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Are You Game?

Video Introduction to Issue 11

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Video Introduction to Issue 11

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Transcript:

- 1 Hello! Welcome to the introduction of issue number 11 of *Angles: New Perspectives on the Anglophone World*, entitled “Are You Game?”
- 2 In this world where many adults and children share, even to the point of competition, the same passion for video games (“*ludi*” in Latin, “*jeux*” in French), the question of game / gaming / playing and its extensions assumes great topicality in terms of technique, aesthetic and – more negatively – medicine (with the phenomenon of addiction).
- 3 It also concerns philosophy and the opposition between real life and life by proxy, where “*ludere*” verges on “*illudere*”, or even plunges one into the fiction of “*mimesis*”, as in the theatre and the genre of the interlude.
- 4 This is why the subject of this issue was chosen, with a title – “Are You Game?” – that purposes to challenge the readers.
- 5 Games already existed in Antiquity, as the Egyptian dice from the British Museum show. Chess – the philosophers’ game – is also a very old human invention, taking its origin somewhere in the East, perhaps in India.
- 6 For centuries the notion of game has raised questions and the serious aspect of this phenomenon appeared in the 17th and 18th centuries, related to the question of probabilities, the most famous image of which is Blaise Pascal’s wager. In early modern Europe, and in England, the question of games, and especially games of chance, led to very animated and deep controversies among scholars and theologians. Dice in particular came under heavy attack from most Anglican ministers, as it depended solely on chance. Mainly considered a form of amusement, antique game already contained a lot of serious possibilities, through the metaphor of life balanced between

chance and fate, famously illustrated by the “*Alea jacta est*” (“the die has been cast”) allegedly uttered by Julius Cæsar crossing the Rubicon (according to Suetonius). It has now become a popular phrase in everyday life.

- 7 What do we mean when we speak of “game” and “play”? The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides a threefold answer: first amusement, fun, pleasure, then “an activity played for entertainment, according to rules” and finally all the senses related to hunting, in particular the animals that “are or have been the quarry of hunters”.
- 8 You’ll see in the Interlude an interesting instance where these different acceptations come into play.
- 9 As a matter of fact, when the sense of game is drawn towards hunting activities, it can provide another metaphor, that of the Passion of Christ (*venatio Christi*), compared to the stag chased and killed by the hunters.
- 10 The topic of game necessarily entails that of play, in the sense of entertainment, and with it the theatrical meaning of the word, already present in the Latin *ludus*, especially in the phrase *ludus scænicus*, where playing a part is translated by the verb *illudere*. The Latin *ludus* and *ludere* are two words that produced a long list of derivatives in English like “ludic”, “ludicrous”, “ludology”, “illude”, “illusion” etc.; they also refer to leisure, free time (in Greek *scholè*) devoted to learning. *Ludus* also designates a school in Latin. So we shall see that game is not simply a futile activity and can conduce to education.
- 11 This issue does not mean to cover all the categories of game as defined by Roger Caillois in *Les Jeux et les hommes: le masque et le vertige* published in 1958, which was translated into English in 1961 as *Man, Play and Games*. It was written against the theories of Johan Huizinga’s *Homo ludens*, written in 1938.
- 12 Caillois’ categories are: games of chance (*alea*), games of competition (*agôn*), games of imitation (mimicry) and games of vertigo (*illinx*). The articles in this issue deal mainly with *alea*, even if video games imply competition.
- 13 The first three articles in this issue address the topic from a theoretical point of view and show the tight connection between game, reading and fiction. In her article “Play and Games in Fiction and Theory”, Joyce Goggin inscribes her reflexion on reading fiction as a game into a wider consideration on what is called the “gamification” of today’s world.
- 14 The complex meanders of reading as a game is also what Olivier Hercend invites us to think about through the notion of literature as “*agôn*”.
- 15 Now if reading is a form of play, then Jean-Jacques Lecercle provides a good illustration thereof, as he takes pleasure in interpreting Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* by analysing its recurrent play on the words “consequence” and “consequences”.
- 16 The next two articles focus on gambling in the American context, with Bastien Meresse showing how, in Thomas Pynchon’s novels, this capitalistic activity becomes a paradoxical way of resisting the rational rules of the world.
- 17 On her part, Julie Assouly studies American cinema and explains how the presence of women in this rather masculine environment allows for a reassessment of the myth of the American Dream.
- 18 The political implications of games are at the centre of Louise Fang’s article on *King John* by Shakespeare where the ludic metaphors used by Shakespeare’s characters reveal the tension between the roles of chance, providence and human agency in

history. This is particularly true of the bowling game, as is confirmed by this engraving entitled *The Catholick Gamesters*, published during the Exclusion Crisis, in 1680.

- 19 A few decades after *King John*, George Wither's *Collection of Emblemes* is not simply one addition to the already long list of emblem books, since it includes a lottery game at the end. Although George Wither downplays the seriousness of what he called a "Recreation", Pierre Le Duff shows that there is much more to it than the mere incidental nature of lottery.
- 20 Lottery games are old and have offered cartoonists splendid occasions for mocking their contemporaries' morals, as in this pair of drawings, published in London at the end of the 18th century, commenting on the shares of hopes and the disappointments brought by lotteries in British families.
- 21 Whereas pure chance governs lottery games, video game players must develop specific skills if they want to progress from one level to another and eventually to win what often turns out to be a harsh competition.
- 22 Game developers have gone a long way from the first Atari console marketed in the 1970s to the latest hyperrealist productions, such as *Assassin's Creed* and *The Order 1886*, both set in a graphic recreation of Victorian London which Nicolas Sigoillot analyses and assesses in his article. He explains how, beyond sheer entertainment of becoming a fictional character, these games are so designed as to enable the players to educate themselves by appropriating history.
- 23 Education is the endnote of this issue, with Jeni Peake and Alexandra Reynolds' article on the linguistic benefits of video games for speakers of English as a Second Language. Immersed in this gaming environment with their peers, French youths find it easy to learn new words and turns of phrases.
- 24 So now, Are You Game?

ABSTRACTS

This issue of *Angles* investigates the diverse aspects of the notion of game, gaming, gambling in the Anglophone world, today and in the past. The perspectives range from theoretical writing, literature, cinema, civilization, pedagogy to video games, in England and the United States.

Ce numéro de *Angles* s'intéresse à la notion de jeu dans le monde anglophone d'aujourd'hui et d'hier. La question est abordée des points de vue théorique, littéraire, cinématographique, civilisationnel, pédagogique et des jeux vidéo, en Angleterre et aux Etats-Unis.

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Mots-clés: recherche, jeux, jeux vidéo, jeux d'argent, loterie, éducation, hasard, providence, plaisir

Keywords: research, games, video games, gambling, play, lottery, education, chance, providence, pleasure

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