epilogue. Dockery concludes that the American cultural embrace of anime is not simply a fad, and that "none of these franchises show any sign of stopping" (p. 203).

Along with his personal experience as someone who grew up with Pokémon, Dockery draws information from various journalistic sources, primarily interviews printed in American newspapers, magazines, and websites. These sources are occasionally referenced by name in the text, but *Monster Kids* contains no footnotes, endnotes, or list of works cited, leaving it up to the reader to follow up on interesting leads. I did so on several occasions, and I was easily able to find Dockery's sources through simple online searches.

Monster Kids is primarily concerned with media history at a corporate level and, for the most part, it eschews descriptions of media fandom at a more local and individual level. This is not a criticism, because the book's tight focus ensures the successful delivery of its narrative. The gaps passed over by the broad reach of *Monster Kids* serve as an invitation for future research into other aspects of the Pokémon franchise, as well as a contextualizing source for more ethnographic and community-specific accounts of its reception and impact.

Based on the accessibility of the writing, the occasionally humorous turns of phrase, and the charmingly off-brand illustrations by José Elgueta, the target readership of *Monster Kids* presumably falls into a young adult demographic of teenagers, and I imagine that this book would be a welcome addition to any school library. In addition, the now-grown millennial generation of adults around the same age as the author may form a significant secondary audience, and *Monster Kids* could easily be read for pleasure, especially by fans curious about the reasoning behind the decisions that went into localizing various Japanese source materials for an American market. *Monster Kids* is an excellent resource regarding a key decade of transition in global media ecosystems, and its accessibility as a reference work ensures that Dockery's careful yet compelling study will entertain and enlighten readers of all ages.

—Kathryn Hemmann, *University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA*

Experimental Games: Critique, Play, and Design in the Age of Gamification

Patrick Jagoda
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. List of figures, prologue, acknowledgments, notes, ludography, and index. 320 pp. $27.50 paper. ISBN: 9780226629971

In *Experimental Games: Critique, Play, and Design in the Age of Gamification*, Patrick Jagoda argues that experimental games "have the potential to create new ways of being, acting, and experimenting within (and perhaps beyond) our digital and networked present" (p. 39). Jagoda begins this work with an introduction that provides an economic history and political framework for understanding video games as experiments. At the nexus of his overview of games lies neoliberalism, the agent he proposes has shifted games out

of a particular Cold War mentality and into the prominent cultural form known today. Buttressed by affect theory thinkers (such as Aubrey Anable and Jennifer Doyle), neoliberalist scholars (like political theorist Wendy Brown and sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato), and cultural theorists (Walter Benjamin and Guy Debord), Jagoda argues that "games simultaneously index and drive the development of neoliberalism" (p. 12). In doing so, *Experimental Games* meaningfully establishes how neoliberalism, as an economic and governing position, fundamentally changes and is changed by the artistic, cultural experiments that are enabled by games.

Jagoda identifies seven concepts that are central to neoliberalism and games—gamification, experimentation, choice, control, difficulty, failure, improvisation, and joy—which also serve as the grounding topics of the book's chapters. The first section of the book, "Framework," begins with the introduction and then the first chapter, "Gamification," which details gamification as a historical paradigm. In analyzing *Candy Crush Saga* (King Digital Entertainment 2012) and *Stardew Valley* (Chucklefish 2016) as contemporary examples, Jagoda demonstrates that gamification provides a connecting tether between games and neoliberalism: that is, game mechanics intrinsically influence both work and leisure. The subsequent chapter, "Experimentation," argues that video games enable experiments with life in this historical moment characterized by digital media and networks, as previous experimental forms much as the modernist novels and avant-garde cinema did for other historical moments. In this chapter, Jagoda critically considers *Star-*

craft (Blizzard 1998) and *Braid* (Number None 2008) and theorizes the "video game sensorium"—a term he coins to express how games condition experience and modulate affect, encouraging scientific hypothesis testing in addition to artistic experiment in games and games players.

Chapters 3 through 6 constitute the book's second part, "Concepts." This section aims to complicate neoliberalist concepts from the standpoint of experimental games. Chapter 3, "Choice," explores nonconscious decision making and the limits and possibilities of choice in an analysis of *The Stanley Parable* (Galactic Cafe 2013), *Moirai* (Chris Johnson 2013), and *Undertale* (Toby Fox 2015). The next chapter, "Control," builds upon the idea of agency by centering power and an impulse toward sovereignty, which Jagoda supports by readings of *Dys4ia* (Anna Anthropy, 2012), *Problem Attic* (Liz Ryerson 2013), and *Luxuria Superbia* (Tale of Tales 2013).

The next two chapters are the most inventive part of *Experimental Games*, providing a direction for future lines of inquiry for those so interested. Jagoda introduces three types of difficulty in chapter 5 (titled "Difficulty")—mechanical, interpretive, and affective difficulty—and considers two games that use them: *Game, Game, Game, and Again Game* (Jason Nelson 2007) and *Loved* (Alexander D. Ocias 2010). These types of difficulties merge with the following chapter, "Failure," which covers games that challenge victory-oriented forms of gamification—particularly *SPENT* (McKinney Ventures LLC 2011), *An Expatriation in Ten Days* (Threshold Land 2010), and *Little Inferno* (Tomorrow Corporation 2012). In critically considering the role of difficulty and

failure, Jagoda argues that these experimental games provide a novel opportunity to shift our attention, as scholars and game players, from choice and control to structural inequality.

The last part of the book adopts a practice-based register employing these concepts. Chapter 7, "Improvisation," investigates Jagoda's own game *the parasite* (2017), which was codesigned at the University of Chicago. *The parasite* invites improvisational storytelling—a term relevant to many different fields. Through this example, Jagoda highlights how experimental game design may encourage improvisational and unexpected responses to neoliberalism. *Experimental Games* then concludes with "Coda: Joy." Here, Jagoda summarizes Ian Bogost's critical consideration of the role of fun in games and similar economic concepts of the gratification of pleasure. Jagoda moves from these understandings of joy to one instead inspired by Theodor Adorno, Max Horkeimer, and Baruch Spinoza: "Joy opens up new sensitivities, capacities to affect and be affected. . . . Experimentation carries the potential to yield an alternative notion of games that exceed the superficial pleasures and instant gratification of so many commercial games championed by the contemporary video game industry" (p. 284).

After finishing *Experimental Games*, I was reminded of other understandings of games as experiments or as a powerful impetus for transformation. I wanted a clearer takeaway from the conclusion. If games are joyful experiments, what then? What more has been done, what can be done in the future, what other games do this, and so on? To think this through, I turn to applications of speculative fiction and queer world building in game scholarship and creation as similar threads on Jagoda's theme, particularly the investigations by Doris Rusch and Andrew Phelps in their article "Existential Transformational Game Design: Harnessing the 'Psychomagic' of Symbolic Enactment" (*Frontiers of Science* 2020), Tanja Sihvonen and Jaakko Stenros in their essay "Queering Games, Play, and Culture through Transgressive Role-Playing Games" (*Transgression in Games and Play* 2018), and in Bo Ruberg's article "Queer Indie Video Games as an Alternative Digital Humanities: Counterstrategies for Cultural Critique Through Interactive Media" (*American Quarterly* 2018). Interestingly, Jagoda does briefly bring up such queer overlaps in his overview of affect theory in the introduction, but he does not elaborate. Further insight into experimental games and their overlap with queer indie games might have teased out the tensions between the queer tendency toward independently developed games within a larger neoliberal framework and the types of games that tend to do experimental, transformative work.

Similarly, the concept of the video game sensorium could benefit from further exploration, because it currently stands as a rough definition of the types of experiences that makes games transformational. But the book is more focused on how games facilitate (joyful) experimentation through seven concepts central to neoliberalism.

Experimental Games weaves neoliberalism with the transformative arts practices seen in games to conceptualize better how video games help provide new ways of thinking. Throughout this book,

Patrick Jagoda makes thought-provoking assertions for an understanding of joy and transformation at the center of games.

—Adrianna Burton, *University of California-Irvine, Irvine, CA*

Replayed: Essential Writings on Software Preservation and Game Histories

Henry Lowood, edited by Raiford Guins, with a forward by Matthew G. Kirschenbaum and an Interview by T. L. Taylor
Foreword, acknowledgments, editor's introduction, bibliography, and index. 358 pp. $50.00 hardcover.
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When talking about the past, fresh is rarely the first qualifier that comes to mind. Yet, this retrospective collection—grouping previously published and unpublished pieces written by Henry Lowood over two decades—feels refreshing. The editor's introduction, author's introductions for each part of the book, and an interview serving as the collection's conclusion breathe new life into Lowood's contributions to the fields of software preservation and game history by providing a relevant and important context to the previously published chapters. *Replayed* is a valuable resource to these fields and, as an historian working within them, I read the book and wished such a resource had been available when I first dipped my toes into game preservation and game history.

Lowood's many hats, notably as a historian and curator, complement each other well and show the worth of cross-disci-

plinary approaches and expertise. Perhaps one of the more valuable contributions of this collection is to show what the history can contribute to the game field, especially when combined with libraries, archives, and museums. As Raiford Guins argues in his editor's introduction, "professionally trained historians lug an entirely different set of tools to a problem" (p. 13). To me, this reminder is especially important as I have heard some scholars, sometimes even colleagues, on several occasions make the claim that "anyone can do history." Although academic historians do not—and should not—have sole ownership of history, dismissing their skills and techniques is not productive for game and play studies. Lowood shows this throughout the book, but the chapters entitled "Games Studies Now, History of Science Then" and "Game Engine and Game History" exemplify it best. Drawing from historians of technology, like Thomas S. Kuhn and Michael Mahoney, and from Hayden White, a historian known for his works on historiography, Lowood shows what a professional historian's ability to tackle big questions brings to the table.

Replayed's sections are well structured and speak to one another, which makes each part and the book itself feel cohesive. Every chapter is thought provoking, engaging, and fairly accessible, at least for a publication dealing with such complex issues, making it a good resource for those both within and outside academia. I found myself smiling and chuckling in places, and some of Lowood's rhetorical strategies were very effective in making his arguments even stronger. I would, however, have liked to see more about minor games. When talking about video games