the dictum, "The child is not an adult" (p. 92), and sought to understand the child's interiority on her own terms. (In this transnational movement, which rests implicitly in the background throughout the book, also lays the origins of the academic study of play.) Jones's approach is a function of his source material; whereas contemporary anthropologists study children's behaviors and development in the context of play, Jones meticulously reconstructs intellectual and popular debates about childhood in Japan from the country's vibrant turn-of-the-century print culture, an exhaustive foundation of primary sources over which Jones displays impressive command.

If I was left wanting anything, though, it was this: the book is less about the lived experiences of turn-of-the-century Japanese children and more about the multitude of actors shaping children's lives, particularly mothers and the bourgeoning army of child-study professionals who penned countless tracts for the rapidly expanding middle-class marketplace. The fault lies not with Jones, however, but with the documentary record available for historians to reconstruct the past.

Chapter 5, "The Childlike Child: Play and the Importance of Leisure," will be of particular interest to scholars of play. Jones details the emergence in the 1910s and 1920s of the archetypal image of the *kodomorashii kodomo*, which rejected specifically the image of the *yutosei* and more generally the alleged artificial pressures of discipline and regimentation that modernity imposed on children. Promoters of the *kodomorashii kodomo*, including an influential antimodernist group, believed childhood to be a natural, innocent state and associated it with characteristics like "freedom, laughter, emotional satisfaction, physical exertion, primitive energy, and creativity" (p. 283). As a result, Taish society saw the "creation of a new geography of childhood" (p. 277) in which public spaces like parks and libraries actively embraced their youngest patrons. The *kodomorashii kodomo*, however, ultimately lost the struggle for childhood to the *yutosei*, remaining a dissenting perspective among a minority, a "haunting whisper" (p. 249) across a postwar era in which the image of the superior student was "massified and internalized by Japanese parents and children" (p. 317).

Jones's excellent study is a valuable contribution recommended to historians of twentieth-century Japan and scholars interested in the history of education worldwide and the global origins of the child-study movement.

—Andrew C. McKevitt, *Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA*

Inter/vention: Free Play in the Age of Electracy

Jan Rune Holmevik
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012. Contents, notes, references, index, charts. 204 pp. $28.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780262017053

"Just as agents seeking to express themselves in alphabetic writing need to be literate, that is master the discourses and conventions of writing, egents who seek to express themselves in digital media need to be electrate (p. 4)." Jan Rune Holmevik frames his book *Inter/vention: Free Play in*

the Age of Electracy with Gregory Ulmer's theory of electracy (competence in digital technology), while pulling from Derrida and Heidegger as well. The author adds to the theory that electracy does not supplant literacy, just as literacy did not supplant orality; rather, electracy is informed by literacy. He argues that the deepest way to understand the importance and vitality of the electrate life is to study play and how play shapes one's electracy. Adopting Ulmer's theory that play is the behavior inherent in an electrate life, Holmevik traces the digital landscape from its inception—weaving the idea of electracy as play through it and exploring everything from informatics and the rise of modern computing all the way to massively multiplayer gaming practices. He foregrounds his concept of hacker noir, discussing how hacker heuretics invent new forms and practices through playful interactions (interventions) with a medium, which in turn shape the digital tools we now use and play with daily. His examination of play within electrate environments showcases many of its dichotomies—play/work, pleasure/pain, productivity/consumption, real/virtual. This, in turn, complicates the deep connections that occur across what he calls the ludic transversal, which is inherent in electrate environments and in being electrate.

In examining the history of computing (informatics), he highlights the importance of exploration and play and shows how this play challenges and rewards work, which has important implications in life off the screen, as well as life on the screen. He uses hacker noir to explain how play with technology shapes one's electracy and helps create an electrate individual. The idea of the hack, as he explains it, resembles what I see occurring with the gamer modding subculture today. He discusses the hack as a form of play that has real implications for making improvements in an existing medium. In original hacker subculture, hacking allowed users to play with code to rewrite it to make new tools, not because they were tasked with doing a job, rather because they were challenged by the task and wanted to create something new. The byproduct of this play allowed multiple new and significantly important trends in technology to emerge, like the open-source movement. Here play is hard, yet rewarding.

The mod of today's gamer culture has much the same effect. Modding allows gamers to take content from within the game engine and change it as they need, want, or deem crucial to their game play. Gamers play within the machine and create that which changes the game. Thus, as in the case of the hacker noir, so too in the modding subculture, we can see how electracy informs the behavior, philosophy, and state of mind needed to be successful.

This idea of play within electrate environments Holmevik identifies as the ludic transversal, where parallels are drawn between ludology and narratology, thus providing a bridge to becoming electrate. Holmevik makes the point more apparent when he traces the rise of computer games, beginning with the MUD (Multi User Dungeon), and shows how these text-based adventures became playful grounds for exploration and hacking. Here he introduces the concept of intervention, showing that play depends on invention through intervention, but also that "inventing electracy means intervention in the invention itself" (p. 91)

to move forward in technological development. Intervention therefore means creating and contributing to an existing system in order to challenge assumptions and offer new ways of proceeding. We see how games traverse the spaces where once they might have been pigeonholed. Through their nature as play within the ludic transversal, they are a pure electrate practice, thus bridging the dichotomy of work/play and becoming an inter/vention.

As we move further into the digital era, the concept of electracy will gain more attention, just as literacy gained attention in oral culture. Holmevik's work tells us that play—with its impact on digitally mediated environments of gaming—is deeply embedded as an inter/vention in being electrate. This book will become a reference and a seminal work in understanding the place of play in electracy.

—Hannah R. Gerber, *Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX*

The Art of Video Games: From Pac-Man to Mass Effect

Chris Melissinos and Patrick O'Rourke
New York: Welcome Books, 2012.
Contents, images, credits. 215 pp. $40.00 paper. ISBN: 9781599621098

The Art of Video Games, by Chris Melissinos and Patrick O'Rourke, published in cooperation with the Smithsonian American Art Museum, is a catalog and companion to a high-profile exhibition of the same name that opened at the Smithsonian facility in Washington, DC, in 2012 and is scheduled to travel to many regional museums. This is a lushly illustrated coffee-table book that offers readers full-page, color photographs and succinct summaries of video games, descriptions of their significance, and interviews with many of their creators. Slick and gorgeous, the book offers an important permanent, widely distributable, inexpensive complement to the exhibition.

Given the noise the Smithsonian exhibition has stirred up, the bar was high for Melissinos and O'Rourke: the authors needed to prove video games worthy of the moniker "art" and of their standing as part of the "record of the American experience," to pull a quote from the museum's publicity. But for those of us who have long been making, studying, using, and advocating for video games, the mere fact of the exhibit and its publication counts as a success—not so much because the likes of game designers David Crane and Ron Gilbert now find a place beside artists David Hockney and Mary Cassatt, but because video games *do* belong in a record of the American experience. Melissinos and O'Rourke deserve praise for having spearheaded the project.

Beyond that abstract victory, *The Art of Video Games* is a bittersweet triumph for those with a more nuanced interest in and understanding of video game history. The book's organization of the history of video games into five eras offers an admirable summary of the key trends and shifts in the gaming landscape. Of course, so did earlier illustrated histories such as Rusel DeMaria and Johnny L. Wilson's *High Score! The Illustrated History of Video Games* (McGraw Hill, 2002), though the latter never reached beyond the enthusiast and is now out of print.