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Toxic YouTubers “hated” by *Doctor Who*? Animating multiphrenic incarnations of Not My Doctor anti-fandom

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ABSTRACT: This article considers how popular/spreadable misogyny enters into *Doctor Who* fans’ discourse communities via fan-cultural appropriation, mixing external political and internal fan discourses. This can oppose fannish communal norms such as “convivial evaluation” and “ante-fandom”. The theoretical perspective taken in the article combines work on toxic fandom with anti-fandom to thus understand fan toxicity as “multiphrenic”, i.e. drawing on multiple discourses and self-investments, including responding to its own anti-fans. The article goes on to examine YouTube voiceover-commentary videos from one communally-prominent Whotuber representing Not My Doctor anti-fandom, showing how they use devices such as the acousmetre and “stripped down” subjectivity to open a projective space for toxic fandom and enact a flat affect characterising what is termed “performative rationality”. Crucially, leftwing narratives of toxicity and hate are completely inverted to the extent that *Doctor Who* and the BBC are presumed, without evidence, to “hate” straight white male conservative fandom.

KEYWORDS: toxic fandom, anti-fandom, *Doctor Who*, BBC, YouTuber, Not My Doctor

Despite the longevity of academic work on *Doctor Who* fandom (Tulloch & Jenkins, 1995), scholars have yet to engage with “culture war” developments in this fandom, especially in relation to the casting of Jodie Whittaker as the first female Doctor (the show’s lead character, a “Time Lord” capable of regenerating their body and therefore played by different actors in subsequent seasons). This regendering suggests that the alien Doctor is “genderfluid” (Stack, 2021, p. 107) and that “the Doctor’s regeneration into a woman challenges a binary

conception of gender that structures a very particular world-view” (DiSanza, 2020, p. 192). Others have noted the social media phenomenon of #notmydoctor fans:

Many fans were certainly pleased to have a female Doctor, but... some were downright hostile. They were not long in making their feelings clear via social media, where #notmydoctor began circulating on Twitter and Instagram. As one Twitter user put it, ‘#DoctorWho died today. He didn’t die nobly as you might expect. He was murdered by Political Correctness’ (Miller, 2020, p. 2–3).

Likewise, Ivan Phillips documents the “vitriolic resistance to Whittaker as the Doctor [that] could be traced to those with a culturally conservative agenda” (2020, p. 219). Phillips suggests that this response was “terrifying in its misogyny. »Not really a DW fan«, raved one voice, again on Twitter, »but female DW... – stupid ideology bullshit infesting everything«” (p. 219). But both this and evangelical Mick Huckabee’s response above are external to *Doctor Who* fandom. Phillips goes on to examine

malcontented voices within fandom [which] have been raucous if not... particularly numerous. Although Bowlestrek [railing against ‘SJWs’] currently has 28 505 subscribers to his YouTube channel and can receive 30 000 views for his videos, these are not particularly large figures by the standards of the website (Phillips, 2020, p. 222–223).

Also recognising a dark side to *Doctor Who* fandom after the casting of Whittaker as the thirteenth Doctor, Rebecca Wray describes how

[i]n fandom, there appears to have been an emergence of reactionary politics with[...] misogynistic messages being disseminated by YouTubers (such as Bowlestrek, Doomcock, Nerdrotic, Midnight’s Edge, MechaRandom42) and via Twitter hashtags (e.g. #BoycottBBC; #scrapthelicensefee; #RIPDoctorWho; #NotMyDoctor...), creating a hostile environment for fans who are women, LGBT+, Islamic, and/or an ethnic minority (Wray, 2020, p. 79).

Here, I want to go beyond the descriptive approach to Not My Doctor fans provided thus far to theorise the textual productions of this group. Two strands of fan studies are relevant: work on toxic fans (Hills, 2018) and work on intense dislike or anti-fandom (Gray, 2003). I will draw on the former to complicate the latter (Jane, 2019), but I want to supplement work on anti-fandom in the first part of my discussion by revisiting readings of online fandom as “multiphrenic” (Bailey, 2005). The “multiphrenic” approach to digital fandom emphasizes destabilised online selves rather than stable identities, highlighting

how toxic fandom appropriates multiple discourses both internal and external to fan communities.

In the second section, I will apply this multiphrenic approach to Not My Doctor texts. Here, I will draw on Teri Silvio’s (2019) work on performance versus “animation” to address how a specific YouTuber has “stripped down” their subjectivity, *contra* work on vlogging microcelebrity (Burgess & Green, 2018, especially Chapter 2; Abidin, 2018, p. 14; Cunningham & Craig, 2019, p. 149), in order to open up a projective space for other fans to collectively “animate” (Silvio, 2019, p. 201) as toxic. I will look at YouTube videos from a figure who is been positioned in fandom as representing the Not My Doctor trend. Exploring the output of this WhoTuber, I will analyse how toxicity is textually constructed.

I will anonymise the YouTube account involved, and paraphrase content which could be searched (paraphrases are indicated by marks « and »). This fits Natasha Whiteman’s critique of such analysis; she alleges that when fan studies’ scholars are concerned about disconnecting their own politics/values from the fans’ under analysis – e.g. “toxic fandom” – then such fans are more likely to be analysed via depersonalised textualisation (2018, p. 520, 522). My reason for doing so here, however, is to avoid further circulating and reinforcing the self-brand of the specific YouTuber: even a critical approach could be reappropriated by the fan concerned as a “culture war” badge of honour. I will therefore anonymise and textualise material; additionally, this accords with Bethan Jones’ argument (2016, p. 294) that anonymised textualisation is acceptable where anti-fandom is focused at texts, although this should move towards a person-based approach (requiring permission for quotations) when anti-fandom focuses on other fans and/or named individuals. Although the examples I will be looking at do refer to *Doctor Who*’s showrunner, Chris Chibnall, and Jodie Whittaker as the Doctor, they read these figures (treated textually rather than personally) within critiques of *Doctor Who* and the BBC.

Before I analyse a number of YouTube videos as texts of toxic *Doctor Who* fandom, then, I want to consider how work on toxic fandom and anti-fandom can be brought into dialogue, and how toxic anti-fandom can be analysed as “multiphrenic” due to the manner in which it works its way into fan communities.

One of the key attributes of toxic fandom is its “structured repeatability”; hence the ongoing iteration of harassing “movements” such as Gamergate (Condis, 2018), Comicsgate (Condis & Stanfill, 2021), and controversies whipped up around franchises like *Ghostbusters* (Proctor, 2017) and *Star Wars* (Gray, 2021, p. 131). As Monica Flegel and Judith Leggatt have argued, with regards to Comicsgate:

This protest featured all the elements of [...] previous clashes: conflicts[...] that were connected to larger social/political issues, such as diversity; accusations that “political correctness” had infiltrated beloved

fan texts and communities, threatening popular culture as a whole and the “quality” of fan texts in particular; [and] the emergence of a cottage industry of outrage online, especially on platforms such as YouTube, which served as sites for organizing social-pressure campaigns that spread widely across other sites (Flegel & Leggatt, 2021, p. 2).

Flegel and Leggatt rightly note that the “volatility of these clashes and their seeming repeatability with each new provocation of fan rage” – such as the casting of a woman as the Doctor in *Doctor Who* – “suggest that each iteration is not significant in and of itself, but rather that they speak to [wider issues of] political polarization, a lack of civility in public debate, and an extreme blurring of the lines between popular and political culture” (2021, p. 2). However, this also implies that *contra* initial theorisations of anti-fandom – i.e. audiences who display a visceral dislike for specific media texts (Gray, 2003) – in these newer instances “participants and influence extend far beyond the smaller circles of each specific fandom, and the focus is more often on reactionary politics than on the texts themselves” (Flegel & Leggatt, 2021, p. 2). Apparent anti-fandom is less a bounded community of distaste, and more a permeable circle of cultural activity, partly comprised of those who have long been internal to a fandom, and partly comprised of newbies/entryists seeking to carry hard-right, misogynistic political beliefs into fan spaces. But this interaction of practices that are external and internal to fandom means that any such “anti-fandom” can no longer be “assumed to be contained within the domain of individual experience in the form of actively reading media texts” (Jane, 2019, p. 45). Instead, repeatable toxic anti-fandom tends to combine negative responses to media texts with *a priori* rightwing politics engaged in “punching down” at marginalised cultural identities (Jane, 2019, p. 57).

Responding to Emma Jane’s critique of work on anti-fandom, Jonathan Gray has noted in an analysis of *The Last Jedi*’s toxic anti-fans that such online “posters’ dislike is wrapped up in hate, [...] but [...] adopts the guise of dislike or perhaps more accurately mixes hate (for groups of people) with dislike (for certain texts)” (2021, p. 131). The ethical line drawn by Bethan Jones – where it is possible to separate anti-fandom aimed at people versus that aimed at texts – consequently self-deconstructs. Toxic anti-fandom can be mapped onto an array of fandoms, presenting a “reminder that [textual] dislike is never [...] free from becoming interwoven with hate” for people and groups (Gray, 2021, p. 133).

Suzanne Scott’s concept of “spreadable misogyny” captures this well, since Scott argues that it is “conceived and deployed as a tactic to win the space of fan culture” (2019, p. 85) as well as involving a version of “the »anti-fan« who actively [...] discredits other fans solely on the basis of [their cultural] identity” (Scott, 2019, p. 92). That such misogyny (and other prejudices; Scott, 2019, p. 86) has become virally spreadable across fan objects reflects how such discourses now migrate between media fandoms. In each case, however, the

toxicity of spreadable misogyny requires a fan-cultural trigger point to mobilise against (however fabricated these may be), meaning that Sarah Banet-Weiser’s (2018) theory of “popular misogyny” is also relevant. Banet-Weiser argues that the “focus on inclusion by popular feminism makes it specifically corporate friendly” (2018, p. 12), rendering it as one pathway to open up new markets for (media) products; arguably, it was this turn which marked out Chris Chibnall’s move into the role of *Doctor Who* showrunner. The programme was reconceptualised as a more inclusive brand from series 11 onwards, with series 12 even carrying the tagline “Space. For All”. Sarah Banet-Weiser has argued that “popular feminism provides spaces for [...] themes that resonate within an economy of visibility, such as empowerment, confidence, capacity, and competence”, and as a result “popular feminism is active in shaping culture. However, the »popular« of popular misogyny is reactive” (2018, p. 3). This “reactive” status can be seen in toxic fandom, whether it is Gamergate reacting to the videogame industry’s move away from being targeted at male gamers (Condis, 2018); Comicsgate as a reaction to titles being reconceptualized for female readers (Flegel & Leggatt, 2021); or *Doctor Who* being repositioned via popular feminism.

For reactive popular misogyny to move into a specific fandom, such as that of Whovians, its viral spreadability thus has to find a foothold within existent fan discourses. As Megan Condis and Mel Stanfill have pointed out, “understanding movements like Gamergate and Comicsgate requires [a] focus on how larger trends and rhetorical themes move through discourse communities rather than identifying individual, agenda-setting thought leaders” (2021, p. 4). However, I will approach these issues as a “both/and” rather than an “either/or”. To best understand how Not My Doctor toxic fandom enters the Whovian discourse community, I will additionally examine YouTube videos uploaded by a content creator who has been identified as a kind of reactionary “thought leader” in the fandom.

Without finding a fan-cultural foothold, spreadable misogyny’s mix of political hate and textual dislike risks being rejected as a blatant externality by fans. Previous scholarship suggests that *Doctor Who* fandom should offer an inhospitable host for such virality; as a long-running fandom which has faced periodic textual changes since the 1960s, the show’s fandom has already had to find ways to avoid becoming hopelessly fragmented:

Doctor Who has always been about value changes. When [...] a new Doctor regenerates, or a new showrunner replaces an old one, there comes with it an inherent comparison that other shows or stories may not have [...]. Shows without that history [...] tend not to generate the same sort of intra-comparative evaluations (Booth & Jones, 2020, p. 151).

My own prior work (Hills, 2019) argues that the *Doctor Who* fan discourse of My Doctor offers one way of binding together the fan community. This

is where fans focus on the version of the Doctor that got them into the programme; usually, My Doctor is the Doctor you first watched as a child. It also represents a kind of “ante-fandom” (Hills, 2019), predating fans’ later awareness of the discourses that make up socially-organised fandom. This supposedly “pre-discursive” quality enables fans to embrace talk of My Doctor as purely subjective and highly authentic; by subjectivising some elements of fan debate, fandom allows individual fans to love what they love without challenging these aspects of engagement. Different generations of fans, who discovered the show during different “eras” of its production, can peaceably co-exist as a consequence (Hills, 2019). Paul Booth and Craig Owen Jones refer to a related quality of “convivial evaluation” among *Who* fans:

Convivial evaluation negotiates major schisms in taste and maintains unity within the fandom. Even if there can be no common ground on how good a given story is, in an environment in which everyone is in broad agreement on the worthwhileness of the [...] corpus under discussion – in other words, that it means something, to someone – the mood will by default be one where positivity reigns (Booth & Jones 2020, p. 26).

Not My Doctor, as a label to oppose the “popular feminism” of Whittaker’s casting and Chibnall’s tenure as showrunner, therefore fan-culturally appropriates an existent phrase that is diametrically opposed to its aims as spreadable/popular misogyny. #NotMyDoctor suspends norms of “convivial evaluation” and ante-fandom established in the community – an action which calls into question its fan authenticity from the outset. Even if *Doctor Who*’s textual politics have been open to different right-/left-wing fan interpretations over time (McKee, 2004), it is unsurprising – given its fan community’s attempts to welcome difference and secure a sense of all *Doctor Who* as worthwhile – that Not My Doctor anti-fan responses would prove to be numerically marginal in comparison to more welcoming fan engagements with a new era of the programme (Phillips, 2020, p. 222–223). Not My Doctor discourses failed to fully permeate the fandom, despite gaining a foothold for spreadable misogyny: other fans commonly rejected the faction, which has subsequently become widely mocked as NMDs on social media. As Emma Jane says of the regendered *Ghostbusters* reboot, “wave upon wave of anti-fan groups are identifiable. First came the original anti-fans of the film’s female lineup, then anti-fans of these anti-fans, then anti-fans of these anti-fans of the anti-fans” (2019, p. 52). The fact that the label NMDs (presumably not wanting to add to the hashtag #NotMyDoctor) has itself become so visible indicates a similar process within *Who* fandom, as “social justice fandom” (De Kosnik, 2016, p. 182–183) has disowned the arguments of Not My Doctor affiliates.

It is this continuous process – the infiltration of a specific fandom by poaching from its lexicon (My Doctor), and then being, in turn, recontextualised by opposed fans (NMDs) – that renders Not My Doctor anti-fandom multiphrenic.

Kenneth Gergen defines multiphrenia as “referring to the splitting of the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments” (1991, p. 73–74), and this version of dark, toxic fandom is multiphrenic by virtue of repeating spreadable misogyny that is external to *Doctor Who* fandom, attempting to virally hijack *Who* fan discourse to turn it against established communal norms, and responding to new waves of anti-fan attacks on its own incarnation of culture war. Rather than a singular identity being projected here, self-investments are connected to axes of identity both within and without *Doctor Who* fandom (in rightwing political communities), as well as becoming aligned with one faction of fandom and against multiple others who need to be monitored and invested in so as to be rebutted. As Steve Bailey has argued: “the condition of the Web-based fan could be described as »multiphrenic« [...] in that... [they] must operate within an array of symbolic networks that are not easily reconciled” (2005: 192), and this multiphrenic tension is surely ever more pronounced when fans are seeking to bring together symbolic networks of previously convivial evaluation and reactionary political hatred (Wray, 2020: 80). David G. Loconto has also argued (2020, p. 124–125) that new generations of fans entering a long-running fandom can result in “a changing of the [fan-cultural] narrative and a fight to preserve the collective memory of the franchise and its [prior] fans” (p. 127). For *Doctor Who* fans, this has meant a struggle to preserve norms of convivial evaluation, not only when new generations of fans have entered the community – this has long since been dealt with – but also when poisonous political ideologies have sought to represent themselves as a tonic acting against an “invasion” of popular feminism (Arouh, 2020).

In the next section I want to move from this discursive level to the micro-textual, reading a number of YouTube videos that have been made by one figure who has become emblematic of Not My Doctor anti-fandom within the *Who* fan community (Phillips, 2020; Wray, 2020). As noted, I will anonymise and paraphrase in order to avoid reinforcing the YouTube self-brand of this WhoTuber. I will begin by applying a concept from film studies, the “acousmetre” (Chion, 1999, p. 17), to analyse the fact that these videos are almost akin to podcasts with video images, given that this proponent of Not My Doctor rarely appears on camera; *contra* theories of vlogging as a construction of micro-celebrity that hinges on to-camera delivery and a construction of “intimacy” (Cunningham & Craig, 2019, p. 149) will also be mentioned.

The WhoTuber whose output I will address has been uploading videos for over a decade. Numbers of views vary widely, from the low hundreds for more personal uploads through to almost 20 000 for the first *Who*-related video examining official merchandise. Writing in *Creator Culture*, Hector Postigo argues that

authentic authenticity (as opposed to its being performed) wasn’t what commentators said in one instance or another; it consisted of patterns they established over time. What made what they were doing very real

[...] was that they had put so many records of their performative personae on platforms (Postigo, 2021, p. 127).

And this Youtuber establishes such patterns of authenticity, evidencing a focus on *Doctor Who* that significantly precedes the thirteenth Doctor; this may also account for their having become a Not My Doctor figurehead. However, their first video responding to the news of Whittaker's casting strikes a rather different tone to what would come later. In terms of the categories established in Sophie Eeken and Joke Hermes' analysis of Youtube comments reacting to the thirteenth Doctor's casting – they identify three strands: “patience, emancipation, and gender anxiety” (2019, p. 6) – this Not My Doctor agitator would seemingly fall into the “patience” category:

The new female Doctor need not necessarily fail. Success, however, would require a production team able to handle a female lead character. On this, users were unsure [...]. In contrast to supportive comments, those counseling patience were based on a “wait-and-see” strategy of not excluding in advance the possibility that the character of the new Doctor would turn out to be “good” (Eeken & Hermes 2019, p. 10).

Such a response “called on viewers [to] resist the rush to criticize the casting [...] appealing to others' loyalty to [...] the series' legacy” (Eeken & Hermes, 2019, p. 8), and can be said to correspond to convivial evaluation, recognizing the as-then-unknown, future version of *Doctor Who* as worthwhile even if its “quality” was yet to be empirically determined.

Comments made in the Not My Doctor reaction video – *About the New Dr*, July 2017 – accept that judgement should be withheld until series 11 has aired. The poster is at pains to separate themselves from misogynistic comments made elsewhere, affirming that they are very much a fan of Jodie Whittaker, and have been for some years. Perhaps surprisingly, some of the arguments made are identical to those set out at the time by self-identified feminist female fans of *Doctor Who*; both refer to official “canon” to legitimate the fact that Time Lords can change gender (Yodovich, 2020, p. 1249).

However, there are hints of what would later become the card-carrying Not My Doctor position when it is argued that “a lot of fans, and I include myself, aren't bothered by this decision – it is the reasons for it that we're worried about”. The implication is that the BBC is following an “ideology first” stance, with social justice and feminist ideals invading *Doctor Who*. Despite repeated attempts to distance the poster from misogynistic views attributed to others, the basic narrative structure of toxic fandom's “repeatability” is already in place, i.e. popular culture is presented as “connected to larger social/political issues, such as diversity” and the implication is “that ‘political correctness’ may have ‘infiltrated beloved fan texts’” (Flegel & Leggatt, 2021, p. 2). As Eeken and Hermes argue in their analysis of YouTube comments, a “majority of com-

menters who disapproved of the casting perceived it as a means of aggressively pushing a progressive political agenda [...] with which [...] [they] disagreed” (2019, p. 6). And it is this argument which underpins the first voiceover video from an emerging figurehead for anti-thirteenth Doctor toxicity.

Eeken and Hermes further suggest that “[on]ce the new season started in the fall of 2018, discussion over the Doctor’s gender died down and became irrelevant” (2019, p. 12). Although this may have been true for the comments threads they surveyed, it was not so for the Not My Doctor faction. These fans maintained a “continuous performance” of their reactionary stance across social media platforms (Doidge, Kossakowski & Mintert, 2020, p. 96), and it has continued to the present, following the announcement of Whittaker’s departure from the role (e.g. the video *Whittaker and Chibnall have gone*, July 2021).

Continuing the scripted voiceover commentary from his first thirteenth Doctor reaction video, a series of uploads from this Not My Doctor vlogger have reflected on the past four years of the Whittaker era (*Looking back on the ruins*, June 2021) as well as looking forward (*No chance as the new showrunner*, August 2021). Visually, these use a combination of publicity photos and close-up screen grabs of press releases or online news stories, often displaying deliberate incongruity between on-screen copy and the voiceover, as it digresses from directly reading and interjects rightwing interpretations or acerbic asides. And like the July 2017 upload, these are marked by a vocal performance indicating flat affect; it is a performance that connotes reasonableness, even while toxic ideas of “BBC hate” are espoused. There is a performative rationality to many of these voiceover commentaries. For instance, Russell T Davies’ dismissive statement about only “five” fans opposing the Whittaker era is contrasted with 30 000 dislikes for the initial reveal video in another 2017 post which went viral (*Publicity catastrophe?*, September 2017). Despite the fact that Davies’ provocation was clearly not meant to be taken literally, and that 30 000 dislikes remains a marginal figure in relation to *Doctor Who*’s mass audience, this is intended to work as evidence against Davies’ position.

The *Looking Back on the ruins 2021* video reflects on how YouTube’s algorithm boosted their views in 2017, resulting in this anti-Davies upload about publicity getting almost 200 000 views compared with other videos at the time receiving a few thousand at most. There is thus a reflexivity to the *Looking Back* video which contrasts with its utterly non-reflexive, fixed political position, in which the BBC is accused of hating the white male audience who are supposedly *Doctor Who*’s «true fans». As Katherine Sender has argued: “Reflexivity [...] cannot be considered simply freeing [...]. Instead, we can see the workings of reflexivity [...] as rerouting audiences back into [...] ideologies” (2012, p. 195), just as a fixed anti-feminist and anti-social justice ideology underpins these videos. Their performative rationality is contradictory, being premised on irrational, unevidenced claims to the effect that *Doctor Who* has become a show “based on its hatred of those who’d been fans for decades”, i.e. white men.

Although Whittaker's gender is constantly said not to be an issue, it being argued that NMDs have accepted the Doctor's gender change, the same NMDs are nevertheless "opposed to the apparent motivations" for change, allegedly rooted in feminist "BBC feminist agendas". It is argued that this group are non-misogynistic because they accept a female Doctor, yet they are opposed to what they see as BBC "tickboxes" for "diversity casting", i.e. claimed non-misogyny manifests through a misogynistic opposition to "popular feminism" (*Looking Back*).

The voiceover style of these videos means that their poster does not appear on camera, and their given name is also not fully present in the adopted self-brand. Rather than becoming the face of Not My Doctor anti-fandom, this is almost the opposite of YouTube celebrity as it has been theorised to date: there is no direct-to-camera address or constructed intimacy with audiences (Abidin, 2018, p. 14). Indeed, this Not My Doctor proponent exists in their uploads purely through what film studies' scholars have dubbed an "acousmetre", where a voice is not matched up with an on-camera source (Chion, 1999, p. 17). The acousmetre is not a concept that has been used to understand YouTube videos, though it has been applied to *Doctor Who* itself (Hills, 2011, p. 32). However it fits extremely well with these commentary videos.

This NMD acousmetre is disembodied in their own user-generated content. Operating acousmatically means that YouTube drama can be initiated whilst the person "behind" this performance is at least somewhat insulated or dissociated from comeback; it is a split structuring of split typically adopted by trolls, as Whitney Phillips has demonstrated (2015, p. 35-36). *Ad hominem* attacks can be made against *Doctor Who*'s showrunner whilst sheltering behind a partially desubjectified self-brand. In Emma Jane's terms, this is an anti-fandom that represents itself as "punching up" at the BBC as a powerful institution whilst actually "punching down" at social justice fandom and feminism (Jane, 2019, p. 57).

In contrast to a YouTube performance that is "fleshed out" and which might seek to inspire parasocial relations (Silvio, 2019, p. 45), the sense of self here is firmly "stripped back". Teri Silvio argues that this is one of the key differences between logics of "performance" and "animation" (p. 46). Whereas performance is defined as "the construction of social selves (individual or group identities) through the introjection of qualities from exterior models" (p. 18), animation is said to be "the construction of social others through the projection of qualities perceived as human – [...] agency, intentionality, personality, and so on – outside the self and into the sensory environment" (p. 19). It is argued that personified brands typically attempt to function via animation, because "the fewer features a character has (the more blank it is), the more open it is to the projection of different emotions" (p. 201). This Whotuber can thus be argued not to fully act as a performing figure of identification for fellow anti-fans, and more as a projective acousmetre, where the very blankness of the self-brand – and its performative rationality – acts as a space for anti-fan anger to be projected into, hence collectively animating this "cottage industry

of outrage” on YouTube (Flegel & Leggatt, 2021, p. 2). By contrast, The Outrage Industry is said to work through parasocial identification for its fans (Berry & Sobieraj, 2014, p. 133), providing a safe haven for extreme rightwing views. In this case, the multiphrenic fan identities that are animated are always acutely aware of rival fan discourses they are opposing or appropriating, and which may show up in comment threads, making this a projective space for holding anti-fan emotion rather than the “safe political spaces” for extremism represented by rightwing TV talkshows in the US (Berry & Sobieraj, 2014, p. 127).

Perhaps the most obvious appropriation, though, is the complete inversion of leftwing narratives of toxicity. This YouTuber recounts a scenario where, as they say in voiceover – discussing the news that J. Michael Straczynski has expressed an interest in following Chris Chibnall as showrunner – “the BBC hates *Doctor Who*’s fans” (*No chance as the new showrunner*, August 2021). By this is meant allegedly “true fans” rather than “false woke fans”. Rather than toxic fans attacking the BBC and popular feminism, we are meant to believe that the BBC and *Doctor Who*’s producers are the genuine sources of hatred; they hate straight white men, and those who oppose social justice, and are pursuing a “perverted ideology” that “now chooses who is able to be a fan, and excludes and attacks everyone” who does not fit this mould. Rather than *Doctor Who* having become more inclusive in the thirteenth Doctor’s era, it has supposedly shifted from “being for all kinds of people” in the past – when the show was far more patriarchally structured around the “longer-term arc of meaning” of the Doctor’s “white male perspective” (Jowett, 2017, p. 179) – to now only being for “SJWs and their toxic, entitled kind” (*No chance as the new showrunner*, August 2021). In this account, rightwing white male “true fans” have been betrayed by an evil BBC intent on destroying the franchise. Rather than the “invited anti-fandom” that Mark Duffett (2013, p. 49) has discussed in relation to folk music artists going electric, and leaving behind sections of their fan base, this amounts to enforced anti-fandom in the eyes of Not My Doctor politics.

Condis and Stanfill have observed a similar move within Comicsgate, where SJWs are described as “a »hate movement« [...] assum[ing] that advocacy for white women, people of colour, LGBTQ+ people, etc. is equivalent to hatred of straight white men” (2021, p. 5). The result of this inversion in Not My Doctor anti-fandom is that opposing political positions and institutions – in this case, “social justice fandom” and the BBC – are depicted as hateful, entitled and toxic. Even recent narrative developments in *Doctor Who*, in *The Timeless Child*, are viewed through these distorting lenses as an “evil attack on the show’s mythology. *Doctor Who*’s continuity was eradicated due to ideology and hate for the fans”. Again, a hatred assumed to be directed at straight white men. It should be noted that there is no textual or paratextual evidence for this assertion whatsoever.

Where aspersions of hatred are cast by Not My Doctor followers, then, this is an inversion of leftwing accounts of toxic fandom. It involves misreading

Doctor Who's texts and paratexts, mischaracterizing current brand inclusivity as an exclusion of white male fans, and misunderstanding classic *Doctor Who*'s centring on white male subjectivity as universal inclusivity. Perhaps the darkest side of this mode of fan response is the fact that through inversion it insistently self-represents as exiled into anti-fandom by the (fabricated) hate and (imputed) toxicity of projected others.

To conclude, in this article I have considered how popular/spreadable misogyny enters into discourse communities via fan-cultural appropriation (My Doctor), mixing external political and internal fan discourses. This can oppose fan norms such as convivial evaluation/ante-fandom, and it renders toxic fandom multiphrenic, drawing on multiple discourses and self-investments, including responding to its own anti-fans. I then examined YouTube voiceover-commentary videos from one communally-prominent Whotuber, showing how they used devices such as the acousmetre and "stripped down" subjectivity to open a projective space for toxic fandom and enact the flat affect of performative rationality. Crucially, leftwing narratives of toxicity and hate are completely inverted to the extent *Doctor Who* and the BBC are presumed, without evidence, to "hate" straight white male conservative fandom. It would be useful to analyse a wider range of relevant YouTubers, examining to what extent they replicate the textual logics highlighted here, or revert to more conventional to-camera performances of intimacy (or, indeed, a mixture of these forms). And it will be intriguing to witness how the continuous social media performance of toxic Not My Doctor anti-fandom develops as *Doctor Who* enters another new era, one where an as-yet-unannounced fourteenth Doctor will either continue the show's moves towards greater inclusion, or step back to featuring a white male lead.

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