

fortieth-anniversary meeting, as it summarizes the spirit of the book. Stevens provides an overview of the challenges that in his opinion play scholars should address: to improve cross-disciplinary communication, research further into the cultural context of play, be less careless about research, and embrace the fact that play is fun.

Interestingly, Stevens's challenges work well with the contents of the articles that follow, especially with those selected to illustrate the present and future of the study of play. For example, Olga Jarrett's fascinating study of dolls and de-segregation is a careful examination of the role of playthings in the configurations of political and social realities. Vicky Thomas's "Playing in Northampton: Connecting Past, Present, and Future" also shows how the study of the manufacturing of toys can illustrate the complex evolution of labor and industrialization in contemporary societies. Finally, Lynn E. Cohen and Sandra Waite-Stupiansky's study of play for all ages calls for scholars to broaden the study of play beyond its manifestation in infants. These articles excel at addressing Stevens's challenges to make the study of play contemporary, relevant, and cross-disciplinary, while at the same time asserting that play is fun, but must also be placed in sociocultural contexts.

The editors close the book with an article by Thomas Henricks that explores modern and postmodern play in the context of the present and future of the study of play. This article functions as the perfect closing for the book, neatly providing a summary of the present and past of the study of play while urging future studies to embrace this duality between modern

and postmodern perspectives on play. If the first article in the book proposes a set of challenges for the study of play based on the history of TASP, then the last article raises the stakes and reframes the discussion toward the present and future of the field.

Ultimately, this ambitious book provides a snapshot of a particular history of the study of play. Thanks to the careful editing work of Michael M. Patte and John A. Sutterby and the quality of the articles selected, it is safe to say that this collection is a worthy contribution to the scholarly discussion on what the study of play is and what it should be.

—Miguel Sicart, *IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

It's All a Game: The History of Board Games from Monopoly to Settlers of Catan

Tristan Donovan

New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2017. Introduction, references, acknowledgments, and index. 292 pp. \$26.99 paper. ISBN: 9781250082725

In *It's All a Game*, Tristan Donovan explores the roots of board games' persistent popularity. Analyzing the influence of social, political, and economic influences on board game designers and manufacturers, Donovan maps the evolution of our modern-day relationship with board games across time, international boundaries, and cultures. He also examines the impact this leisure activity has had on popular psychology. Donovan concludes

that games have “shaped us, explained us, and molded the world we live in” (p. 7).

In sixteen chapters, the author takes his readers on a journey that underscores the history and evolution of ancient games and their contemporary counterparts. Donovan traces the Indian and Persian influences on chess, highlighting the game’s journey along the Silk Road trade routes and how the rules and game pieces evolved to reflect first Muslim and then European societies. He examines how games such as backgammon, Milton Bradley’s *The Checkered Game of Life*, and *Monopoly* developed as games that required both strategy and luck. As with chess, Donovan emphasizes the ways in which the original versions of these games addressed the concerns of the day and then evolved over time.

Donovan devotes much of his book to twentieth-century games and illustrates the international influences of modern games and how changing mores affected games and game play. He discusses the development of popular games such as *Clue* and *Scrabble*, and he recounts the history of Marvin Glass, an eccentric and paranoid toy inventor whose infusion of plastics into board games (such as *Operation* and *Mouse Trap*), melded the board game industry with the toy industry. Donovan also highlights the importance of *Twister* and how it was designed as a party game but became a game that unintentionally “echoed Western society’s sexual journey” and paved the way for other games with sexual themes (p. 178).

In addition to exploring game development, Donovan dedicates a portion of his book to connecting board game play to warfare, most notably *Kriegsspiel*, a

type of war game invented by a Prussian army officer as a way to calculate military operation outcomes. These games mapped tactical maneuvers for global conflicts until computers, with their more accurate ability to determine artillery-firing rates, replaced plotting scenarios on a board. The concepts of re-creating, developing, and practicing military strategies inspired modern games, such as *Risk*, and launched Avalon Hill, a company that “helped foster a community of armchair generals” (p. 102). Building on this analysis of military themes, Donovan examines the roles of games in both geopolitical and ideological conflicts. He recounts how the British government used *Monopoly* in World War II, infusing the game with secret compartments containing money, compasses, and silk maps before sending them to British prisoners of war via military intelligence agencies disguised as relief organizations. Other games—particularly the venerable game of chess—came to reflect the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Donovan also traces the history of world chess tournaments and the Soviet Union’s use of its domination of the game as a means to highlight the superiority of communist rationalism. With the exception of America’s Bobby Fischer, Soviet players dominated competitive chess until the USSR collapsed in 1991. With each of these topics, Donovan effectively underscores the role of games beyond home entertainment purposes.

Game innovations, Donovan argues, have had significant effects on games played beyond childhood. He spends a chapter explaining the importance of *Trivial Pursuit* as a game that “broke board games free from the toy box” and created a

market for adults (p. 223). Another innovation is the use of strategic cooperation and planning, a notable feature of Settlers of Catan (a game that encourages players to cleverly manage their paths to success as opposed to direct racing and eliminating opponents). While Catan has a niche following, Donovan argues that other game designers infused these methods into their products, such as Monopoly Empire, creating a more communal environment for play. After all, Donovan posits, the social function of board games is what has maintained their popularity for centuries.

In addition to historical and socio-cultural mutations, Donovan explores the psychology of games and emphasizes the dichotomy of games into two camps—math-based strategy games and games that focus on emotions and feelings. Chess and Brain Buster games fall into one camp, while games that have no winners but explore our inner thoughts, such as the Ungame, fall into the other. Donovan argues that games challenge us mentally and socially and that manufacturers and educational experts have capitalized on games' motivating aspects to foster social and developmental skills. Chess and other strategy-based games, Donovan notes, have also served as a motivation for scientists exploring artificial intelligence in a playful way.

It's All a Game provides an international snapshot of board games that both influenced game play and reflected changing cultural mores. The work is insightful, emphasizing some game designers' motives to incorporate paratextuality (role playing) as discussed in Paul Booth's 2015 book *Game Play*. While Donovan does not dwell on the strategic descriptions

of play that can be found in other board game histories, such as David Parlett's *The Oxford History of Board Games* (1999), images would have been useful to readers in explaining some of the details of the games. Donovan or his publisher assumes that readers are familiar with most of the games mentioned, but photographs would have enhanced his arguments on the manner in which contemporary events influenced game design. Additionally, Donovan assumes all games prior to Monopoly were race games and infers that games prior to Trivial Pursuit were intended primarily for children. While there was a plethora of race games prior to Monopoly, strategy and capture games did exist, particularly those that re-created Spanish-American War battles scenes. Furthermore, in the American board game industry, most games were initially marketed for family fun or adult social gatherings—not just for children. Such drawbacks are nonetheless minor. *It's All a Game* is a well-researched and engaging monograph that will appeal to the general reader and scholars alike.

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What to Do When Children Clam Up in Psychotherapy: Interventions to Facilitate Communication

Cathy A. Malchiodi and David A. Crenshaw, eds.

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