

Universal Monsters plastic model kits as “America’s newest, most spine-tingling hobby.” Traditional monsters could not die, which proved an intriguing marketing strategy for children growing up in the Cold War era. It might be more interesting to consider how a child relates to the monstrous toys presented in popular films like *Dolls* or what the relationship between a child and a murderous doll suggests about how adults view children.

Overall, the contributors provide a broad overview of toys in literature, comics, and film. The book serves as a good general resource. But the use of a toy as a heroic trope is not well-defined in the text and, therefore, the essays do not seem to form a cohesive study. Many of these essays would be strengthened by defining “hero” or by removing the concept of “hero.” Even if defining a hero proved impossible, the reader would benefit from a more structured collection. Restructuring the book based on format, origins, chronology, or theme might also provide a more critically astute body of work. Still, in spite of the generalist approach to the subject, the essays contribute to the literature in toys and cultural history.

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Atari Age: The Emergence of Video Games in America

Michael Z. Newman.

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In the introduction to *Atari Age: The Emergence of Video Games in America*, Michael Newman observes that he was born in the same year as the debut of *Pong* (1972) and grew up during the height of the Atari craze. As a slightly younger scholar, I missed the direct experience of the Atari era. Nintendo was all the rage among my peers, though like Newman I could not convince my parents to buy the hot console of the moment. Newman succeeds both in painting the era I missed in impressive detail and in capturing its significance for scholars. *Atari Age* focuses on a very narrow time period at the dawn of video games, as its title suggests. It is not, however, simply an account of Atari as a business or even as a cultural producer. Instead, Newman engages with the video game and console during Atari’s reign as physical artifacts situated in changing spaces influenced by a migration from the public to the domestic sphere.

Newman’s work looks at the decade from 1972 to 1982, which saw the release of not only *Pong* but also *Space Invaders* (1978) and *Pac-Man* (1980)—inescapable classics, well-documented in top games lists and still playable on arcade machines throughout the country. But Newman does not set out to retread old analyses or even to dive deeply into analyzing these or other games. Instead, he takes us outside the games to consider their situation, audience, reception, and context. He examines the challenges companies and marketers faced in positioning the games in relationship to the home and existing perceptions of the appropriate types of leisure divided along lines of class and gender. For scholars working outside games history, this analysis of play in the household and the

restructuring of the domestic spaces by new “toys” (however technical) should be of interest.

Throughout, Newman pays particular attention to the gendered nature of games as play, noting that pinball machines and other precursors of the home video game console were typically found in spaces dominated by men (p. 31). He suggests that the arrival of the console in the living room can be understood in part as a masculine alternative to television, “a medium long denigrated on the basis of its feminized and lower-class cultural status” as a fixture in the domestic sphere (p. 72). Discussions of historically situated gaming rarely engage with gender on this level. Carly Kocurek’s *Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood at the Video Game Arcade* (2015) marks a notable exception and makes a great companion text to this volume. Newman’s strength lies in his detailed engagement with the artifacts of gendered discourse throughout the text and particularly his inclusion of comics, advertisements, and other primary sources that foreground this gendered tension. He connects cultural changes happening in the American household on every level, from the changing names and ownership of family, recreation, media, and “rumpus” rooms to the advent of the so-called “man cave” (pp. 80–85). Newman’s account of the different status occupied by computers and video games proves particularly compelling in these terms, noting that the very presence of a keyboard demands a different spatial configuration and implies the male-dominated environment of the office (p. 143). These discussions are illustrated by painfully sexist advertisements from the time depicting the stratified spaces.

Newman leaves the reader with an account of the highly gendered reception of *Pac-Man* (and of course, *Ms. Pac-Man*), crediting the game with sealing the progression of video games from “new-fangled gadget” to “a fixture of everyday life” (p. 199). His account of the game’s role in making women more visible as players, and the subsequent attacks on these women and even on the game itself, will be all-too-familiar to anyone immersed in the current discourse of game history (p. 194). As the field of video game studies matures, Newman’s work will play an important role in our understanding of its origins. His work is particularly valuable for interrogating (and illuminating) the moral panics that inevitably accompany new media. He captures both the contemporaneous fears and support of video games at this moment of emergence and their inevitable resolution as the novel becomes mundane.

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The Tetris Effect: The Game That Hypnotized the World

Dan Ackerman

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Tetris: The Games People Play

Box Brown

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