

the other. In some respects, the concepts as laid out in this volume are like ring species—one can see the links between them, but the ends do not resemble each other at all. Thankfully, those authors who specifically look at play and ritual behaviors in cognitive development do not argue that the latter are a direct outcome of evolutionary processes, but rather that these behaviors are possible because of the cognitive abilities play engenders.

Although there is strong coherence in the collective focus on ritual and play as broad concepts, how closely each author approaches these topics varies, especially with respect to animals and animal play behaviors and the links to cognitive development and evolutionary processes. Despite these issues, the evidence and subjects explored in this volume are well presented. The chapters do presume some knowledge of biological, evolutionary, and archaeological concepts and theories; thus, the book is more appropriate for readers with some background in these disciplines. Ultimately, this volume gives readers interesting insights into the role of play, belief, and ritual in both evolutionary processes and, the somewhat related development of early human societies from a wide range of perspectives and case studies.

—Marijke Stoll, *University of Indiana, Bloomington, IN*

Wit's End: What Wit Is, How It Works, and Why We Need It

James Geary

New York: W. W. Norton & Company,

2018. Notes and bibliography, illustration credits, and index. 128 pp. \$23.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780393254945

It has been difficult to write a review for James Geary's *Wit's End: What Wit Is, How It Works, and Why We Need It*. It is a book about being clever and finding paradoxical connections between disparate things. Layers of nuanced understanding of the newly connected things form in the process. It is not that the book is problematic. Hardly! Indeed, it is insightful and fun, illuminating how we can creatively "connect the dots" through play. Rather, it has been difficult to write this review because I have been struggling with how to make it also at least partially clever. I mean, how could someone write a dry review of a book dripping with wit?

I first thought I should riddle this review with puns (what could be more fun?). That is how Geary starts, deconstructing the pun and framing what makes some puns true wit. Hint: it is more about juxtaposing meanings to shed new light on a situation than merely using homonyms or rhymes. As I kept reading, however, I discovered that each chapter was laid down in a different literary style, so I thought that maybe I could follow suit and attempt a review in verse. This, unfortunately, revealed to me how terrible a writer I am, my own clumsiness foiling any demonstration of rapier wit. Here is an excerpt:

Even the lowest form of wit under the sun,
the pun,
can expose creatively through some
much-needed levity.
Puns work best when they make ideas

connect, not just words connect.
 This leads Geary to explain that a good
 pun
 is a metaphor, which is a stand-in for
 much more than its sum direct.
 It's not the literal meaning that makes it
 fun.
 And the lightning flash recognition within
 our brains,
 compels us to follow novel thought trains.
 And when we "get it" through metaphor,
 we will alight
 upon a newfound foundation of erudite
 wisdom,
 experiencing "aha" moments and making
 our ideas alight
 through mirth and playdom.

You see? There are another five verses! My terrible writing ability and limited mental capability led to a months-long writer's block, bouts of imposter syndrome, and an existential intellectual crisis. Though, if I am being honest, I cannot tell how much these feelings come down to just being a citizen of the United States in 2019.

Geary crafts each chapter carefully, brewing an argument for heady wit and finding ways to mature and tap it. He chronicles a history of wit, from court jesters to Sophists to monks and public intellectuals to rent parties where partygoers traded jibe through jive as a form of counterculture. The best forms of wit, according to Geary (citing Tesauro), have three necessary components: novelty, brevity, and clarity. Being witty is a creative act, finding likeness between completely different sorts of things. The setup for a witticism can be slow, but the payoff has to be quick—making those who understand the esoteric connection feel smart. They get an "aha" moment and

belong to the in-crowd, in on the joke. For this recognition, it has to make sense and almost supernaturally fit, sparking useful new insights.

One of Geary's chapters is in the form of a research paper in a medical journal in which he describes the brain science behind being witty. Creativity activates or comes from our default mental network, as opposed to our executive network. This is useful to know since we can see that the same parts of our brain that light up while we are being witty also become active when we make different forms of connections, such as when we come up with an innovative design solution to an engineering problem. This suggests that making puns is similar to finding novel solutions in any discipline. Innovation, then, is the act of being able to see connections that are not immediately obvious. What seems necessary is a particular openness or attitude, one that is playful and spontaneous.

His argument allows for playfulness and (even bad) puns, because these things expose truths and build understanding. Playful wit destabilizes and disarms tense situations by juxtaposing completely dynamic responses to seemingly static ideas. We can release tension through laughter, as we recognize that the conditions that brought us stress are absurd. What was once an impasse to our thinking suddenly becomes potential.

And, thus, I learned that wit is potentially a way to bring us together, to unite those in opposition. Riddling something with puns is like riddling rigid thinking with holes, breaking it down into component parts. A bricolage of the remains can then be assembled with

scavenged scrap from far-away places to make something new.

So learn from Geary, and appreciate wit.
Learn from Geary on how to develop it.
It may seem like we're fighting and being
mean when we spar
through a play on words,
but in truth we're *understanding*, we're
coming together from afar
and making meaning through words in
play.

—Mark Chen, *University of Washington, Bothell, WA*

**The Psychology of Zelda:
Linking Our World to The
Legend of Zelda Series**

Anthony M. Bean, ed.

Dallas, TX: BenBella Books,
2019. Foreword, introduction,
acknowledgments, and about the editor.
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The games in The Legend of Zelda video game series typically follow the journey of the silent hero Link in his quest to save the Kingdom of Hyrule from the evil power-hungry Ganondorf, often at the behest of the pseudonymous Princess Zelda (although some of the games deviate from this format). *The Psychology of Zelda: Linking Our World to The Legend of Zelda Series* is a collection of essays written by a group of mental health professionals discussing the various ways in which the games in the Zelda franchise reflect human experience in the stories they tell and the characters who populate them.

These essays stand alone and can be read in any order, which is both a strength and a weakness of the book. Each author takes the time to explain concepts that sometimes have been explained in previous chapters, all of which can get repetitive. However, clearly—and refreshingly—this book was a collaborative process and the reader gets a wide range of perspectives. For example, across chapters, we find a heavy emphasis on Jungian psychology, and several authors explore how players can psychologically project themselves onto the hero Link and effectively experience his journey as their own. Nevertheless, the authors each have their own take on this projection and a distinct way of communicating information to the reader. A chapter that may not speak to me personally for one reason or another, may speak to someone else deeply—and vice versa.

Many find it difficult to understand the importance video games can assume for those who play them. Throughout this book, nearly every author takes the time to explain why video games matter to people, and—more importantly—how they can affect individuals personally and emotionally. One chapter stands out in this regard. In “Unmasking Grief: Applying the Kubler-Ross Five Stages of Grief Model to *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask*,” authors Larisa A. Garski, Emory S. Daniel Jr., and F. Cary Shepard walk the reader through the story of Link, who—after losing both a close friend and a purpose in life—progresses through the stages of depression, denial, anger, bargaining, and acceptance. It is not difficult to see how Link's emotional journey during the course of the game closely parallels phases