presents a comprehensive and situated start to understanding online play spaces; and that makes this work much more approachable than many other academic texts.

—Jes Klass, *DePaul University, Chicago, IL*

Achievement Relocked: Loss Aversion and Game Design

Geoffrey Engelstein
Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020. On Thinking playfully, preface, introduction, notes, and index. 135 pp. $30.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780262043533

In *Achievement Relocked*, Geoffrey Engelstein does a wonderful job presenting the science behind loss aversion and how to use it as a lens for understanding player psychology and designing better games. Engelstein compellingly illustrates the ways games present rewards and punishment to influence players. The author shows that even small changes like starting people toward a goal can encourage them to complete it, or how—depending on the size—numbers can carry different meaning to different people in different situations and in turn can change how they make choices. This opens a different way to think about how players will navigate a game environment and gives designers another tool to craft an enjoyable experience for their players. Through Engelstein's thought experiments, he demonstrates how game mechanics tuned to elicit specific reactions can lead players to different and perhaps more desirable play experiences.

Throughout *Achievement Relocked*,

Engelstein illuminates principles that help inform our understanding of how players navigate game environments. Each of these principles presents opportunities for designers to create better games. The author presents loss aversion as the different reactions that people have when they gain something as a reward compared to when they lose something as punishment. Specifically, even when the amounts are the same, loss is more impactful than reward, showing that people are inclined to avoid loss. Using this insight, game designers can better think about how players will react to mechanics that are designed to give or take away player resources. Similarly, the author presents the endowment effect as different reactions the feeling of ownership elicits over loss. When individuals gain a sense of ownership or closeness to an item, the threat of loss connected to that item changes, and game designers can create more player investment in the environments and characters in their games.

Engelstein points out that the framing of a scenario can change how an individual reacts to potential loss or gain. If players focus on loss, he notes, they will be more likely to avoid it, and game designers who understand this can frame game events to create more tension or soften losses. Utility theory, which says that the value you put on something influences your perception of its loss (and increases your sense of reward in not losing it), offers designers support for how they control player reactions. This lens helps teach them how to create value around currency, resources, or characters to control how players feel reward and loss.

The author also discusses endowment progress—or the change in reactions to

loss that players can experience as they invest time and resources. It shows game designers the moves they might wish to avoid when introducing loss into their game to avoid an overly strong reaction, like regret—that is, players will more likely avoid situations in which they have a higher chance for regretting their decision. This gives game designers a way to think about how they present choices in their games, ensuring that players can avoid such excessive responses where possible. Competence, as well, plays into such calculations, since the author suggests that the less informed about any situation players are, the more often they become skeptical when making a choice. This should lead designers to present choices that players feel more comfortable making. Taken together, these principles offer a tool kit that can help designers better understand the choices they create when designing a game.

Engelstein's timely work advances the discussion on player psychology in games and further explores the nuances of how players react when they encounter failure—a topic upon which MIT Press's Playful Thinking series (see Jesper Juul, *The Art of Failure*) was launched.

Over the last decade, game researchers and designers have become increasingly interested in player psychology and exploring the ways in which games encourage us to think, react, and feel the ways designers intended. *Achievement Relocked* is a great read for game designers, researchers, or enthusiasts looking to understand player experiences around loss and reward.

—Craig G. Anderson, *University of California, Irvine*

Open World Empire: Race, Erotics, and the Global Rise of Video Games

Christopher B. Patterson
New York: NYU Press, 2020. List of figures, introduction, acknowledgments, notes, references, index, and about the author. 344 pp. $35.00 paperback. ISBN: 9781479802043

If "queer game studies" as a field has grown substantially in the last decade, *Open World Empire* in no small measure offers a much-needed queer-of-color intervention that presents exciting new challenges and avenues for study in the field of game studies as a whole. At its core, *Open World Empire* is a methodological text, pushing the boundaries of how to do game studies, one that offers a compellingly well-theorized and well-executed framework. Christopher B. Patterson provides crucial insight into a deeper, more compelling future for analysis and theory in game studies, merging thoughts from American studies, Asian American studies, and postmodern, poststructuralist, and queer theories. *Open World Empire*'s interventions in game studies are plentiful and potent.

Patterson invites us to rethink and reimagine the core tenets of game analysis through the language of race, erotics, and globalization. In this two-part text, he encourages us to shift our perspective from the rules and mechanics of game design and from ideological critique of games' content and cosmetics to the experiences of play as "intimate" encounters with others—racial, cultural, linguistic, technological. Patterson constructs an analytical frame that not only acknowledges but makes central the experiences of pleasure