

Editorial

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Press Start 2026 Editorial Board

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It has been just over a year since the previous issue of *Press Start*, but we are very excited for this new collection of articles and reviews to finally see the light of day (some of which we have been working on for a long time). This issue is the first published under the joint leadership of our 2026 Co-Editors-in-Chief, Andrew Fleshman and Meg Ritchie, who have taken over the reins from Samuel Poirier-Poulin, who remains on the board as a staff editor. This year, we bade farewell to several long-serving members of the editorial board but were very excited to welcome some extremely talented now-and-future scholars of game studies as colleagues: Ambrin Hasnain, Mark Hines, Sara Bimo, and Timur Slavgorodskii-Kazanets.

The past year has given us a lot to reflect on as students, scholars, mentors, teachers, writers, and citizens in an increasingly complex and unsettled world. Breaking into sustainable research and teaching positions in academia has only become more difficult across 2025-26. The intervening presence of various institutional forces—from not only the academy itself, but national governments and the news media—have pushed humanistic inquiry even further into precarity. As such, we at *Press Start* want to both thank and commend our editors, authors, peer reviewers, and readers alike for their passion and rigorous intellectual commitment to furthering the pursuit of knowledge in such uncertainty. It is because of these efforts that we are able to present you with the latest issue of *Press Start*, comprising eight articles and two book reviews.

The issue begins with Ondřej Dušek's article, "The Art of Playing a Role in an MMORPG." With *World of Warcraft* as its analytical focus, Dušek's research utilises participant observation to argue for the presence of role-playing as a minor activity within the massively multiplayer online

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role-playing game genre. Interspersed with actual chat logs and narrative story segments from Dušek's own fieldwork, this study offers an intimate, ethnographic insight into the various ways in which role-playing can take place within the virtual world of games.

This is followed by Oliver J. Griffith and Benjamin T. Sharpe's article, "To See and Fear: A Pilot Study on Gaze Behaviour in Horror Gaming," which presents a methodology for comparing visual horror fixations in participants with varying gaming habits and interests in the genre. Codifying participants based upon individual gaming habits and the "Fear Questionnaire" (pp. 32-33), the authors utilise data from Tobii Pro Eye-Tracking Glasses to calculate fixation number and threat percentage in playthroughs of *Resident Evil 7 Teaser: Beginning Hour*. Contributing towards the growing body of research on the psychological impact of horror gaming, the paper sheds valuable light on the complex relationship between players and fear-inducing content.

Through an inductive thematic analysis, Andy Wilson's article, "Playfully Anachronistic and Historically Inauthentic: Understanding Resistance to Diverse Representation in *Call of Duty: Vanguard*," analyses the community discourse on the subreddit r/CODVanguard to posit that discourses on historical accuracy and period authenticity can be used as a pretext to delegitimise the contributions of marginalised identities during World War II. Wilson argues that accuracy demands become a selectively applied standard used to frame diversity as an intrusion and treat White, cisgender, heteronormative masculinity as the default measure for a successful war game, and, ultimately, reinforce the West's hegemonic perception of WWII.

Next, we have Edward Melvin, Liam Challenor, and Gráinne Kirwan's article, "The Perfect Game: The Effect of Perfectionism and Performance on Game Experiences," which critically considers how perfectionist tendencies may affect the subjective experience of gameplay. Utilising data gathered from *Super Mario Run*, the authors uncover how gaming operates within "a potentially low-stakes life domain" (p. 75) wherein the notions of success, failure, and perfectionism are perhaps less relevant. Through this, the authors present a compelling argument into how gaming could act as a form of liberation—offering respite from the pressures of perfectionism and perhaps helping those with perfectionist tendencies to understand their need for perfection better.

This is followed by "Playing to Care: Games as Empathy Development Tools in Healthcare Education," where authors Ruaridh Dall, Daisy Abbott, George Cherukara, and Jaya Jayasinghe conduct a review of various games that could be used to develop clinical empathy among healthcare practitioners. Drawing on the concept of narrative medicine, they examine 36 articles addressing both commercial empathy games

and serious games. Their review highlights the potential of both types of games to cultivate empathy among healthcare students and thereby contribute to better treatment outcomes for patients.

We continue with Christopher Jolivet's article, "Black and White in Colour: Ludonarrative Deconstruction and (Anti)Monomyth in *Pokémon Black* and *Pokémon White*," which examines shifting narrative strategies in the premier franchise. The author situates traditional Pokémon storytelling as aligned with monomythical structuralism, examining how the fifth generation invites a deconstructionist approach—one which challenges the idea of a singular, authoritative hero or player.

We then pivot to the ambitious classification project of Jesse Aidyn, "World Annihilation Operations Database," which collects a vast array of logical contradictions in video games. Using the insights of impossible worlds theory and unnatural narratology, Aidyn elaborates an open typology of contradictions—including violations of sensory perception, physical laws, and spatial/temporal distortions—that should prove as useful for game designers and creators in the production of compelling experiences as it is for scholars in their analyses of how these experiences ought to be understood.

Finally, in "Queer Reorientations in Visual Novels: *Our Life: Beginnings & Always*' Meaningful Choices," Hong Nguyen-Sears explores the queer potential of visual novels by proposing a felt, affective space between player, interface, and game world. Nguyen-Sears analyzes the visual novel *Our Life: Beginnings & Always*, illustrating the ways that the game's intentional and reorienting choices actively refuse a cisheteronormative default for the player character and demand a player reflect on their experience of both their and their player character's gender. Through an examination of ways visual novels position the player in concrete and virtual space, Nguyen-Sears proposes that the genre's queer potential lies in its capacity to directly impact the player, the playing body, and the virtualized felt body.

We are also excited to include two book reviews in this issue: Edoardo Bogni's review of *Of Floating Isles: On Growing Pains and Video Games* (Guillermo, 2025) and Ruth García Martín's review of *Zen and Slow Games* (Navarro-Remesal, 2026). In respectively blending memoir and cultural analysis through the lens of video games and critiquing the close association of video games with speed and action, these books offer a valuable contribution to the ever-growing field of game studies.

We want to extend our deepest thanks to the authors, peer reviewers, and readers alike, who keep the lifeblood of our journal flowing. It is heartening to see those who believe in the ethos of our journal—of a fundamental academic kindness and care—join our community and share in the work we are facilitating. If you are a student yourself, or perhaps a game studies practitioner with students of your own, please

consider sharing *Press Start* within your circles or signing-on as a peer reviewer. Once again, thank you for helping us in our journey to provide greater visibility for new academics within this dynamic and ever-evolving field.

Best wishes from the *Press Start* editorial board!