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

in play, ironically often undertheorized or poorly analyzed in much of previous game studies literature. Compellingly, *Open World Empire* does so without suggesting that social science methods—that is, ethnographic or observational approaches of players—are necessary to account for pleasure, erotics, and play. Instead, each chapter produces a set of tools and useful vocabulary for game analysis that is still squarely within critical theory, textual analysis, and cultural studies. Patterson presents this new vocabulary through the illustration of each concept's empirical origins and its value in case application.

Open World Empire is divided into two parts, each comprised of three chapters. The first half, "Asiatic," works to provide a foundation for games criticism that takes central politics of globality, race, and pleasure. In chapter 1, Patterson lays the foundation for this new game studies approach by introducing analytical vocabulary: "global game," "dizzying diversity," "Asiatic," and "race as play." Each is presented through a powerful blending of playful autoethnography, critical theory, and close reading of games both as text and experience. Positioning video games as the quintessential media of global and postmodern empire, and a media form unquestionably intertwined with Asiatic imaginaries, Patterson highlights the inefficacy of games critique that fails to account for the global reach of the games industry—both in terms of production and consumptive play. This chapter applies such a stance in the exploration of pleasurable play experiences with the multinational, multicultural casts of *Street Fighter II*, *League of Legends*, and *Overwatch*. Understood through the queer aesthetics

of camp, the seemingly stereotypical characters of these games are instead figured as exaggerated sites of pleasurable meaning making and intimacy with the other.

Chapters 2 and 3 extend this approach, offering two methods for "playing erotically": "ludophilia" and "aphrodisia." Chapter 2 explores the messy dynamics of games authorship, influenced heavily by discourses and imaginaries related to Asia, and highlights how the author function across three types—the Japanese auteur, the invisible American (non-)author, and the Asian American author—each invites players to become erotically ludophilic, to seek pleasure in play rather than in representation, critique, or comprehensive understanding, in noticeably different ways. Chapter 3 addresses role play, which Patterson describes as an anonymized form of play characterized by undeniable power relations. In this chapter, Patterson incorporates Foucault's later writings on self-care and *ars erotica* to explore how "power play" is erotic under conditions of both self-care and care for others.

The second half of the book aims to extend earlier questioning of the limits of ideological critique, both broadly and specifically in the context of video games. Patterson extends Alexander Galloway's mid-2000s work, in which he elaborates on the limits and failings of ideological critique in working through complex systems such as internet protocol or video game simulations. While Galloway turns to Deleuze in developing a new form of critique, "protological" or "informatic" critique, Patterson follows Sedgwick's lead in shifting to erotic encounters—of touch, pleasure, affect, and the body—and resisting the "paranoid position" or "hermeneu-

tics of suspicion." Chapter 4 explores this in relation to bodily posture, in horror games generally and most specifically to *Alien: Isolation*, in which the player's postures invite new sensations, affect, and pleasures. Chapter 5 explores the pleasures of repetitive action, such as shooting in the Far Cry series, as such repetitive action takes place in the context of global empire. The book closes with chapter 6 providing elaborations on the text's main theoretical underpinnings, furthering Patterson's exploration of erotics and the other and solidifying that erotic play lays bare the intimate, pleasurable relationships we have with others, broadly defined, under empire.

Open World Empire follows the conventions of intersectional feminist writings, queer of color critique, Asian American studies, and postmodern theory: often, the book invites us to sit with uncomfortable tensions and contradictions. Moving away from absolutist claims—whether something is or is not racist, what constitutes a game, and the like—we are asked to engage with games and play as if they are intimate encounters and accept the vulnerability and particularity of such intimacy. As such, *Open World Empire* is a call for more rigorous, deeper, and perhaps messier explorations in game studies, but that call is punctuated with analytical vocabulary, well-historicized and empirical genealogies of such vocabulary, and substantial evidence of the efficacy and utility of an erotic approach to games analysis.

Invigorating the field with a language that fully recenters the politics of pleasure in games and play offers a promising new direction for game studies. I wholly recommend this text as a foundation for the next stage in video game analysis, both for seasoned scholars and rising academics in the field.

—Evan W. Lauteria, *University of California, Davis, CA*