minor details, the main characters could be mistaken for any two men pulled off the street. Usually abbreviated to ATG	unknown
<b>Anywhere But Here</b>	A type of story told in second-person form (ie. "He walks over and takes your hand...") These tend to be sexual in nature and are generally regarded as pretty bloody horrible. Usually abbreviated to ABH.	Star Wars
<b>AOFC</b>	The acronym for <i>Annoying Original Female Character</i> .	general
<b>APA</b>	Amateur Press (or Publication) Association (or Alliance) -- an old-fashioned way of distributing fan-related materials in which contributors submitted pages to an editor who photocopied and mailed out the collated result. Some APAs featured fanfic, though it was not originally called that. APAs still exist and are sometimes mentioned in connection with fanfic.	old fandom
<b>archive (n.)</b>	A collection of fanfic available on a website or automatically logged for a mailing list. The former is handled done by an archivist, either of their own work or that of others, with express permissions;	general

	the latter is automatically handled by a list server under the assumption that anyone posting to the list knows in advance that their posted work will be logged for future access. A third as-yet-rare type of archive allows writers to archive their own work (ie. <a href="http://www.fanfiction.net">www.fanfiction.net</a> ).	
<b>archive (v.)</b>	To save a story, essay, comment, etc. in an archive.	general
<b>archive fic</b>	Originally created by Buffy archivist Anya to present her archive updates in an amusing fashion, this is one clever way to keep an off-topic post on-topic. Basically, the author writes him/herself into a short fic interacting with a character(s). Usually used to get information out to a mailing list. Also known in comic-fanfic circles as a <i>feedback fic</i> .	Buffy
<b>archivist</b>	Any person who owns/manages an online repository of information, either on a website or in a public FTP. In fandom's case, this usually refers specifically to someone who archives fanfic and/or fanart.	general
<b>ATG</b>	See <i>Any Two Guys</i> .	unknown
<b>AU, A/U</b>	See <i>alternate universe</i> .	Star Trek, general
<b>Aus, A(us)</b>	Shorthand for "Angelus" -- as opposed to "A" for "Angel." Noted here because it's not an immediately apparent acronym.	Buffy, Angel
<b>Aura Of Smooth</b>	An imaginary energy field said to exist around blatant <i>Mary Sues</i> or other <i>self-insertions</i> . It's the only explanation for how the canon characters suddenly turn into gullible shadows of their normal selves around 'em.	MST3K
<b>avatar</b>	A character which represents the person that created him/her -- a fictional version of the real person, so to speak. Most writers have several "me" characters but only one true avatar.	gaming, general
<b>B</b>		
<b>Babe Of The Week</b>	According to <a href="#">Kat</a> : "You know how Our Hunky Hero always seems to meet, each episode, a beautiful (feisty) woman who ends up going out with him and/or exchanging kisses with him, and/or going to bed with him before the end of the episode -- and is then never seen or heard from again? She's the Babe Of The Week." Usually abbreviated to BOTW.	Sentinel, others
<b>babyfic</b>	Fanfic in which the main characters adopt and/or raise children. Usually refers to a subgenre of Mulder Scully Married (MSM) fanfic.	X-Files
<b>badfic</b>	To quote (edited) from <a href="#">the source</a> itself: 1) Fiction that is intentionally bad, written to entertain and amuse, and also educate, by pointing out common errors made by inexperienced writers. 2) Fiction that is unintentionally bad; the author thinks it's good. Often those who know the	Buffy

	difference between good and bad fic don't know whether to laugh or cry...	
<b>baka</b>	Japanese for idiot, dope, moron, fool, etc. Most famously heard as "Ranma no baka!" ("Ranma, you idiot!") Has crept into many anime fans' vocabulary.	anime/manga
<b>Barbieshipper</b>	A fan of a particular <i>pairing</i> that acts a particular way. Barbieshippers want their pairing to behave in an idealized fashion, and tend to throw fits if anything threatens that cherished bubble. Get a good full explanation <a href="#">here</a> .	X-Files
<b>bard</b>	One who writes Xena and/or Hercules fanfic. See <i>fanficcer</i> .	Xena
<b>basher fic</b>	Fanfic devoted to vilifying, humiliating, torturing, and/or killing a character who the author dislikes. The character in question may be portrayed as anything from a buffoon to a jerk to a psychotic monster, even if he/she was never portrayed as any of these in canon.	general
<b>BBS</b>	Boy Band Slash, ie. NSYNC, the Backstreet Boys, etc. Yes, it exists, and there's a lot of it. See also <i>slash</i> and <i>RPS</i> .	slash
<b>bdsf, BDSM</b>	Bondage, domination, sado-masochism. A term from outside of fanfic, but a useful one to know when deciphering ratings.	general
<b>Best Served, First In</b>	The policy of adding stories to an <i>archive</i> in order of their ease of addition; that is, those stories which are easy to archive (well spelled, properly spaced, correctly formatted) are generally added first.	unknown
<b>beta, betaread, beta-read</b>	To edit and comment on someone else's work before it's finalized, taken presumably from the old software term "betatesting." Betareading brings a fresh perspective to a rough draft -- by the definition of the word, one cannot beta one's own work.	general
<b>betareader, beta-reader</b>	Someone who edits your work upon your request (or bribe). You cannot be your own betareader, and unsolicited comments from readers after the story goes live do not count.	general
<b>bezoar</b>	Another term for <i>troll</i> -- originally a B:TVS monster who controlled others' minds through its foul eggs. In appearance, a huge, gaping maw.	Buffy
<b>BGM</b>	Short for "background music" -- an integral part of the anime experience, for some fans.	anime/manga
<b>bi-faux-nen</b>	A humorous term invented by the <a href="#">Yaoi Files</a> to denote girls who either happen to look like pretty boys or are purposely masquerading as males. A pun on the term <i>bishounen</i> .	anime/manga
<b>Big Name Fan</b>	Someone who is so active in fandom that their name becomes well-known in fan circles, to the point that sometimes other fans want their autographs or pay their way as guest speakers. A term native to <i>conventions</i> and other traditional fan gatherings. A step lower on the totem pole is the	old fandom

	WKF ( <i>Well-Known Fan</i> ) -- Lord knows who makes the distinction. Usually abbreviated to BNF. Also called a <i>superfan</i> .	
<b>bishie</b>	Having <i>bishonen</i> qualities.	anime/manga
<b>bishounen</b>	"Beautiful young man" -- refers to any male so inhumanly handsome that he's pretty, as often seen in popular anime. Although not generally automatically associated with adult stories, this word's etymology is covered in Yumemisama's <a href="#">full explanation</a> of anime/manga adult story classifications.	anime/manga
<b>BLFC</b>	The acronym for <i>Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest</i> .	fiction
<b>blogs</b>	Short for "weblogs" -- denotes any online diaries or journals. <a href="#">LiveJournal</a> is popular with the fic crowd.	general, falling out of usage
<b>Blue Believers</b>	An old-but-still-going-strong Beast/Nightcrawler/anyone-cool-&-blue fanclub.	comics
<b>BNF</b>	The acronym for <i>Big Name Fan</i> .	old fandom
<b>BOTW</b>	The acronym for <i>Babe Of The Week</i> .	Sentinel, others
<b>boyfic</b>	A sarcastic term for stories big on action, explosions, and violence but low on character development.	X-Files
<b>breaking the fourth wall</b>	The fourth wall is what you can't see when you look at a movie or a comic panel -- the invisible barrier which separates fantasy from reality. A character breaks the fourth wall when they speak or refer directly to their audience or creator, revealing awareness of their fictional existence. Not strictly a fanfic term, but a useful one. The fourth wall is pretty much a shattered ruin in any <i>Subreality</i> story or <i>metafic</i> .	general
<b>Brit-pick, britpick</b>	To correct or <i>betaread</i> a story in such a way that brings its lexicon, spelling, etc. in line with British usage.	Harry Potter
<b>Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest, The</b>	The BLFC is an annual competition at San Jose State University which challenges entrants to write the worst possible novel-opening sentence. Edward George Bulwer-Lytton was a minor Victorian novelist and the original author of the notorious "It was a dark and stormy night."	fiction
<b>bunny</b>	See <i>plot bunny</i> .	general
<b>bunny</b>	Short for "boink bunny" -- somebody met for casual playful sex, often in the context of a convention. Not technically a fanfic term, and not a very common one, but it does pop up! Term created/popularized by Trisha Sebastian.	comics, anime/manga
<b>bunnyslipper s, predatory canaballistic</b>	Namely Wink-Wink and Nudge-Nudge, writer Abyss's imaginary sentient footwear. It's a long story. Suffice it to say that they're small, cute, fluffy, and known throughout comic fanficdom as the most	general



	dangerous creatures in the <i>multiverse</i> .	
<b>C</b>		
<b>C&amp;C</b>	"Comments And Criticism" -- another word for feedback. According to Andrew Dynon, "Authors need the former to survive -- without it they either curl up into a ball and die, or buy an Uzi and take out a K-Mart. They don't like the latter, and will often respond with posts the size of doctoral theses as to why they are right and you are wrong."	anime/manga
<b>canon</b>	An adjective referring to a character, event, plotline, etc. which happened "for real" -- the actual professional source material. Note that "canon" is a term used throughout most fanfictions, not just here. On the Star Trek fanfic forums, this is sometimes jokingly referred to as TDC (The Dread Canon). See also <i>fanon</i> .	general
<b>casual fan, casual</b>	A fan who merely enjoys reading/watching, as opposed to an <i>active fan</i> .	Star Trek
<b>CBFFAs</b>	The Annual Comic-Book Fan-Fiction Awards, an open fic/writer popularity vote first instituted in early 1998 -- voting is conducted in December/January (watch this site and others) and the results are presented in a rather unique form in March (hopefully!). The virtual award taken home by winners is called the Creative License.	comics
<b>CC</b>	See <i>Conventional Couple</i>	Roswell
<b>CFAN</b>	The Comic-Book Fanfic Authors' Network (yes, I know the acronym doesn't fit exactly) -- the major hubsite for comic ficdom, now on hiatus.	comics
<b>challenge</b>	An informal game played in writing circles -- one person says "Hey, I dare you to write about [X]!" and anyone who likes the idea responds with a story about it. [X] can be a character, a particular set of characters, a crossover, a situation, an event, or even a set of funny lines or objects that must be included within the body of the story. A challenge must be interesting, unusual, and original -- something that hasn't been done before, if possible. I.e. if characters X and Y have been written as a couple a hundred times already, asking for more stories about them is not a challenge.	general
<b>challenge fic</b>	Any story written as the result of a challenge.	general
<b>-chan</b>	A Japanese suffix that implies that one is younger and more innocent. It could be translated as "sweetie," "little one," "dear," or even "junior." Used as an endearment or as a component of the word <i>chanslash</i> .	anime/manga
<b>chan</b>	Short for <i>chanslash</i> .	Star Wars
<b>chanslash</b>	Slash stories wherein one member of the <i>pairing</i> is under the legal age of consent (usually between 13-18 years of age but can also be under 21). When George Lucas based the Jedi upon Samurai	Star Wars

	warriors, he neglected the fact that the Samurai expected apprentices to "service" them in return for training. Many Phantom Menace slash writers have thus interpreted this into Jedi tradition. NOTE: Many archives/lists will not accept chanslash. Chanslash archives are often underground to avoid legal difficulties. See also <i>shotacon</i> and <i>lolicon</i> .	
<b>character death</b>	A warning placed in the header of a story in which one or more major characters dies. Yeah, I know, my opinions shouldn't be expressed on this page, but honestly: "Oh no, you killed [insert character name here] without warning me! I'm traumatized! Boo hoo! Waaaah!" *snort* Babies. Go read "Devil's Due" and get out of my face.	general
<b>chibi</b>	Japanese for "small/cute." A word used often in fandom.	anime/manga
<b>chi-bishounen</b>	A humorous term invented by the <a href="#">Yaoi Files</a> to denote cute young boys in the range of 10 to 13 years old. Taken from the words <i>chibi</i> and <i>bishounen</i> . Good examples are the Clamp Campus Detectives.	anime/manga
<b>citrus, citrusy</b>	Indicates a tale with a strongly erotic tone yet without any actual sex. Read Yumemisama's <a href="#">full explanation</a> of anime/manga adult story classifications.	anime/manga
<b>combined story</b>	A story involving more than one Trek series -- ie. TNG/DS9 (Next Generation/Voyager).	Star Trek
<b>The Common People</b>	Aka TCP -- an open-to-all-writers anthology of short stories dealing with everyday non-superhero life in the Marvel Universe. This concept can be used in other genres.	comics, Gundam Wing
<b>con</b>	Slang for a fan-related convention, often used as a modifier (ie. consuite, San Diego ComicCon). In comic fanfic, organized gatherings of fanficcors who don't normally get to see each other are called cons -- so far the big ones in comic fanfic are DexCon in Toronto and Subrealcon in Southern California, while smaller ones include SouthernCon and AussieCon.	old fandom
<b>con</b>	Short for <i>consensual</i> .	general
<b>concom</b>	Short for <i>convention committee</i> .	Star Trek
<b>conrep</b>	Short for <i>con report</i> .	general
<b>con report</b>	A fan's personal report of their dealings and meetings at a convention, nowadays often posted to LiveJournals or con-related sites. Sometimes shortened to "conrep."	general
<b>consensual</b>	In fanfic, this refers to sexual relations or situations (as elements within a story) which are agreed to by all involved fictional parties. Shortened to " <i>con</i> " in subject headers.	general
<b>constructive</b>	Story feedback that is helpful, useful, and detailed,	general

<b>criticism</b>	rather than rude, curt, disparaging, or happy-happy positive. Also called <i>constructive feedback</i> .	
<b>constructive feedback</b>	See <i>constructive criticism</i> .	general
<b>continuation</b>	A fanfic which follows on from the end of a series or movie.	anime/manga
<b>convention committee</b>	The group of volunteers who plans and manage a convention. Sometimes shortened to "concom."	Star Trek
<b>Conventional Couple</b>	The pair who's definitely an item in <i>canon</i> , or whom will obviously end up together in the end. Often abbreviated to CC.	Roswell
<b>crossover</b>	A story which straddles two different fandoms. Can be as close mixing characters from different universes within a genre (ie. Batman/Wolverine) or as wildly disparate as you can imagine (ie. Buffy/Teletubbies). These stories can either be great fun or infamously horrible, depending on the skill of the writer. Sometimes spelled "cross-over" or abbreviated to "C/O" but not with comic fandom.	general
<b>Conqueror-Warrior/Slave</b>	Refers to all stories which take place in an alternate timeline wherein Xena forgets/pretends/becomes/is a warlord and goes on to conquer kingdoms, etc. Not necessarily <i>Xena The Conqueror</i> , but similar.	Xena, Hercules
<b>cosplay</b>	"Costume play." To go to a convention or a roleplaying event dressed up as a favorite character; more common in Japan and anime fandom, but you can probably spot 'em at any con.	anime/manga
<b>CSM</b>	Cigarette-Smoking Man (aka Cancerman, the Smoking Man) -- Agent Mulder's archnemesis. Noted here because it's not an immediately apparent acronym.	X-Files
<b>Cult Of The Pallid Hunter, The</b>	Fanficcers who insist upon writing Iolaus as a whimpering, crying, helpless little man subservient to and dependant upon Hercules.	Hercules
<b>CWC</b>	"Curse? What curse?" or "Clause? What clause?" A reference to the "curse" that prevents Angel from achieving, er, happiness. CWC is how some ficcers ignore this major plotpoint to have him boink anyone he wants without reverting to his evil self Angelus.	B:TVS, Angel
<b>D</b>		
<b>Dane, 'Dane, dane, 'dane</b>	An insult with a fantasy-fan/SCA flavor. See <i>Mundane</i> .	old fandom
<b>darkfic</b>	A story involving a large amount of death/pain/trauma being inflicted on the characters, often to force out characterization. To quote Elsa Bibat's essay "A Long Strange Walk": "Those who really don't like seeing their favourite characters slaughtered or emotionally and mentally scarred for life are advised not to read anything with a [DARK] tag or warning." In anime/manga a darkfic is especially a tale from a	anime/manga

	series otherwise considered fairly "light" or comedic, and is also called a <i>shockfic</i> .	
<b>Dark Jedi</b>	A Fallen Jedi Knight seduced by the power of the Dark Side of the Force. I note this here because it is a bone of contention -- some Star Wars fans believe that being a Jedi is akin to religion (if you've turned dark, you've stopped being a Jedi), while others state that once a Jedi, always a Jedi.	Star Wars
<b>deathfic</b>	A fic where one or more characters die or have just died, usually written to focus on how the remaining characters cope with the loss.	anime/manga
<b>delurk, delurking</b>	To quit being a lurker by publically posting a story or an introduction. (Personal comments/feedback don't really count as only the person thus addressed will see them.) Also serves as a noun referring to that first public post.	general
<b>derivative fiction</b>	Creative works that are based on another's ideas. An older and more technical term for <i>fanfiction</i> .	old fandom
<b>Deus Ex Machina, deus ex machina</b>	Latin: "God In The Machine." This refers to a contrived plot device which shows up out of nowhere to resolve an otherwise insurmountable problem. Not strictly a fanfic term, of course, but a useful one. Deus ex machinas are regarded as the cop-out refuge of a bad writer or gamemaster.	general
<b>Devil's Triangle</b>	Another interesting scuffle in Star Wars fandom. This term is used solely by Anakin/Amidala 'shippers who think any sort of love triangle involving those two (ie. Amidala/Obi-Wan) is disgusting and unthinkable.	Star Wars
<b>dino</b>	an oldtimer ("Call me a dino, but I remember back when Claremont...").	general
<b>dinew</b>	Someone who was an dino in another fanficdom but is new to this one. Term coined by Trisha Sebastian.	comics
<b>DISC</b>	Short for "discussion" -- on some mailing lists or forums this notation is added to a message's subject line to indicate that it is a discussion.	comics
<b>disclaimers</b>	Information usually placed at the top of a fanfic. Disclaimers can include legal disclaimers (ie. who owns what in the story to follow), dedications, rating, plot summary, and various explanatory author's notes. In <i>Subreality</i> fic, full disclaimers are often placed at the bottom to avoid spoiling surprise guest appearances. Also known in other fandoms as <i>header info</i> .	general
<b>djka</b>	Abbreviation of <i>doujinka</i> .	+
<b>double drabble</b>	A <i>vignette</i> exactly 200 words long. See <i>drabble</i> .	Doctor Who
<b>doujinka</b>	A fan who draws manga ( <i>doujinshi</i> ). Sometimes shortened to "djka."	anime/manga
<b>doujinshi</b>	Self-published or non-mainstream published mangas; some have original characters but others	anime/manga

	are based on pre-existing series and thus count as fanfic. Many doujinshi are created by groups of artists called <i>doujinka</i> .	
<b>drabble</b>	Set by the Birmingham University SF Society as thus: a self-contained <i>vignette</i> of exactly 100 words, no more, no less, with up to 15 more words are allowed for the title. Hyphenated words are in dispute. The term originates from a Monty Python skit: "Drabble. A word game for 2 to 4 players. The four players sit from left to right and the first person to write a novel wins." Drabbles started in British SF fandom in the late '80s. A <i>half-drabble</i> is fifty words long; a <i>double drabble</i> is 200 words long.	Doctor Who
<b>The Dread Canon</b>	A joking term used on Star Trek fanfic forums. See <i>canon</i> .	Star Trek
<b>D/S, d/s</b>	Dominance/submission, with consent implied.	general
<b>E</b>		
<b>EBE</b>	Extraterrestrial Biological Entity. A term often used in X-Files fanfic instead of "aliens" both for its higher degree of precision and its frequent use on the show.	X-Files
<b>ecchi</b>	The letter "H" in Japanese -- the first letter of <i>hentai</i> , and thus used to mean "pervert!" or "just a bit of kinky/naughty." Can also refer to material containing softcore eroticism.	anime/manga
<b>egoboo, ego-boo</b>	Short for "ego boost," an old term -- basically any verbal encouragement or support a writer receives, be it spoken or typed. The recently-invented opposite is <i>negoboo</i> .	APAs/fanzines
<b>ELF</b>	Any story that places Lucas (seaQuest's teen genius) in a bad situation (ie. child abuse, kidnapping, etc) from which he can escape or be rescued for the sake of character development. Variations of this idea can probably be fitted to similar characters in other fandoms.	seaQuest DSV
<b>ELOC, eloc</b>	E-Mailed Letter Of Comment -- not commonly used. See <i>LOC</i> .	old fandom
<b>Elseworld</b>	Taken from the DC comics of the same name, an Elseworld is an alternate reality or timezone-- you may recognize the basic characters, but they are actually analogues leading entirely different lives. Ie. mutants cropping up in the old West, or Batman living during the Inquisition. See also <i>uber</i> .	comics
<b>ep</b>	Episode of a TV show.	general
<b>erotica</b>	A highly subjective term often used to differentiate "tasteful" or "classy" x-rated stories from "trashy porn." As Gloria Leonard says, "The difference between pornography and erotica is lighting."	general
<b>Estrogen Brigade</b>	a humorous term used by some segments of female fandom who are devoted to a male star, ie. the PMEB (Paul McGann Estrogen Brigade), the DDEB (David Duchovny Estrogen Brigade), or the	several

	HJEB (Hugh Jackman Estrogen Brigade).	
<b>EU, E/U</b>	See <i>Extended Universe</i> .	Star Wars
<b>euchronia</b>	To envision a better time, usually in terms of a golden age (versus "eutopia," the envisioning of a better place). Noted here because long-term fans tend to do it. A LOT. ;)	Star Trek
<b>Extended Universe</b>	Refers to any Star Wars information derived from a source other than the films -- books, comics, toy boxes, computer games, etc. Often abbreviated to EU or E/U.	Star Wars
<b>EZB</b>	EZBoard, a free service often used to host fic-related messageboards. Feature-laden but loaded with pop-ups.	general
<b>F</b>		
<b>faanfiction</b>	Nope, that's not a typo -- this is an old term referring to self-referential fiction about fans and/or fandom itself, usually in the form of satire laden with jokes. See <i>Subreality</i> or <i>metafic</i> for more recent Internet equivalents.	old fandom
<b>face-fault</b>	An expression of shock or surprise -- the character's mouth hangs open, their face sags, and their eyes go huge and blank. Similar to the "jaw-drop" of American animation.	anime/manga
<b>face-plant</b>	An expression of shock or surprise -- the character falls down face-first, as if they have literally been knocked over by astonishment. Usually a reaction to monumental stupidity.	anime/manga
<b>Factions</b>	Divisions among Forever Knight fans, a highly splintered fandom -- ie. those who support particular pairings (slash or het), characters (Knighties, FoD=Friends of Don), traits (Dark Knighties, Dark Perks), icons (Caddywhackers), and even those who refuse to be pigeon-holed (DieHards).	Forever Knight
<b>Falstaff Syndrome</b>	See <i>top-heavy</i> .	comics
<b>fan</b>	Short for "fanatic," the definition of "fan" depends on who you talk to. A mundane on the street will tell you that it means "someone who's really into something," and probably means a sports team or a TV show. However, when we say "fan," we're really using a secret wink-wink geek code that means "person who's into something that requires an operational brain and some creativity," be it sci-fi, fantasy, roleplaying, comics, etc. We're not just fans -- we're <i>fans</i> . And in our own aggressively antiestablishmentarianistic way we're pretty bloody arrogant about it, too. ;)	general
<b>fanac</b>	Short for "fan activity" -- attending cons, singing filk, writing fanfic, drawing fanart, etc.	Star Trek
<b>fanboy</b>	See <i>fangirl</i> .	general
<b>fandom</b>	A collective term used to describe all fans and their	general

	activities. Science fiction fandom originates in the 1930s, when the first clubs were created.	
<b>Fandom Wank, Fandom_Wank</b>	A <a href="#">community</a> devoted to mocking the arrogant, pretentious, crazy, and downright stupid throughout fandom forums online. Widely despised, though not by THIS glossary maintainer. ;) Currently hosted at JournalFen. Often abbreviated to F W or FW.	general
<b>fanfic</b>	Short for "fan fiction" or "fanfiction," also called "fic" -- any story written about an existing TV show, book, movies, comic, etc. without permission from the original creators or intention of profit. Here's a <a href="#">really good selection</a> of what various glossaries have to say about this word... NOTE: An older term for fanfic is <i>derivative fiction</i> .	general
<b>fanficcer</b>	Someone who writes fanfic. Also shortened to <i>ficcer</i> or more generically called "writers" -- called "Writers" (with a capital W) in Subreality fic and " <i>bards</i> " in Xena fic.	general
<b>fanfiction university</b>	Parody genre in which <i>badfic</i> authors are kidnapped to a university in the fictional universe in question and subjected to educational torments by canon characters. Inspired by Camilla Sandman's Official Fanfiction University of Middle Earth ( <a href="#">OFUM</a> ).	LOTR
<b>fan fiction, fanfiction</b>	See <i>fanfic</i> .	general
<b>fangirl</b>	See <i>fanboy</i> ;) No, okay, seriously, any childish, obsessed, over-the-top fan who makes more mature fans embarrassed to be associated with them. The kind you see on TV (usually in full costume) every time the local newsteam decides to go cover a convention. Specifically, in ficdom, a writer whose stories are nothing but badly-written wish-fulfilment fantasies.	general
<b>fanon</b>	Information or characterization that has never been confirmed in <i>canon</i> but is accepted as such by fans, ie. Bobby Drake's orientation, Cordelia Chase's nightmares, or Yoda as Qui-Gon's Master. As a reader on <a href="#">CABS</a> pointed out: "Fanon refers to much more than pairings. Mulder's insomnia, his dead fish, his Armani suits are fanon. Methos tossing bottlecaps behind the fridge is fanon because he did it once on the show [but] fans expanded it to ridiculous proportions."	general
<b>fanservice</b>	Any character-related eye-candy added just to make the viewers/readers happy -- gratuitous panty shots, shower scenes, etc. Usually geared toward males, but sometimes the gals get theirs too!	anime/manga
<b>fanzine</b>	See <i>zine</i> .	old fandom
<b>fb</b>	See <i>feedback</i> .	unknown
<b>feedback</b>	Any comment -- whether it be by e-mail, chat, or live -- from a reader/viewer/listener etc. to a writer/artist/filker about their creative work. Put it	general

	this way: most creative types like to "paid" for their hard work in feedback. ;) In other fandoms this is referred to as <i>fb</i> or <i>LOC</i> .	
<b>feedback fic</b>	Originally called <i>archive fic</i> , when authors in Buffy fandom wrote off-topic notes in the form of little stories to avoid getting in trouble and make them eligible for archival. In comic fandom, these are usually written to help give other authors feedback - hence the new name.	comics
<b>femslash</b>	Tales regarding romantic or sexual relationships between female characters. This idea warrants its own term in fandoms where lesbian themes are either very rare or are overshadowed by male/male <i>pairings</i> . See <i>slash</i> .	slash
<b>fen</b>	The plural of "fan" as used on the convention circuit. Rarely seen online except in the word <i>slashfen</i> .	old fandom
<b>F/F, f/f</b>	Denotes a story involving a romantic or sexual relationship between two female characters. In mainstream porn "F" usually indicates an adult woman while "f" indicates one who's underage -- ie. F/F would describe an encounter between two adult women while F/f would be a liaison between an adult woman and a teenage girl, and so on. However, this distinction is not well-known in fanfic and <i>cannot</i> be used as an accurate guide to content. For full details on same-sex themes in fanfic, see <i>slash</i> .	general
<b>FIAWOL</b>	Short for "Fandom is a way of life." See <i>FIJAGDH</i> .	old fandom
<b>fic</b>	See <i>fanfic</i> .	general
<b>ficcer</b>	Short for <i>fanficcer</i> -- one who writes <i>fanfic</i> . See <i>fanficcer</i> .	general
<b>#fictalk</b>	Comic fanfic's IRC room on EFNet until troll problems drove 'em out, still used on occasion. See <i>#subcafe</i> .	comics
<b>#fictalkers</b>	The old word for the IRC chat regulars, be they in <i>#subcafe</i> or <i>#fictalk</i> .	comics
<b>fictive</b>	Any character in a fanfic, usually but not always referring to those either created or altered by fanfic writers. More specifically, characters usually called "fictives" when they are outside their usual story, ie. hanging out in the <i>Subreality Cafe</i> . Fictives sometimes get the chance to scold or comfort their writer in <i>metafics</i> .	Subreality
<b>Ficworld</b>	A major page devoted to Generation X and then X-Force/New Mutants stories. Formerly known as "GenXForce" -- now defunct but often mentioned.	comics
<b>FIJAGDH</b>	Short for "Fandom is just a goddamn hobby." See <i>FIAWOL</i> .	old fandom
<b>filk</b>	A fandom-oriented rewriting or parody of an existing song, using the same tune but new words. Can also refer to original tunes written about/within fandom,	general



	or to the actual act of turning a mundane song into a filk. Popular after-hours at conventions.	
<b>fillo</b>	A pun on the word " <i>illo</i> " -- a piece of fanart which was not designed for a specific story but which can be used as an illustration for any story it happens to suit. Also, any graphic that helps the <i>archivist</i> or editor fill dull blank space.	old fandom
<b>First Time</b>	A story that chronicles a couple's first romantic and/or sexual encounter. Often tooth-rottingly sweet.	unknown
<b>flame</b>	to "flame" someone is to viciously insult them or their work in a manner that has little or no redeeming value. Note that "flame" is a general-usage network, and is not appreciated anywhere... <i>especially</i> not in writing/creative groups.	general
<b>flamewar</b>	A bitter and often childish fight conducted with written <i>flames</i> , ie. in e-mail, forums, journals, and beyond.	general
<b>fluff</b>	lighthearted, inconsequential. A fluff fic is somewhat like a sillyfic, but more cute than humorous -- it's generally short and sweet. In some fandoms, stories of this type are jokingly called "hhjj" (happy-happy-joy-joy).	general
<b>fluffy angst</b>	A style of story that starts out terribly dark and gloomy but then works up to a terrifically sweet happy ending. Often overly so.	general
<b>Founderfic</b>	Tales written about the Hogwarts founders.	Harry Potter
<b>fusion</b>	A type of crossover wherein the characters in one series, instead of meeting the characters in another series, actually <i>replace</i> them in the continuity. Again quoting Elsa Bibat's essay "A Long Strange Walk": "A fusion is what you would get if you tossed one series in with another in a blender and pressed 'MAXIMUM PUREE.'"	anime/manga
<b>FUT</b>	Frequently Used Terms. A glossary/FAQ like the one you're currently reading.	anime/manga
<b>F_W, FW</b>	See <i>Fandom Wank</i> .	general
<b>G</b>		
<b>gafiate</b>	From the acronym GAFIA ("Get Away From It All). Once used to describe the act of immersing oneself in fandom to escape the <i>mundane</i> world, this verb has now come to mean the exact opposite: to drop out of fandom completely. It is also possible to gafiate from one fandom to another.	old fandom
<b>gayfic</b>	Fanfic centering around characters who are actually <i>known</i> to be gay/lesbian in canon -- a subtle distinction from <i>slash</i> , which involves characters who are either declared or assumed to be straight.	The Sentinel
<b>GC Elvish</b>	See <i>Grey Company Elvish</i> .	Tolkien
<b>gen</b>	Short for "general" -- denotes a fanfic suitable for all ages and mores, containing no sexual overtones. Used by slash writers to mean "not slash."	slash

<b>genderfuck</b>	A story in which at least one character's gender is altered -- occasionally via reassignment surgery, but more often through a plot device like alien experimentation, mutation, magic, etc. These tales often involve sex, but not necessarily; the nickname is akin to the term "mindfuck."	Star Trek zines
<b>gen fen, genfen</b>	Fans who prefer non- <i>slash</i> material, or who oppose slash because they think it violates correct characterization. This term is mainly used by slash fans to describe "the opposition." See <i>fen</i> or <i>slashfen</i> .	slash
<b>genre</b>	In general usage a genre is a class of story, such as fantasy, sci-fi, romance, etc. Fanfic itself is technically a genre. When specifically used by a fanficcer, however, the word can mean be more specific, denoting stories that can be lumped together by some common concept, setting, style, element, or <i>pairing</i> .	general
<b>Godwin's Law</b>	"The first person to mention Nazis, Hitler, or fascists in an argument is immediately declared the loser and the argument is over." Full law explained <a href="#">here</a> .	Usenet
<b>gomen</b>	Japanese for "Sorry!" Has crept into many anime fans' vocabulary.	anime/manga
<b>Great Game, The</b>	Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories gave rise to the Sherlock Holmes Literary Society, which in turn inspired the Great Game: a lifestyle wherein fans pretend that Sherlock Holmes was an actual historical personage...and that Doyle was merely Dr. Watson's literary agent. Fans have been "playing along" for longer than you'd think!	Sherlock Holmes
<b>Grelvish</b>	See <i>Grey Company Elvish</i>	Tolkien
<b>Grey Company Elvish</b>	A <a href="#">pseudo-language</a> , based on Quenya and Sindarin from the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, invented by a roleplaying group. Nothing wrong with that, per se, except when aspiring new fanfic writers mistake it for the real deal and scatter it liberally through their writings. Also called GC Elvish or Grelvish.	Tolkien
<b>Grey Jedi</b>	A concept George Lucas used in reference to Qui-Gon Jinn. Some fans have taken it to mean that Grey Jedi do not see in terms of Light or Dark but rather that all, including the Jedi Council and the Republic, is secondary to serving the Force itself. Noted because it comes up often in some corners of Star Wars fandom.	Star Wars
<b>GTM</b>	"Gratuitous Tactile Moment," "Gratuitous Touchy Moment" -- innocent physical contact between characters, often to prevent injury or to provide support or comfort. Just because it's innocent to the characters, however, doesn't mean that the writer/readers aren't enjoying it -- or that it won't lead to something rather <i>less</i> innocent! Frequently spotted in <i>'ship</i> py stories, <i>slash</i> , or <i>smarm</i> .	X-Files
<b>grrl</b>	As Red Monster put it: "Like a girl, only without the	general

	sugar and spice. We are not darling little pink-ruffled girls, we are s***-kicking, taking-crap-from-no-one grrls." Not a fanfic term, but one often seen so here's the entry for ya.	
<b>GWLBWLB</b>	Girls Who Love Boys Who Love Boys = in other words, female <i>slash</i> fen.	X-Files
<b>H</b>		
<b>H</b>	Short for <i>hentai</i> and meaning the same thing as <i>ecchi</i> , H is sometimes used to form warning terms like H-anime, H-doujinshi, and so on.	anime/manga
<b>half-drabble</b>	A <i>vignette</i> exactly fifty words long. See <i>drabble</i> .	Doctor Who
<b>hall of shame</b>	A site which features the dregs of fanficdom -- badly written garbage, character assassinations, cliches, and worse. Some see them as flames; some see them as a sharp form of <i>constructive criticism</i> ; others merely see them as just desserts.	general
<b>hammerspace</b>	A pocket dimension where characters in silly stories keep weapons, used to explain how they whip 'em out of thin air. Named after Akane Tendo and her "war mallet," this can be applied to any character who seems to pull a weapon out of mid air. Known to Dirty Pair fic writers as "bikini-space."	anime/manga
<b>Hawk's Archive</b>	The first major comicfic archive, consisting of all stories on the newsgroup ACFF saved on an FTP site. Long defunct but remembered by dinos.	comics
<b>h/c, H/C</b>	hurt/comfort -- a style of story in which one character is harmed (physically or emotionally) and another must save them, make them feel better, or both. Though not often seen in comic fandom, this one's been around since the original Star Trek 'zines and is often used to encourage a hopeless romance or set the stage for <i>slash</i> . In Sentinel fandom, stories of this type are jokingly called "owwies."	general
<b>header info</b>	See <i>disclaimers</i> .	X-Files, various
<b>het</b>	Short for "heterosexual" -- denotes fanfic depicting a romantic or sexual relationship between opposite genders.	slash
<b>hhjj</b>	"Happy-happy-joy-joy." See <i>fluff</i> .	unknown
<b>HOSD</b>	See <i>THOSD</i> .	comics
<b>host segment</b>	Any section of a <i>MSTing</i> wherein the cast is not interacting directly with the movie, script, fanfic, etc. Usually slice-of-life, skits, an ongoing secondary plotline, or all three. Most <i>MSTings</i> follow the original <i>MST3K</i> formula of prologue, epilogue, and several intermissions inbetween.	<i>MST3K</i>
<b>hubsite</b>	A webpage which consisted of organized links to other pages containing fanfic or ficcer resources. Called an "index" in some fandoms.	comics, others
<b>I</b>		
<b>iconoclast</b>	A writer who <i>only</i> writes about certain characters	unknown

	because nobody else is.	
<b>IDIC</b>	"Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations." The Vulcan motto, often used to symbolize fandom's acceptance of all members weird and wonderful.	Star Trek
<b>illo, illoe</b>	Short for "illustration." So far this term is mainly confined to Senners, but these things tend to spread.	The Sentinel
<b>index</b>	See <i>hubsite</i> .	Xena, others
<b>infoquest</b>	A request for information intended to assist with writing a fanfic. If the acronym "IQ" is spotted in a subject line, send all responses by private mail or else!	comics, others
<b>Inside The Web</b>	ITW for short -- a free service that once hosted most fic-related messageboards. Notoriously buggy and now defunct.	general
<b>Internet Relay Chat</b>	IRC for short. A free (so far) chat service used by many in this fandom to congregate and gab. For more info, <a href="#">click here</a> or visit <a href="#">Dal.net</a> .	general
<b>IQ</b>	An acronym used in subject headers on mailing lists like OTL. Short for <i>infoquest</i> .	comics, others
<b>IRC</b>	The acronym for <i>Internet Relay Chat</i> .	general
<b>ITW</b>	The acronym for <i>Inside The Web</i> .	general
<b>J</b>		
<b>Japanimation</b>	The old term for <i>anime</i> . Considered somewhat offensive, both racially and as a pun; try to avoid using it.	anime/manga
<b>jossed</b>	As in Buffy creator Joss Whedon. A fanfic author's theories on what "really happened" in a canon plotline are "jossed" when the canon source provides information which contradicts those fan theories. I.e. all fanfics dealing with how Angel got out of Hell were jossed when his return was shown in an actual episode.	Buffy, Angel
<b>K</b>		
<b>kakkoii</b>	Literal meaning in Japanese: "(the) form/appearance (is) good." Modern usage is closer to the American slang term "cool."	anime/manga
<b>kawaii</b>	Japanese for "Cuuuute!" Has crept into many anime fans' vocabulary -- and beyond.	anime/manga
<b>kerfuffle, kerfluffle</b>	An argument, often (but not always) about fanstuff and usually in writing. Could count as a small <i>flamewar</i> , except for the trivializing undertone of "petty bickering over something stupid/pointless."	general/LJ
<b>Kill [fill in the character] Fic</b>	A fanfic where the entire point of the story is to murder an unpopular character. Common targets include Wesley Crusher (ST:TNG), Joxer (Xena), and Jar Jar Binks (SW).	originally Star Trek
<b>L</b>		
<b>lay story</b>	A <i>Mary Sue PWP</i> -- basically little more than "author's <i>avatar</i> gets <i>canon</i> character into the sack." A very old term which predates the Internet by about ten years.	Star Trek

<b>LEO, L.E.O.</b>	Low Earth Orbit -- a silly destination for anyone who's had their butt kicked. For example, it's where most anime characters find themselves after being kicked into the air by Akane Tendo.	anime/manga
<b>lemon</b>	A fic containing gratuitous sex; some sources say it comes from the pornographic "Cream Lemon" anime series. Originally an anime term -- read Yumemisama's <a href="#">full explanation</a> of anime/manga adult story classifications.	anime/manga
<b>lemonade</b>	A cute 'n' fluffy <i>lemon</i> . Read Yumemisama's <a href="#">full explanation</a> of anime/manga adult story classifications.	anime/manga
<b>lime</b>	A fanfic involving non-explicit sexual situations, a tasteful "fade to black." Read Yumemisama's <a href="#">full explanation</a> of anime/manga adult story classifications.	anime/manga
<b>listdomme, ListDomme</b>	A more authoritative <i>listmommy</i> .	various
<b>listmom, listmommy</b>	The individual, usually female, who maintains, runs and/or moderates a <i>mailing list</i> -- often the person who created the list in the first place. Tougher versions are sometimes jokingly called <i>listdommes</i> . Called <i>mod</i> (moderator) in some fandoms.	general
<b>listsib</b>	Short for "list sibling" -- regular <i>mailing list</i> participants may use this fond term to refer to fellow members. See also <i>listmom</i> .	general
<b>LiveJournal</b>	A free <a href="#">online diary system</a> increasingly used by ficcers as another avenue of expression, interaction, and backbiting. ;) Individual journals are often called " <i>blogs</i> " -- short for "weblogs."	general
<b>LOC, LoC</b>	Letter of comment, also seen as <i>eloc</i> (e-mailed letter of comment) in some backwater ficdoms -- see <i>feedback</i> . Jessica Ross says: "LoC is way older than the fandoms you name -- LoCs were printed up in the very second zine ever. There's an old, old joke: 'The last fan in the world was alone in the ConSuite. There was a LoC on the door.'"	ST:TPM, Man From U.N.C.L.E., others -- predates online fandom
<b>loli</b>	See <i>lolicon</i>	anime/manga
<b>lolicon</b>	A romance story (usually but not always sexual in nature) in which at least one of the participants is a young girl. The age cut-off is about 15 or so. Sometimes called "roricon," "rorikon," "lolikon," or just "loli." The root comes from the novel "Lolita" and the term follows the same general usage as <i>shotacon</i> -- see also <i>chanslash</i> .	anime/manga
<b>lotrips, Lotrips</b>	A slang way of saying "LOTR RPS" = Lord Of The Rings real-people slash. See <i>RPS</i> .	LOTR
<b>lurker</b>	Member of a <i>mailing list</i> , <i>messageboard</i> , or other forum who rarely if ever directly posts or comments, instead remaining "invisible." Sometimes lurkers are so good that you don't know they're there for	general

	years. Some lists tolerate lurkers; others strongly discourage or even ban them to assure that all members "pull their weight" by participating. Please note: most fanfic writers do not like lurkers. If you enjoy a story, send <i>feedback</i> !	
<b>M</b>		
<b>mainstream</b>	The one-and-only original unaltered canon version of a character.	Subreality
<b>maintext</b>	Any canon romantic or sexual relationship between characters which occurs as the writer intended and without need for interpretation. The opposite of <i>subtext</i> .	Xena
<b>manga</b>	Japanese comic books. Manga (pronounced "MAWN-guh," with a hard "G" as in "gum") makes up forty percent of all publications in Japan and is aimed specifically at men and women as well as at teens. See <i>anime</i> for the animated side of the industry.	anime/manga
<b>Mary Sue</b>	The generic name for any new character (usually female) who's a ego-stroke for the writer: she's beautiful, has amazing skills/powers, gets into a love affair with an existing character, or (usually) all of the above. Mary Sues often convince characters to hook up romantically, especially in <i>slash</i> . Good writers <i>can</i> write good Mary Sues, but this is not the norm. See <i>fangirl</i> and <i>avatar</i> for other variations, or <a href="#">go here</a> for a full explanation.	Star Trek
<b>MCS</b>	Middle Chapter Syndrome -- a disorder which causes writers (mainly of trilogies and longer epics) to write a substandard work in order to get the characters from one heavily plotted section to the next.	Xena
<b>ME</b>	Abbreviation for Mutant Enemy, production company responsible for Buffy The Vampire Slayer, Angel, and Firefly.	Buffy/Angel
<b>mediafan</b>	A fan whose main focus of fascination is popular media, ie. a particular TV show or movie. A slightly demeaning term used primarily by snobby oldtimers who still think that fandom should be restricted to arguing the mechanics of so-called classic sci-fi and cranking out mimeo'd zines, if you ask me.	old fandom
<b>megacrossover</b>	A crossover involving characters from several different works -- at least four or five.	anime/manga
<b>meta or META</b>	A word of "warning" politely added to the subject line of a post or e-mail to indicate that the message contained therein is ABOUT fanfic or the people who write it, but isn't actually a piece of fanfic itself.	comics, others
<b>metafic, metafiction</b>	A self-referential story which " <i>breaks the fourth wall</i> " by acknowledging that the characters are not real -- and, often, that they know it. Can be enjoyed in non-fanfic work like "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" and John Byrne's "She-Hulk" -- often used to humorous effect in fanfic by forcing the writer to	Subreality, others

	face his/her irate <i>fictives</i> . See also <i>Subreality</i> . PS: Here's <a href="#">proof</a> that I didn't invent the term, as some have accused...	
<b>meta-MST</b>	A MSTing of a MSTing. It happens. These tend to be petty revenge from an abused author.	MST3K
<b>MEverse</b>	Non-series-specific term for the fictional universe in which Buffy The Vampire Slayer and Angel take place. See <i>ME</i> for explanation.	Buffy/Angel
<b>MFEO, M.F.E.O.</b>	Made For Each Other, Meant For Each Other. Refers to two characters who "ought" to be a couple, and thus a popular rallying cry for <i>'shippers</i> .	X-Files
<b>mirror</b>	A tale concerning a set of events already covered in another story...only this time they're being retold or experienced by a different character than in the first version.	unknown
<b>M/M, m/m</b>	denotes a story involving a romantic or sexual relationship between two male characters. In mainstream porn "M" usually indicates an adult man while "m" indicates one who's underage -- ie. M/M would describe an encounter between two adult men while M/m would be a liaison between an adult man and a teenage boy, and so on. However, this distinction is not well-known in fanfic and <i>cannot</i> be used as an accurate guide to content. For full details on same-sex themes in fanfic, see <i>slash</i> .	general
<b>Mod, mod</b>	Short for <i>moderator</i> .	general
<b>moderator</b>	A person who has full or partial control over posts to a moderated newsgroup, mailing list, or other forum. Some moderators have complete control, okaying or denying each message; others merely have the authority to delete rules-breaking posts and negotiate arguments. See also <i>listmom</i> and <i>listdomme</i> .	general
<b>mook</b>	No relation to the original gangster slang-word for "tough guy" -- "mook" (or "mooky") describes close loving relationships that are Just Plain Cuuuute. The characters involved in said relationships are called "mooks." Mook stories may or may not involve actual sex, and often don't -- the only criteria is that the characters involved be sweet, romantic, and totally in love. As one expert put it, " <i>Angst</i> is allowed, but tragic or otherwise dark stories are <i>not</i> mook." Note: Mook in comic fic is often (yes, yes, not always) associated with <i>slash</i> .	comics
<b>mook, mooks</b>	Characters involved in a <i>mooky</i> relationship. The originals were Kaylee's "Gem Twins," Jack & Zach. When fans refer to "the mooks," however, they are generally referring to some other currently popular duo -- if you aren't up on the latest gossip in the world of mookiness, you'd have to ask to find out.	comics
<b>mooky</b>	The state/action of being cute-romantic-awww towards a love interest, especially (but not always)	comics

	if said love interest is the same gender. See <i>mook</i> .	
<b>MOTW</b>	Monster Of The Week. Any scary beastie that only shows up for one story/episode to drive the plot and to give the characters something to do between blocks of dialogue.	X-Files
<b>moviefic</b>	Any story set within the continuity of a movie adaptation instead of that of the original source. See <i>movieverse</i> .	LOTR, Spider-Man, X-Men
<b>movieverse</b>	Refers to the alternate continuity created when a book or comic is translated into a popular film. Movie continuity is usually quite warped, and fans thus created rarely have any grasp of the information behind the popular adaptation; thus stories set therein are often regarded as a different subgenre.	X-Men, Lord Of The Rings
<b>MoZ</b>	Moment of Zen -- a perfect moment, of some kind, that you've found on the Internet.	MST3K
<b>mpreg</b>	Describes a story involving male pregnancy -- found mostly in slash, but has not shown up in comicslash yet. This fairly rare term is not always greeted with open arms.	anime/manga, Star Wars: TPM, Star Trek: Voyager
<b>MSR</b>	Mulder/Scully Romance, usually used to denote the booming <i>subgenre</i> of 'shippy fanfic about those two.	X-Files
<b>MSTing, msting, misting</b>	To subject a fanfic to the same treatment afforded bad movies on the show Mystery Science Theater 3000 -- to dissect it line by line to make fun of it, either speaking via the original MST3K characters or with others. This style is called <i>riffing</i> ; individual gags are called <i>riffs</i> . Some call MSTing a form of <i>flaming</i> -- people with an actual sense of humor call it high comedic art. You decide.	MST3K
<b>MulderLogic</b>	Arriving at an improbable (but usually correct) solution via leaps of logic which appear quite barking mad to anybody else.	X-Files
<b>multiverse</b>	"Everything everywhere" -- includes all alternate dimensions, other realities, parallel universes, and fandom genres. There is only one multiverse. Period.	general
<b>Muggle, muggle</b>	A <i>Mundane</i> , with less harsh overtones -- more pitying than suspicious. Derived from J.K Rowling's word for an ordinary human being without magical powers.	Harry Potter
<b>mun</b>	Short for "mundane" or "human" -- another word for the player behind the character(s) in an online roleplaying game.	unknown
<b>Mundane, mundane</b>	A person who's hopelessly mired in reality; a <gasp!> non-fan; anyone who ignores, belittles, oppresses, or is oblivious to fannish pursuits. This term was adopted from Piers Anthony's Xanth series -- or did he adopt it from fandom?	general



	Regardless, if a fan calls you a mundane, they're insulting you by calling you worthless. Harry Potter fans use the word <i>Muggle</i> ; Ren Faire types will just call you a <i>'Dane</i> .	
<b>MWPP</b>	Stands for "Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot, Prongs" -- refers to any fanfic written about these four characters in their Hogwarts school days.	Harry Potter
<b>mythosphere</b>	A complete mythical or fictional universe which contains its own geography, history, culture, and possibly even language(s). A mythosphere's characters and the actors/artists who portray them is often humorously called a <i>pantheon</i> .	Star Trek
<b>N</b>		
<b>NAXIS</b>	Not A Kiss In Sight. See <i>Noromo</i> .	X-Files
<b>ne, neh, ney</b>	In Japanese (and thus in anime fandom), "ne" means "right?" or "isn't it?" However, X-Men fans also use "neh" or "ney" in the same sense, swiped from Cajun character Gambit's manner of speaking. Just an interesting sidenote.	anime/manga
<b>negoboo</b>	The opposite of <i>egoboo</i> -- criticism or flames. A recently-coined pun.	Star Wars
<b>neo</b>	See <i>newbie</i> .	old fandom
<b>neofan</b>	See <i>newbie</i> .	old fandom
<b>netiquette</b>	Rules of acceptable online behavior. Whether assumed, word-of-mouth, or painstakingly recorded, these rules vary from situation to situation -- and from fandom to fandom. If you're not a "local" (or even if you are!), it's best that you mind your manners.	general
<b>newbie</b>	A raw newcomer to any online group/place/genre, sometimes less charitably called a "virgin," or in older circles a " <i>neofan</i> " (" <i>neo</i> " for short). Often not meant cruelly but as a simple statement of fact.	general
<b>nextgen</b>	See <i>Next Generation</i> .	anime/manga
<b>next generation</b>	A tale focusing on the children/descendants of canon characters. Also called <i>nextgen</i> .	anime/manga, Roswell
<b>ng</b>	Newsgroup -- an old traditional type of messageboard found on Usenet, a text-only sideline to the Internet.	old fandom
<b>nm, (nm), NM</b>	"No Message." See ( <i>nt</i> ).	general
<b>non-con</b>	Non-consensual sexual act. The jury is still out on the shades of meaning here -- some say non-con is just another word for rape, while others see the two terms as subtly different.	general
<b>nonshipper</b>	A fan who opposes a popular <i>pairing</i> , preferring to view them in a non-romantic light. Also can mean a fan who doesn't care if said characters get it on or not, especially in fandoms heavily focused on said pairing. Ie. Mulder/Scully (X-Files), Harm/Mac (JAG), Clark/Lex (Smallville). See also <i>noromo</i> .	X-Files
<b>non-standard</b>	Any MSTing that uses a cast, characters, and/or	MST3K

<b>MST</b>	setting that never appeared on MST3K itself. Improbable crossovers within the show itself count, such as Mike&Joel.	
<b>Noromo, NoRomo, NoRoMo</b>	"No Romance." Noromos are opponents of the M/S (Mulder/Scully) 'shippers in X-Files fandom. M/S is one of the most widespread and deeply entrenched 'ships online, so the Noromos are also fairly well known and the term could be applied to other such opposition groups. Also called <i>nonshippers</i> , <i>platonics</i> , or <i>NAXIS</i> (Not A Kiss In Sight).	X-Files
<b>nt, (nt), NT</b>	When spotted on the subject line of a message on a messageboard, this stands for "No Text" -- meaning that there's no message attached to the subject line, the subject line is all of that person wanted to say, so don't bother clicking it to read more because there ain't any. Also seen as <i>(nm)</i> -- "No Message."	general
<b>Nuzgul, nuzgul</b>	Another name for <i>plotbunny</i> . Origin uncertain, but apparently a deliberate misspelling of "Nazgul."	Tolkien
<b>O</b>		
<b>OAV</b>	Original Animation Video -- an anime production sold direct to video. Not a fanfic term but comes up fairly often in anime fanfic discussions.	anime/manga
<b>OC, oc</b>	See <i>original character</i> .	general
<b>OFC, ofc</b>	See <i>Original Female Character</i> .	general
<b>old-school</b>	A Harry Potter story set when Harry's parents attended Hogwarts.	Harry Potter
<b>OMC, omc</b>	See <i>Original Male Character</i> .	general
<b>OME, ome</b>	Abbreviation for "Oh my Eru," a substitution for "OMG" ("oh my God"). Eru Iluvatar is the over-god of JRR Tolkien's Middle-Earth.	Tolkien
<b>One True Pairing</b>	The belief that a given fandom only contains one "real" couple, and that any other <i>'shipping</i> is preposterous. Usually abbreviated to OTP and nowadays often used humorously. An OTP with three members is an <i>OT3</i> .	unknown
<b>OOC, ooc</b>	See <i>out of character</i> .	roleplaying
<b>ops</b>	An <i>IRC</i> chatroom term -- someone "with ops" has an @ next to their name. An op has more control over the room's security, ie. channel options, banning, kicking, etc. In registered rooms there are often rules and politics about who gets op status.	IRC
<b>original character</b>	Any character who was created by a fanfic author, rather than being from the original <i>canon</i> material. Often abbreviated to "OC" or "oc."	general
<b>Original Female Character</b>	Any female character who was created by a fanfic author, rather than being from the original canon material. Often abbreviated to "OFC" or "ofc." Also seen as <i>Annoying Original Female Character</i> (AOFC) and other such bastardizations.	general
<b>Original Flavor</b>	A fic intended to be as close to the series it is based on in content, tone, etc. as possible.	anime/manga

<b>ose</b>	The filk equivalent of <i>angst</i> -- the chief intangible quality of a depressing song. Think of the term in this way: "That filk was nothing but ose, ose, and more ose." Get it?	filk
<b>OT</b>	Denotes an off-topic message on a mailing list or messageboard -- see also <i>meta</i> .	general
<b>OT</b>	In Star Wars fandom this stands for "Original Trilogy," denoting fics which take place in or near the first three movies	Star Wars
<b>OT3</b>	A "perfect relationship" involving three characters, not two. See <i>OTP</i> .	LOTR/PotC
<b>otaku</b>	A Japanese word denoting a fanatical anime/manga fan. The word has a negative connotation in Japan thanks to otaku who committed crimes and blamed them on their hobby; in the West, some fans use this term to make themselves sound cooler than the stereotypical <i>fanboy</i> .	anime/manga
<b>OTL</b>	See <i>Outside The Lines</i> .	comics
<b>OTP</b>	See <i>One True Pairing</i> .	unknown
<b>out of character</b>	For a fictional creature, acting in a manner not consistent with his/her/its established personality. This can be on purpose for a plot device or, more often, merely due to bad acting/writing. Often abbreviated to <i>OOC</i> or <i>ooc</i> .	roleplaying
<b>Outsider</b>	A member of <i>Outside The Lines</i> .	comics
<b>Outside The Lines</b>	<a href="#">Outside The Lines</a> , comic fanfic's major distribution/evaluation mailing list.	comics
<b>P</b>		
<b>pairing</b>	Any combination of characters who are romantically and/or sexually involved, either from established continuity or (more likely) desired together by fans. Very rarely, a fanfic "pairing" can be a threesome or more; however, trios (or more) where those involved are not all interested in each other (ie. Logan and Cyclops vying for Jean's attentions) are referred to as <i>triangles</i> . Some writers are fanatical about their favorite pairings, snubbing or actively flaming anyone who dares to disagree. In comicfic, this term is mainly seen in <i>moviefic</i> , and is almost interchangeable with <i>'shipping</i> .	general
<b>pantheon</b>	All important characters in a particular <i>mythosphere</i> , plus the actors who play/voice them and/or the artists who portray them.	Star Trek
<b>pastiche</b>	Material that imitates previous works of other writers, often with satirical intent. Most fandoms are not old enough nor distinctive enough for this -- you might see it in "classical" fandoms such as Sherlock Holmes or Lord Of The Rings.	general fandom
<b>platonic, platonics</b>	See <i>Noromo</i> .	X-Files

<b>plotbunnies</b>	Ever get hit with a story concept that doesn't really go anywhere but you <i>have</i> to write it? You've just been attacked by a plotbunny! Possibly inspired by John Steinbeck: "Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen."	general
<b>politics</b>	The catty, cliquey goings-on within the web of interpersonal relationships which inevitably evolve in any close-knit fandom.	general
<b>pop-up fanfic</b>	Ever seen "Pop-Up Videos" on VH1? That's where they show a video and "pop up" little interesting/funny facts about it while it's playing. Someone had the bright idea to do the same to a fanfic once (exactly once, mind you), creating a very gentle but still funny sort of <i>MSTing</i> . Ever since then, some writers who are afraid of their work being MSTed are also afraid of being "pop-upped," so they place warnings against both in their disclaimers. Why? Ya got me.	comics
<b>POV</b>	Point Of View -- specifically in fanfic, a type of story told first-person from a character's point of view. Has migrated into comic ficdom with X-Men movieverse fic.	Star Wars
<b>The Powers That Be (TPTB)</b>	The people who control the canon material, be it comic or TV show. In other words, the people who hold the rights to the stuff we like to write fanfic about, and who could probably squash us like bugs if we pushed it. So far, so good. ;) This term lies somewhere between respect and sarcasm, and usually does not include writers/creators beloved by the fans. TIIC (The Idiots In Charge) can be used if you're feeling particularly sarcastic. Note: This term can also be applied to any nebulous agency or persons who "hold the reins" in a story. Most commonly used in X-Files fic, but seen almost everywhere.	Star Trek, Xena, others
<b>PPC</b>	See <i>Protectors Of The Plot Continuum</i> .	Tolkien
<b>pre-series</b>	A story that takes place prior to the timeframe of the series in question.	Star Trek
<b>preservation</b>	Saving a fanfic for posterity, usually on a website. A variation of <i>archive</i> .	Foxtrot, Calvin & Hobbes
<b>pre-slash</b>	A story which explores the potential for a same-sex romantic relationship without actually initiating it or dragging it out into the open. Tends to be PG/PG-13, and not very commonly used. See <i>slash</i> .	slash
<b>pro MSTing</b>	A <i>MSTing</i> which gets its source material from something somebody got paid for -- movie script, TV show, published book or poem, etc. Unfortunately, due to copyright paranoia, most pro MSTings have been removed from the net.	MST3K
<b>Protectors Of The Plot</b>	A writing society devoted to "removing" <i>Mary Sues</i> from the stories they infest -- mainly LOTR. Hubsite	Tolkien

<b>Continuum</b>	is located <a href="#">here</a> .	
<b>PWP</b>	"Plot? What Plot?" or "Porn Without Plot" -- the nickname for a story which was written purely for the sake of creating pointless sexual escapades.	general
<b>R</b>		
<b>RACC</b>	rec.art.comics.creative, the newsgroup home to stories about original comic-type characters.	comics
<b>RACMX</b>	rec.art.comics.marvel-x-books -- the discussion newsgroup that ACFF split away from, itself a spin-off of the newsgroup rec.arts.comics.marvel I believe.	comics
<b>Ratboy</b>	Turncoat agent Alex Krycek. Noted here because it's not an immediately apparent nickname.	X-Files
<b>ratings</b>	<p>An author- or archivist-applied system which lets readers know what they're in for before they start reading a story. Not all archives or mailing lists require ratings, but most of the good ones do -- ratings are increasingly becoming a solid component of good fanfic etiquette, and at very least authors are expected to warn readers if a story contains explicit adult content. Using the American movie guidelines as a template, most fanfic can be rated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• G: Good clean fun for all ages.</li> <li>• PG: Mild implied sexual innuendo, mild bad words, or violence or serious (though not quite mature) topics.</li> <li>• PG-13: Some violence, bad language, obvious sexual innuendo, implied sexual relations. Also may include some mature topics such as suicide, homosexuality, drug/alcohol advocacy, rape aftermath, details of childbirth, etc. depending on the mores of the fandom involved.</li> <li>• R: Just-short-of-explicit sex, graphic torture or violence, rape. Not recommended for minors.</li> <li>• NC-17: explicit erotica, excessively gory violence. Often illegal for underage readers.</li> <li>• X: the same as NC-17 but only in reference to sex. No longer used by some fandoms.</li> <li>• XXX: Pure graphic badly-written porn -- rarely seen and not encouraged in fanfic circles.</li> </ul>	general
<b>Real Life</b>	The dread eternal reason why fans vanish, authors stop posting, and archivists fall behind in their duties. Often abbreviated to RL.	general
<b>real-people fic</b>	Fanfic written about the actors or creators behind a fandom -- often abbreviated to RPF. Also called <i>actorfic</i> where appropriate. See also <i>real-people slash</i> .	unknown but recent

<b>real-people slash</b>	<i>Slash</i> written about the actors or creators behind a fandom -- often abbreviated to RPS. Also called <i>actorslash</i> where appropriate. A form of <i>real-people fic</i> . See also <i>lotrips</i> .	unknown but recent; esp. in LOTR and entertainment genres like boyband and wrestling
<b>relationshipper</b>	Originally, a fan/writer who fervently believes that Mulder and Scully "belong together" -- "shipper" for short. This term has now popped up in other ficdoms about other characters -- for the comics explanation, see <i>'shipping</i> below.	X-Files, migrated to Buffy then beyond
<b>retcon</b>	Short for "retroactive continuity," a retcon is a plotline wherein the writer or <i>TPTB</i> decide to pretend that an existing plot happened differently than originally portrayed...or simply never existed/happened at all. A retcon is also the name for a plot written to replace and erase the original version. Retcon is also a verb -- to tamper with or wipe out previous ideas/plots is called "retconning."	comics, others
<b>revenge fic</b>	A) A story in which the fictional characters which an author has inflicted misery and suffering upon return the favor on the author. The term is originally from anime, but has also surfaced in other fandoms, including Star Trek and MST3K. B) A story written as a "return volley" at someone whom an author feels insulted them or their work -- basically a <i>flame</i> in story form. Choice B) is the meaning usually meant in comic fanfic.	anime, others
<b>riff</b>	A joke or sarcastic comment made in immediate response to something one is watching, hearing, or reading. Can be said aloud or written down. To continuously riff a story or movie/show is to be <i>riffing</i> . See <i>MSTing</i> .	MST3K
<b>riffing</b>	See <i>riff</i> .	MST3K
<b>RL</b>	The acronym for <i>Real Life</i> .	general
<b>ROG</b>	"Really Old Guy" -- Methos, the nigh-mythical eldest immortal. Noted here because it's not an immediately apparent acronym.	Highlander
<b>romantic friendship</b>	Another way of saying <i>smarm</i> .	Xena
<b>romantic, romantics</b>	See <i>'shippers</i> .	X-Files
<b>round robin</b>	A story written in installments by various writers, usually impromptu. Often abbreviated to RR.	general
<b>RR</b>	See <i>round robin</i> .	general
<b>RPS</b>	See <i>real-people slash</i> .	slash
<b>R.S.T.</b>	Resolved Sexual Tension -- see <i>U.S.T.</i>	X-Files
<b>R/T</b>	Rape/torture. Be careful -- in some fandoms this can be a common theme in <i>H/C</i> .	unknown
<b>S</b>		
<b>SC</b>	See <i>Subreality Caf��</i> .	Subreality

<b>SCA, SCAs</b>	Subreality Cafe Awards. Coined in 2000 by Paradoqz, this vote was a CBFFA counterpart which only catered to Subreality-related stories. No relation to the Society for Creative Anachronism.	Subreality
<b>schmoop</b>	A story rife with overt romanticism -- flowers, chocolates, candles, cutesy pet names, and little to no plot. Sometimes spelled "shmoop."	slash
<b>self-infliction</b>	A parody of the <i>self-insertion</i> genre where the self-inserted author screws things up and/or generally suffers a lot of pain.	anime/manga
<b>self-insertion</b>	A fanfic where the author includes him/herself as a character; also a noun referring to the character in question. Sometimes abbreviated to SI, and often a <i>Mary Sue</i> .	general
<b>semi non-con</b>	Story contains shaky consent issues -- one character may not have been interested in a sexual act, but ends up enjoying it (against their will); or, they started off having fun but the experience got frightening or unpleasant. Often also involves psychological torment.	general
<b>shmoop</b>	Alternate spelling of <i>schmoop</i> .	slash
<b>shockfic</b>	See <i>darkfic</i> .	anime/manga
<b>Shadowlands</b>	A genre created by Alicia McKenzie in which the culmination of the X-Men's "Twelve" plotline resulted not in Cyclops' death but in a shattering of the walls between realities, resulting in a deadly patchwork multiverse where anything can happen as the shards of possibilities drift randomly. Mainly a comic-book genre but by its very nature is expanding into others, ie. Buffy and X-Files.	comics
<b>'ship</b>	Short for "relationship" -- uses to denote which pair of characters are romantically involved in a given story. See <i>'shipping</i> for more details.	general
<b>'shipping</b>	short for "relationshiping" -- a 'shipper is someone who believes that a chosen pair of characters "belong together," and who diligently reads and/or writes tales to that effect. The term originated in the X-Files fanfic, but has migrated over to comicfic in full force with the advent of the X-Men movie and a subsequent boom in Logan/Rogue 'shipping.	general
<b>shockfic</b>	See <i>darkfic</i> .	anime/manga
<b>shota</b>	See <i>shotacon</i>	anime/manga
<b>shotacon</b>	A romance story (usually, but not always sexual in nature) in which at least one of the participants is a young boy. The age cut-off is about 15 and can overlap territory covered by the term <i>shounen ai</i> , which is generally considered sweeter, less graphic, and more acceptable. Sometimes spelled "shotakon" in correct Romanization, or abbreviated	anime/manga

	to "shota"; "Shota" (or "Shouta") is a boy's name in Japanese. The female equivalent is <i>lolicon</i> . See also <i>chanslash</i> .	
<b>shoujo ai</b>	The female version of <i>shounen ai</i> -- see below, or read Yumemisama's <a href="#">full explanation</a> of anime/manga adult story classifications. See also <i>lolicon</i> .	anime/manga
<b>shounen ai, shonenai</b>	A label for stories which deal with sweet, non-graphic romance between two guys, a milder term than <i>yaoi</i> . The female version is <i>shoujo ai</i> . See also <i>shotacon</i> and <i>yaoi</i> , or read Yumemisama's <a href="#">full explanation</a> of anime/manga adult story classifications.	anime/manga
<b>SI</b>	Short for <i>self-insertion</i> .	anime/manga
<b>Siku, Sikudhani McCoy</b>	See X-S.	comics
<b>sillyfic</b>	A term which refers to "lighthearted, usually short pieces written for the sake of amusement or to lower the angst-level of current fanfic traffic flow," to quote Indigo.	general
<b>skit</b>	A short humorous satire, often written in dialogue-only play format. These parodies often poke fun at a canon episode or scene, but can also take place around fan ideas.	Xena
<b>slash</b>	A type of fic, often written by women, involving romantic or sexual involvement between two major canon characters of the same gender, originally mainly M/M (male/male) but lately shifting to include F/F (female/female) tales too. The term originates from the splinter of Trekkdom which came up with the idea of "Kirk/Spock" stories -- the term "slash" comes from the slash (/) placed between the names of the characters involved. Also called "alternative fiction" in Xena ficdom. Pure sweet romantic slash is sometimes lumped under the term <i>mook</i> .	general
<b>slashfen</b>	An older but still-used term which denotes slash fans (" <i>fen</i> " being the convention-circuit plural of " <i>fan</i> ").	general
<b>slashy</b>	A playful term in regards to slash overtones -- also used to denote subjectively-perceived sexual tension between canon characters, ie. "Ooo! Did you see the slashy look Bobby gave Remy on page two of that Uncanny issue last week?!?"	general
<b>smarm</b>	A type of story starring characters, usually of the same gender, who care and worry about each other a LOT. Not sexual or <i>slashy</i> , but rather a noble not-too-macho-to-admit-I-love-my-buddy brotherly-love kinda thing. Often found hand-in-hand with <i>h/c</i> , smarm sometimes does lead to <i>slash</i> and is often associated with it. Notes: Senners have fought hard over the	Due South, The Real Ghostbusters, The Sentinel



	" <a href="#">degeneration</a> " of smarm into near-smut. It's called <i>romantic friendship</i> by Xena bards. And there's a <a href="#">rating scale</a> , too. ;)	
<b>SMT</b>	"Sadistic Mulder Torture" -- a cheerfully burgeoning subgenre which delights in inflicting horrible things, preferably physical AND psychological, upon everybody's favorite deadpan FBI agent. It even has its own <a href="#">dotcom</a> ...	X-Files
<b>Snacky's Law</b>	"The first person in an argument to invoke any comparison to 'those popular girls who were mean to me everyone in school,' loses." Inspired by <i>Godwin's Law</i> , coined by DeadJournal's Snacky – full explanation <a href="#">here</a> .	general
<b>snark</b>	To snarl rudely; to be sarcastic, impatient, or downright bitchy for little good reason. Snarking is not cute or funny -- it's annoying. A person who snarks is being <i>snarky</i> .	general
<b>snarky</b>	Someone who's snarking an awful lot. See <i>snark</i> .	general
<b>songfic</b>	A story based entirely around the lyrics of a song. Thanks to a flood of sappy, pointless songfics in other genres, these are generally regarded as a Very Bad Thing. As long as a story would not completely collapse without the song to provide support, a story <i>can</i> be named after a song or even include a few lyrics to set the mood and not be considered songfic. The worst consist little more than the song itself...and the <i>very</i> worst are ones that seek deep personal meaning in a hot pop-song of the moment.	general
<b>SOTA</b>	Sign Of The Apocalypse -- something indicating the world is coming to an end. Something bad.	MST3K
<b>spackle</b>	Named for the paste used to fill cracks in a wall, this is a story that tries to "fill in the holes" in canon, supplying missing scenes/motivation and trying to make sense of <i>TPTB</i> 's often dizzying leaps of illogic. Also used as a verb. This term seems to have been coined in 1999 by Greywolf the Wanderer, when he posted his zine story "Dark Star" online with this summary: "I always loved <i>The Enterprise Incident</i> , but it's got plot holes ye could drive a logging truck thru. Consider this my best attempt to spackle the bastards."	Star Trek
<b>spatulate</b>	This is in reference to a certain Japanese character who uses cooking utensils in her martial arts. When you "spatulate" someone, it means to flip them over like a pancake -- using a spatula, of course. Don't ask.	anime/manga
<b>spoiler, spoilers</b>	A piece of information within a story or a message which can reveal (and thereby "spoil") an important plotpoint in a movie, show, issue, etc. that the reader has not yet seen/read. See <i>spoiler warning</i> .	general
<b>spoiler</b>	A good poster or chatter always takes their	general

<b>warning</b>	audience into consideration and warns them if they're about to mention a spoiler (see above). This is done by a) telling listeners/readers that there are spoilers coming so they can decide to stop reading before it's too late, and b) in the case of a messageboard post, adding a page's worth of blank space or gibberish to force readers to scroll down to read the actual text, ensuring that the spoiler is not spotted by mistake by a casual browser.	
<b>spork</b>	A disposable plastic utensil which is part fork, part spoon, often spotted in cafeterias or cheap fastfood joints. Not a fanfic term, but it comes up a lot -- I think writers find it both a funny word and a funny thing to threaten each other with -- so here it is. :)	general
<b>squick</b>	To be "squicked" is to have been disturbed at a personal gut level, often but not always in regards to sex. (I.e. walking in on naked parents squicks most people. ;) Usually used in a humorous way, as if to indicate that you understand it doesn't gross out other people but man does it push one of your <i>your</i> "eww" buttons!	general
<b>Sturgeon's Law</b>	"Ninety percent of everything is crap" -- a paraquote by author Theodore Sturgeon, who once said, "Sure, ninety percent of science fiction is crud. That's because ninety percent of everything is crud." Scholars disagree on what word Sturgeon actually used. Can be applied to fanfic and often is.	science fiction
<b>#subcafe</b>	The Dalnet <i>IRC</i> chatroom where comicficcers hang out and avoid <i>Real Life</i> . ;) See <i>#fictalk</i> .	comics
<b>Subreality</b>	An imaginary borderland between reality and fantasy where writers can meet their characters and the casts of various fanfics from any genre can mingle for a beer and a nap between chapters. Adopted into several genres and used as the setting of many <i>metafics</i> .	comics, Doctor Who, Reboot, others
<b>Subreality Cafe</b>	Aka SC -- the between-dimensional hangout for comic-book fanfic characters (and, increasing, their writers) -- see also <i>This Time Around</i> .	Subreality
<b>subtext</b>	In literary analysis, "subtext" refers to any element of plot that is implied rather than clearly stated. In fandom, this term is usually used to label any canon action, dialogue, or imagery which imply sexual attraction between two characters, usually of the same gender. Subtext generally exists only in the minds of viewers (calm <i>down</i> already, you Mulder/Krychek fangirls! ;), but in rare cases <i>*coughxenacough*</i> it can be pretty darn blatant. The opposite is <i>maintext</i> .	Xena
<b>superfan</b>	An <i>active fan</i> who has gained wide recognition for contributions to fandom. See also <i>BNF</i> .	Star Trek
<b>T</b>		
<b>Tapestry Syndrome</b>	A serious condition in which a writer has so many ideas for stories that he/she can't possibly <i>start</i>	comics

	them all, let alone <i>finish</i> them! Named after an infamous writer who seems to be permanently suspended in this strange state....	
<b>TBC</b>	See "To Be Continued."	general
<b>TCP</b>	See <i>The Common People</i> .	comics, Gundam Wing
<b>TDC</b>	See <i>The Dread Canon</i> .	Star Trek
<b>tenshi ai</b>	A fairly recent variant of <i>shounenai</i> where the leads (often romantic) are androgynous angels (tenshi = angel + ai = love). Examples include CLAMP's "Wish" and Yuki Kaori's "Angel Sanctuary."	anime/manga
<b>the Terrible Trio</b>	Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger -- the three main characters in the HP books, and thus the center of attention in many fanfics.	Harry Potter
<b>Thinkerism</b>	A word or sentence so mangled by typos (or insanity) that it defies comprehension. Named for the completely mad works of Dr. Thinker. Famous examples include "Out pooped Sailor Mercury" and "Gyra famous on Ami."	MST3K
<b>This Time Around</b>	An imaginary bar where Doctor Who fanfic characters hang out between stories -- a spin-off of the <i>Subreality Cafe</i> .	Doctor Who
<b>THOSD</b>	The House Of Strange Dimensions -- sometimes abbreviated to HOSD. A Subreality-related round robin set on a messageboard at CFAN. See <i>RR</i> or <i>Subreality</i> for more details.	Subreality
<b>TIIC</b>	"The Idiots In Charge." See <i>The Powers That Be</i>	unknown
<b>Tim Tam, Tim-Tam</b>	Australian chocolate-coated chocolate biscuit (cookie if you're American) with chocolate filling -- known for its highly addictive nature and the ability to cure all. Universal bribery material. Introduced by Rossi.	comics
<b>tinhat</b>	Someone who clings to a delusion and acts like any other argument is a conspiracy to lead them astray from the Truth. Think of those tinfoil hats that crazies wear to ward away alien mind control. Often used specifically for a certain sect of 'shippers who take delusions of a particular LOTR actor <i>pairing</i> a little too far.	LOTR
<b>TMI</b>	"Too Much Information." Almost always in regards to sex or other intimate bodily functions, ie. "Last night my boyfriend and I [fill in the blank]--" "Ack! TMI!" Used outside of fandom but useful within it, which is where many ficcers first heard it.	general
<b>top-heavy</b>	describes a story with an overly long title. Also known in some circles as <i>the Falstaff Syndrome</i> after a writer notorious for his long titles, who's probably going to hit me for including this. ;)	unknown
<b>TOR.n, TORN</b>	TheOneRing.net -- a major center of news/interaction for Tolkien fans.	Tolkien
<b>triangle</b>	A plot situation often spotted in soap operas,	general

	wherein three characters are involved with each other but not all together (ie. Bobby and Logan vying for Rogue's attentions). More than three can be involved in a triangle, but three is the classic conflict number.	
<b>troll</b>	Someone who's a foul jerk just for the thrill of ruining other people's day, as seen on newsgroups, messageboards, chatrooms, mailing lists, and beyond. Trolls are not tolerated long.	general
<b>trufan</b>	Self-referential term used by hardcore fans, usually of old-school sci-fi or the original Star Trek. Though this can be a proud hard-earned label, it also has negative connotations: trufen tend to be pedantic, defensive, and scornful of anyone who isn't excruciatingly well-versed in the "classics." Needless to say, many trufen scoff at fanfic.	sci-fi
<b>trufen</b>	The plural of <i>trufan</i> .	sci-fi
<b>TPTB</b>	See <i>The Powers That Be</i> .	unknown, mainly TV media
<b>TrekSmut</b>	A general goodnatured term for sexual or romantic tales that feature Star Trek characters. This term was invented in March 1995 to avoid loaded words like "porn" or "erotica."	Star Trek
<b>TTIOT</b>	"The Truth Is Out There." A common sign-off among X-Files ficcers, for obvious reasons.	X-Files
<b>twink</b>	A person or character who twink. Not a nice thing to call someone. See <i>twinking</i> .	general
<b>twink</b>	An enthusiastic underage male participant in a pornographic story. This has <i>absolutely nothing to do</i> with fandom's version of the word; however, I was informed that it would be a good idea to note the difference. I agree.	gay porn
<b>twinking</b>	Adding convenient new powers to characters (often to one's own <i>self-insertion</i> ) whenever convenient. Often spotted in young roleplayers and often associated online with <i>Mary Sues</i> . A person or character who twinks is a <i>twink</i> .	roleplaying
<b>U</b>		
<b>uber</b>	A type of story involving "new" characters who physically and/or psychologically resemble canon characters. In Xena ficdom, the term mainly covers tales of two canon descendents of Xena and Gabrielle -- Mel and Janice. See also <i>Elseworld</i> .	Xena, others Xena
<b>UC</b>	See <i>Unconventional Couple</i> .	Roswell
<b>UF</b>	See <i>Unnamed Faction</i>	Forever Knight
<b>Uffish</b>	Another term for <i>slash</i> -- taken from the acronym UF and a pun off of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwock" ("As in uffish thought he stood"). See <i>Unnamed Faction</i> .	Forever Knight
<b>Unconvention</b>	Any fan-promoted romantic pairing that has little to	Roswell

<b>al Couple</b>	no precedent in the original source material. Often abbreviated to UC.	
<b>Unnamed Faction</b>	Another term for <i>slashfen</i> -- originated in an Oscar Wilde poem extolling "the love that dare not speak its name." Abbreviated to UF or <i>Uffish</i> .	Forever Knight
<b>Unusual Setting</b>	The anime fanfic term for an <i>Elseworlds</i> story.	anime/manga
<b>U.S.T.</b>	Unresolved Sexual Tension -- a term for perceived "chemistry" between characters who are not romantically involved in canon or are prevented from pursuing the possibility by circumstances (ie. career, danger, both same gender, etc.). Think Mulder & Scully. See also <i>R.S.T.</i>	X-Files
<b>V</b>		
<b>vanilla</b>	In kink vernacular this refers to sexual practices which are conventional and unremarkable -- in fanfic this can be used as a disparaging term for boring, unimaginative <i>erotica</i> .	general
<b>vignette</b>	A very short story dealing with a single brief period of time, a single subject (an event, an emotion, a relationship, etc.), and often only a single character. Rarely action-oriented, vignettes are usually involve a character's internal dialogue as they muse over something that's already happened, debate something yet to be faced, or simply "enjoy the moment." By necessity, <i>drabbles</i> are always vignettes.	general
<b>W</b>		
<b>WAFF</b>	"Warm And Fuzzy Feeling" -- describes any cute sappy pointless fic, sometime but not always involving g-rated romance. Most Rogue/Gambit fiction can be placed in this category. Anime WAFFs, however, almost never involve romance.	anime/manga
<b>WAFFy, WAFFish</b>	See <i>WAFF</i>	anime/manga
<b>Wai!</b>	Short for <i>kawaii</i> , which Japanese for "cute." A girlish exclamation of adoration/happiness.	anime/manga
<b>wank</b>	Self-important arrogance -- usually in reference to humorless elitist fans with massively bloated egos, but the meaning is becoming blurry. See <a href="#">FandomWank</a> .	general
<b>Warlord/Slave</b>	Tales which revolve around a relationship between two main characters in which one of the characters assumes a "warlord" persona while the other is their servant or slave. Often seen in <i>XC</i> stories.	Xena, Hercules
<b>WIP</b>	"Work In Progress" -- a story whose ending has not yet been written or a rough draft which has not been thoroughly <i>betaread</i> .	general
<b>WNF</b>	"Well-Known Fan" -- see <i>BNF</i> .	old fandom
<b>X</b>		
<b>XC</b>	See <i>Xena The Conqueror</i> .	Xena, Hercules

<b>Xena The Conqueror</b>	A popular alternate timeline inspired by the premise of the Hercules episode "Armageddon Now" -- where Hercules never existed and Xena never saved Gabrielle from slavers, going on instead to become the ruler of the known world. Gaby usually shows up to oppose Xena's tyranny. See also <i>C-W/S</i> and <i>Warlord/Slave</i> .	Xena, Hercules
<b>X-S</b>	Aka Growing Up X -- a popular multi-writer series created by Darqstar and concerning the life of one Sikudhani "Siku" Edna McCoy, a child adopted as an infant by Hank "Beast" McCoy and raised by the X-Men.	comics
<b>Y</b>		
<b>yaoi</b>	Erotic tales or images of male/male (gay) encounters, usually for adults only -- the Japanese version of hardcore <i>slash</i> . Yaoi is an acronym for the Japanese phrase "Yama nashi, imi nashi, ochi nashi" ("Without climax, without meaning, without resolution"), though some fans joke that it stands for "Yamete! Oshiri ga itai!" ("Stop! My ass hurts!"). ;) The female equivalent is <i>yuri</i> . See also <i>shonen ai</i> , or read Yumemisama's <a href="#">full explanation</a> of anime/manga adult story classifications.	anime/manga
<b>Yed, yed</b>	Playful yet respectful abbreviation which denotes the editor of a fanzine ("Ye Editor").	sci-fi
<b>yiffy</b>	Containing sexual content, usually gratuitous and a little silly or exaggerated. Derived from the sound a fox makes ("yiff!"), as people who claim the fox as their totem in furrydom are often fondly stereotyped as ditzy sluts.	furry
<b>yuri</b>	Indicates stories dealing with female/female (lesbian) pairings, usually intended for adults only -- the male equivalent is <i>yaoi</i> . See also Yumemisama's <a href="#">full explanation</a> of anime/manga adult story classifications.	anime/manga
<b>Z</b>		
<b>Zine, 'zine</b>	Short for "fanzine" which itself is a corruption of "magazine" -- a collection of fan-oriented information or fanfic printed in magazine form, usually sold for cost-of-printing. A dying breed, 'zines pre-date the Internet by at least about twenty years but are still in circulation; you can find 'zines offered via mail-order from websites and at conventions.	old fandom

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