characterized as porn; they remark that certain sexual scenes play for titillation and arousal while others are played for romance and a sort of slice-of-life realism. Ultimately, they seem to agree to disagree. The authors go on to discuss fetishism in relation to costuming and, of course, cosplay in relation to porn. The chapter ends with description and analysis of a few cases of "cosporners." This chapter also could have benefitted from a look at additional fandom studies of pornography, romance, and sexuality, particularly in the works of Constance Penley and Janice Radway.

Ultimately, this text must and will see the light of many a fandom studies syllabus and perhaps a broader audience of not only scholars in the fields of play, fandom, and subcultural studies, but also cosplayers themselves. It is entirely possible that there will be fan meta critiques in response to the work, as well as the traditionally expected academic response. In any case, as the first in what is sure to be an entire body of literature, this text is a vital addition to bookshelves everywhere.

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The Postmodern Joy of Role-Playing Games: Agency, Ritual, and Meaning in the Medium

René Reinhold Schallegger
Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2018. Preface, conclusion, abbreviations used, chapter notes, bibliography, and list of names and terms. 258 pp. $55.00 paper.
ISBN: 9781476664934

The concept of postmodernism has been appraised quite differently by continental European and Anglo American academics. Whereas many Anglo American scholars—Terry Eagleton, Nicholas Birn, Jane Elliott and Derek Attridge among them—have historicized the postmodern period as spanning the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s and now consider our current literary period "after 'theory'" or "post-theory," many continental European scholars—Pierluigi Pellini and Pierre Ouellet among them—are still preoccupied with postmodernism as a relevant heuristic category. So, too, is René Reinhold Schallegger, who argues (in dialog with Linda Hutcheon) in his book *The Postmodern Joy of Role-Playing Games* that postmodernism inherently has "a ludic logic at work, talking of players and moves" (p. 19). To Schallegger, role-playing games (RPGs) are sites at which the postmodern achieves social and narrative expression. Indeed, as the title of the book suggests, the participants in such games experience postmodern "joy," the pleasure of seeing language as procedural rather than factual; as always interrupted and contingent rather than fluid, explanatory, and coherent. The book does a laudable job in its explanations of postmodernism and its tensions with modernism. Yet the book stumbles when applying this theoretical framework to RPGs. The reasons for this are illuminating in and of themselves.

Continental European literary studies, "Germanistik" and "Amerikanistik" among others, places emphasis on the inclusion of works within a grand meta-narrative of defined epochs and great thinkers. This canon unfortunately leaves precious little room for the pop-culture

contingency or general aporias that afflict the literary archive, such as neglected preservation and dissemination of works by women, queer authors, and authors of color. Against the grain of the literary canon, Schallegger valiantly argues for the inclusion of role-playing games as a twentieth-century medium of literary merit. These texts would be filed aspirationally under the "postmoderne" section of a tome such as the J. B. Metzler *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte* (with Schallegger's monograph listed in its footnotes). In other words, this monograph is concerned with the institutional legitimacy of (role-playing) game studies within the fairly rigid, nationalistic literary studies establishment as currently conceived in Germany, Austria, and other European countries. For example, the absolute focus on theory in chapters 1, 2, 5, and 7 make it clear that the intended audience of the volume would be those literary scholars well versed in poststructural and postmodern theoretical frameworks who would also be interested in debates about the definitions of RPGs and their overall form. To his credit, in this respect, Schallegger has succeeded; the Austrian dissertation he used as a basis for this book was defended with distinction, and he is currently building up an excellent game studies presence in Austria. However, Schallegger's work also seems to have missed a decade or more of recent role-playing theory, especially from the Nordic Knutepunkt book series, as well as many less-mainstream games of interest that explicitly include postmodern principles of ambivalence and appropriation in their design. The book's usefulness for those of us working in the field—perhaps best summarized in the author list

of José P. Zagal and Sebastian Deterding's edited volume *Role-Playing Game Studies* (2018)—is thus attenuated.

The strength of Schallegger's study lies in the fact that he defends RPGs as an "intersemiotic medium," rather than as some curious social practice (as does Gary Alan Fine) or via game-rule conditions—as in Salen and Zimmerman's *Rules of Play* (2004). I cannot overstate the usefulness of this framework: RPGs are a scavenger medium that explicitly absorbs and reformulates the symbols, tropes, and tricks of every other medium imaginable. At their best, they are "fiction about fiction" (p. 226) that permit players to use game techniques and oral storytelling to weave vast new playful realities that need not restrict themselves to focus or coherence. Yet as elusive as RPG texts ostensibly are, Schallegger sees little need to go into RPGs' framing devices or paratexts, which David Jara has shown to be of primary importance in establishing the unique dynamics of tabletop RPGs. Schallegger invokes live-action role play (larp) and computer RPGs (CRPGs) only to bracket them out of the study to focus on the language game aspect of RPGs, even though Rafael Bienia's *Role-Playing Materials* (2016) explicitly rejects the thesis that pen-and-paper RPGs are not also spatial, embodied, affective, and grounded in material reality. Schallegger's book stands as a testament to a time when scholars were having testy debates about (postmodernism-framed) definitions of game play and narrative, theories of player motivation, and the textuality of games, whereas contemporary Anglo American discourse—framed by Brendan Keogh, Aubrey Anable, Darshana

Jayemanne, and Shira Chess—suggests that theories of phenomenology and social stratification perhaps better explain the more elusive processes of games. RPG studies certainly need more philosophical interventions, but Schallegger's appears less urgent in the field at this time.

Schallegger's study primarily focuses on products by mainstream RPG companies—Wizards of the Coast, White Wolf, Steve Jackson Games—when the so-called "indie" RPG scene may offer more illustrative objects of study. For example, in the late 1980s, Robin D. Laws published a thought experiment in *Alarums & Excursions* about creating a RPG based on William S. Burroughs' (postmodern) 1959 novel *Naked Lunch*. Jonathan Tweet would take up the challenge and create the explicitly postmodern 1992 RPG Over the Edge. Greg Stolze and John Tynes' 1999 RPG Unknown Armies reframes horror as the postmodern struggle over ideological metanarratives and their symbols; Jason Morningstar's 2008 RPG Fiasco lets players experience the pointless mediocrity of Coen Brothers-esque characters; P. H. Lee and Aura Belle's The Tragedy of GJ 237b (2017) manages to create an aleatoric RPG of catastrophe using zero players. How might Schallegger's book help us explore the nuances of these explicitly postmodern RPGs? And why is the emotion of joy at the heart of the matter and not failure or frustration, per Jesper Juul? Schallegger's book has secured RPGs in European literary studies. Let us now push their study further down truly interdisciplinary, intercultural paths.

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Intermedia Games—Games Inter Media: Video Games and Intermediality

Michael Fuchs and Jeff Thoss, eds.
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Editors Michael Fuchs and Jeff Thoss offer in a collection of essays a contribution to the subject of game intermediality, or in the editors' terms, "interrelatedness" of video games to other media (p. 1). The title's forward-and-backward construction (*Intermedia Games—Games Inter Media: Video Games and Intermediality*) connotes a difference between "*intermedia* games" as "the intermedial dimension within games" and "games *inter media*" as "games' relationship to and place within a larger media ecology" (p. 9). The book does not suggest, as the title at first might appear to, that games "inter" media as in burying them, as provocative as this sense of the word might be. Rather, this collection applies intermediality studies, a field that has "largely been developed in continental Europe," to video games, which "rarely take center stage" in scholarly discussions of intermediality (p. 3). Thus, the collection's central effect is to illustrate the applicability of intermediality studies to games and contribute to a body of scholarship that has been comparatively underdeveloped.

Tim Summers's chapter "Music across the Transmedial Frontier: *Star Trek* Video Games," one of the collection's strongest essays, illustrates the productivity of analyzing games within a broader