

“I am not a fan, I just play a lot” – If Power Gamers Aren’t Fans, Who Are?

Hanna Wirman

University of the West of England

Faculty of Creative Arts, Department of Culture, Media and Drama

hanna.wirman@uwe.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to discuss one of the well-known and widely accepted characteristics of fandom, textual productivity, in relation to the productive practices surrounding computer games. The paper will show that the social and cultural aspects of computer game playing as well as games’ structural and game-mechanical support for various forms of player participation give the traditional fan theories a slip. The paper aims to illustrate that it is not trouble-free to read certain players as fans just because their actions at first sight correspond to what we have usually considered as fandom. In addition, it suggests that we should look for new manifestations of fandom among players. The issues will be considered in part of the artificial division between the so-called (power/hardcore/pro) gamers and game fans. Examples are drawn specially from the productive practices within and beyond the games *World of Warcraft* and *The Sims 2*.

Author Keywords

Computer games, co-production, fans, participation, power gamers, productivity

INTRODUCTION

It is important to be able to recognize fandom within the game culture. Fans are people with special relation to a game or some other *game cultural text*. Their opinions and attitudes on these texts is expressed in criticism, comments, underlining, and rejection towards certain aspects of the texts and therefore the study on fandom helps in understanding and analyzing not only the possible relations between audience and texts, but also the texts themselves. Harris [7] writes, that fans are very visible instances of the process in which people assert their social values and tastes within cultural products, and “[b]ecause they are so visible, we can learn from a close examination of these subcultures something about the entire social contract a culture makes with its cultural industries, and the very real contribution to social identity the products of these industries provide for us”. Fans are often considered as pioneer media users (and producers), whose practices will be later adopted by mainstream audiences.

But only a very simple real life example shows how the definition of fandom is ambivalent when it comes to games. So, let me draw a case: There is person A, who plays a MMORPG 30 hours per week, contributes to game-related information databases, discusses avidly on the game forums and engages with a game guild by partaking in-game events with her friends several times a week. And then there is this person B, who participates the game culture related to the very same game in the very same way. The only major difference between these two players, a difference observable for an outsider, is that the player A tags herself as a power gamer, maybe a game-a-holic, while the other says she is a fan. Such conceptual deviations are common when identifying with notions that have obscure meanings in everyday use. After all, when the player A and the player B meet in the game and achieve a common goal it does not seem to be relevant to ponder who is a fan and who is not.

But it is important to make the difference within an academic discourse. Player comments such as “0% fan, 69% addicted”ⁱ and “I am not a fan, I just play a lot”ⁱⁱ should, in my opinion, lead us to reconsider fandom also as a scholastic definition when studying contemporary computer games. No matter if it was the everydayness of the term ‘fandom’ that made it very difficult to define at the first place; a new way of the everyday use of the term can also be what forces us to revise it. After all, mundane everyday practices have always been important starting points on the field of cultural studies. Therefore I would like to ask: Is there a difference between a fan and a power gamerⁱⁱⁱ? Or do power gamers form one subcategory of fans? Furthermore, what lies behind this amorphous division?

My aim here is to consider fandom in game culture by looking at different forms of participation and productivity that computer games offer to a player. I suggest that the concept of productivity as one of the well-known and widely accepted characteristics of fandom is challenged in the game culture. Because playing is always about productivity and playing is supported by many productive activities that take place outside the game world, fan productivity is very difficult to pinpoint among these

Situated Play, Proceedings of DiGRA 2007 Conference

© 2007 Authors & Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA). Personal and educational classroom use of this paper is allowed, commercial use requires specific permission from the author.

activities. The examples will be drawn from the player participation and productive practices related to *World of Warcraft* (2004) and *The Sims 2* (2005).

FAN DISCOURSE WITHIN GAME STUDIES

I agree with the common currency that all media use is active and in part of many online media also interactive. Creativity is always involved in the complex processes of reading and interpretation of any media texts. So it is with computer games. Game cultures are also excellent examples of participatory cultures, which are cultures “with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices” [11]. Creation of new cultural products and texts is an important part of the participatory culture. Therefore I find it rather vague that we often tend to use the word fan, when we need to underline players’ textual productivity in relation to the games. Alongside with the term ‘fan’, studies often recognise ‘power gamers’, but do not specify the relation between these potentially different orientations towards playing.

Obviously, productivity related to computer games is an interesting research topic because it gathers together problems regarding new models for creating cultural products, ownership and copyrights, co-creation between developers and players, as well as the sui generis amount of player created content from machinimas to mods meritoriously arranged on hundreds of web pages and databases online. But it is distinctive how the word ‘fan’ is often placed when there is a simple need to talk about players who have created new cultural texts related to games and published them online. How do we know that a walkthrough, for example, is a fan product? Although productivity lies in a very central position of many theories of fandom, the recent use of the word ‘fan’ may lead to a twofold misunderstanding of game fans. It seems to be too easy to consider that 1) all the productivity related to games is a marker of fandom, and 2) the game fandom can be defined based on the player productivity alone. For example *affect* as a basis for computer game fandom has been very little studied.

I will suggest that there exists at least three kinds of productivity related to games, and every one of them is an example of productivity that cannot be directly defined as fandom. Thus, I will concentrate on problematising the notion of productivity as a priori a sign of fandom disproving the first possible misunderstanding on productivity as fandom. Before that I need to discuss the origins of productivity as it appears in the theories of fandom.

PRODUCTIVITY AND THEORIES OF FANDOM

While proposing a brief history of media fandom, Coppa [4] writes about “*bigger, louder, less defined, and more exciting*” fandom of the early 2000’s. She also states, that

“*media fans are making more kinds of art than ever before*”. Coppa is among the many scholars studying fandom who relate fandom with productivity. Fans’ creativity as producers “*has formed the basis for theorisations of fandom which celebrate this ‘activity’, whether it be video editing, costuming/impersonation [...], filk songwriting and performing or fanzine production*” [8]. This presumes that in addition to the production of meanings, interpretations and identities, fans create new and altered cultural texts. These texts, such as fan fiction, slash fiction, fanzines, and fan art, are often called *fan texts*. In empirical studies, fan texts have always been popular objects of fan research. As examples of fan theories including productivity as one of their central points, I will briefly introduce how widely cited studies of Fiske, Jenkins and Abercrombie and Longhurst have defined fans as productive.

Firstly, according to Fiske [6] all popular audiences take part in the production of meanings and pleasures related to the products of the culture industries, but fans divert this semiotic productivity into some form of textual productivity. For him, *productivity and participation* is one of the three main characteristics of fandom. The other two are *discrimination and distinction* and *capital accumulation*. Fiske states, that “[f]ans are particularly productive”, and reminds that textual productivity can be, in addition to production of new texts, about reworking the original text.

While talking about fans as textual poachers, who actively transform the meanings of cultural texts and use them for their own purposes, Jenkins’ suggests four [9] and five [10] levels of activity that fandom covers. Both definitions include productivity as one of their main points. Calling these practices *Art World* Jenkins [9] talks about fan fiction, poems, novels, pictures, videos, and fanzines, for example. For Jenkins there is no clear-cut between artists and consumers in fandom, and the issues concerning with copyrights start appearing: for example fanzines challenge the use of industry-created characters for new purposes [10].

Abercrombie and Longhurst [2] also agree on fans as culturally productive. They suggest that “*fans are: skilled and competent in different modes of production and consumption; active in their interaction with texts and in their production of new texts; and communal in that they construct different communities based on their links to the programmes they like*”. Abercrombie and Longhurst distinguish four types of textual production among media users, and the productivity of the four groups follows the according continuum. *Fans* concentrate on material production and this production is incorporated into everyday life. *Cultists* generate new texts, which becomes an important activity as a part of acting within a community. For *enthusiasts* textual production is subordinated to the material production. Production then forms a separable activity and aspires towards imagined consumers of produced material entities, such as second-hand dresses or railway models. Last, *petty producers* are enthusiasts who have become professionals. The identity of a petty producer

is more like a producer's. Instead of situating within another activity, their productive practices generate new activities. When placed within a broader discussion on fandom Abercrombie and Longhurst note that cultists are most close to what we have used to understand as fans in previous literature [2] whereas Sandvoss points out that fans, cultists and enthusiasts are actually just different degrees of fandom [16].

While Fiske and Abercrombie and Longhurst are interested in films, TV series and pop stars, Jenkins mostly covers issues on television fandom, *Star Trek* in particular. The introduced theories weren't originally intended to encompass interactive texts, fandom in virtual realities or computer games. However, they can offer a challenging starting point to discuss such contemporary phenomena. I will continue to the productivity related to games by which I mean the (textual) productivity of new or altered games cultural texts, and discuss the characteristics of games and game playing that suggest need for reconsidering the traditional theories on fandom.

PRODUCTIVITY IN THE GAME CULTURE

Games serve as platforms for many kinds of productivity. Actually, they even require and not only enable productivity, because productivity is compulsory already during the gameplay. Thus productivity is a precondition for a game as a cultural text. Furthermore, some forms of productivity relate directly to playing and succeeding in a game, while some grow from the expressive and artistic intentions of a player. Sometimes games serve as rather technical tools for such self-expression that has very little to do with the original game. In the following I will illustrate two different aspects of productivity: playing as textual productivity and productivity for and beyond play. In real life different forms and orientations behind productivity usually overlap and meet. The categorization used is a simplified grouping of productivity in the game culture.

Games research is heading towards closer understanding on different player types and playing styles. Also the industry has shown strong interest towards gamer types. For example a study from last year proposes six gamer types: power gamers, social gamers, leisure gamers, dormant gamers, incidental gamers, and occasional gamers (Parks Associates 2006). Probably the most famous categorization within the field of games research is Bartle's (1996) four types of MUD players: achievers, explorers, socialisers, and killers. My intent is not to suggest new classifications of players, but my perspective touches the issue, because I will propose different orientations towards player productivity. Used examples are drawn from the games *World of Warcraft* (2004) and *The Sims 2* (2005). The games offer a wide range of different productivity and player orientations already based on the amount of their players. However, reading player categorisations and orientations of productivity side-by-side would be an interesting task but will not be further discussed in this paper.

Playing as Textual Productivity

According to Jones, "[a]s an interactive medium, the video game requires the participation of the gamer", and this interactivity should not be confused with fan participation [12]. The game is created through an ergodic process, which means that without effort on the part of a player a game would not be complete (see for example [1]). As cybertexts, games require participation in order to become objects for any kind of analytical consideration. Compared to older forms of media, such as television or movie in their traditional meanings, computer games allow users to not only interpret them, but also *explore*, *configure* and add content into them [1].

Drawing from Aarseth among others, Raessens [15] divides player participation into *interpretation*, *reconfiguration* and *construction*. While reconfiguration concerns with creating a virtual world by active selection between options offered by the game, or originally by the game designer, construction means a possibility to add new elements into the game. I understand reconfiguration as a crucial part of any game: it is the lowest form of participation that a player is forced to perform in order to play. Reconfiguration is also the player effort that is needed to transform a piece of software into a game. The player is producing the game throughout the play. While *The Sims 2* player decides to buy a sofa, (s)he creates new possibilities for action in the game as well as alters the game world.

Comparing playing as productivity with the productivity that is usually considered as fan productivity is rather trivial in relation to most games, especially single player games. In some sense, reconfiguration is for a game what interpretation is for a film or a television series. But games such as *The Sims 2*, in which the production of some essential game elements, game goals in this particular case, is needed before the game can be played, make the productivity look more concrete. Similarly many other games do not seem to fulfil the requirements of formalistic definitions for games while they do not impose prewritten goals. But, in fact, when these games are played and experienced, the goals become part of the games as the player invents and sets them. It should then be noted that it is not only the designer of a game who can be responsible of setting goals for a game. When being played and completed in part of their formal structure by the player, the games that did not seem to have goals in the first place may finally fulfil all the requirements for a proper game. In these games the player productivity reaches as far as into the formalistically defining characteristics of a game.

Playing as productivity is most vivid in MMORPGs and other multiplayer online games. Through hours of passionate unpaid labour players create a very wide variety of game content. In *World of Warcraft*, for example, average players at least create characters with specific qualities, wander around the game world with the character and thus also involve in creating the game environment for other players, and kill opponents and pick up or buy items

and thus make variation to the game environment. Additionally, most of the players take part in social or collective forms of playing such as forming and attending parties and guilds to make achieving bigger goals possible and defining prices for items on the block and hence to be part of the economic system of the game. However, it is important to notice that *World of Warcraft* could offer much more diverse possibilities for a player to alter the game environment. While picking up and using small objects in the game is possible, building, moving and changing the landscape and the actual game environment isn't.

Productivity for and beyond Play

I have proposed that game playing in itself can be seen as textual productivity. By playing the player is actually partly responsible for the game as a cultural text. But production becomes much more visible and concrete when it comes to *construction* as player participation. According to Raessens [15], construction, a more "radical" form of participation, is characteristic only for a minority of players. It requires advanced technical tools and skills from the player. For Raessens, construction means addition regarding a game as software. Thus, construction is about hacking the game, making mods, skins and patches or altering the existing game software in other ways.

Aarseth [1] suggests a useful distinction between scriptonic and textonic changes in the text. Scriptonic change refers to changes in the information as it appears to players, while textonic means changes in the text. Sometimes these changes are so total, that they result whole new games, such as *Counter-Strike* (2000), which is a (total conversion) mod of *Half-Life* (1998). However, it is evident that digital games can be, sometimes very easily, reshaped, rewritten or reprogrammed by players themselves. Such activities are an important part of player productivity. In addition to the productivity that aims to alter the original game, players create new texts about games and to facilitate playing. These texts I will group under the categories of instrumental productivity and expressive productivity.

Instrumental Productivity

If we agree with the game theories that suggest that games are about achieving goals, we can find a group of productive operations that are strictly related to games because they help in succeeding and progressing in games. These practices have a function regarding the efficiency as well as the pleasure, fun and other purposes that make players play the game. And because of their functional status, the texts produced in these practices do not usually serve any other purposes outside the gamer community.^{iv} Such forms of player productivity as walkthroughs, databases for different content in games (e.g. *Thottbot* or *Allakhazam*) and cheat codes, for example, are also usually collaboratively participatory.

Player cultures as well as game studies tend to make distinction between 'fans' and 'power gamers' or 'hardcore gamers', but the differences between the two orientations

towards playing and productivity are poorly discussed. The terms 'power gamer' and 'hardcore gamer' usually overlap; with the rather slight difference that power gamer usually refers to a player of a MMORPG in particular. Both of the terms are most commonly used when the writer aims to emphasise player's orientation towards efficiency, clear goals and winning. These players are also seen to use a lot of money for buying games and a lot of time for playing them. In addition, power gamers have a playing style that does not meet our usual ideas of fun or leisure, but by themselves they "*consider their own play style quite reasonable, rationale, and pleasurable*" [17]. A general assumption is that power gamers play as efficiently (or powerfully) as possible and do not care about such social interaction as chatting. Both positive and negative connotations are usual regarding the everyday use of the terms.

Taylor [17] writes about instrumental play, which refers to the ways in which power gamers gain knowledge on the game by such committed actions that seem to situate more near to working than playing or having fun. "*The simple idea of 'fun' is turned on its head by examples of engagement that rest on efficiency, (often painful) learning, rote and boring tasks, heavy doses of responsibility, and intensity of focus*" [17]. Correspondingly, with 'instrumental productivity' I refer to player productivity yielding new and altered game cultural texts that somehow help in advancing in games and offer tools for more effective play. A thing common to power and hardcore gamers is that their productivity and the game cultural texts they create serve the efficiency and progress. These texts come under the group of instrumental productivity and cover texts like walkthroughs, cheat code listings, databases, and forum writings. Forum postings may handle issues of pushing the technical constrains of games, finding most efficient ways to obtain goals and choose best qualities for a character in a certain game.

Some fan texts are based on the player's interest towards games as systems and structures. Burn [3] writes that authors of walkthroughs know the procedural demands of the game system and are not interested in a holistic view of the game, which includes the narrative, for example. The aim of a player is then to proceed in the game as efficiently as possible. Thus, players consider walkthroughs not only as indispensable tools for aiding creative play but also as ways of cheating [14].

Writing walkthroughs for MMOG games is possible only when it comes to individual quests and similar. Databases such as *Thottbot* are tools for players to maintain game-related information about game items, locations, quests, and monsters. *Thottbot* is an unofficial *World of Warcraft* database consisting of player gathered information about game items, locations, quests and mobs. The database is equipped with convenient search-function, which makes it very handy to use it alongside with the actual *World of Warcraft* game. *Figure 1* shows some of the information

available for someone interested in the statistics, looks, sources and uses for a specific item. Using Thottbot for finding locations for quests or certain monster frees from wandering around and spending time for “unessential” tasks. According to my experience, both power gamers and more casual players use databases such as Thottbot. For many players, databases such as Thottbot are integral parts of the game playing, and not only participation beyond, after and before the game. Taking the contribution to Thottbot as fan activity just because it is a game-related productive practice would be oversimplifying. People participate these functional practices not because they have special interests towards the game or because they are fans of the game, but simply because it makes playing easier, efficient and more fun.



Contributed by Anonymous

Submit a Screenshot

Objective of			
Level	Name	Start	Rewards
60	Saving the Best for Last (Dungeon) Ironforge	Delliana Alliance City of Ironforge	

Dropped by							
Level	Name	Zone	React	Kills	Count	Drop%	Options
?? Boss Elite	General Drakkisath	Blackrock Spire	A H	7791	442	5.7%	Map
?? Elite	General Drakkisath	Hall of Blackhand		5470	341	6.2%	Map
??	General Drakkisath	Blackrock Spire	A H	706	67	9.5%	Map
??	General Drakkisath	Blackrock		1187	67	5.6%	Map

Figure 1: Thottbot information on Magister’s Robes.

Expressive Productivity

Machinimas, stories about games, drawings, screen captures and poems form the third group of fan production related to games. These practices do not support playing or exist as essential parts of games, but some of them, such as machinimas, are created *while* playing. They can also exist

as independent texts with no need for the user/viewer/reader to understand the original game. At first sight, it seems that this group of player productivity covers what is traditionally considered as fan production: fan fiction and drawings, as well as movies and videos based on the original text. Machinimas are often pure gameplay movies or make stories of the lives of game characters.

While instrumental productivity is productivity of players who have strong interest in game mechanics, structures and technical aspects, characters and narrative seem to be starting points for what I call expressive productivity. These texts have been created to serve the artistic or other kind of self-expression of a player (or a non-player as I will later argue), and motivations behind creating such text may well anywhere between fondness for a game lore or a character and political persuasion. If we further compare players who create poems or fiction based on games to the players writing walkthroughs and strategy guides, one helpful duality could be to look at MMOG games. In MMOG games role players are often distinguished from power gamers. The idea is supported by Taylor’s [17] studies on *EverQuest* (1999), which show that people consider role players to be interested in the back-story and narrative while power gamers concentrate on goals. A rough suggestion would be to define role players as expressively productive and power gamers as instrumentally productive. *Figure 2* classifies different game related texts according to their origins in either expressive or instrumental productivity.

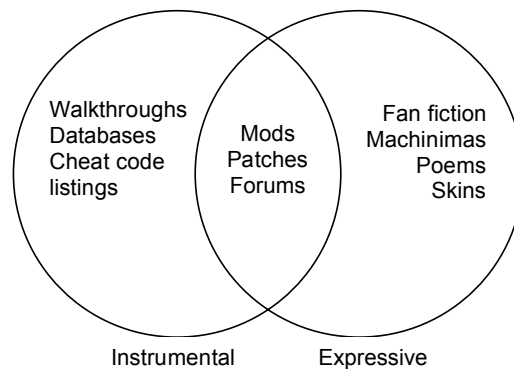


Figure 2: Different orientations of game-related productivity.

The presumption that the productivity that is not part of the actual game playing could be divided into the two suggested categories is not without problems. It seems to be contested by the fact that games are also used as tools for other purposes than playing or even to purposes related to other fandoms. Good examples could be music video machinimas. Often, as soon as a new music video for a pop song is released, a machinima version of it can be found from the Web. Is a music video made with *The Sims 2* playing the song by Lily Allen and loosely copying the original music video a fan text of Lily Allen or *The Sims 2*

(see *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*)? How about an episode of *Lost* made with *The Sims 2*? How about an episode of *Friends* made with *The Sims 2* or a Brad Pitt skin for the same game? No matter the right answer, it can be seen that games are tools for people to show their fondness, create new stories, express their opinions or even advertise, as the Coca Cola custom machinima ad made with *Grand Theft Auto* game or CBS' *Second Life* machinima advertisement for *Two and a Half Men*. Furthermore, tens of autonomous "machinima series" and short movies exist. For example, the machinima series *Red vs. Blue* just announced its 90th episode.



Figure 3: A machinima imitation of Lily Allen's music video Alfie.^v

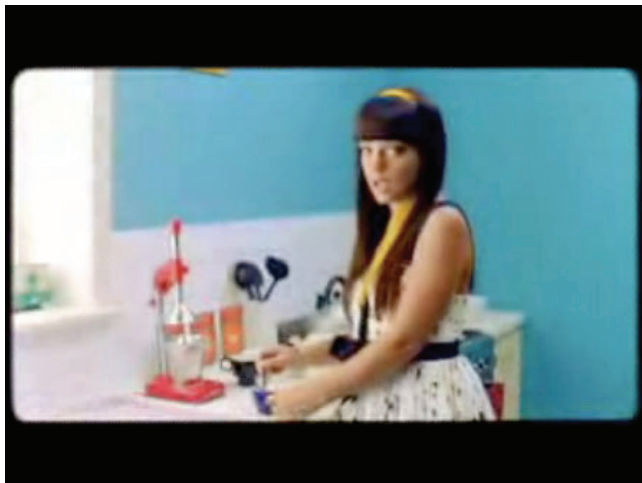


Figure 4: Picture from the original Lily Allen's music video Alfie.^{vi}

POWER GAMERS AND FANS

I posted a question to the biggest Finnish *World of Warcraft* online forum about the issue of fandom and asked if the

people on that forum think they are fans. I also asked for a brief explanation for the answer. In one month I got 165 answers. 110 of the respondents considered themselves as fans, 57 said they are not fans. After posting the same question on a closed forum of one of the best ranked Finnish *World of Warcraft* guilds answers were rather different: 8 non-fans and 3 fans.

Although the settings of these small surveys weren't perfect, the questions were posted in technically very different environments and the surveys function more as a pilot kind, the answers are suggestive. It can be speculated that power gamers are not very likely to consider themselves as fans. Comments on the guild website forum show that they find even to whole idea of someone being fan of the game odd. On both forums fandom was strongly related to the idea of collecting fan junk. Answers on the national open forum show that a fan must be very aware of the narrative and the lore, of the game. Interestingly, the division between fans and power gamers also seems to be a gender issue. While fandom has been seen as a feminised identity in the Western societies [10], power and hardcore gaming is usually related to rather masculine issues such as high technical competence, competition and "hard work".^{vii} Thus, this may affect on the ways the players identify themselves either fans or power gamers.

The answers to my survey on the two *World of Warcraft* forums go in line with the suggested two categories of productivity for and beyond play: instrumental and expressive productivity. At the same time when (power/hardcore) gamers, this is the people most interested in games' structures, are loaded with cultural values of having no life and being obsessed with games, thus non-fans, those who are considered fans are the players who take part in the productive practices well known from the fan practices of more traditional media. Basing on the introduced division between power gamers and presumed game fans as well as on the discussion concerning different forms of productivity, *Table 1* suggests how traditional fans, presumed game fans and power gamers take part in new forms of textual productivity related to games. The table consists of textual practices typical for each of the groups. The productive forms inherited from traditional media constitute a group of fan activities that is usually considered as game fandom both in scholastic discussions and among players. They have a strong relation to the narrative aspects of games just as the fans of any television series or movies usually have.

Categorisation of game-related productive practices causes a dilemma regarding the use of fan in game studies. Should we look at the (negative) cultural meanings of fandom and declare power gamers fans? Or should we listen to the gamers themselves who assure that instead of them, 'real' fans are the players who collect fan junk and wear t-shirts of their favourite games? Power gamers tend to find themselves more like professional players than hobbyist game fans. But if power gamers aren't fans, who are?

I have suggested that we should be careful with the use of the term and especially when it tends to direct us to the textual productivity and the productive practices we are familiar with from contexts of more traditional media.

	Traditional media fan	Game fan	Power gamer
Concentration	Narrative Characters	Narrative Characters	Game mechanics Game as system Advance Success
Forms of textual productivity	Fan fiction Poems Drawings Slash fiction Fanzines	Fan fiction Machinimas Poems Drawings Skins Forums	Walk-throughs Cheat Codes Mods Patches Databases Forums

Table 1: Different forms of fan productivity.

CONCLUSIONS

Along with playing a game, for example *World of Warcraft*, player may chat online his or her friends, endlessly develop one's character(s) and thus make the game look and feel different for other players, contribute to Thottbot by describing where to look for the specific rare mob, take part in enormous raids and hierarchical systems in order to kill new bosses, express her/his opinions regarding the price of items from Allakhazam, or write a 'game ticket' to a game master in order to report about a bug in the game. If a scholar defines fandom on the grounds of the contribution and productivity, most of the MMORPG players would be understood as fans.

Co-creativity, a term introduced by Morris [13] and further elaborated by Dovey and Kennedy [5], is a clarifying way to define the kind productivity that includes both game developers and players as creators of games as media. In her study, Morris suggests FPS games as results of co-creative development processes because these games as retail items are products of collaborative or otherwise shared creative processes between game developers employed by game companies and individual players. Along with creating a game as product as well as creating other texts based on games also the actual playing process is one form of co-creation. We may consider that a game is created in two phases: first as a playable product and second as played. In this regard, Dovey and Kennedy discuss the idea of 'configurative' relationship of media audiences with media texts [5].

In addition, after or alongside with playing there can exist yet another form of co-productivity. This productivity covers mods, skins, fan fiction, machinimas, poems, drawings, forum writings, walkthroughs, cheat code collections, mods, patches, and databases – for example. The practices situated within this group may support both creating new games and playing games. These practices I have introduced by grouping them into expressive and instrumental productivity. The different groups of co-creative practices form a complex network of tasks committed by players and designers some of which, but not all, should be considered as fan productivity.

I suggest that we need better definitions for game fandom as well as for different forms of it.^{viii} All the productivity related to games is not fandom. My intent in this paper was to illustrate that game culture includes so many forms of productivity with many different orientations from the player that fandom in the game culture cannot be simply defined based on the textual productivity of players. In game cultures there are new forms of productive activities that do not have counterparts among the fan activities of traditional media. These are the practices that have functional nature and that are most often carried on by so called power gamers. Expressive forms of player production such as machinima and poems can be easily compared to the fan texts of other media.

However, machinimas and skins that copy music videos or represent movie stars shouldn't be straightforwardly regarded as fan texts of games. Instead, they can be markers of fandom towards TV series of pop stars and games have only been used as tools for creating fan texts. At the same time there exists a great amount of game-related productivity that isn't usually considered as fan productivity. This group I have introduced as instrumental productivity and suggested hardcore gamers and power gamers most likely to conduct such productivity. Power gamers probably use most time of all players for the production of new game-related texts, but what makes these texts tricky to tag as fan texts is their strong functionality regarding the player's success in a game.

One important issue regarding computer game fandom is the concept of 'fanboy' or 'fangirl'. Fanboys/fangirls are considered as players who maintain the console wars^{ix}, for example. Such a different idea of game fandom deserves more attention in the future. The analysis in this paper approached game fandom from the point of view of player productivity. From that viewpoint, 'fanboyness' seems like a distinct practice, characterized by the fanboys'/fangirls' loyalty to a certain game console or manufacturer or game designer. Rather than admiration towards any particular game, it could be seen as fandom of the game culture as a whole.

This paper may represent computer game players' productive practices as especially emancipatory and all the players as highly interactive. However, even the games I

have used as examples show that instead of independent DIY culture, game cultures still appear very much dependent on mass marketed games and the most visible game cultural fan texts are altered from or based on remarkably popular games. It is also worth noting that only a small percent of all the players contribute to the new game cultural texts. Thus, highly productive power gamers may appear to reach the ideal of a *prosumer*, but even they are often working between the varying economical and juristic boundaries and regulations set by enormous corporations.

Hills [8] has stated that the “[c]onventional logic [which has occurred in many theories of fandom], *seeking to construct a sustainable opposition between the ‘fan’ and the ‘consumer’, falsifies the fan’s experience by positioning fan and consumer as separable cultural identities*”. For Hills, fans are always already consumers. What I would like to add to this discussion, based on my observations that lead to writing this paper, is that computer game players are always already producers. I see need for including power gamers into our definition of game fans but also continuation to revising theories of fandom to suit better for analyzing computer games.

REFERENCES

1. Aarseth, E. *Cybertext – Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. 1997.
2. Abercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B. *Audiences*. SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi. 1998.
3. Burn, A. Reworking the Text: Online Fandom. In Diane Carr, David Buckingham, A. Burn & G. Schott (eds.) *Computer Games: Text, Narrative and Play*. Polity, Cambridge & Malden. 2006, pp. 88-102.
4. Coppa, F. A Brief History of Media Fandom in K. Hellekson & K. Busse (eds.): *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*. McFarland & Company, Jefferson, North Carolina & London. 2006, pp. 41-59.
5. Dovey, J. & Kennedy, H. *Game Cultures: Computer Games as New Media*. Open University Press, Glasgow. 2006.
6. Fiske, J. *Television Culture*. Routledge, London & New York. 1992.
7. Harris, C. *Theorizing Fandom*. Hampton Press, New York. 1998.
8. Hills, M. *Fan Cultures*. Routledge, Oxon. 2002.
9. Jenkins, H. ‘Strangers No More, We Sing’: Filking and the Social Construction of the Science Fiction Fan Community in L.A. Lewis (ed.): *Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. Routledge, London & New York. 1992a, pp. 208-236.
10. Jenkins, H. *Textual Poachers: Television fans and participatory culture*. Routledge, New York & London. 1992b.
11. Jenkins, H., Clinton, K., Purushotma, R., Robison, A.J. & Weigel, M. *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. The MacArthur Foundation. 2006. Available at http://www.digitalllearning.macfound.org/atf/af/%7B7E45C7E0-A3E0-4B89-AC9C-E807E1B0AE4E%7D/JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF
12. Jones, R. From Shooting Monsters to Shooting Movies: Machinima and the Transformative Play of Video Game Culture in K. Hellekson & K. Busse (eds.): *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*. McFarland & Company, Jefferson, North Carolina & London. 2006, pp. 261-280.
13. Morris, S. WADs, Bots and Mods: Multiplayer FPS Games as Co-creative Media in M. Copier & J. Raessens (eds.): *Level Up: Digital Games Research Conference 4-6 November 2003 Utrecht University*. 2003. CD-ROM.
14. Newman, J. Playing (with) Videogames. *Convergence* 11:1. 2005, pp. 48-67.
15. Raessens, J. Computer Games as Participatory Media Culture in Joost Raessens & Jeffrey Goldstein (eds.): *Handbook of Computer Games*. The MIT Press, Cambridge & London. 2005, pp. 374-388.
16. Sandvoss, C. *Fans*. Polity Press: Cambridge & Malden. 2005.
17. Taylor, T.L. *Play between worlds: Exploring online game culture*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London. 2006.

GAMES

- Blizzard Entertainment. *World of Warcraft*. Blizzard Entertainment. 2004.
- Maxis Software. *The Sims 2*. Electronic Arts. 2005.
- Valve L.L.C. *Half-Life*. Sierra On-Line. 1998.
- Valve Corporation. *Half-Life: Counter-Strike*. Sierra On-Line. 2000.
- Sony Online Entertainment. *EverQuest*. Sony Online Entertainment. 1999.

ⁱ Player with a nick-name “Unformed8 - The Strange” at the Finnish World of Warcraft forum: <http://fincraft.net/forum/index.php?topic=9666.0>

ⁱⁱ Player with a nick-name “TWOMB” at the Finnish World of Warcraft forum: <http://fincraft.net/forum/index.php?topic=9666.30>

ⁱⁱⁱ One definition for a power gamer refers to “*someone who primarily plays computer games that place particularly high demands on the hardware, requiring the latest graphics card and a fast processor. Commercially sold systems may be specifically advertised as being for “power gamers”, as opposed to the cheaper and more common systems used in office computing*” (Wikipedia). As one will see, the definition I use is very different.

^{iv} Some user created texts that are very functional appear very interesting also for non-gamers. For example there are walkthroughs that are closer to interesting stories than to plain instructions on how to proceed in a game.

^v *Lily Allen, Alfie-Ultimate Sim Version* by Badboy2008, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUmo_eFDYqE>.

^{vi} See <<http://youtube.com/watch?v=UhpIzTE24Ps>>.

^{vii} Gender and productive practices in computer games are my primary research interests and I see a lot of fruitful starting points for studies in the cultural values related to different practices and ways of participating game cultures. In addition to the feminised fan identity and masculinised hardcore/power gamer identity, the hyper-feminine representations of a woman body admired among the power gamers and the otherwise somewhat hostile player attitudes towards women players of MMORPGs are interesting issues and should, in my opinion, be studied in more detail.

^{viii} In doing so we should bear in mind an important remark made by Hills [8]: definitive ‘definitives’ for larger phenomena such as fandom should not make us assume that just by fixing the terms in place we could isolate an ‘object of study’. After all, identifications as fans or power gamers are multi-dimensional cultural constructions.

^{ix} See for example <<http://www.gamer411.com/blog/25>> and <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanboy>>.