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EDITORS' NOTE

Welcome to the summer issue of *Analog Game Studies*! Happy summer solstice! According to many midsummer traditions, this is a time of light, love, growth, change, and healing. The year of the fire horse is still running. And the vim and vigor of the season bring us a bountiful issue with five diverse, colorful, and timely essays.

In honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month this past May, the issue opens with "Mad About Mahjong: A Conversation between Two Asian American Game Scholars." Tara Fickle and Edmond Y. Chang discuss the recent (and repeated) controversy over the appropriation and whitewashing of mahjong to think about the game's history, assimilation into US culture, and its "functions as a site of diasporic identity formation, intergenerational connection, and gendered sociality."

And just in time for Pride, Delenn Ganyo-Roalsvig's "Same Time Next Week: An Analysis of Queer Temporality in Tabletop Role-Playing" is second in the lineup. The article analyzes the actual play podcast *The Adventure Zone* and other TTRPGs through the lenses of queer theorists like Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz. Ganyo-Roalsvig explores queer performativity, queer temporality, and queer utopia in TTRPGs that open possibilities for the "understanding of real-world queer lives through the parallels that emerge in tabletop."

Next, David Scott Diffrient offers up a genealogical and ludo-rhetorical analysis of poison mechanics in "Death by a Thousand Drips: Poisoning as Mechanism and Theme in Contemporary Tabletop Games." Looking at card games like *Magic: The Gathering* and the *Pokémon Trading Card Game* as well as board games like *Poison* and *The Princess Bride: A Battle of Wits*, Diffrient argues, "One of the most significant yet overlooked elements of contemporary tabletop games is the 'poison' mechanism," from its default color-coding to social, pop cultural, even political norms, valuations, and meanings.

The fourth essay is “Player Psychology and Decision-Making in the Card Game *COUP*” by Serena Yang, Yifan Shi, and Xuhong Han. Yang, Shi, and Han explore player psychology and decision-making in the social deduction card game *COUP* using self-collected telemetry data from eight gameplay sessions to identify key patterns shaped by players’ sensitivity to risk, aversion to uncertainty, and affective responses and motivations like paranoia and revenge. The study provides some interesting data regarding bluffing, deception, and player choice in social deduction games.

Closing the issue is Brandon Blackburn’s book review of J. Rey Lee’s *Unsettling Catan: Detached Design in Eurogames*, which was published in 2025 as part of the University of Michigan Press’s Tabletop Game Series (edited by Paul Booth and our very own Aaron Trammell). According to Blackburn, Rey’s slim volume attempts to complicate the comfort and complacency “underlying the design ethos of simplicity, intuition, and peaceful feelings in eurogames” as a way to unsettle and critique “capitalism and settler-colonialism’s influence and ubiquity in mainstream hobbyist culture.”

As always, thank you to our readers, writers, editors, and supporters, especially as the migration to a new platform continues. Special thanks to eScholarship for welcoming and featuring AGS!¹ We are also looking forward to the second half of the year (that hopefully will bring some keen surprises). Finally, the glowing and growing time is perfect for the fifth annual Generation Analog 2026, which will be held online on July 15 and 16, with “GREEN” as its organizing theme.² This year’s schedule features two keynotes—Alenda Y. Chang, author of *Playing Nature: Video Games and Ecology*, and Matteo Menapace, Co-Designer of *Daybreak*—as well as eight great panels, totaling thirty-two presentations over two day, and presenters and attendees from all over the world.

Until next time, stay bright, stay tuned, stay analog!

–The Editors, June 29, 2026



¹ “Analog Game Studies Joins eScholarship Publishing,” Office of Scholarly Communication, University of California, May 19, 2026, <https://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/2026/05/analog-game-studies-joins-escholarship-publishing/>.

² See “Generation Analog 2026 ‘GREEN’ Program,” *Analog Game Studies*, <https://analoggamestudies.org/generation-analog/generation-analog-2026-green-program/>.