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
New York: PublicAffairs, 2016. Contents, acknowledgments, selected bibliography, index. 264 pp. $25.99 hardcover. ISBN: 9781610396110

Tetris: The Games People Play

Box Brown
New York: First Second, 2016. 253 pp. $19.99 cloth. ISBN: 9781626723153

Inventions, Cold War politics, friendships, betrayals, revenge, courtroom drama, false contracts, international intrigue, and money, lots of money—this list could describe any number of blockbuster movies or critically acclaimed television shows. In this case, however, it depicts the story of *Tetris*, starting with Alexey Pajitnov playing with pentomino puzzle pieces in Soviet Russia and closing with a mostly happy ending for the heroes of these stories. I am purposeful about the use of "story" and "hero" here, for this is how these two books—*The* Tetris *Effect: The Game That Hypnotized the World* by journalist Dan Ackerman and *Tetris: The Games People Play* by graphic novelist Box Brown—present the history of *Tetris*. This seemingly simple geospatial puzzle game, inspired by the pentomino puzzles of Pajitnov's youth, had profound effects on the lives of people and nations.

Ackerman's book *The* Tetris *Effect* is organized into three sections, each with six to seven chapters, in which he tells the story of *Tetris*'s creation and distribution. At the end of each section, he includes a bonus level wherein he considers an aspect of *Tetris* and its influence on the game industry, people, and society. Ackerman summarizes Jeffrey Goldsmith's influential article "This Is Your Brain on *Tetris*," emphasizing that *Tetris*'s use of procedural and spatial memory repetition leads to a type of persistent visuospatial memory—people can see *Tetris* when they are not playing it—and that *Tetris* ultimately reshapes how we see our world. In other sections, Ackerman shows that *Tetris* makes human brains more efficient or that it can help counter the formation of debilitating post-trau-

matic stress disorder (PTSD. This, however, is not the focus of this book. Rather, Ackerman's story is at turns fascinating, horrifying, and hilarious.

The book begins with Henk Rogers crossing the proverbial threshold into unknown Soviet Russia. Rogers intended to secure the rights to *Tetris* for Nintendo through his game publishing business, Bullet-Proof Software. Following this introduction, the first section of the book covers how Rogers ended up in this position and how Pajitnov grew up, joined the Russian Academy of Sciences, and designed *Tetris* with his friend Dmitry Pavlovsky and a high school student named Vadim Gerasimov. The game went viral and finally landed in Hungary.

Part 2 of the book switches to Robert Stein, a software publisher who specialized in importing cheaper Eastern European software into the European and U.S. markets. Stein saw the potential of *Tetris*, sent a message to Pajitnov (who could not himself enter business because of the communist antienterprise laws of the USSR), and started the process of licensing *Tetris* for international distribution. And this was where the train wreck began. Within short order, illegal licenses were sold and resold, three major players vied for rights—Stein, a major media conglomerate called the Mirror group, and Rogers on behalf of Nintendo—and representatives of the Soviet government realized that individuals had been abusing its asset. Law suits, revenge, and political threats pepper these pages, and throughout, Pajitnov remains a silent bystander to the game he created. Part 3 sees the *Tetris* rights resolved in favor of Nintendo, allowing the game to be packaged and released with the new Gameboy.

Millions were produced, a lot of money was made, and meanwhile the USSR collapsed. The last chapter reads like the final credits in a film biography, indicating where the main players are now and briefly summarizing Rogers and Pajitnov's partnership (based on long friendship) in forming The Tetris Company.

Brown's graphic novel covers much the same story, albeit in much broader strokes. His book begins with a prehistoric definition of games emerging from play and transforming into art (at the point of creation) and fun (at the point of consumption). This may be the weakest part of the book because it glosses over some particularly contentious material. After this introduction, Brown takes an ensemble approach to this history, cycling back to Pajitnov and his creative thinking several times, but skirting away from making any of the actors in this drama the hero. The content is elegantly organized into sections demarcated by a single back page with introductory portraits of the main characters who appear in the unfolding narrative. This is brilliant organizational strategy because there are simply so many powerful people in the story to keep track of, and it reminds the reader that games are not made in vacuums by nameless people. Real actors affect the production, distribution, and consumption of the game, and they are as thoughtful, selfish, giving, and petty as most other humans.

The strength of the graphic novel approach to the history of *Tetris* is that the reader can see examples from the game, the advertisements, and the meetings and parties referenced. Brown also uses the affordances of the comic page to represent the abstract thinking processes of creation, relationships, and internal dialog from Pajitnov's articulation of games as the confluence of humanity and technology (pp. 67–68) to Stein's self-satisfied visage as he imagines all of the money he will make (illegally) licensing *Tetris*.

The only major critique I have of these two histories is not the fault of the authors; these are popular histories. However, I missed the typical academic citations for source information. This is especially pertinent because the two books do not always agree on their facts, providing different stories about the first time Rogers and Pajitnov met, for example. Ackerman does have a selected bibliography, but it is less a bibliography than a suggested reading list for those interested. Because of the nature of the graphic novel, Brown tends to skip large swaths of information, presenting sequential bites instead. I recommend reading these together because they complement each other. What I especially appreciated about these two books (in addition to a truly entertaining story) was the careful record of *Tetris* as a game that went through multiple iterations and an industrial account of the role of distribution in the creation of cultural texts.

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Cultural Code: Video Games and Latin America
Phillip Penix-Tadsen
Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016.
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