public spheres. This hypocrisy is referenced by some of the favourable judgements that feature more heavily towards the closing chapters of *Legally straight* as the historical narrative edges closer to legalisation.

The question of how same-sex marriage affects our understandings of lesbian and gay identity is not the main subject of this book. However, the conclusion pulls together a number of strands introduced throughout the preceding chapters to produce two key arguments: first, Rollins introduces a concept he calls the ‘elasticity of childhood’ which he employs to refer to the ways in which childhood as category is used flexibly to support various adult concerns (p. 144–5). Second, he reworks an argument well-established in sexuality studies in support of diminishing (or eradicating) the category of heterosexuality with effective reference to the legal discourses he covers in the book. While he does not propose substantial new theory or arguments in either of these areas, the book nevertheless stands as an engaging and contemporary commentary on a historical moment for sexual identity and American civil rights with broader international significance. It is likely to be of critical significance to students or scholars of law seeking to specialise in marital law or constitutional rights in the USA.

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Jane Jensen: *Gabriel Knight*, adventure games, hidden objects, Anastasia Salter, 2017, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 200 pp., ISBN 978 1 5013 2745 2, $ 72 (hardback), ISBN 978 1 5013 2746 9, $24.95 (paperback)

This volume is the first of the ‘influential video game designers’ series that, following the logic of other authorship studies, aims to understand this sector by focussing on the designers’ biographies. The series follows a similar structure in all its monographs: an introduction to the key topics about the figure to be studied, followed by various chapters analysing these dimensions in depth with a focus on a specific work, period or a methodology aspect related to the creative process. Interviews are also included, some of which, as in this case, were carried out exclusively to be included in the books. The Conclusions chapter redirects the text to the academic realm where the most important theoretical aspects of the historical and cultural reflection are highlighted.

An author linked almost exclusively to narrative video games, Jane Jensen (Palmerton, Pennsylvania, 1963) started working for emblematic titles with Sierra On-Line such as *King’s Quest IV: The Perils of Rosella* (1988), under the supervision of Roberta Williams, *Police Quest III: The Kindred* (1991) and *EcoQuest: The Search of Cetus* (1991). She arguably made her name in the ’90s by writing and supervising the *Gabriel Knight* games saga, one of the most popular Adventure Games in history.

The volume devotes an entire chapter to the first three video games of this saga while highlighting two features of Jensen’s working method. Gabriel Knight’s charisma and Jensen’s ability to develop narratives through complex characters are highlighted. Knight has a similar appeal to many other iconic television and film personalities and, like them, is a modern Gothic horror character for teenagers, whereby main characters become simultaneously objects and agents of desire. Clearly, Jensen’s Gabriel Knight is part of a trend that will be followed by *X-Files* (1993-2002) and *Supernatural* (2005).

Anastasia Salter has produced an extensive and well-documented work, although she seems to make the mistake (so common in authorship theorization) of misunderstanding style as uniqueness
and originality. Thus, she tends to ignore a whole creative system that surrounded the author: all those other professionals who contributed to and were fed by Jensen’s talent. Hopefully, the series will give us the opportunity to delve into the stories and learn more about other Sierra contributors such as the ‘three key women’ (p. 3): Gano Haine, Lorelei Shannon and the aforementioned Roberta Williams.

The book also explains the methodology derived from the ‘research driven’ approach (p. 31). Here, the term does not designate a concept taken from marketing or social sciences applied to the figure of the user/reader of Jensen’s fictions but to the meticulous setting of her works and the elaborate process of ‘documentation’ she followed. This approach is similar to that of other successful novelists. Rather than a consequence of Jensen’s unquestionable talent, it is the natural result of the maturity achieved by the video game medium.

*Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers (1993)* and *Gabriel Knight 2: The Beast Within (1995)* were released when the narrative video game was hegemonic. This occurred when the major players of the video game Sierra and Lucas Arts competed in the market with their different approaches to digital storytelling. The use of visual commands, or the remediation of other sequential languages such as comics and movies, are part of the brand image of Sierra On-Line, which Jensen welcomed and contributed to later develop in her own work. The end of the ‘golden age’ of narrative games did not end Jensen’s career but forced the author to evolve and search for a new relationship with audiences, which ultimately made her migrate between genres and even between media. Another chapter of the book is dedicated to the time Jensen spent at Oberon Media, where she applied her storytelling skills to the design of puzzle and hidden object games. From this period, her more celebrated works may be the effective *transliterary* adaptations of *Women’s Murder Club*, a series of novels by James Patterson.

Finally, the book explores the latest stages (so far) of Jensen’s continuous metamorphosis as a writer of video games and, more recently, as a novelist. As an entrepreneur and manager of successful kick-start initiatives, Jensen has developed as a video game designer, just as narrative games have done. In this sense, this reminds me to the well-known *Red Queen Hypothesis* (Van Valen, 1973), in which species compete in a changing environment evolving in parallel. The book will be of great interest to those who know the field of narrative video games or, at least, are curious about the differentiation between historical genres such as Adventure Games, Hidden Objects, Interactive Novels, etc. In this sense, the text offers a detailed insight into Jensen’s work and creative processes. The video game environment has been considered ‘an industry without workers’ (Kocurek & DeWinter, 2017: ix). While the claim seems exaggerated, it reveals that style signatures are usually attributed to companies rather than individuals. The author of video games, therefore, is a relatively unknown figure compared to the popularity of authors from other creative industries. In this sense, the series is based on a fascinating concept and is a project which, over time, will be an obligatory reference for Video games Studies.

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Brenda Laurel: pioneering games for girls, Carly A. Kocurek, 2017 New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 184 pp., $72 (hardback), ISBN 978 1 5013 1978 5; $24.95 (paperback), ISBN 978 1 5013 1977 8

Third in a series edited by Carly A. Kocurek and Jennifer deWinter, exploring the most influential designers in the history of video games, this volume focuses on the designer, playwright and entrepreneur Brenda Laurel (1950, Columbus, Ohio). While both male and female designers have been object of study, the collection has an overall gender slant, noticeably in the editors’ prefaces and the conclusions of each volume. In other words, the series is especially concerned with the nature of gender representation within video games and how this correlates with their target audience. In this sense, Laurel’s study is highly relevant as she contributed to the development of games specifically designed for female audiences and which were conceived as an alternative to other “games for girls” (Cassell & Jeankins, 1998) such as those of Mattel (i.e. Barbie’s video games).

Kocurek starts by outlining the two backbones of Laurel’s work, i.e. research design and entrepreneurship, as a first assessment of Laurel’s authorial agency. Afterwards, she reflects on the fundamental basis of Laurel’s ethos as a creator, namely the role of research-driven design. Laurel started off as a researcher for companies such as Atari Labs, CyberVision and Lucas Arts. She then worked for many years at Palo Alto-based Interval Research before contributing to its spin-off, the independent video game producer Purple Moon. For Laurel, research does not merely underpin the creative process but it is its main design tool. For four years she conducted interviews with large groups of children (boys and girls aged between 7 and 12 years) and the results of these surveys informed the main design features of her two main series of video games Rockett’s Movado and Secret Paths targeted to preadolescent female audiences.

This monograph also deals with Laurel’s contribution to the narrative theory in the field of digital media. Laurel’s enormously influential research consists of a transposition of the poetics of Aristotle and of Brecht’s immersive theatre to the emergent field of Human Computer Interaction (HCI). This section also delves into her exercises around the simulation of fantasy interactive systems as well as her pioneering exploration of embodiment and user interfaces using Virtual Reality.

Kocurek reflects on the real nature of Laurel’s innovations when she speculates about the inception of a new genre which Laurel’s company labelled ‘friendship female adventures’ (p. 71). Laurel argued this mainly narrative genre was more valuable and educational than others because of the central role played by emotions in the users (through avatar stories) – an experience she called ‘emotional rehearsal’ (p. 13). In any case, what the text implies as the relevance of Laurel’s work is not the creation of a new genre but the coming-of-age of digital storytelling. Laurel’s video games show strategies derived from other serial forms, including the construction of characters’ spin offs, the development of creative tools to facilitate user-generated content and transmedia narrative, supported by the interaction with audiences through websites.

Following the pattern of other books from this series, the text includes an exclusive interview by Kocurek with Laurel in 2015. Considering its chronological structure and its intrinsic human value,