

Editorial: American Culture in Games and Game Studies

Popular culture comes up with a variety of ways to navigate the exchanges between the transcultural platforms it provides for people from different parts of the world to share interests, emotions or codes of communication; the glocalised phenomena that adapt those platforms to particular societies; and the local contributions that, having originated from specific contexts, get embraced by global audiences.

As a pop-cultural medium whose impact has significantly grown over decades, digital games add to the complexity of such oscillation between the global and the local by combining narrative and visual dimensions with gameplay architectures, and therefore by expanding the spectrum of processes or phenomena in which such dynamics may manifest themselves.

This issue of *Anglica Wratislaviensia* is devoted mainly to exploring the said potential in the context of broadly understood connections between digital games—plus one tabletop role-playing game which, however, has exerted a prominent influence on the development of the digital medium—and the United States. As put by Carly A. Kocurek, “[a]s the video gaming industry exploded in the United States during the 1970s and early 1980s, the medium became a point of articulation for anxieties surrounding broader cultural and economic changes”. Since that time, the scope of those changes may have been shifting and expanding—from pedagogical or psychological concerns about games’ impact on young people, to more recent insights into the issues of diversity, representation and intersectionality in game content as well as game development—yet games have remained a prominent element of the American economic, social and cultural landscape. Simultaneously, with the United States’ remarkable formative power with regard to globalized cultural and media discourses, American locality has also been influencing the international gaming culture, as well as the medium itself. Examples of that influence include, among others, the significance of producers such as Electronic Arts or Microsoft; the recognizability of America-inspired settings, for example, *Night City*, originating from the tabletop *Cyberpunk 2020* and digitalized in the Polish *Cyberpunk 2077*; or the visibility of American narrative formulas, such as

hard-boiled detective fiction tropes traceable in the Estonian *Disco Elysium* and Lovecraftian horror in the French *Call of Cthulhu* or Ukrainian *The Sinking City*.

In the academic realm, the dynamics between digital games and the United States have inspired multiple publications focused on various specific overlaps between games and American reality, including book-length texts, such as Kocurek's *Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood at the Video Game Arcade* (2015) or *Video Games and American Culture: How Ideology Influences Virtual Worlds* by Aaron A. Toscano (2020), as well as projects particularly concerned with game studies' methodologies, for instance, *Playing the Field: Video Games and American Studies*—a collection of essays edited by Sascha Pöhlmann (2019)—or its follow-up, *Video Games and Spatiality in American Studies*, edited by Dietmar Meinel (2022).

The papers collected in the “Game Studies” section of this *Anglica Wratislaviensia* issue contribute to the research on games in the American context by scrutinizing the topic's specific aspects or approaching them as elements of a bigger picture.

Discussing a non-American take on the iconic American expansion myth in “Last Remnants of the French Wild West: Remembering *Colorado* (1990)”, Jakub Majewski demonstrates the relevance of figurative and literal perspective flexibility when dealing with both narrative formulas and gameplay limitations. For that purpose, he evokes a French game set in early 19th-century America and representing a unique transitional stage in the medium's technological development.

“Are Dwarves Protestant? American Religion and *Dungeons & Dragons*” by Leonid Moyzhes is the only paper in the “Game Studies” section dedicated to a non-digital game, namely the tabletop *Dungeons & Dragons* series. Usually indicated as a foundational role-playing game, and major inspiration for the entire genre, including its digital branch, *Dungeons & Dragons* has also become a complex artefact of American culture. Among many other things, it can, according to Moyzhes, be useful in identifying some characteristics of religious thinking in US society, as despite their fantastic renderings, the game's employments of religion can be traced back to a logic typical for American Christianity.

Eleonora Imbierowicz's paper, “Consumerist Environmentalism in *The Sims 4: Eco Lifestyle*”, explores another kind of underlying logic by identifying what the author sees as a misrepresentation of globally relevant ecological concerns and environmental activism, and locating its sources in the American paradigms of individualism and consumerism. One of the most popular game titles worldwide, *The Sims* game series, is discussed as a carrier of problematic approaches to the protection of the environment that originate from both capitalist premises in general and their American renditions in particular.

In “Turnt, Trippy, and Tippy: Video Games, Drugs, and Allo-Ludic Play”, Mike Piero aims for a systematic consideration of the ways digital games depict intoxication and what he calls “drug culture” in order to investigate politically and socially problematic aspects of American drug policies and the discourses they generate.

Moreover, he reflects on the possible impact of parallels between those discourses and conceptualizations of digital games on the medium's cultural functions. The paper refers to multiple game examples, from those of American origin to those that, while produced in other countries, sustain United States-influenced drug tropes.

The "Game Studies" section is closed by Aleksandra Mochocka and Radosław Piotr Walczak's insight into a single game, investigating its literary entanglements as established by the factors characteristic of the game medium, such as gameplay focalization and in-game music. "Focalization, Subjectivity, and Magic(al) Realism in *Night in the Woods*" shifts its focus from the game setting's compliance with the American "Rust Belt Gothic" to its ontological ambivalence indebted to magical realism.

The "Literature and Culture" section of this *Anglica Wratislaviensia* issue comprises Marek Pawlicki's "'A Flight from History'? Nadine Gordimer's Congo Journey"—a paper in which the author tracks down the transformation of Nadine Gordimer's political views and considers the imprint of colonial preconceptions about nature on her otherwise liberation-supportive attitude towards the freshly won independence of the Congo state. The author reflects on the effectiveness and limitations of a white writer's strategies of developing an Afrocentric perspective.

Agata Zarzycka
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