that many readers will have experienced themselves or how players can use this vicarious experience to process their own emotions. Moreover, the authors provide a nuanced and clear overview of the five stages of grief and how individuals may (or may not) get through them.

Although the stories in The Legend of Zelda franchise largely focuses on Link, Princess Zelda is always part of them. Her role in the franchise has evolved over the years, and this development is discussed in the chapter, "The Legend Herself: From Damsel in Distress to Princess of Power," by Melissa Huntley and Wind Goodfriend. The authors address the ways in which sexism seeps into the characterization of Zelda throughout the series and instances when the characterization of Zelda was ahead of its time and confronted sexist expectations head on. In the early games of the franchise, Princess Zelda was portrayed as a classic damsel in distress who needed a male hero to save her. In *The Ocarina of Time,* Zelda lives and dresses as an androgynous warrior named Shiek, with the intention of appearing male to hide her identity. In *The Wind Waker,* a pirate queen named Tetra turns out to be the long-lost Zelda. The authors dig into the social psychology literature to explore real-life gender stereotypes and how they have changed and evolved over time and how this relates to the development of Zelda.

This book is intended for a lay audience rather than for graduate students or researchers. In many ways, this book reads as a love letter to fans of The Legend of Zelda games. It is clear that the authors themselves care deeply about the franchise and that the games have significant meaning to them personally. Indeed, anyone who is a fan of The Legend of Zelda franchise will enjoy the book. Moreover, I think that parents who want to understand why video games mean so much to their children would particularly benefit from reading it. Personally, I enjoyed the book and I look forward to seeing more from these authors.

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Fun, Taste, & Games: An Aesthetics of the Idle, Unproductive, and Otherwise Playful

John Sharp and David Thomas
Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2019.
Preface, notes, bibliography, and index.
256 pp. $27.95 hardcover.
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Is it fun to review a book about fun? This latest in MIT's Playful Thinking series comprises a series of essays and provocations that address fun through a composite lens and allows readers to challenge their own, possibly rather staid, idea of what it means to have fun while being playful.

Given that the authors seem fairly sure fun is frequently lost or ignored in the serious business of games design—often because they see fun as too nebulous and too subjective to be useful—they manage to assemble several persuasive conjectures about it. In a series of essays, mediations, and provocations, including a deep dive into the history of aesthetics

and design in games, an examination of various definitions of aesthetics and fun from games scholars, and a meditation on why the Hamilton Building in Denver does not have playground slides, they examine how fun can be used to reevaluate philosophically our understanding of games and play.

The pieces in the book address these—and other more flippant responses to fun—using a confident tone clearly embedded in the bedrock of gaming thought and philosophy. A great deal of quiet scholarship offers a valuable, but not exhaustive, context for those not familiar with games studies. This comes as something of a relief, because many games-studies books still overexplain concepts and theories now so well trodden they do not need much elaboration. The freshness of the writing also means it can be exuberant. So, to answer my first question, yes, it is fun to read this book.

The authors identify three aspects needed for fun, aspects that allow them to explore different elements of fun in subsequent essays. These are "set-outsideness," which sets the preconditions for fun; "ludic forms," which enables the potentials for fun; and "ambiguity," through which fun is enacted. However, we also move through a number of critical definitions of fun as the book progresses, some of them rather charming. For example, we find that Ian Bogost thinks fun to be "the feeling of finding something new in something familiar." Jesse Schell finds that "fun is pleasure with surprises." And, rather more cynically, the provocative Pete Garcin claims that "fun is probably the most (over) used words in game design discourse" and that "it's also

a broad, nonspecific, subjective term that actually doesn't actually tell us anything meaningful about a game experience" (pp. 41–56). Perhaps so, but the authors certainly intend to enjoy themselves trying to reach this last point.

Although some of the later chapters relate players and player communities to their aesthetic desires, they offer less than might be expected about playfulness—indeed this seems rather absent. My visiting mother became extremely aggrieved by the title of the book, which she holds suggests that fun, taste, and games are "idle and unproductive." She may have felt this way been because she had just beaten several friends at a new board game that weekend or because disagreeing with things is simply her favourite way of having fun. Still, the playful player does not take up much space in this book.

Have we pushed fun away because it is unquantifiable? A key takeaway from this book is that we might also have inadvertently orchestrated a very narrow description of what playfulness can be. This work refigures such narrow definitions of fun and thus provides a valuable contribution to games-studies scholarship.

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Playing Smart: On Games, Intelligence, and Artificial Intelligence
Julian Togelius
Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018.