

narratives. In chapter 13, Elizabeth Tucker recounts childhood birthday party traditions in New Zealand to celebrate Sutton-Smith's one-hundredth birthday. In chapter 16, Anna Beresin conjurs an enigma in Sutton-Smith's honor.

The eighth chapter anchors the volume. Fraser Brown and Michael Patte offer a previously published interview with Sutton-Smith. His recollections of his New Zealand childhood and adult experiences provide the reader a path to his views on dark and risky play; his choice to study games, play, folklore, and humor; his passion for collecting children's artifacts; his connection between play and narratives; and how and why he began to think about the ambiguity of play.

In chapter 10, Helen Schwarzman uses the Italian tradition of carnival as a mirror to view Sutton-Smith's life. She recounts how he embraced multiple perspectives of play and how his thinking on play mirrored his ideas on the adaptive variability in play—constantly in flux, adapting, and evolving. She highlights the power of his playful approach in communicating his ideas on play, an approach that continues to guide those who study play.

In chapter 11, Fraser Brown uses the ambiguity of play to describe the benefits of play for children not simply as a developmental outcome but while children are playing. He connects this to playwork and how children represent reality by drawing on Sutton-Smith's view that, in play, children create and re-create their own world.

In the twelfth chapter, Jeffrey Goldstein highlights Sutton-Smith's position on children's culture and children on the periphery. Although initially doubtful of the benefit of digital play experiences, his

flexible and adaptive thinking led him to accept all forms of play including electronic games and toys.

In chapter 14, Han recounts how Sutton-Smith inspired her to become a more playful teacher scholar. She illustrates how to integrate play into graduate class, conceptualizing play as a learning context. Sutton-Smith advocated for play across a lifespan and for the adaptive variability of play in helping us adjust to change.

In chapter 15, Jeremy K. Saucier offers a guided tour of The Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play located at The Strong National Museum of Play. The collection reflects Sutton-Smith's remarkable multidisciplinary interests and perspectives of play. The notations he placed in books reflect his playful mind, constantly in motion, making connections, and searching for the meaning of play.

The volume ends with the reflections of people who knew Sutton-Smith. This edited collection honors his legacy and humanity and conveys this message to readers—with Sutton-Smith's guidance, the future possibilities of play are boundless. It is a worthy contribution to the literature and should appeal to all those interested in the study of play.

—Robyn Holmes, *Monmouth, Long Branch, N.J.*

Wandering Games

Melissa Kagen

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Acknowledgments, introduction, notes, bibliography, ludography, filmography, and index. 216 pp. \$30.00 paper. ISBN 9780262544245

For anyone who loves a good book and long walks in a video game, Melissa Kagen's *Wandering Games* makes the perfect title. Her salient scholarship is particularly (problematically) apt for an age in the throes of late capitalism and the less walkable world it creates. Dis-course abounds on the demise of walkable cities and their potential for spaces in which people are allowed to be without the impetus to buy something. We are farther apart, further isolated, and far more boxed in than ever before by our "real" lives. Hostile architecture enforces where we belong, and arguably harsher specters of work-life imbalance follow us home and shame us into thinking of downtime as morally inferior, wasted time. So, in the face of such stricture at the mercy of late capitalist superstructure, it starts to feel as if the only place left for long walks is the third space of the magic circle that video games beckon us toward. In *Wandering Games* Kagen explores the ways in which wandering, perhaps even purposelessly so, within video games stands as resistance to capitalist colonization of not just the way we live our lives outside work, but even the way we play our games like work.

Kagen's book best advocates for the subversive potential of its titular wandering by interrogating the restrictions of its radical potential in video games. She begins this balancing act in her introduction through a tour of historical influences upon the theory and praxis of walking as liberatory. Ranging from the *flâneur* proposed by Charles Baudelaire and further theorized by Walter Benjamin to a sampling of subsequent artistic movements and literature invested in subversive wandering, Kagen connects the avant-garde

contrarian to the deceptively commercial evidenced in the walking simulator video game genre. She does well to acknowledge—but not get bogged down in—the by now well-trodden territory of discussions such as derogatory dismissal of walking simulators or the #GamerGate controversy, instead moving on to refreshingly new analysis of walking simulators and wandering games according to different theoretical perspectives.

Kagen looks at various case studies in this vein through the four guiding lenses of work, gender, colonialism, and death. With each of these concepts comes discussion of the artistic subversion built into wandering in certain video games as well as the ironic strictures placed on these acts through different narrative, ludic, and theoretical means.

The discussion throughout the book's body dedicates chapters to the four major theoretical frameworks and how they shape analysis of particular video games. The first two chapters following the introduction focus on *Return of the Obra Dinn* (2018) and *Eastshade* (2019) through the conceptual lens of work. Kagen's analysis of *Obra Dinn* confronts the contradiction of game play built around its character at work, in which we play as an insurance adjuster for the East India Trading Company tasked to investigate the mysterious deaths of the titular ship's crew to assess their dehumanizingly monetary value. After her chapter on *Eastshade* as a romantic fantasy of work detached from actual labor conditions, she analyzes *Ritual of the Moon* (2019) via gender, branching out into queer perspectives as well. *Ritual* is a mobile game that allows players to play as a witch banished to the moon, but only

for five minutes a day for twenty-eight consecutive days according to tightly controlled limits, a central mechanic that Kagen highlights to analogize the restrictive and risky real-world limitations that women and queer people similarly must navigate in their wanderings.

The next two chapters shift to colonialism for explorations of *80 Days* (2014) and *Heaven's Vault* (2019), with contrasting analyses of colonizer and colonized. *80 Days*, as a ludic adaptation of Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872), serves as a postcolonial deconstruction of its source material that, Kagen argues, is yet ironically compromised by, even unintentionally, replicating colonialist tropes of not just coming and seeing but conquering. The science fictional world of *Heaven's Vault* conversely puts players into the position of the colonized, as they inhabit the player-character of Aliya, an archaeologist investigating an ancient nebula while also navigating diasporic issues of discrimination between the central world of the empire and her own peripheral planet, now part of that empire. As Aliya contends with the past and present and their overlapping conflicts, Kagen uncovers the world around the player through postcolonial analyses of empire, language, and time, drawing upon Afrofuturist theory for the latter. She finally transitions from life to death for her last body chapter, looking at both *Death Stranding* (2019) and *The Last of Us Part II* (2020) to mount one last analysis of the ways in which these games task their players to traverse apocalyptic settings to imagine a life after the death of capitalist societies and their arbitrary social strictures.

Throughout all of these chapters, perhaps the most impressive strength of

her analytical method is the way she not just focuses specific chapters on specific analytical lenses but also interweaves their frameworks across chapters. For example, *Obra Dinn* not only works as a theoretical case study for work but also death; *Ritual* resonates not just with gender but work, too; *Heaven's Vault* engenders further discussion of gender. Each lens is not limited to a prescriptive outline but rather all of them to wander throughout Kagen's argument. By expanding the purview of her different theoretical perspectives across the book, Kagen ultimately sets up her conclusion quite well, extending their conceptual frameworks beyond just wandering games to video games in general.

Melissa Kagen's *Wandering Games* is an innovatively charted walkthrough for the wanderings of anyone looking to go off map in their game play. The book is a gift to game studies scholars, especially those working to move discussion of walking simulators and adjacent wandering games further into less explored territory in cultural studies. It has more to offer as well to anyone more broadly in the study of performance and play as it intersects with the theoretical frameworks Kagen so deftly navigates in her analysis here. Not just as scholarly research but as a testament to our currently less walkable Anthropocene, Kagen's work offers an insightful new viewpoint on both the virtual world of video games and the "real" world as it corporeally stands in what feels like the final bang—or whimper—of late capitalism. Enjoy the book and take a long walk, in or out of a video game.

—Chloe Anna Milligan, *University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA*