

play interventions for hospitalized children. The third section addresses play interventions for externalizing disorders. Its chapters explore using play interventions and coaching for children with externalizing disorders (such as social aggression and bullying), parent-child interaction therapy for children with disruptive behavior disorders, and the use of play interventions with children in a cognitive-behavioral group for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The fourth section examines play interventions for developmental disorders and other models. It features chapters on a play-based intervention for young children with autism spectrum disorders; integrated play groups for children with autism and their typically developing peers; and theory, research, and intervention on child-parent relationship therapy. The book's final chapter offers readers a summary of future directions of empirically supported play interventions.

Although the title of the text may be most attractive to scholars and researchers in the field, the book is likely to be versatile enough to be used in numerous settings. The book examines scholarship and evidence for each treatment specialty, and it is written in a manner that individuals new to the field can easily digest. The contributors write for both novices and skilled readers. At the end of each chapter, readers are likely to be prompted to explore their own avenues of discovery in respective areas of interest. The chapters are generally concise but significant enough to review theory, case examples of practice, and empirical evidence for each model. Overall, the book is a must-have for students, researchers, and scholars in

the field of child therapy.

—Gabriel I. Lomas, *Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, CT*

How He-Man Mastered the Universe: Toy to Television to the Big Screen

Brian C. Baer

Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2017. Introduction, filmography, notes, bibliography, photos, and index. 228 pp. \$19.99 paperback. ISBN: 9781476665900

The rising recognition of toys as an understudied form of culture has led to a number of recent explorations of toys and toy franchises. Such studies and books come from a variety of perspectives, including sociology, the political economy of media companies, the history of industry, media studies, fan studies, and explorations of specific toy lines and connected “branded entertainment” texts.

Brian C. Baer's *How He-Man Mastered the Universe* from McFarland Books arrives as one of the latter, a history and selective interpretative reading of Mattel's Masters of the Universe (MOTU) franchise. Baer describes himself as a lifelong MOTU fan and a novelist who also writes popular culture articles for fan web sites. The book explores the origins of the MOTU toy line, tracking its earliest origins through its decline and attempts to revive it. The author gives special attention to the action figure line, the minicomics that were distributed with the original figures, the cartoon series, and the 1987 motion picture. With the exception of the motion picture (which Baer explores at

length), he presents noteworthy selections of each iteration of the franchise he covers.

Where the book succeeds best is the background stories connected to the franchise, particularly the accounts of the dissolution of Cannon Films during the *Masters of the Universe* feature film production. Baer draws much of this information from previous accounts, but its presentation alongside the narrative about the production of the film yields a new insights into production cuts and editorial decisions in the latter stages of filming, as the studio was attempting to stave off bankruptcy long enough to see the film released. Less valuable might be the extended history of the film actors (in particular, Dolph Lundgren), but such material allows the book to frame some of the preproduction and postproduction struggles of adapting a toy franchise to the big screen. The film itself receives most of Baer's attention: he gives it three full chapters, including twenty-nine pages of synopsis.

Though the histories, synopses, and selective interpretations provide fan service, other parts of the book are less compelling. Baer repeatedly claims the 1980s *Masters of the Universe* franchise as seminal in its approach to transmedia promotion. Consider: "Before the animated series *He-man and the Masters of the Universe* debuted in 1983, no other action figure brand had attempted to cross into the world of children's cartoons, and with good reason: such adaptations were heavily regulated by the Federal Communications Commission" (p. 16).

Such a statement creates unfortunate half-truths. During that time, the FCC tightly regulated animation in commercials, but the FCC regulations Baer cites

came into being because of complaints against the 1969 *Hot Wheels* cartoon as an animated commercial for Mattel's toy car line. Several works contribute to our understanding of the FCC's rulings including Sydney Ladensohn Stern and Ted Schoehaus's *Toyland: the High-Stakes Game of the Toy Industry* (1990); Cy Schneider's *Children's Television: The Art, the Business, and How it Works* (1989); and Heather Hendershot's *Saturday Morning Censors: Television Regulation Before the V-Chip* (1998). Not only was *MOTU* not the first animated show based on a toy property, it was not even the first such series based on a Mattel property. Such a lack of industry context hurts the book throughout.

The show debuted in syndication on September 5, 1983, in the UK and September 26 in the United States, and it immediately changed the game. Because *He-Man* was so successful, other animation studios began taking their wares to syndication directly and skewing the standard route of the major networks Saturday morning programming block. Within the next two years, Mattel's cross-media formula would be repeated by its competitors, such as Hasbro, and *He-Man's* popularity would be under siege by the likes of *Snake Eyes* and *Optimus Prime*. Until then, however, the success of *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* was unparalleled (p. 51).

Unfortunately, Hasbro's *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero* cartoon had premiered in American syndication on September 12, before the premiere of *Masters of the Universe*. The wave of animated cartoon shows in the early 1980s certainly signaled a new era in toy franchise marketing, but both Mattel and Hasbro contributed to this trend

after long histories of similar tactics by each across many mediums, at least dating back to Hasbro's original 1964 G.I. Joe twelve-inch action figure line.

In his quest to position the *MOTU* cartoon as a seminal model, Baer frequently gets key timelines wrong, which leads him in turn to claim Hasbro copied Mattel in this strategy and even that "Hasbro's success all came from the benefit of not being the first ones to attempt something risky" (pp. 51, 133, 174). But at the time both series launched, Hasbro was more than two years into a multimedia strategy to skirt FCC restrictions that mixed animated commercials for the Marvel Comics series with ads for the toys appearing in the comics. And the He-Man line itself has been described as an attempt to compete with the precartoon success of G.I. Joe (in Jason Bainbridge's "Fully Articulated: The Rise of the Action Figure and the Changing Face of Children's Entertainment" in *Continuum: A Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* [vol. 24, 2010]). Both toy lines appeared in 1982, but if one toy company had to be crowned the prime mover in that particular wave of transmedia promotion, it would more likely be Hasbro. However, in truth, determining which individuals or companies were the originators of particular ideas or strategies is difficult, as Baer himself notes when discussing the origins of He-Man (p. 26).

Baer's tendency to proclaim the primacy of *MOTU* appears driven by his own fan zeal, but it frames the central thesis of his book: "What this book was written to support is the pivotal role *Masters of the Universe* played in the genesis of the *Transformers* film franchise, board game-based films like *Battleship* (2012), and the cur-

rent Marvel Studios crossmedia strategy that has become the norm for speculative fiction franchises" (p. 174).

Perhaps Baer felt the need to frame his book around this claim to justify the particular contents of his book, including some pieces of the Mattel franchise, while only briefly mentioning others (merchandising like lunch boxes, stickers, and even video games). The book does not benefit from this framing because the fan service it provides is interesting enough on its own merits. To the extent that the book overreaches, these industry accounts could be better accessed in previous books on Mattel and Hasbro, such as Eric Clark's *The Real Toy Story: Inside the Ruthless Battle for America's Youngest Children* (2007); Stephen Kline's *Out of the Garden: Toys and Children's Culture in the Age of TV Marketing* (1993); G. Wayne Miller's *Toy Wars: The Epic Struggle Between G.I. Joe, Barbie, and the Companies That Make Them* (1998); and Brian Sutton-Smith, *Toys as Culture* (1986). These works, however, do not celebrate He-Man in ways consistent with Baer's affection for the text. But, as a work of fan celebration, Baer's book entertains and provides insight into the mutual demise of Cannon Films and one of Mattel's marquee toy properties.

—J. Richard Stevens, *University of Colorado, Boulder, Boulder, CO*

Fans and Videogames: Histories, Fandom, Archives

*Melanie Swalwell, Helen Stuckey, and
Angela Ndalianis, eds.*