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Just Playing in the Sandbox: Fan Identities from a Play Perspective

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Disclaimer: I do not own Johan Huizinga, Roger Callois, or Henry Jenkins, and it’s probably better this way.

Summary: The aim of this research paper is to explore online fan culture from a play perspective and analyse the construction of fan identities through narrative and ludic theories. After giving a short introduction to the different definitions of ‘fan’, both from in- and outside of academia, I will analyse fandom by tracing play elements and the essential qualities of play, as defined by Johan Huizinga and Roger Callois. The paper will proceed with an analysis of the identity construction of fans using narrative and ludic theories, as well as investigating the appearance of ludic digital media influenced identity formation. Finally, I will take a closer look at Huizinga’s concept of the ‘magic circle’ and explore the extra meaning and functions it gains in fan play and culture.

Note: Research paper for Game Studies in the New Media and Digital Culture programme at Utrecht University.

Tags: fan culture narrative theory of identity play theory playful identity research paper
In their introduction to *Homo Ludens 2.0: Play, Media, & Identity*, Frissen, de Mul and Raessens argue that the ludification of culture is a two-fold process. On the one hand, this means that in our modern (or more like postmodern) society, we can witness a significant increase in games and playful activities – an entirely different trend than what Johan Huizinga observed in the late 1930s. On the other hand, play theory is also becoming a fruitful theoretical framework that aids greatly the understanding and analysis of different media experiences and phenomena.

This research paper will also embody these two sides of the ludification of our culture. I will use play as a metaphor to try to add a new angle to existing fan studies, as well as investigate how the trends of playfulness have enriched fan culture in the digital age. Several characteristics of fan culture point to the fact that playfulness is an inherent quality of fans; I will explore this notion by focusing on fan identities and how they manifest online.

Firstly, I will give a short introduction to the different definitions of 'fan' and related concepts, both from in- and outside of academia. I will mainly consider online fan culture: fans of a range of cultural artefacts (e.g. films, television series, books, musicians, etc.), who create fan texts (or fanworks) – fansites, fanfiction, fanart (i.e. blends, manips, wallpapers, icons, etc.), fanmixes, etc. – and then share them online (some of the most popular sites are FanFiction.Net, DeviantArt, and the many journals and communities on the blog engine LiveJournal). Fans often form communities based on their interests, the interaction between the members of which also happens predominantly online. An analysis of fandom will be presented within theoretical frameworks by Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois, investigating whether play is an element of fan culture, and if so in what ways does it manifest. I will bring examples mostly from the online fandom of British science fiction series *Doctor Who*, one of the biggest and longest living communities in television history.

In the paragraph that follows, I will address the construction of identities of fans, crucial moments of this process, key influences and its implications. The starting point for this discussion is Paul Ricoeur's narrative theory, which, however, needs to be re-evaluated in the light of the new ideas and new digital technologies that appeared in the last few decades. The adding of the ludic theory of identity seems to be the answer for this dilemma, as it has valuable points that can help understand fan identities, how they are constructed, how they manifest, and how they are related to 'real life' identities.

Finally, I will elaborate on the notion of the 'magic circle.' The main question addressed will be whether the magic circle gains extra meaning in fan play and investigate how identities might play a part in possibly creating 'magical fan circles'. With the help of play theory, I will look into

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1 Added by user 910664 on 15 September 2012.
how fans live through their fan identities online, what these identities mean to them, and why do they often turn into secret identities; adding new points to the current discussion on fan culture.

The Fan and the 'Games' of Fan Culture

Looking at academic definitions of 'fan', there are 4 qualities that seem to be the key to the phenomenon: affect, specialisation (including collection and knowledge), community and productivity (Abercombe & Longhurst cited in Hills ix; Hills ix; Jenkins 41; Wirman; Fiske cited in Wirman). Abercombe & Longhurst, in 1998, created a scale where they place 'fan', alongside 'cultist' and 'enthusiast', based on how much the latter three qualities are maximised, with the 'fan' being on the bottom of the scale; however, the terminology seems to have changed. Jenkins claims that “consumption naturally sparks production” in the case of fans (41), this is what sets them apart from other “enthusiasts”; he argues that viewers do not become fans “by being a regular viewer of a particular program but by translating that viewing into some kind of cultural activity, by sharing feelings and thoughts about the program content with friends, by joining a 'community' of other fans who share common interests” (41). This highlights how the cultural (textual) production of fans is taking the limelight in many discussions about fandom, it being the most 'revolutionary' aspect of the phenomenon. Hills argues, however, that rigorously defining fans is not the most fruitful approach, as terms like 'fan' do not only serve as a labels but they “form part of a cultural struggle over meaning and affect” of those who self-identify as fans (xi); and he claims that being a fan is performative as “it is an identity which is (dis-)claimed”.

Many academics use the word 'play' in one way or another when talking about fan culture; de Certeau, for example, describes popular reading as a series of “advances and retreats, tactics and games played with the text” (qtd. in Jenkins 39-40). In his book Fan Cultures, Hills also claims that fans participate in “non-competitive and affective play” (112), and he acknowledges a certain “'playful' potential” of fandom, which he describes as “movement across boundaries of 'inner' and 'outer', 'real' and 'fantasy'” (90-1), drawing extensively from D. W. Winnicott and Roger Silverstone, and describing (mainly from a psychoanalytical perspective) the correlations between childhood play and adult fan “play”\(^2\). Hills mainly explores the notions of “moving across usual boundaries and categories of experience” (a characteristic Huizinga also addresses), but there is more to play theory. Silverstone has already established the playfulness of popular culture and electronic media, using Huizinga's and Caillois' theoretical frameworks (62); and fan culture, which relies greatly on both popular culture and electronic media, should not be any different.

In Homo Ludens, Huizinga studies the play-element in culture by proposing four qualities of

\(^2\)Interestingly, Huizinga excludes “the primitive play of infants” from his analysis, claiming that it involves an “irreducible quality of pure playfulness” not susceptible to further analysis (7).
play. His first criteria is the freedom of play; meaning that people play because they choose to, because they enjoy it, it is a voluntary activity (8). This is the basis of fan culture: fans engage with the things they love. Play is never a task, which can also be the reason why many school age fans have writing as a hobby, but when it is not fanfiction but schoolwork, it is not enjoyable any more. Participating in fandom is a choice, fans choose to showcase their admiration for a certain object in the form of different textual products, and when they have other priorities or grow bored the 'game', they abandon it (traces of this can often be found, as there is a high number of abandoned fansites and Livejournals still on the Internet). At the same time, just as any other form of play, fan culture also comes with dependence, and participating in fandom can become a need; and it can often become a way of processing what is happening in the narrative or even in their own lives – somewhat like therapy.

The second characteristic that Huizinga defines is that play is not “ordinary life”, but instead a temporary sphere of pretending. This quality of “only pretending” shows another duality in play, in that it is not serious (it is just make-believe after all) and serious (players are immersed and devoted, they “take it seriously”) at the same time (8). Frissen et al. distinguishes this in-play seriousness from everyday “profane seriousness” by terming it “sacred seriousness.” This duality shows in peculiar ways in fandom. Most fanfiction writers add a disclaimer before their work to avoid being sued for copyright infringement, mainly just mentioning that they are not the owners of the characters, storylines and so on. There are many of these disclaimers that are also very creative and playful, incidentally showing how fans are aware of not only the play-element in fan culture but the dual nature of it in terms of seriousness.

Just playing in the sandbox. I'll put my toys back when I've finished with them.

Doctor Who belongs to the BBC; I'm just playing (you don't sue fans who just have fun, you don't!)

All characters are owned by Mutant Enemy (Joss Whedon), a wonderfully creative company whose characters I have borrowed for a completely profit-free flight of fancy. Kindly do not sue me, please, as I am terrified of you. Thank you.

The second and third disclaimer also displays another point made by Huizinga, namely that play is “disinterested.” As it stands outside ordinary life, it serves as an interlude, and thus becomes a “regularly recurring relaxation” (9). It serves no material interest, no profit is gained from it, that is

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3It has to be noted, these disclaimers are mainly useless, as well as counter-productive: if they are indeed infringing copyright, then explicitly saying that they do not own the characters implies that they are aware of breaking the law. (I Do Not Own, TV Tropes)

4Source: sleepykraken; sleepykraken.livejournal.com

5Source: user NeverMineToHold; fanfiction.net

6Source: user Meltha; fanfiction.net
The third characteristic of elaborated by Huizinga stems from this state of play: it is secluded and limited in both time and space. The repeatability of play is one of the most essential qualities of play according to Huizinga, and it is an important part of fan culture as well. Fans do not only “play in the sandbox” themselves from time to time, when they want to “escape from the mundane into the marvellous” (Jenkins 42), but they like keeping track of when others do so too. One of the main biggest collections of fan communities and fan journals, Livejournal allows users to 'friend' or 'watch' each others' journals, so they will always see if someone has been “playing”. In terms of space, it is the Internet and popular media that provide the playground for most modern fans. They connect and share online, they “play with and through [their] media” (Silverstone 62-3). The sandbox is a separate universe created by a television series or novel, but which exists on the Internet in the forms different fan texts.

The fourth quality of play is that it creates order. “Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection” (Huizinga 10). A number of factors play a part in creating such an order: the beauty of play, tension generated from rules and goals having to work together, and a sense of community. Huizinga suggests that the tendency of play to be beautiful stems from “the impulse to create orderly form” (10) – an impulse very much visible in fan cultures. It is tied to the fact that fans see their creative outputs as artworks, from literature to visual arts and music. They strive for beauty and perfection, and many consciously work on these skills by learning and relying on constructive criticism from other fans. This shows in a variety of ways, for example through the popular practice of beta reading (fans called betas read others' works and check it for everything from typing errors to continuity and characterisation issues) or in the rigorous and orderly categorisation of different fan texts (e.g. it is generally expected in fan communities to include a header to most fan texts, stating details like the fandom, ship (the couple featured), and warnings if applicable).

The striving for beauty is most often the goal of 'fan games'; the creative process is play and achieving a preferable outcome (such as a piece of fanart that the creator is proud of) is the goal, and is in a way winning the game. Caillois notes that many games do not imply rules, especially those that in any way involves playing a role, and where free improvisation is key (126-7). The rules of a game simply mean that a playful activity is “under conventions that suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation, which alone counts” (Caillois 128). This can appear on two levels in fan culture. On the one hand, fans play art in creating fan works, while they also play the characters while creating their texts. In the first case it is the laws of literature, visual arts and so on they need to abide by (such as a fanfiction must have characters, a plot, correct grammar and spelling, etc.), on the other level, they need to use their knowledge of the universe
they play in and respect its laws. As it is free play, changes can be made, but this has to be noted and explained. In fanfiction, Alternate Universe (AU) pieces are very popular, one subgenre is for example taking characters out of their usual setting, and placing them in a high school\(^7\). The reason why such fanfiction is still enjoyed by many is the fact that even though it seems impossible in Doctor Who the series that the 900 year old alien Doctor and his human companion Rose Tyler would suddenly turn the same age and attend high school together on Earth, but while they do so in fanfiction, they retain their original characterisations from the series. This familiarity (which builds on one of the key qualities of fans, knowledge) is what needs to be maintained, with characterisation being the focal point in many fan texts. The characters being OOC (out of character) is the most frequent reason for the breaking up of the game, it takes away from the immersion and the characters will feel created and not naturally existing.

One of the most important, most valued quality of fandom is community. Huizinga claims that play communities tend to become permanent, and even when not, players feel united in being “apart together” (12). As Gelder writes, “all commentators agree that fans create a sense of solidarity amongst themselves, built around their specific interests and practice” (144). The cultural activity of fans includes sharing and enjoying their object of affection together (Jenkins 41), often joining forces in creating fanworks as well, thus playing together yet on another level.

In his 1961 book *Man, Play and Games*, Roger Caillois suggests two types of classification for games. His first approach is based on whether competition, chance, simulation, or vertigo plays the most dominant role in the game in question (130). Applying this categorisation, different fan activities belong to the rubrics of agôn and mimicry, with the latter being the most common. In mimicry, simulation is dominant, as Caillois writes, “play consist not only of deploying actions or submitting one's fate in an imaginary milieu, but of becoming an illusory character oneself, and of so behaving” (135). Just like a child playing with its dolls, when engaging in fan 'games' such as writing fanfiction, creating fanart or compiling a fanmix\(^8\), the player imagines themselves in the position of their favourite characters, thinks about the feelings they might have and their reactions to whatever is happening around them. Often a competitive edge is added to these games (agôn), where fans can compare their works, or participate in another popular fan competition, the theme challenge.

Write one hundred fanfics centered around this fandom you’ve chose. You can use old stuff that you’ve written before, or new

\(^7\)High School AU is a popular Alternate Universe fanfiction subgenre, where the characters of any kind of universe are shown in an academic setting, generally a high school. TV Tropes also theorises that it is the opposite of the Self-Insert Fic, explaining that “instead of putting themselves in a fictional universe, the writer brings fictional characters into a setting which they can write about knowledgeably.”

\(^8\)A fanmix is a collection of songs based on a certain theme (can show in lyrics, genre, atmosphere of the songs), such as a film, or a couple (ship). The biggest fanmix site is Fanmix: A very important organisation to help save humanity! (Or at least fan-sanity.) (fanmix.livejournal.com)
stuff. Fictions, drabbles, poems, scripts. Anything is game as long as it is set in your fandom. You don't have to post them all at once. You can do one at a time, or a couple, or whatever you want. And the catch: each of the fics must fit into one of the following prompts. 

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9The description of The Ultimate Fanfic Challenge (fanfic100.livejournal.com). The community has 19,478 entries as of 14 November 2012.
From Reading to a Kind of Play

Hills points out in *Fan Cultures* that the emotional attachments, experiences, and the passions of fans are often neglected by academics, even though they are the basis of fan culture, it would not exist without them (90). Emotions and interests also play a great part in the identity formation of fans. Human identity has a crucial reflective dimension to it (alongside logical and anthropological identity; de Mul 251), making it an actively constructed entity that is formed “in a social world with the aid of various expressions and media, such as speech acts, consumer goods, cultural artefacts, social institutions, and (life) stories” (Frissen et al). This reflectivity plays a part in expressing ourselves, as well as in self-(re)presentation, also implying that identity needs to be recognised by the person (de Mul 252).

In unravelling the process of fan identity formation, the narrative theory developed by Paul Ricoeur is the most logical starting point. Ricoeur's hermeneutic model treats human identity as a narrative – “the life nexus is structured like a narrative” (Ricoeur qtd. in Frissen et al.) – and considers the narrative as the most important type of expression in human life (Frissen et al). In the three-step process (in other words, the moments) of narrative identity construction, first we need to understand life as a narrative (mimesis_1), then we can produce (express ourselves by) different kinds of narratives (mimesis_2), which will lead to finding ourselves identifying with certain stories and characters (mimesis_3).

The fandom of British science fiction series *Doctor Who* (1963-1989, 2005-) will serve as the example for how this process of identity formation happens in fans, and also to point out the flaws in the (post)modern application of Ricoeur's theory. The first moment happens on a general scale, as all human beings have in common a preoccupation with meaning: “we distinguish motives and interests, we set standards and ascribe values, we attempt to realize certain ideals in life” (de Mul 254). The second moment of identity construction, as watchers of the programme, fans are engaging intensively with a narrative, following the life and adventures of the Doctor. They move into the third moment by finding stories and characters that they identify with. The most obvious sign of this connection and the defining effect of the narrative is when these stories and characters will be used on fans' journals and websites as defining characteristics.

I am a fandom person. I always have been and suspect I always will be. I've enjoyed obsessions with many things, including (but not limited to): Harry Potter, the Matrix, LotR, Artemis Fowl, His Dark Materials, Buffy (although I've only seen 2 and a half seasons) and the X files.

My current obsession is: *Doctor Who* (Footnote: This is liable to change without much warning. However, DW has been for two
years and may well stay that way for a while yet.)

In the producing fan, the process does not end here, this is not all that shapes fan identity. After identifying with certain characters, fans return to mimesis and engage further in narratives: except this time it involves creating their own. Fans use narratives to express themselves, to voice their love and support for certain stories, characters, by creating works that immerse them even more in the original narrative. Fans are also often on the lookout for other fan texts, as they want to see (read) more of their favourites, which can also amplify the identifying with characters (mimesis again), as well as make them fans of not only the original narrative but the different fanworks too (which can lead further to fanworks, but these are fanworks of the fanworks).

This is the first time ever I got sucked into a fandom not through the canon but purely by all the great things being created in the fandom. This is music to enjoy while fangirling with feels.

Riceour's framework applied to fan identities can definitely lead to fruitful results. However, this analysis can only stand if we take liberties from two main criteria of his, which is the exclusive focus on high culture and linear novels. Not even television is considered high culture, especially not a television series that gets part of its charm from being ridiculously low quality in terms of production and often story. Fanworks are also generally discarded as amateur “art”, and yet, in our early 21st century postmodern society, television and fan texts are in the centre of many people's identity construction. Postmodern did not only come with bridging the gap between the high and the low, elite and popular culture; it also involves non-linearity becoming a conventional and very important mode in our culture. The nature of fanfiction, for example, is that if fans feel that a story is “missing” between two episodes of Doctor Who, they can decide to write it, post it online and as it gathers readers, it will be a part of the fan universe of Doctor Who. Fanfiction readers (are able to) read stories in a non-linear way – travelling back and forth in time and place, just like the Doctor – starting with one that is set post-Journey's End (new series, season 4 episode 13) and feature Rose and the clone Tenth Doctor, continuing with a fanfiction that also features Rose but on an adventure with the Ninth Doctor (new series, season 1), and later reading a story about the Eleventh Doctor's encounter with a character from another franchise. Fandom and fan universes are inherently non-linear, but this is not a problem for fans, who are able to reposition themselves in the story based on their specialisation and knowledge (Rushkoff points out a similar phenomena with readers of comic books).

It seems to be that Ricoeur's theory is not sufficient for a full analysis of fan identity formation. In the light of the new ideas and technologies in our lives, his model needs to be re-

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10Excerpt from LiveJournal user shinyopals profile, accessed on 14 November 2012.
evaluated and extended for the better understanding of (post)modern identities. Silverstone claims that “[p]lay is central ... to media experience” (63), and by investigating the multimediality, virtuality, interactivity and connectivity of digital media, Frissen et al. also came to the same conclusions. Thus fan identities also seem to be playful identities, and the ludic theory of identity formation can add valuable points to the previous analysis; fans are indeed engaging in a kind of “ludic reading” (Harrington & Bielby qtd. in Hills 105).

Similarly to mimesis, the first moment of ludic identity construction, play involves an implicit understanding of our lived experience. “We no longer plan ahead but shape our everyday actions by the accidental hunches, brought to us through our mediated experiences” (Frissen et al). This constant play of fate (termed alea by Caillois), is not surprising in such an age of information overload, where media users surf, and so need to stay on top of the chaotic waves of the current mediaspace, as Rushkoff describes it in Children of Chaos. The second moment, play is the explicit use of digital media for games and playful activities – corresponding to mimesis in fans' identity construction. The creation of new narratives (fan texts) based on others can also be understood as playing with the original narrative. In a way, it is a very logical reaction: they see someone play with “dolls” they like, so they “borrow” those “dolls” to play them for a while. As Jenkins describes it, “[f]or the fan, reading becomes a kind of play, responsive only to its own loosely structured rules and generating its own kinds of pleasure” (39). Finally, in play, the play in other people's sandboxes becomes a defining factor in how fans see themselves, and how they want other people to see them. They create journals and websites to showcase that they are indeed fans, who play and create proudly.

Magical Fan Circles

The magic circle plays a very special role in fan play. The magic circle provides a secludedness to playful activities, but also implies limitedness. It serves as the playground, a space dedicated exclusively to play, and which is a temporary world within and outside the ordinary world, in many ways isolated from it (Huizinga 9-10).

This definition already implies one great appeal of the magic circle, which is that it allows through play a detachment from real life. For fans, immersing in the universes they love by reading or creating is a form of escapism – getting away from everyday problems, social and cultural isolation. Play can be therapeutic, and the magic circle becomes a safe place where fans can engage in activities that involve artefacts they feel strongly about and that make them happy. Affective play, as such can help keep our inner and outer worlds separate but also connected, as well as prevent us from getting caught up exclusively in either our inner fantasy world or our external reality; which could lead to “effectively becoming psychotic”. Playing with media texts can result in a balance in
our lives, because the magic circle lets us act out our inner fantasies, express ourselves, while it also implies the existence of an outer reality; practising this regularly is what makes fans able to “play with (and across) the boundaries between 'fantasy' and 'reality' (Harrington and Bielby cited in Hills 105-6). it can also clear up the difference between different types of fans. This is in complete opposition to the great stigma on fan culture, which is the attributed obsessiveness of fans – these fans are often referred to as fanboys, fangirls or stans\textsuperscript{12} – the “disturbing” side of fandom. Many (mainly non-academic) definitions of 'fan' often accentuate this side, focusing on fandom as a collective of obsessive people who have lost touch with reality (Urban Dictionary; Gelder 143). The aforementioned terms are all associated with extreme, irrational and erratic behaviour - “[h]ave been known to glomp, grope, and tackle when encountering said obsessions (sic)” (Urban Dictionary, May 2003) – as well as a lack of objectivity relating the object of admiration. Such behaviour is reminiscent of game addiction, where in a way the voluntary aspect of play has almost completely disappeared, and dependence on the inner fantasy world, on these “transitional objects” of admiration is higher than it would be healthy. However, as not all gamers and players are addicted, not all fans are “delusional”.

The nature of the Internet increases the secludedness of the magic circle, it being a separate reality; by playing, fans can find a community where “they may feel a sense of 'belonging'” (Jenkins 41), also by being “apart together” (Huizinga ). The Internet not only encourages self-disclosure, but interacting with other people online can also lead to greater self-acceptance and decreased social isolation (Joinson 81). Jenkins cites the example of women “trapped in low-paying jobs or within the socially isolated sphere of the housewife” for whom the “participation within an (inter)national network of fans grants a degree of dignity and respect otherwise lacking” (42). The magic circle encourages players to do things they would not even try in real life, and the same is true for fans, who are also supported by the anonymity of the Internet. Many young people dare to try their hands at writing, photo manipulation, because they are inspired by their favourite stories and other fans improving their skills and participating in fan competitions.

Fandom offers security and emotional warmth to those “who migrate into” it, as a sort of ‘mobile home’ (Sandvoss cited in Gelder 144). Travellers is a common metaphor used in academics to describe fans; de Certeau sees them “[moving] across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves” (qtd. in Jenkins ). Fan play is like a journey, an adventure, just like any other adventure that people can play in the form of a board game or a computer game. For all these examples, play is what takes them out of the mundane, into the marvellous magical circle.

\textsuperscript{12}The term ‘stan’ is a portmanteau of ‘stalker’ and ‘fan’, mostly denoting celebrity fans. It presumably originates from the Livejournal community \textit{Oh No They Didn’t}.\hspace{1cm}11
According to a fan Jenkins quotes in his book, for fans, the “mundane” also means “narrow-minded, pettiness, judgemental, conformity, and a shallow and silly nature” (42). The existence of the magic circle also helps fan play in keeping this kind of mundane outside and unknowing of the game. Huizinga also argues that this air of secrecy shows “[t]he exceptional and special position of play” (12), and it is inside the magic circle where fan identities develop as well, often in secrecy. Many fans keep their identities hidden from the outside world, for the most part because of the aforementioned stereotyped representation and stigma that surrounds fandom\textsuperscript{13}. This and the “online/offline divide” (Yus 37) these fans experience often lead to double identities: the online, fan identity displays a different image, but still retains the core identity, which also appears in the offline, real life identity. These two selves are still connected, they often represent two different sides of the self (Yus 37), between which people can easily shift (Turkle cited in Yus 37); Jenkins frequently discusses how he “negotiate[s] [his] multiple identities as fan and scholar” (1).

Fan-related activities are often marginalised, and viewed to be “outside the mainstream and beneath dignity” (Jenkins 40), and because of this, the magic circle gains yet another importance in fan culture. Huizinga argues that when someone enters the magic circle, the outside does not matter any more: it is the \textit{us} that is important, and not \textit{others}. Play is for ourselves, and what anybody else is doing outside of the circle, is of no concern at the moment (Huizinga 12). Being aware of the magic circle and the playfulness of fan culture, the feeling of being marginalised and looked down on can be changed to an attitude of “[w]e are different and we do things differently” (Huizinga 12), but it is as valid as any other game or play.

Conclusions

Homo Ludens is a fan. Through play, the Homo Ludens engages actively with everything surrounding them, and it keeps going back, repeating the games they like to play. We are experiencing the gamification of all aspects of life, and it would be strange to leave out what can truly immerse people and bring out all kinds of feelings in them: stories. Fans take the stories they love and they do what we all always do, ever since we were little children: play with them. Fans are often characterised as fearless, rogue readers and rebels, but it must not be forgotten that at the core, all they really do is just play. Fans just want to have fun.

\textsuperscript{13}Jenkins mentions an article from Newsweek which focuses on “conspicuous consumption and “infantile” behavior” - the latter being a rather critical comment towards all playful activities in a way (39).
Bibliography


