

compelling points found in Miller's own interpretations and analysis.

Although its comprehensive and multifaceted approach is one of the book's core strengths, it is also one of its main weaknesses. While there are obviously important continuities between the various case studies and technologies that Miller has elected to include, some of the examples featured in part 3 veer just a little too far away from the themes that were so cogently established in the first two parts of the book. In these final chapters, the focus shifts away from games and play under a fairly tenuous pretext. Given the plethora of game-related alternative examples that Miller could have used in these sections instead, such as the widespread use of "walkthrough" videos to learn to play specific games and game levels, or the hybridized sense of embodiment experienced while playing Xbox Kinect games, this shift is puzzling. Although knowledge sharing through social media is clearly an important aspect of any digitally mediated community of practice, and while the author's forays into guitar lessons and yoga instruction are interesting, these chapters ultimately felt like they belonged in some other book. That said, Miller's accessible, theoretically grounded approach, as well as her meticulous handling of her research subjects (both human and technological), will likely keep readers engaged even as they are unexpectedly detoured into the realms of conga and cybershala.

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Raising the Stakes: E-Sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming

T. L. Taylor

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012.

Appendix, notes, bibliography, index. 304 pp. \$29.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780262017374

In *Raising the Stakes: E-Sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming*, author T. L. Taylor examines the ups and downs of a slowly emerging industry, e-sports (electronic sports). The e-sports industry aims to turn real-time video game competition into the next major professional sport—complete with franchises, broadcast tournaments, superstar players, and mogul team and league managers. Those who would make e-sports a success point to South Korea, the only country so far in which the industry has taken hold. Taylor tells us that tournaments like the World Cyber Games draw sponsors like Coca-Cola, Microsoft, and Samsung and that Korean Telecom companies, and even the Korean Navy have—or sponsor—teams. Outside of the promised land of South Korea, however, e-sports have struggled and exist as a generally small, niche industry.

Taylor's book does an excellent job of examining e-sports through numerous lenses. Providing historical context, she takes us back to the roots of e-sports, delving into the early days of informal, head-to-head video game competitions around the first computer game, *Space War!* (1962) and the inclusion of high-score record keeping on arcade machines to arcade-based tournaments (still happening today on the old machines like *Pac-*

Man and Donkey Kong and chronicled in the 2007 documentary *King of Kong*) and the video game–themed *Starcade* (1982–1984) television show. She then moves to the emergence of the on-line networked play of Id Software’s *Doom* (1993) and *Quake* (1996) through today’s current live and networked tournaments of first-person shooters and other video game competitions.

Yet *Raising the Stakes* is not just a historical effort. With her first book, *Play between Worlds: Exploring On-Line Game Culture*, Taylor established herself as a solid analyst of games as media and community. And Taylor brings those skills to bare on gaming as a sport. For example, in her second chapter, titled “Computer Games a Professional Sport,” Taylor guides us through an in-depth, well-reasoned, and documented analysis. She cites the literature on the debates around computer games as play. She examines the modification of rules, and occasionally of systems, of the games themselves for tournament play, judging, and broadcast. She compares the requirements and practices of professional sports and professional athletes (mental and physical training, hours and routines of practice, preferences for specific brands and makes of equipment or insistence on the use of personal equipment) in other sports to those of professional gamers.

Her fourth chapter, titled “Growing an Industry,” explores the business side of professional gaming, probing the contracts and the deal making, and comparing them to what happens in the world of established pro sports. Her final chapter, called “Spectatorship and Fandom,” turns the tables by considering the e-sports cul-

tures of those who watch the players.

Not engaging in a merely academic effort, Taylor balances her analysis with accounts of visits to e-sports events and interviews with would-be moguls and some of the current professional players. This kind of journalism rounds out the book and is well-trodden ground for Taylor. She has been writing on various aspects of massively multiplayer on-line games (MMOGs), an immense, lucrative, thriving international industry in which particular games attract millions or even tens of millions of players. Her work has covered academics, journalism, and ethnography in this portion of the video games industry. As an avid, long-term player of such games herself, she is well versed in the practices of that culture.

In writing *Raising the Stakes*, Taylor faced two challenges, both of which she readily acknowledges early in the book. The first is that unlike MMOGs, which are a thriving international industry, e-sports has been unable to find its stride, making it a smaller and more obscure pool for her to draw from. The second is that Taylor herself is not a member of the e-sports community, so—unlike the case in her first book—she is very much an outsider looking in. While, in general, video game players, and even MMOG players, include all ages and sexes, e-sports is more often pursued by young men. Some women participate in e-sports, and there are a few mixed and all-female teams, but currently they are vastly in the minority and are treated with some suspicion. Many suspect all-female teams of being used simply to draw attention to the emerging industry and their corporate sponsors—which they sometimes clearly are. Unfortunately, such suspicion and such

use ultimately hamper the women who wish to compete professionally.

Despite these challenges, Taylor's book is a valuable piece of scholarship that lays the groundwork for further investi-

gation into all aspects of video games as sport and players as athletes.

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