CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

What computer games are

CHAPTER 1 Bad Play 15
CHAPTER 2 Anti-ness 30
CHAPTER 3 Formalism Redux 40
CHAPTER 4 Interface and Code 50
CHAPTER 5 The Computer Game Anti-aesthetic 65

What computer games aren’t

CHAPTER 6 Anti-narrative 71
CHAPTER 7 The Backstory 86
CHAPTER 8 Civilization 98

The self and the social

CHAPTER 9 Social Play 117
CHAPTER 10 City of Heroes 132
CHAPTER 11 Play and Punishment 144

The genie in the bottle

CHAPTER 12 Final Comments 158
Notes 163
References 173
Index 181