Editorial

Today, the juxtaposition between physical bodies and the gameworld is ever more fluid. Virtual Reality headsets are available at game stores with more AAA games being created for the format. The release of the Nintendo Switch and its dynamic JoyCon controllers reintroduce haptic movement based controls. Pokémon GO's augmented reality took gamers outdoors and has encouraged the Harry Potter franchise to follow in its mobile footsteps. Each development encourages a step further into the digital world.

At the same time, the movement of bodies always has political dimensions. We live in a world where walls seem like solutions to the movement of bodies, while the mere meeting of bodies elsewhere – for sex, marriage and other reasons – is still forbidden by many states' rules. Games and game-like interfaces have shown the ability to bend those rules, and to sometimes project other worlds and rule systems over our world in order to make bodies move and meet.

For this special issue on 'Body Movements', Press Start invited authors to focus on embodiment, body movements, political bodies, community bodies, virtual bodies, physical bodies, feminine, masculine, trans-bodies, agency or its lack, and anything else in between. The response to this invitation was variegated, and provocative, as outlined below.

Marshall - Being Anal About the Rules

This paper explores how hookup apps such as Grindr transform any space into a 'cruising' place, traditionally associated with bars and public bathrooms. Through their very use, these apps provide a game-like presentation of relationships. The use of smartphone technology transforms these users' environments into an inclusive gay space, providing personal and social change.

Schellewald - Desperately Trying to Mediate Immediacy

This paper analyses esports as part of contemporary media culture and society. Esports are said to rely on media as both meaning resource (producers of culture) and as a means of communicative action (technological forms of communicative practices). Schellewald concludes that esports as a new media culture is superimposed with the digital, suggesting that the manner in which we cope with immediate experiences in both digital and mediated contexts is the same.

Stang - Shrieking, Biting, and Licking

In this paper Stang analyses how powerful female bodies is equated with monstrosity in videogames. In titles such as The Witcher and God of War powerful women are seen as dangerous and something to be destroyed, they are the enemy. Sarah Stang makes use of film theory to highlight the mythological inspirations that are implemented in these games to juxtapose womanhood with evil. Aided by a psychoanalytical framework used in film, the author successfully finds a pattern in which vagina dentata is a recurring motif in the portrayal of powerful female bodies.

Ruelos - Queer Gamer Assemblages

Ruelos looks at gamers as sociotechnological assemblages with gaming and game cultures as sites for queer "worldmaking possibilities". The study includes interviews with queer gamers on how they view their gamer identity, how they engage with games, whether or not they find identification with characters essential for enjoyment or not. The author identified three broad themes in the qualitative interviews: the worlding elements of games, the practices of storytelling, and the gamer's own personal experiences. This piece in conjunction with Marshall's work on hook-up apps provides a case for the value of games and the virtual world aiding in these communal bodies to express themselves.

Shibolet - Game Movement as Enactive Focalisation

This paper on game narrative takes an approach to analyse movement in the popular game Journey. To understand its 'environmental storytelling', Yotam Shibolet applied the cognitive theory of perception and literature on narrative focalisation. As a result, the author proposes the original concept of 'enactive focalisation' - narrative perception as interpreted through the interconnected dynamics or perspectival and physical movement.

Tupja - frictiOns – The software-surface-rubbing game

In frictiOns, Tupja offers a critical piece which explores the ways games and smartphones become intertwined through the touch of players. Tupja's case study focuses on the way touch and gamic gestures come together in the experimental film project of frictiOns. Where the smartphone was once perceived as a device that stimulates activity in its users, Tupja focuses on the mechanical and repetitive movements that users employ in their struggle to generate content. In her critical piece, Tupja makes the argument that these new modes of activity are a sign of the decline of the soft power of interfaces.