

**Review Essay: A Cultural Legal Studies Reflection on Tom Tyler’s *Game: Animals, Video Games, and Humanity* (University of Minnesota Press, 2022), ISBN 9781760641849**

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**Introduction**

Exploring the animal question in legal contexts is an innately interdisciplinary affair.<sup>2</sup> Scholars seeking to advance our thinking in this regard routinely interweave deep socio-legal and theoretical investigations with insights from wide-ranging scholarship including animal welfare and environmental sciences, behavioural studies, and multispecies sociology and anthropology. In part, this tendency speaks to the fact that law is increasingly regarded as a cultural artefact<sup>3</sup> that can and perhaps ought to be studied from a sociological or socio-legal perspective.<sup>4</sup> In this vein, growing research on cultural legal studies, which follows on from the ‘law ands’ (sociology, literature, film, etc), provides insight into how ‘law and culture co-constitute one another’.<sup>5</sup> Video games are proving to be a rich source of legal intrigue as an ever-growing mode of cultural expression and representation.<sup>6</sup> With this context in mind, it is apt to present

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<sup>2</sup> Sacha Lucassen, ‘Animal Law as an Interdisciplinary Academic Program’ (2019) 7 *Global Journal of Animal Law*.

<sup>3</sup> Luka Burazin, ‘Can There Be an Artifact Theory of Law?’ (2016) 29(3) *Ratio Juris* 385.

<sup>4</sup> Naomi Creutzfeldt, Marc Mason and Kirsten McConnachie, ‘Socio-legal Theory and Methods: Introduction’ in Naomi Creutzfeldt, Marc Mason and Kirsten McConnachie, ‘Routledge Handbook of Socio-Legal Theory and Methods’ (Routledge 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer L Schulz, ‘What is Cultural Legal Studies?’ (2021) 44(2) *Manitoba Law Journal* 143, 144.

<sup>6</sup> Dale Mitchell, Ashley Pearson and Timothy D Peters (eds), *Law, Video Games, Virtual Realities: Playing Law* (2023 Routledge).

Tom Tyler's *Game: Animals, Video Games, and Humanity* to an audience of legal scholars and practitioners interested in wildlife.

This collection of 13 essays is rigorous in its academic investigation and deep thought, whilst maintaining an eminent readability that will attract scholarly and broad audiences alike. Tyler's essays are punchy, narratively rich, deep in their references to multidisciplinary and theoretical perspectives, accessible and gripping. Each leaves the reader with the feeling that they have gained a nugget of impactful, potentially paradigm-shifting knowledge. The writing style and structure are effective at imparting this knowledge and delivering an at times subversive message which is all the more impactful for its subtlety. The value of this work for legal experts lies centrally in its investigation of animals in our cultural artefacts and, in identifying key trends therein, facilitating a reflection upon how cultural notions of animality are similarly embedded within legal systems.

*Game* is a captivating, charming, and deeply insightful exploration of the place of animals in our games, our minds, and our worlds. I find *Game* to be a culturally illuminating read for legal experts interested in the animal question, despite not engaging with strictly legal questions. In this generative review, I will provide an overview of *Game*'s contribution and a synthesis of its central themes. In doing so, I will provide a cultural legal studies reflection on Tyler's work by putting his insights into conversation with some of my own research on animals and the law.

## **Overview**

Tyler's broad investigation of over 140 games covers classics (*Pac-Man*) and new releases (*Beat Saber*), the prodigiously popular (*Minecraft*) and the obscure (*Llamazap*), the inspired (*Ōkami*) and the banal (*Cow Clicker*), the widely beloved (*Super Mario Kart*) and the controversial (*Super Meat Boy*). Tyler's reference material is artfully selected and capable of engaging hardcore gamers and casual players as well as non-gamers with a vague knowledge of (and interest in) digital worlds and play. *Game* is also vital reading for those human animals amongst us who are interested in the lives and representations of our non-human animal kin; animal advocates and activists, animal studies (law and policy, literature, media) scholars, and vegans (or those of other non-anthropocentric ethical persuasions).

The focus of the book, as described by Tyler, is an investigation of 'some of the complex and often contradictory ways in which players of video games have been invited to encounter, understand, and engage animals' (p 3). Crucially, Tyler invites the reader to 'encounter, understand, and engage those animals and games *differently*' [emphasis added] in our thinking and our acting (p 5-6). For example, Tyler describes how in the 1984 Nintendo game *Duck Hunt*, a second player may join to control the titular duck, making it harder for the gamer (hunter) to successfully shoot the duck. Animal law scholars similarly ask for the law to engage animals differently by safeguarding their wellbeing or even awarding them with legal rights. Legal systems facilitate and perpetuate the harm of animals through human industries,<sup>7</sup> aligning with *Duck Hunt* in its objectification of sentient animal life.

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<sup>7</sup> Wendy A Adams, 'Human Subjects and Animal Objects: Animals as "Other" in Law' (2009) 3(1) *Journal of Animal Law & Ethics* 29, 32.

The method through which Tyler facilitates this different encounter is best described through the term “coined by Tyler himself: “vejan” (p 151). Tyler explains the “vejan” method in perhaps the most impactful and exciting of the book’s many satisfying ‘a-ha’ moments. In the final chapter, Tyler explains—following discussion of a handheld game called *Trojan Horse*—how the Trojan Horse at troy was a vehicle to deliver more than was ‘bargained for’, for something to be ‘snuck in under cover, before emerging, impenitent and assured, to shake and trouble’ (p 150). Just so, Tyler reveals to the reader that the entirety of *Game* was “vejan” (a vegan play on the word “Trojan”); a text ‘designed to further the vegan project’ in which ‘vegan values would be taken for granted—latent, not explicit’ and which does not ‘evangelize or mount frontal assaults or besiege the heavily defended’ (p 149). Scholarship on animals and the law does not tend to be covert in this way. Largely, it cannot be, because prioritising the interests of animals in our anthropocentric legal systems<sup>8</sup> requires such a break from the status quo that it would be difficult for this to be slipped in unnoticed.

This kind of “vejan” work is proposed by Tyler as a compliment to the more commonly encountered vegan advocate and apologist (restated, robustly defending) works (p 151). One might wonder whether such a trend is a result of vegans being encouraged into quieter practices due to the popular critique of our supposed lambasting, preachy dialogue and nature. (How do you know if someone is vegan? Don’t worry, they’ll tell you!) Of course, such critique is a morally defensive misrepresentation of the broad vegan community and, whilst inevitably impactful upon our social realities, it ought not to unduly impact our activism. Nonetheless, Tyler neatly proclaims the value of broadening vegan narratives to include such works, and the book itself demonstrates this value

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<sup>8</sup> Maneesha Deckha, ‘Critical Animal Studies and Animal Law’ (2012) 18(2) *Animal Law* 207, 208.

clearly. Its assumptions, reconceptualisations, deconstructions, and explorations are assertive, convincing, and well thought-out. Certainly, legal scholarship on animals tends to repetitiously defend its own positionality (whether vegan or otherwise) and engage in extensive conceptualisation.<sup>9</sup> Thus, a greater volume of legal work that takes vegan values for granted could allow the discipline of animal law to grow at a greater pace.

The style of *Game* is eclectic and effective. Tyler elucidates the portrayal of animals by investigating not only video games but also fables, literary fiction and film, mythology, poetry, TV shows, and much more (p 6). He also considers knowledge from ‘ethology, entomology, ichthyology, primatology, ecological and environmental studies’ and, crucially, ‘etymologies’ (p 6). Tyler’s etymological insights are one of the book’s most grounding and astute contributions, which will particularly appeal to legal experts whose subject of study requires an intricate knowledge of the use of language.

As an example, Tyler introduces his book by exploring the meaning of the word ‘game’. He notes how ‘gamen’ or ‘gomen’ means amusement, merriment, and joy. Tyler describes the modern meaning of ‘game’ as ‘an activity played for entertainment, usually governed by certain rules or restrictions, most often involving some combination of skill, strength, or luck, and perhaps culminating in victory or defeat for one or more of those involved’ (p 2). Tyler also describes a second meaning which emerged during the late Middle Ages which essentially means ‘hunting’ (p 2). Finally, he describes a third meaning that has been identified from the eighteenth century onwards, and which most likely developed in the context of cockfighting, as an adjective meaning ‘plucky or

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<sup>9</sup> My own work is guilty of this. See, for example, Iyan Offor, *Global Animal Law from the Margins: International Trade in Animals and their Bodies* (Routledge 2023).

spirited' (p 5). Tyler explores how these etymologies interact to introduce the kinds of games the book will discuss, as well as the ways in which he will engage with them. Tyler uses this technique throughout the book to invite the reader to encounter animals in new ways.

Tyler describes the book's substance as focusing on the inclusion of animal perspectives; comparisons of animals and humans; the features of individual animals and species; the roles animals take on in games; and the ways animals have 'helped us to understand games' (p 3). I will use these substantive themes to organise my brief overview of the individual essays within *Game*, though each theme permeates throughout the book. Each theme provides valuable opportunities for reflection for legal experts that consider the place of animals within our legal worlds.

### **The Inclusion of Animal Perspectives**

Animal perspectives are detailed richly in chapter 3 through discussion of the game *Dog's Life*. This game includes an overhead third person mode as well as a first-person mode called 'Smellovision' in which you see through the dog protagonist's perspective, with visual representation of smells, dulled colours, etc. Tyler discusses how perspectives reveal other worlds that are, in a way, completely inaccessible to us (p 22). This leads Tyler to conclude that it is common for the human perspective and the manner in which it is informed by our senses, sociality and more, to be regarded as objective. In reality, Tyler argues, there is no 'single, standard mode of apprehension' (p 28). This relative inaccessibility, and neglect, of animal perspectives is highlighted further in chapter 8 in which Tyler notes that games like *Farmville* fail to depict the reality of life on a farm for

a cow (p 69). Further, he explores how games like *Cow Clicker*—which satirises social games like *Farmville*—use animals as ‘ciphers’ or ‘absent referents’ (referencing Carol J Adams).<sup>10</sup> They do this by taking animals as their objects when nothing about the gameplay is, for example, cow-like.

This brought to my mind the way in which anthropomorphised animals are frequently used as protagonists in video games like *Animal Crossing*, *Crash Bandicoot*, and *Spiritfarer*, whilst their animality is largely irrelevant to the gameplay. In *Spiritfarer*, the player cares for spirits who are being ferried to an afterlife through the game’s Evergate. The spirits mostly take the form of anthropomorphised non-human animals, though they represent the spirits of human beings (as revealed through various illustrations). Their animal forms reveal something of the humans’ characterisation. For example, the character Gwen takes the form of a deer, whose design includes a lush fur collar which is evocative of her social status as an aristocratic heir. Yet beyond their designs, these characters reveal nothing of animal perspectives beside the occasional quirk, such as when the frog Atul can be seen sleeping suspended in a water tank. These spirit animals could be taken to represent death as a reunion with our animal nature<sup>11</sup> or to the particular prevalence of spirit animals amongst various Indigenous cultures. Interestingly, the player is accompanied by a pet cat named Daffodil who does not seem to be a spirit at all. Further, this becoming animal<sup>12</sup> occurs in a game in which the spirits are fed meals of meat and dairy. This confusing compilation of animal representation is perhaps best represented by Gwen’s fur collar which, in life, she may have sourced from a lynx, chinchilla, or mink, but which in death is made of her own spirit’s deer form.

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<sup>10</sup> Carol J Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Continuum 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Calarco regards the similarities between animals and humans in the direction of animal-human: we are all animals, after all. Matthew Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals* (Stanford University Press 2015) 56.

<sup>12</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (Columbia University press 2011) 82.

Tyler's discussion of animal perspectives inspires reflection on how the confusing compilation of animal representation in video games (like *Spiritfarer*) is not dissimilar to how animals are treated in law. While animals are treated as property in most legal systems,<sup>13</sup> many have evolved a *sui generis* legal status by also offering welfare protection to animals.<sup>14</sup> Some states have also now acknowledged that animals have legal rights.<sup>15</sup> Yet, it remains the case that methods for including animal perspectives into legal processes remain elusive. There is a growing call for noticing the signals of animals and nature and incorporating these into our legal systems.<sup>16</sup> While these calls often take socio-legal theory for their inspiration, perhaps the transformative experiences of game features like Smellovision or varied animal perspectives in games like *Spiritfarer* could also prove inspiring whilst also being more accessible to non-academics.

### **Comparisons of Animals and Humans**

Chapter 9 provides an interesting exploration of comparisons between humans and animals. Tyler discusses meat, its various uses in video games, the game *Super Meat Boy*, and PETA's parody game *Super Tofu Boy*. In this context, Tyler explores Matthew Calarco's idea of 'indistinction' whereby discussion of similarities and differences between humans and animals is nuanced by seeking to indistinguish each category (pp

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<sup>13</sup> Simon Brooman and Debbie Legge, *Law Relating to Animals* (Cavendish Publishing Limited 1997) 50.

<sup>14</sup> Yoriko Otomo, 'Law and the Question of the (Nonhuman) Animal' (2011) 19 *Society & Animals* 383.

<sup>15</sup> 'Nonhuman Rights Blog' (*Nonhuman Rights Project*) <<https://www.nonhumanrights.org/blog/>> accessed 20 November 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Iyan Ofor and Antonio Cardesa-Salzmann, 'Multispecies Lawscapes in the Anthropocene: Priorities for a Critical, Constitutional Turn in Climate Change and Biodiversity Law' in Richard Caddell and Phillipa McCormack (eds), *Research Handbook on Climate Change and Biodiversity Law* (forthcoming Edward Elgar)

82-83).<sup>17</sup> Tyler links this to controversy around the character Meat Boy. PETA's erroneous assumption that Meat Boy is made of animal meat, when he is in fact a skinless human boy, proves for Tyler that it is difficult to distinguish human and animal meat, thus indistinguishing the two (p 87).

Tyler notes that PETA has created other games, including *Pokémon Black and Blue*, to parody casualised animal cruelty in video games. Certainly, the Pokémon series is a rich source for critique of casualised depictions of animal cruelty, with gameplay centred around capturing and training pokémon to fight one another. Indeed, I have found the Pokémon universe to be a useful pedagogical tool, using it as a setting for assessment questions to get students thinking creatively about the relationship between law and species.

Yet, animal cruelty is not the only problem that faces legal scholars interested in the animal question. Legal scholars are also increasingly considering means to enable animals to flourish.<sup>18</sup> Many animal law scholars justify such legal change by identifying similarities between humans and animals, particularly relying on Peter Singer's animal welfarism and the animal rights theories of Tom Regan, Gary Francione and others.<sup>19</sup> This is considered a step forward from the status quo that regards humans and animals as fundamentally distinct, justifying mistreatment of animals on this basis. Yet, many scholars, particularly those operating within the second wave of animal ethics, regard it as insufficient to provide legal protection to animals due only to their similarity to

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew Calarco, 'Identity, Difference, Indistinction' (2012) 11(2) *The New Centennial Review* 41, 54-55.

<sup>18</sup> Martha C Nussbaum, 'The Capabilities Approach and Animal Entitlements' in Tom L Beauchamp and RG Frey (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics* (Oxford University Press 2013) 247.

<sup>19</sup> Martha Nussbaum, 'Working with and for Animals: Getting the Theoretical Framework Right' (2018) 19(1) *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 2.

humans.<sup>20</sup> These scholars argue that the value and dignity of animals ought to be recognised in law on their own terms. Calarco's work on indistinction is valuable in this regard, as it provides a basis from which to make law that does not hold the human/animal distinction at its core.<sup>21</sup> So, if we were to consider making law with a legal subject like Meat Boy in mind, whose body can appear both human and animal, how might we think differently about the act of creating law? Indistinction, of course, presents intellectual challenges for legal experts who are used to working with law's rigid, fixed categories. Thus, it is helpful to use cultural artefacts like video games to identify law's means of worldmaking as just one method amongst other possibilities.

### **The Features of Individual Animals and Species**

Throughout his book, Tyler explores numerous features of individual animals and species. For example, chapter 4 discusses ruminants like sheep and, linked to this, the concept of rumination itself and how it features in the work of video game designer Jeff Minter. Additionally, chapter 5 explores the suffix 'ing' in the context of the game series *Splatoon* and the inkling characters it features. This game serves as a potential counterexample to *Cow Clicker*, which uses animals as objects without including relevant gameplay features. *Splatoon* games, in contrast, see players cover arenas in ink whilst playing as squid-like characters. Chapter 11 focuses on the concept of 'misanthropy'. Tyler explores this within the context of the game *Plague Inc.* In this game, players are tasked with spreading a pathogen to 'obliterate the human species' and, in its Simian Flu

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<sup>20</sup> Offor (n 9) 31-37.

<sup>21</sup> Calarco (n 17) 54-55.

expansion, enhance the population of apes, linking to the plot of the 2014 film *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (pp 106-107).

Tyler's exploration of the features of individual animals and species in video games reminds the reader that the animal category ought not to be essentialised. When considering law for animals, it is important to consider how individual features of animals and species ought to be borne in mind. Hence, for example, the European Union's animal welfare rules include directives and regulations that target particular species and their welfare needs (though, with notable gaps).<sup>22</sup> Additionally, wildlife law often operates through international treaties that target particular species.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, further legal attention ought to be paid to the impact of climate change and other human-induced environmental change on various animal species and individuals.<sup>24</sup>

Inspired by Tyler's reflections, it can be insightful to observe the varying adaptation strategies used by animals experiencing climate change and harsh ecosystems in video games. In *Endling*, the player takes on the role of the last remaining mother fox on Earth. In *Rainworld*, the player takes on the role of a "slugcat" which must endure the severe weather and various hazards of its harsh ecosystem. In each game, the player observes the impact of harsh environmental conditions from an animal perspective whilst being reminded that different animals will maintain different priorities, capabilities, and means of coping in the face of environmental catastrophe. Tyler's work reminds legal scholars

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<sup>22</sup> For example, the Broilers Directive 2007/43/EC [2007] OJ L 182/19.

<sup>23</sup> For example, International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (adopted 12 February 1946, entered into force 10 November 1948) 161 UNTS 2124.

<sup>24</sup> Angie Pepper, 'Adapting to Climate Change: What We Owe to Other Animals' (2019) 36(4) *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 592.

working on the animal question to identify individual animal features of significance for new rulemaking intended to benefit animals.

### **The Role Animals Take on in Games**

Tyler also returns regularly to the issue of animals' roles in video games. Chapter 2 discusses video game depictions of animal adoption, companionship, resources, adversaries, protagonists, and more. This provides Tyler with impetus to explore the ways in which individual animals are not usually given distinctive appearances in video games but, instead, are reduced to a species type. Protagonists tend to be the exception, such as Sonic the Hedgehog. Tyler reflects on how this aligns with the etymology of the word 'animal', the peculiarity of the collective term for a group of boars being the word 'singular', and Jacques Derrida's critique of the erroneous catch all category of 'the animal'. In chapter 10, Tyler explores the various roles played by animal excretions in video games including humour, resources, triggers for new abilities, and as fertiliser (pp 91-92). Tyler then makes what is perhaps the biggest intellectual leap in the book by linking this discussion of animal excretions in video games to the etymology of 'bullshit' and, in connection, the impact of animal agriculture and manure on the environment in an age of *Pac-Man*-esque insatiable consumption (pp 103-104).

The various roles of animals in video games are reflective of their various roles in human societies. Law tends to treat animals differently depending upon their "use category" as farmed animals, animals used in research, companion animals, wild animals in captivity,

or wild animals subject to conservation or other measures.<sup>25</sup> Due to law's reliance upon fixed categories, animals considered "liminal" can fall between the cracks of different legal regimes that apply to animals. Liminal animals are discussed in Donaldson and Kymlicka's *Zoopolis* and can be considered as non-domesticated animals who live among us, such as city-dwelling rats, seagulls, foxes, etc.<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to notice the way in which the individuality of animals disappears when we categorise them according to roles in video games or "use categories" in our laws. While law is not designed to recognise individuality and protagonists in the way video games can, Tyler's work inspires thinking on how law could mitigate harms caused by categorising animals according to human use and not according to animal need.

### **The Ways Animals Have Helped us to Understand Games**

The final theme, whereby Tyler discusses how animals help us to understand games, provides perhaps the greatest depth of reflection. In chapter 6, Tyler recounts Val Plumwood's experience of being prey to a crocodile (pp 43-45) and links his discussion of the 'predator perspective' to the experience of winning and losing games. He notes how most games use 'repeat-to-win' mechanics whereby victory is assured. He also notes how a recent trend, particularly associated with endless runner games like *Temple Run*, sees the use of a repeat-and-lose playstyle that amounts to a paradigm shift for players.

On this theme, I think one could also consider rogue-like games (influenced by tabletop role playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons*) including the titular *Rogue* and the recent

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<sup>25</sup> Opi Outhwaite, 'Neither Fish, nor Fowl: Honeybees and the Parameters of Current Legal Frameworks for Animals, Wildlife and Biodiversity' (2017) 29 *Journal of Environmental Law* 317, 317.

<sup>26</sup> Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford University Press 2013) 8.

*Hades* and *Shovel Knight Dig*. Rogue-like games include permanent death and are similarly paradigm shifting. The Soulslike subgenre of games also comes to mind. This genre includes games made by developer FromSoftware such as *Dark Souls*, *Bloodborne*, and *Elden Ring*, as well as games from other developers that imitate their style such as *Nioh* and *Hollow Knight*. Soulslike games typically include unforgiving, difficult combat and deaths which result in the loss of experience or resources. This amounts to a similar, though softer, paradigm shift compared with rogue-like games.

Tyler's reflection on paradigm shifting regarding death is insightful for legal scholars considering the animal question. As Donna Haraway puts it, we consider animals to be "killable" whilst we do not consider humans to be so.<sup>27</sup> This is the case even though humans can be prey (as Plumwood's experience makes clear) and our death is inevitable (as it is in repeat-and-lose, rogue-likes, and Soulslike games. Our legal systems socially entrench the idea that humans ought not to be killed, even if doing so through euthanasia or assisted suicide would be the most compassionate option. Meanwhile, legal systems definitively entrench the concept of the killable animal by facilitating, regulating, and perhaps even encouraging the killing of animals through animal agriculture. Video games provide a space to consider the consequences of death. It is perhaps worth reflecting on the fact that, in law, animal death is frequent, commonplace, expected and encouraged in the same way players are expected to die in repeat-and-lose, rogue-like, and Soulslike games.

In chapter 7, Tyler reflects on what things are worth doing and whether they are worth doing well (as in the popular maxim 'things worth doing, are worth doing well') or poorly.

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<sup>27</sup> Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (University of Minnesota Press 2008) 89.

In this regard, he discusses the “game” of catching fish as one that may be worth doing badly. The reason being that fishing badly would mean the fish is not killed (or even caught in the first place), noting evolving science around fish sentience. And finally, in chapter 12, Tyler discusses the difficulty levels utilised in video games, noting how these create norms around able-bodiedness. Tyler links this to the concept of the everyman, which Gordon Freeman in the game *Half-Life 2* is intended to embody.

This brought to my mind the 2022 downloadable content for the game *Resident Evil Village*. The original game is in first person and the downloadable content adds a third person mode. But, perhaps to maintain the protagonist’s role as an everyman, when the player attempts to turn the camera to make Ethan Winters’ face visible it moves in the opposite direction, leaving his face an unseen mystery. Tyler argues that any everyman is, inevitably, a distinct individual. And, similarly, variable difficulty settings respond to the fact there is no singular ‘everyplayer’ for whom a “normal” setting is appropriate (p 124). In one of the book’s most surprising turns, Tyler uses this as the appropriate moment to introduce the way in which various animals have played video games (both made for them and made for humans).

This reflection on the ‘everyman’ or ‘everyplayer’ is valuable for legal scholars who are interested in considering the animal question from marginal perspectives. Marginal perspectives can be regarded as those that stem from individuals or social groups who identify as a member of a community that has experienced systematic marginalisation or oppression in society (including but not limited to women, people of colour, queer people, and disabled people). Legal systems utilise concepts such as the “reasonable person” which, like the ‘everyman’, are intended to be neutral and applicable to all but which, in

reality, can fail to represent those at the margins. Various critical theories of law (including, but not limited to, critical legal studies, feminist legal theory, and queer legal theory) reveal that the neutrality and objectivity on which law is ostensibly based are so often false. It is certainly the case that concepts like the reasonable person do not encompass reasonable *animals*. In the same way that video games are not made for animals, laws have generally not been made for animals either. Yet, just as animals have come to engage with video games by playing them, animals have encountered the law frequently throughout history. In presenting animals' engagement with video games, Tyler encourages the reader to consider the anthropocentricity in much of what we produce and engage with in our human cultures.

## **Conclusion**

Through these varied explorations, Tyler succeeds in assisting the reader to encounter animals differently through his distinctively “vejan” narrative, which he reveals in his final chapter. The subtlety of this narrative is effective though, in places, does require the reader to stay eminently focused to detect the links that Tyler is making. For example, in chapter 10, Tyler moves from discussing excretion in video games to the concept and etymology of ‘bullshit’. As in each chapter, the connection is reflected upon and made clear in a stylish and satisfying conclusion. But some chapters require a willingness to be along for the ride, waiting for the final reveal.

Additionally, because most chapters have a clear and deeply impactful message at their core, I found myself searching and reflecting upon the few chapters in which this was not as immediately obvious. For example, it was not initially clear to me what the reader

should take away from Tyler's exploration of rumination in chapter 4. However, I have found that process of further reflection to be a valuable trigger that, I believe, succeeds in Tyler's goal of encouraging readers to encounter animals differently. I have found this a particularly valuable exercise from a cultural legal studies perspective, evoking consideration of law's various anthropocentricities and the status quo of legal engagement with animals.

I believe the reflective, paradigm-shifting value of Tyler's work reveals itself to the reader both immediately and gradually. In chapter 2, Tyler notes how even though games often render animals of the same species identically, it remains true that when we encounter them in a game (such as in battle), we encounter, experience, and consider them as individuals. Likewise, when the law encounters animals, despite its abstract and general framing, it encounters an individual animal. With that in mind, I strongly recommend reading *Game* for yourself to determine what your individual, uniquely rendered experience of its immediate and gradual impacts on your animal encounters may be.