

eth and game designer Chris Crawford get obligatory citations, but key game studies scholars working on animal representation in games are strangely absent here, such as Alenda Chang, Krzysztof Jański, and Eleonora Imbierowicz, to say nothing of broader green game studies work. Even Donna Haraway haunts this text with her relative absence, though intellectually related animal studies contemporaries such as Giorgio Agamben and Carol J. Adams are deployed here. Yet it is worth stressing that this departure also rewards the reader with intriguing primary sources in the form of games little discussed in the literature, such as the work of Jeff Minter or mobile games like *Into the Dead* (2012).

This loose collection of short essay chapters introduces an ambitious and engaging range of topics only to drop them, lacking the space for unpacking implications and applications. Chapters open with long meditations on etymology that are made to bear a large burden of argumentation, before digressions into philosophy without signposting. The relevance of these detours only becomes clear after the long-deferred return of the game and animal as objects of study in brief and tantalizing conclusions. Ultimately the utility of the text depends on whether the reader wishes for a more granular analysis and unpacking of games and concepts or is interested in running with the openings provided here. Although I would have liked to see these fascinating case-study analyses fleshed out to reckon with the viscosity of *Meat Boy*, the physicality of consoles dedicated to single games, or the zaniness of *Plague Inc.* (2012), I was disappointed. But I reflect after reading *Game* that we are no more than meat and

potential prey. In the face of this, perhaps the reader's time might be weighed against scholarly diligence or restraint, and perhaps stimulation is as important as explanation when we are enlivened by the sheer number of topics here.

For all the ways *Game* is sometimes a frustrating read that can ignore the trails left by scholarship on the medium, on balance I find that it is capable of delivering fresh observations and points for future departure. This is a species of creative and critical writing more native to animal studies and an intriguingly alien organism to game studies, but I wonder how well it will thrive when it lacks well-established roots in eco game literature.

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EA Sports FIFA: Feeling the Game

Raiford Guins, Henry Lowood, and Carlin Wing, eds.

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Guins, Lowood, and Wing's anthology on the most prominent digital sports game in the world, *EA Sports FIFA: Feeling the Game*, provides a much-needed contribution to scholarship in an understudied area. Two previous books in this area have focused on sports video games writ large—Consalvo, Stein, and Mitgutch's *Sports Videogames* (2013) and Brookey

and Oates's *Playing to Win: Sports, Video Games, and the Culture of Play* (2015). But *EA Sports FIFA: Feeling the Game* represents the first scholarly text devoted exclusively to a single sports game. As such, it is worthy of attention from game studies, sports studies, and media studies scholars interested in the digital sports game and digital games more broadly.

The editors self-consciously structure their authors' contributions around a common soccer formation, the 4-3-3. Section 1 is titled "Attack" and represents three forwards. Section 2 is titled "Midfield" and represents three midfielders. Section 3 is titled "Defense" and represents two wing-backs, two central defenders, and a keeper. This structure may initially appear to be a clever conceit, but it aligns relatively well with how the collection's contributors approach the game that is *EA Sports FIFA*. It could be relatively easy to present a collection of chapters that go on the attack and critique the game for its historic gender blindness or dismissive treatment of its players. Alternatively, it might be equally easy to present a defensive anthology that uncritically celebrates a highly financially successful entertainment product and the fans who gladly pay for each yearly iteration. Yet, the book's 4-3-3 formation provides a useful balance between an all-out offense and a "park the bus" defense.

Section 1's forwards go on the offensive in taking *EA Sports FIFA* to task for its considerable shortcomings with respect to gender. Michael Pennington argues that EA's failure to include women in the game for more than the first two decades of its existence operates within the broader trajectory of football's century-long ritualized exclusion of women, an exclusion

the game subsequently perpetuates with its outsized focus on men. Carlin Wing's essay on the "feel" of *EA Sports FIFA* highlights two types of feeling during play: the feeling of the ball and the feeling of player movement. The latter focus proves particularly interesting when Wing concentrates on motion capture and the inclusion of women in the game. In one of the more intriguing sections of the book, she astutely observes that arguments the developers make about the technological challenges accompanying rendering female physiology elide problematic ideological assumptions about sport, race, and gender. From a slightly different angle, Mel Stanfill and Anastasia Salter attack the game's long-standing inability to include women as a byproduct of a geek and sports masculinity that works to trivialize female participation in sport in the name of an alleged realism. These chapters effectively challenge the notion that *EA Sports FIFA* merely simulates "real" football.

Section 2's midfielders provide differing perspectives on *EA Sports FIFA*'s most lucrative mode, the digital card-based, microtransaction rich, FIFA Ultimate Team (FUT). Piotr Siuda and Mark R. Johnson see FUT as a paradigmatic site to examine power, money, streaming, and player reception. Henry Lowood uses FUT to interrogate how the game's mechanics represent the intangible team quality that is "chemistry," a representation that causes problems for player understanding of how the game plays and for EA's public relations department as they attempt to explain it. Abe Stein's ethnographic study of FUT players' "fan-tagonistic" relationship with the mode addresses their love-hate attitude toward it. These chapters provide a

balanced look at how the enormously successful FUT simultaneously represents a highly profitable and entertaining, yet highly problematic, mode in the game.

Lastly, section 3's defense and keeper approximate an apologia for the game by pointing to some of the joys players experience as they engage *EA Sports FIFA*. Ranjodh Singh Dhaliwal considers these joys from the perspective of real footballers who have something of a measured joy that comes with playing with their virtual selves. Matt Bouchard's chapter considers the joys of incremental improvements to one's squad across several versions of the game's management mode. Emma Witkowski and Rune K. L. Nielsen examine the pastoral role of *EA Sports FIFA* as a site of joy for at-risk youth in a juvenile detention facility. Chistopher A. Paul elucidates the joy of optimizing play in the game so that computer opponents are not merely defeated but defeated handily. Raiford Guin's concluding chapter speaks to the joys *EA Sports FIFA* afforded him, and other like-minded Leeds United supporters, in the virtual games the club simulated for their fans in *EA Sports FIFA* during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each of section 3's chapters defend the game for the value and importance it has in the lives of those who play it.

One of the book's considerable strengths comes in its diversity of methodological approaches. Section 1's history-based and critical approach melds with the media and reception studies in section 2 that subsequently flow smoothly into section 3's discourse analysis and autoethnography. With its methodological diversity, *EA Sports FIFA: Feeling the Game* should serve as a model for how other books on prominent sports games might be engaged. The editors' methodological inclusivity would be welcome in potential books devoted to sports games like *Madden Football*, *NBA 2K*, or *Football Manager*. On a minor note, the collection could be helped by a chapter or two on the relationship between *EA Sports FIFA* and esports, given the increasing growth of the latter in recent years. In addition, to play with the book's football formation might mean going with a slightly more effective 3-4-3 and shifting Dhaliwal's chapter into the midfield, given his balanced look at real athletes who play as their virtual counterparts in the game. Nonetheless, *EA Sports FIFA: Feeling the Game* provides a much-needed multidisciplinary contribution to a scholarly space where this type of work has been rare.

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