

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.

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Fans and Videogames: Histories, Fandom, Archives

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

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Acknowledgments, introduction, and
index. 242 pp. \$97.43 cloth.
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Fans and Videogames: Histories, Fandom, Archives consists of thirteen chapters by a range of scholars and an introduction by the editors. The book is divided into three sections: Historicizing Game Fandom, Fan Contributions to Game History, and The Archive. These sections and the book's subtitle highlight the methodological and conceptual orientation of the book; it is a collection of works about game history. This focus is noteworthy for a few reasons. First, it suggests the growing importance of historically oriented research in contemporary game studies. The editors Melanie Swalwell, Helen Stuckey, and Angela Ndalianis argue in their introduction: "Game history is a relatively understudied aspect of game studies" (p. 4). I am unconvinced, game history is arguably the most vibrant and active subfield in game studies, at least of late. The high quality of the work in this collection will only make it more so. Second, in connecting games studies and fan studies through history, the concept and figure and practices of the fan are recast in meaningful ways. At the same time, the figure of the fan allows the contributors to talk about people and practices beyond the player and play, a long-standing problem in game studies.

This collection shows how fans both have histories and make (and preserve) history as key features of their fandom. This historical perspective offers a meaningful and significant contribution to understandings of the fan and fandom. In their introduction, the editors are explicit

about this: "the essays together subject the term 'fan' to some critical pressure" (p. 3). I was happy to see such pressure, but it does seem to be exerted principally from one side. The book feels like a reach across the "nexus" from game studies to fan studies as opposed to an equal meeting of two disciplines, which is not necessarily a bad thing (I say as a game scholar). This uniformity means that the collection fits together better than most and is cogent and useful. I am curious to see what fan scholars might think of these new formations and formulations of the fan and fandom.

The claims made by the authors are reasonable and well supported by substantial research. Still, I got the feeling that the "critical pressure" on the figure of the fan called for by the editors could have been more critical and of higher pressure. For example, often in the volume, fan practices are described as kinds of resistance to companies, markets, and control. Although valid and necessary, it is a familiar conceit in fan studies, one that calls out for more critical reassessment. This is not to say that game studies cannot learn much from fan studies. It is particularly refreshing to see materials and practices that surround games, literally in the case of home-brew cartridges, given their due.

There is not a dud in the book; it is a remarkably consistent, well-researched, and well-written collection. Topics range from fan sites to home-brew games for old systems to unusable, unstable app archives. Some highlights include James Newman's exaltation to think about the peculiar archeo-play-hacking that led to the discovery of the so-called Minus (-) World in *Super Mario Bros.* as a kind of

fandom and Helen Stuckey's fascinating account of how paper war gamers turned themselves into computer gamers. Another standout is Jennifer deWinter and Carly Kocurek's use of Walter Benjamin's figure of the collector in conjunction with interviews to explore how fans' collections are institutionalized.

This book is an essential read for those of us who study what people (especially communities) do with games beyond designing and playing them. It will be of interest to anyone working in game history and especially those who study issues of preservation and archives. It should also be useful for fan scholars. The high price and scholarly tone will probably keep the layman and, ironically, fans away.

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Metagaming: Playing, Competing, Spectating, Cheating, Trading, Making, and Breaking Videogames

Stephanie Boluk and Patrick Lemieux

Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 2017.

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“Metagames are the only kind of games that we play” (p. 3). *Metagaming* opens with a rather bold statement. Or, possibly, with the most common of common senses about games. We never really engage with the abstract, platonic, perfectly formed rule set of a game, but rather we play around it, engage with it in messy ways, shape it to

our and other players' advantage. Playing means, in fact, performing meta-operations on and around the materiality, authored mechanics, and rules of the peculiar object that is a game. Not absolute obedience to the precepts of the game, nor boundless, liberating freedom, the metaplay of the metagamer is an act of approximation and negotiation, at times subdued (“spectating,” “making,” “trading”), at times violent (“cheating,” “breaking”). Stephanie Boluk and Patrick Lemieux, both professors at the University of California, Davis, build a compelling theoretical structure that rests on this complex duality, ultimately claiming that the metagame is the site where the authority of the game and the creativity of the player coexist in a constant state of tension.

The rhetoric of metagaming can be defended as true for games of all sorts, but here the authors choose to analyze its relevance to digital play. This inclination operates a double framing on the work of Boluk and Lemieux. Primarily, within the context of digital game studies, metagaming certainly subscribes to what can be defined as an exceptionalist theory of video games. This theoretical stance—found in numerous other recent studies—claims that video games are in fact exceptional kinds of games because they rely for their functioning on the unique properties of computing. In a digital game, everything must be programmed in advance and executed by a string of code. Using the authors' clever similitude: whereas gravity is taken for granted when playing baseball in real life, in a digital simulation of baseball, entities such as gravity, mass, and attrition become rules that need to be programmed. This focus on pragmatics, in turn, situates this