example, provides us a critical purchase on our notions of property. Fox's description of how a nine-pound *ulama* ball crashing into his chest in the small town of Los Llanitos transformed his understanding of the ancient game he had studied for years, also makes a powerful case for the types of knowledge that can only be gained through bodily impact.

The second half of the book sinks into the social history of twentieth-century American sports. Of particular interest are the early rule debates in American football that provide back story to the present-day concussion crisis; a profound story about Onondaga Nation lacrosse players refusing to travel on U.S. passports when England deemed their travel documents inadequate; and Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir's stunning achievements in women's high school basketball in the face of anti-Muslim taunts. In turning to these histories, Fox, at times, leaves the ball behind. But although I had hoped to learn more about the dynamics and politics of industrial pneumatic objects, the stories he highlights are important and undertold and mark one of the book's important contributions.

The most frustrating aspect of the book is its tone. Fox pitches it for a broad audience, purposefully refusing academic jargon. But it is possible to forsake jargon and still grant your readers respect. I felt anxiously anticipated instead of trusted. This tone may be an unintended effect of using his son's question as a hook, which implicitly aligns his readers with the seven-year-old whose question he is answering. The father-son through line also amplifies Fox's lack of any sustained address of gender. It is certainly true that the history of ball sports is, until very recently, mostly a history of men playing each other. Which begs the question, why? A long history of men playing sports, especially one that devotes only a handful of its three hundred pages to women, needs to address masculinity. In skirting this subject, Fox misses a true opportunity to address our desperate lack of spaces and languages for discussing how men connect and combat other men through objects. He also misses an opportunity to speak to the fundamental queerness of sport—the range of intimacy and eroticism that its cordoned-off spaces open up. Despite these drawbacks, both fans and scholars will appreciate the depth and the range of research that Fox has done on such a central object of play. He has performed a real service by gathering all these different histories together and giving them the opportunity to sit next to each other.

———————————————

—Carlin Wing, *New York University, New York, NY*

Of Dice and Men: The Story of Dungeons and Dragons and the People Who Play It

David M. Ewalt
New York: Scribner, 2013. Contents, notes, index. 288 pp. $26.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781451640502.

A few pages into David Ewalt's auto-ethnography of Dungeons and Dragons (D&D), I learned what to expect. "I am not a wizard," Ewalt writes, "but I play one every Tuesday night" (p. 4). Technically, Ewalt plays a cleric, a divine spell caster

as opposed to an arcane spell caster like a wizard, but his point is clear: playing D&D is a you-and-not-you proposition; like acting, it occupies a place between true life and delusion, reality and fantasy. In *Of Dice and Men*, Ewalt takes on several tasks: he documents the history of D&D, joins and describes multiple gaming sessions, and (most interestingly to me) analyzes the reasons he and other people play the game. He approaches this task in a journalistic fashion, getting the facts and seeking out people and places close to the phenomenon. The book is structured as a journey, or a series of chapters about episodes leading from Ewalt's rediscovery of D&D to his pilgrimage closer to its source. Ewalt puts himself into the story in auto-ethnographic fashion, including moments where he cites his own gaming adventures and writes about the actions and choices of his characters and the characters of his fellow players. These segments are interspersed with the journalistic and reflective passages and are intended to bolster Ewalt's findings and analysis with in situ examples from the game.

Ewalt does an admirable job of tracking the history of D&D. He starts with miniatures games such as Chain-mail, which inspired the first D&D boxed sets, and moves all the way through to the D&D Next project, in which Wizards of the Coast (since 2000, the owner and publisher of D&D) is crowd sourcing the design of its forthcoming fifth edition with the participation of fans around the world. Ewalt stops along the way to explore such historical landmarks as the demonism-delinquency scare of the 1980s and the rise of Magic: the Gathering and buyout of TSR (first publisher of D&D) by Wizards

of the Coast. A few omissions from this history include the Forgotten Realms campaign setting, as well as D&D computer games such as the iconic Baldur's Gate series. In addition to this material, Ewalt takes side trips to participate in and analyze D&D-associated games and phenomena such as historical miniatures gaming and live-action role playing (LARPing). These explorations always bring Ewalt back to tabletop D&D; although he appreciates other game styles, D&D is home to him—the play experience he feels most comfortable pursuing.

Alongside the history of D&D, Ewalt analyzes the reasons gamers gather together in general, and why they are taken with the D&D system in particular. He mentions such benefits of role play as creating a character that can do the things one cannot do in real life (a LARPer crows: "Other people went out drinking for their thirtieth birthday. I slayed a fucking banshee." [p. 201]), feeling a kinship with other players who were probably outside the social mainstream, and working together to build a collaborative story. I particularly enjoyed his descriptions of players' ideas and discoveries, as well as the auto-ethnographic moments in which Ewalt writes thoughtfully about himself as a gamer. Some of these moments seemed self-indulgent (there are several play session narratives per chapter, when one would have served), and others seemed excessively negative. I lost count of the times Ewalt described himself and other role players as "geeky" or "nerdy." I would have liked a few more descriptions of players who broke away from these stigmas of social awkwardness or a critical look at the stigma and language around "geekiness."

Still, Ewalt mines some rich material around what it means to play and, in particular, play in a way that is outside what many people regard as socially acceptable. Such play can even be liberating; choosing a game character can extend to the player's real life. As another LARPer, who left her bad relationship and a dead-end job because that was what her *character* would do, commented: "If I can do heroic things when I'm running around in the woods, why can't I do them here at home?" (p. 195).

This book will be of use to scholars who study role playing and who are interested in Dungeons and Dragons in particular. In addition to the history behind the brand and ethnographic approaches to play sessions, Ewalt points toward other studies of the game from sociological- and performance-studies contexts. More generally, the book will benefit anyone who studies fandom or adult play. I applaud Ewalt for his research and the time spent documenting play, and I hope to see more investigations of role-playing games and other tabletop games in the future.

—Andrew Chappell, *Chapman University, Orange, CA; and California State University Fullerton, Fullerton, CA*

Playing Along: Digital Games, YouTube, and Virtual Performance
Kiri Miller
New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Notes, references, index. 272 pp. $27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780199753468

From Double Dutch to limbo competitions, games that meld music, performance, and play are easy to find. In more recent years, the rise and spread of digital technologies have given way to a whole new, and ever-widening, range of practices that combine, recombine, and expand upon this tradition. This is particularly true of digital games (video games, arcade games, and computer games) in which music has long fulfilled a core function, both in terms of adding significantly to games' narratives and aesthetics, as well as providing an intuitive way of giving feedback to players. Some of the early arcade games had soundtracks that contained hidden clues about the right time to make a particular move or that forewarned players they were running out of time or were about to experience a change of speed. More recently, rhythm games, such as *PaRappa the Rapper* (1996) and *Dance Dance Revolution* (1998), have incorporated beat as a core component of their game-play mechanics—where a player's moves are only successful if made in musical time. As digital games have become more social (and more socially acceptable), events such as weekly *Rock Band* competitions at the local pub and sharing a musical creation made in the game *Sound Shapes* (2012) with thousands of other players online are increasingly common.

Kiri Miller's *Playing Along: Digital Games, YouTube, and Virtual Performance* is a timely and important work that tackles multiple aspects of the complex intermingling of music, performance, and play that is currently taking place within digital culture. The book features a range of relevant examples and draws important linkages between contempo-