

platforms and also examines what forms of cosplay content have flourished lately, such as YouTube videos, TikTok dancing, and streaming.

The design of costumes takes a prominent role in the book as well. Liptak, for instance, explores the ways in which fans and makers add to existing stories and characters. Why do fans choose to represent characters in costume, and what is the relationship between franchises and costuming? The book provides many insights around this, as well as the maker culture of cosplay. How do fans, for instance, move from amateur to pro and sell their own costumes? What does professional cosplay look like?

Furthermore, readers can find insights on the legalities of cosplay, its economy, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and more. Liptak's work offers an insightful and comprehensive guide of fan costuming as a practice, as storytelling, and as a subculture. It is an exhaustive work about this practice that will certainly be of use to media and fan scholars, and to fans interested in the practice. My only complaint is that the work explores specific histories of costuming at the expense of others. It focuses more on the development of fan costumes in a Northern American context than on that in Japan and other countries. This limitation could have been corrected by drawing from other cosplay scholarship and documentation to compare more across cultures. However, the subcultures themselves, particularly in Western countries, as well as their complexity, are studied in great detail in this book. Liptak, for instance, provides some nuanced reflections on gatekeeping in these commu-

nities, as well as their sexist and racist aspects. More broadly speaking, the book also includes sections on cosplay and politics and on protest cosplay and activism. Although cosplay is not an inclusive hobby yet, it can be used to spur change.

A key strength of the book is that it is very accessible and outlines the history of cosplay in a clear and thorough way. The poignant cases and examples really bring this volume to life. Overall, *Cosplay: A History* is a full guide to cosplay for newcomers and long-term fans. This is a fantastic read if you have a passion for cosplay but also if you want to know more as an outsider.

—Nicolle Lamerichs, *Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, Utrecht, Netherlands*

Gaming Sexism: Gender and Identity in the Era of Casual Video Games

Amanda C. Cote

New York: NYU Press, 2020.

Introduction, conclusion, acknowledgments, appendix, gameography, notes, bibliography, index, and about the author. 280 pp. \$30.00, paper. ISBN: 9781479802203

Amanda Cote has undertaken an ambitious project in *Gaming Sexism*, which seeks both to explore the already completed academic work about gaming sexism and to fill in the existing gaps. In a day and age when the attempts to reverse women's rights are growing in Western society, it is particularly pertinent to explore women's experiences in all fields—

of work and of play. Cote uses this space to examine what it means to be a female-identifying gamer in the twenty-first century, specifically when there is a plethora of easily accessible games pervading media (casual games). As she states, while the accessibility to games has widened greatly, the perception of a gamer has only partially followed suit: white, cis-hetero men still hold the identity of gamer, especially in mainstream console games (core games). Cote's book is a combination of theorization and hands-on research, mixing interviews of female, self-proclaimed gamers and statistics derived from the gaming industry with an examination of previous scholarship, sociological theories, and gaming media. Cote strikingly and perceptively lays out the problems with the gaming industry. She gets deep into the weeds of the struggle women have with adopting the title of gamer, even in a society purporting to make way for diversity in gaming.

However, although Cote's streamlined syntax makes her work extremely accessible, the interweaving of multiple, varying threads often muddies the individual points she makes. She has a tendency to place her reasoning for including examples after the examples, which leaves the reader wondering where they are in the argument. At the same time, the work is often repetitive, at times repeating sentences verbatim within the same chapter. Her audience appears to be anyone related to the gaming industry who cares about equity in its boundaries, though Cote seems to shift from those long rooted in the scholarship to those new to it—at times going into great detail about the origins of terminology

and events; at other times assuming the audience knows the context of particular ideas and hashtags. The fact is Cote does an immense amount of work, and though her writing style is marked with precision, her ordering of information in a chapter does not always reflect the work and the stylistic exactitude.

Cote indeed makes a rocky start in her first chapter, biting off more than she can chew as she explores casual versus core and often tying out various concepts and ideas before (or without) getting to concrete examples. However, her argument becomes much clearer and more streamlined in chapters 2 and 3, in which Cote explores overt versus inferential sexism. This fits neatly with her previous discussion of hegemony, though she never explicitly ties the two together. The work in these two chapters is not revelatory, as Cote herself acknowledges. This section of the book includes much research those familiar with gaming scholarship will recognize, but Cote inserts a freshness with her primary interviews and by delineating between the two types of sexism. Though the boundaries between the two are not as distinct as Cote aims to make them, having a foundation for picking these apart is crucial for future work in the field. Where the work starts to really feel like Cote, though, is in the second half of the book. Chapters 4 and 5 dive in deep to women's experiences with video games, how they play, and how they adapt. In this space, Cote proves that women have already been and continue to be core gamers. Although this left me wanting a continued discussion of what it means for women to be casual gamers as well as an exploration of the role of indie games, the proof that

women have always been gamers—and the ways women assert this identity—feel like the heart of the text and the key for the eventual next steps Cote will lay out in her conclusion. Beyond this deeper interpretative work, Cote also seems to have stronger footing here, falling less into her tendency in the first half of the book to undercut her statements with “probably” and “potentially.” One sticking point: it is not always clear to me where Cote is focusing on issues women have as women gamers versus issues women have as gamers—and what it means for these to coexist as distinct entities. Her final chapter offers a poignant, refreshing perspective on how women gamers’ identities shift over time, although her framing of the entire chapter around GamerGate seems slightly awkward and forced.

Overall, though the book struggles to weave all the pieces together, Cote has presented an efficient and powerful history of what it means to be a female gamer and how all present in the gaming realm can pave a way forward. There do seem odd gaps in the discussion. For instance, Cote twice brings up the “second shift” in relation to women’s household work, but she never addresses in detail the skewed labor women take on while establishing and protecting their gamer identities. Her exploration of prior research in the first half of the book could be greatly condensed, which would allow more room for interpretation in the vital second half of the text. Regardless of these quibbles, Cote’s voice emerges strong. Because the work leans often into compilation and reflection, it is a solid resource for anyone who has not previously delved into gaming sexism. For anyone already well versed, this book does

not seat itself as a particularly revelatory text, but its collection of proof and detail of the feminine gamer identity makes it a worthy read for those who want to further gaming equity in the near future.

—Christina Xan, *University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC*

Performativity in Art, Literature, and Videogames

Darshana Jayemanne

London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2017. Introduction, list of figures, list of tables, bibliography, and index. 331 pp. \$159, paper. ISBN 9783319853963

Darshana Jayemanne’s *Performativity in Art, Literature, and Videogames* has seemingly modest aims: to explain how games create experiences. However, as Jayemanne demonstrates, this is anything but simple. Neither games nor play are homogenous. There is variability in both players and games that makes typological approaches to video games unwieldy. Additionally, games scholarship has generally taken either a player-centered or a formalist approach—in other words, a focus on the individualistic act of play or the formal construction of games as a medium. As Jayemanne notes, the tendency to overprivilege either leads to overstating each’s importance. This is the gordian knot that Jayemanne cuts through by developing the concept of “performative multiplicities” as well as a corresponding methodology, which he describes as a “comparative approach to the analysis of videogame performances . . . that is capable of accounting