Stillborn Gamers? Writing a Birth Certificate for Corporeality and Locomotion in Game Research

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ABSTRACT
The paper presents a theoretical cornerstone in my current, ongoing PhD project which overall aim is to investigate relations between gamers' corporeal, digital, and communicative practices. The present paper explores, in a beginning way, one of the more overlooked perspectives on the gamer, namely, the gamer as a 'tool-wielding, moving body.' It considers the theoretical and analytical questions that might begin to be asked if we understand gamers as moving bodies rather than e.g. visual perceivers or cognitive learners. The outlined framework will constitute the foundation for the project's future research into gamers' practices and hopefully open the doors for a more inclusive perspective on the gamer. The paper is organized in two parts: Firstly, a compact 'reading' of current game research is presented, secondly, possible theoretical and analytical tools for studying gaming as a corporeal activity is introduced. The aim is to make room for and shed light on corporeality and locomotion as valid, significant, and meaningful dimensions in game research.

Author Keywords
Play experience, embodiment/corporeality, movement/ locomotion, philosophical phenomenology, World of Warcraft

INTRODUCTION
Overall, three circumstances within game research can be identified as contributing factors in the current absence of corporeality and locomotion: 1. The preferred theoretical frameworks, 2. The preferred methodological frameworks, and 3. The general, foundational structures of corporeality and locomotion itself. In the following, the first two circumstances will only be addressed briefly as the main focus of this paper is partly to delve into the foundational, underlying reasons for the evasiveness of corporeality and locomotion in game research, partly to signal the potential in acknowledging the qualitative and dynamic structures of corporeality and locomotion in the play experience. Thus, I will not present a thorough critique of the preferred theoretical and methodological frameworks within game research, as my goal is to open up for further discussion.

In the following research on the Massively Multiplayer Online Game *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) will serve as a paradigmatic example. *WoW* is one of the most extensively and thoroughly researched computer games, and it even has its own anthology; *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader* [8]. Thus, the game will here serve as a telling case regarding the lack of corporeality and motility within game research.

PREFERRED FRAMEWORKS
If one investigates the preferred theoretical frameworks deployed when researching e.g. *WoW*, it becomes evident that they are themselves a contributing factor in the absence of body and movement in game research. The typical titles of the research papers are telling in themselves, encompassing titles like "Learning Conversations in World of Warcraft" [21], "Communication, Coordination, and Camaraderie in World of Warcraft" [6], "The Words of Warcraft: Relational text analysis of quests in an MMORPG" [16], "From Tree House to Barracks: The Social Life of Guilds in *World of Warcraft*" [36], "The struggle for Immersion: Narrative Re-framings in World of Warcraft" [19], "Scientific Habits of Mind in Virtual Worlds" [31], "Massively Multiplayer Online Video Gaming as Participation in Discourse" [29], and so on. When the scholarly works within game research emanates from the areas of textual analysis (e.g. [16],[31]), communication and discourse (e.g. [6],[29]), narration (e.g. [19]), perception (e.g. [18]), cognitive and social science [e.g. [5],[7],[21],[30],[35]), virtual in-game interaction (e.g. [3],[6],[11]), or culture studies (e.g. [16],[20]) it is understandable that the corporeal dimensions of gaming are

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easily overlooked. There is no tradition, within these frameworks, of viewing or treating corporeality and locomotion significant dimension of the activity. This has its natural explanation in the fact, that the theories are geared towards dealing with objects that are not characterized by containing essential and significant traits of corporeality, action, or movement.

Nonetheless, given the locomotory complexity of a game like *WoW* where gamers constantly experience shifting patterns for corporeal interaction (e.g. changes in the interface layout), high standards regarding corporeal performance (e.g. in high-end raids or arena battles), alternating rhythmic paces (e.g. in- and outside instances), and demands regarding corporeal collaboration and orchestration (e.g. in groups and raids) it is significant that even the World of Warcraft Reader [8] doesn't broach or mention these dimensions. Encompassing 13 articles, the reader is a thoroughly investigation into *WoW* by means of corporate ideology, gender studies, colonialism, theme parks/spectacle, myth, narration, death/death narratives, quests as rhetorical figures, mods/player surveillance, player deviance, role-play, avatar capabilities/appearance, and avatar naming. But strikingly, none of the articles are concerned with aspects of corporeality and locomotion.

And notable, what goes for scholarly works on *WoW* goes for scholarly works on computer games in general. Even the most promising of titles within game research, such as "Video Games and Embodiment" [11], "Power Gamers Just Want to Have Fun?: Instrumental play in a MMOG" [35], "Towards a (Kin)Aesthetic of Video Gaming" [2], or "Gaming as a collaborative embodied phenomenon" [27] turns out to be following in the same tracks: Either embodiment is redefined to virtual in-game interaction [11],[35], reduced to body-to-body interaction amongst co-located gamers [27], or delimited to a distinct feature of "physical" games (exergames, rhythm games and the like) placed in opposition to "traditional" computer games [2]. On the rare occasions where corporeality and locomotion in traditional computer games are touched upon at all, it typically amounts to nothing more than acknowledging their existence and then quickly move on to more "essential," "qualitative," or "interesting" matters.

Another contributing factor in the absence of body and movement within game research is closely tied to the applied methodological frameworks. Stereotypically, the investigated data material consists of: 1. The game as autonomous object (e.g. [11],[16],[20]), 2. Gamers' narrative recounting on e.g. forums (e.g. [29],[30],[31]), 3. Player interviews (e.g. [14],[19],[30],[35], 4. Collections of in-game text or talk (e.g. [5],[7],[21],[29],[30]), 5. Collections of in-game video (e.g. [3],[7],[19]), 6. Observations of in-game interaction (e.g. [6],[18],[19],[30],[31],[35], or 7. Observations of body-to-body interaction (e.g. [5],[27]). Hence, it is comprehensible why corporeality, corporeal actions, and movement in gaming, which are characterized by being self-effacing, fleeting, tacit, and incorporated (see below), escapes both the gamer's and researcher's awareness.

However, research on "physical" games, like *Dance Dance Revolution*, *Guitar Hero*, *Rock Band*, *SingStar, Wii Sports* or other games where the gamers' "overt" or "odd" physical interaction (compared to traditional computer games) is in the forefront, has a predisposition for being observant towards the corporeality and locomotion of gaming, and some of the articles even touches upon the qualitative and experiential dimensions of the domains (e.g. [2],[5],[34]). Here, methodological sensitivity and analysis of (video recordings of) the significance and impact of corporeal interaction and locomotion on the gaming activity is common practice. The explanation for this explicit and unique awareness regarding body and movements in gaming is probably due to the newness of input (e.g. using the feet, the voice, or the whole body), input-devices (e.g. dance mats, plastic guitars, drums, microphones, or balance boards), and proficiencies (foot dexterity, strumming, drumming, singing, balancing) which make corporeality, materiality, and locomotion stand out compared to traditional computer games. Unfortunately, this highlighting of body and movement in physical games is carried out at the expense of traditional computer games as an antithesis between the two forms is constructed. Contrary to interaction in physical games, corporeal interaction in traditional games is viewed and characterized as "unnatural," "simple," "damaging," "unbodily," and suchlike (e.g. [13],[23],[34]). Yet, instead of such unproductive phenomenological and methodological animosities it is perhaps more fruitful to adopt a forthcoming and versatile perspective where traditional computer games and physical games are viewed and characterized as equal varieties of corporeal gaming activities as "playing computer games rightfully, in some cases, is less *physical* than other activities, but it is by no means less *bodily*" [17].

All in all, considering the theoretical and methodological frameworks deployed, corporeality and locomotion in traditional computer games will only come to the fore in times of dysfunction or problematic performance, and hence be predisposed to either being trivialized and relegated to the area of ergonomics, reflexes, and muscle memory or being viewed as something to be mastered and overcome and relegated to the area of learning difficulties. It is furthermore understandable, given the development of theoretical and methodological frameworks within game research, why corporeal interaction evade our scholarly attention – We simply haven't developed core terms, or

theoretical, analytical, or methodological frameworks for corporeality and locomotion in gaming within game research. But is it perhaps also possible to propound more foundational explanation for this absence? And given that such an explanatory framework should exist, where can we then turn to if we want to capture these evasive but essential dimensions of gaming?

THE ABSENT BODY[1]

In the philosophical-phenomenological work *The Absent Body* [12], Drew Leder presents a framework that explicates the body's natural propensity for attentional and experiential withdrawal and evasion. Hence, the framework can also provide a possibly more forgiving and natural explanation for 'the absent body' in game research.

Corporeal Dis-appearance and Dys-appearance

I forget my feet until I stumble (p.85)

Concisely put, in order to act successfully and effortlessly in the world we have to direct our attention and actions *away from* our corporeal base *toward* the (game)world as "My being-in-the-world depends upon my body's self-effacing transitivity" (p.15). In this way, our body and its movements become like a transparent pane through which we engage the game while simultaneously being oblivious to our bodily movements and actions with the material input-devices – As gamers we are naturally focusing upon the goal of the gaming activity not our corporeal means of accomplishment (p.20). This disappearance not only encompasses our bodily actions and movements but also the tools involved, like keyboard and mouse, which are the core of the gaming activity but absent from our attentional field both as gamers and researchers. Through a process of 'incorporation' the material tools become part of my tacit corporeality as they are "enveloped within the structure of the taken-for-granted body from which we in*habit* the world" (p.32). Hence, the gaming body serves as a neutral background, away from explicit awareness: "This is the principle of focal disappearance. The intentional arc has a telos that carries attention outward, away from the bodily points of origin." (p.53). Thus, when we as researchers build our analytical and theoretical frameworks on e.g. narrative recounting or visual recollection, this corporeal disappearance will also encompass our scholarly stance: Since the body is a (necessarily) tacit and self-concealing structure, the gamer can all to easily be framed as a disembodied entity and any leftover corporeal traces framed as devoid of higher meaning and quality (p.119-26). In this way, an inherent duality is established: We cannot deny the existence of the gamer's body in gaming, but we can deny the existence of any significance, meaning, or experiential value residing there. Those aspects are consistently withheld from corporeality and locomotion and instead granted to e.g. cognition, perception, or virtual embodiment. All in all, the structure of corporeal disappearance can be considered as an inherent self-sustaining explanation, given that the structure of corporeality itself is a contributing factor in the neglect and unawareness of corporeality and locomotion in game research.

The renunciation within game research of tools as unbodily or harmful, tool-use as trivial and mechanical, and the body as something to be controlled or transcended is likewise partly motivated by an inherent corporeal structure, namely the structure of corporeal 'dys-apperance.' Dys-appearance concerns the fact, that in times of problematic performance or dysfunction the disappeared corporeality and materiality of the activity will re-enter our attentional field as gamers and researchers. But now, corporeality rematerializes as something problematic, as something dysfunctional preventing us from focusing upon the gameworld (p.84). Consequently, the corporeal dimension will inevitably be regarded as something negative, unwanted, or uninteresting – as an undesired state that must be controlled and transcended. This trait is evident in e.g. [13] and [23]'s treatment of 'unnatural' input-devices where the dys-appearance between body and material interface is explored, as well as in [5]'s analysis of a group of young girls struggle to ergonomically and cognitively master and 'transcend' different input-devices.

Motivated Misreadings

That from which I perceive, my body, is literally over-looked. It can thus seem as if the experienced world is arrayed before the gaze of a disembodied mind. (p.116)

As an overall consequence of corporeal dis-appearance and dys-appearance, body movements, tool-wielding and tools are framed as something mechanically grinding away under the surface in order for us to research and play the game 'for real'. They are not aspects that contain quality or meaning, on the contrary they signify latent trouble and crisis or negative states that potentially will keep us 'outside' the game. Hence, an ethic of segregation, mechanization, and trivialization is developed as the 'natural reading' of corporeality. However, this natural reading, motivated by the inherent experiential structure of corporeality itself, is nonetheless a motivated *mis*-reading where an "experiential disappearance is read in ontological terms" (p.115). In accordance with Descartes' "Cogito ergo sum" [9], corporeality and locomotion are persistently recast as *something else* (i.e. as subcategories of e.g. culture, virtuality, cognition, or perception) or as *nothing in itself* (i.e. as trivial, void, or mechanical): Thoughts and perceptions simply seems to come to the gamer, involving no corporeal or material structure. Thus, the Cartesian

[1] Unless explicitly stated otherwise all quotations is from [17]

model of mind and body, pervading Western thinking and philosophy, has also played a role in game research where gaming is treated as a detached rather than meaningful corporeal relation to the game. But even though gaming experientially takes place *from* a tacit body, it is nevertheless rooted in the corporeal. Gaming is an activity unfolding in corporeal movement: It is a becoming not a being. It is not that I *inhabit* a body which I instrumentally use in order to play the game, but that I *am* a moving gaming body.

In this way, learning a new game opens up what Drew Leder terms an "*actional field"* (p.18). Thus, when I have incorporated gaming *WoW* into my repertoire of "I can" and "I move", the game will forever look different than it did in my pre-*WoW*, pre-gaming days. As the following excerpt from my 'fielddiary' illustrates, this transformation is corporeal in nature and not something that is accomplished through a cognitive "flash of understanding" or a picking up of visual affordances:

I put one hand at the WSAD-keys and the other on the mouse and steer my avatar through the terrain using the mouse to look for the kind of NPC's needed to complete my quest. I lift my hands from the WSAD and make a circular smooth movement with the mouse in order to get an overview of the area. I localize some NPC's flying around in the distance. I move my mouse in a gliding motion so the mouse-pointer hovers above the NPC and tell me whether it is the sort of NPC I am questing for. It is, and I jaggedly mark it using the mouse, then quickly move my hand from the WSAD-keys to the 2-key, pressing it quickly to 'smite' the NPC. I 'skillfully' press 2 for smite in a pulsating rhythm until the NPC falls dead to the ground. I move my hand from 'firing'-position to 'driving'-position, and steer my avatar to the 'corpse' and loot it using the mouse. Then, I make my mouse surf the pad and click-mark a new NPC. My fingers leap from WSAD to 2 but I am 'out of range'. I irregularly press 2 several times – maybe the NPC is moving closer – but I only receive the same message over and over again: 'out of range'. I hesitantly move my fingers back to WSAD, and using the mouse to pilot my viewpoint, I scan the area for hostile NPC's as I run into the landscape. My W-finger is acutely aware of the 2-key positioned right above it, it tingles as it is ready to jump from steering to attacking. I release it, and the finger soars from W to 2 and makes my avatar 'smite' the NPC as the finger jumps to the pulse of the casting bar. In this way, I move from NPC to NPC, letting my fingers do the walking on the keyboard and my mouse-hand steer the mouse in dexterously glidingly or clumsily jaggedly movements. My hands, learning to dance with the game, try not to miss a beat as they accelerate and decelerate, moves uniformly or irregularly in accordance with the games pulsating, ever-changing rhythm. Finally, my hands come to a rest as I realize that I have killed all the NPC's required for the quest. I lean back and 'drive my avatar home' to the NPC that gave me the assignment, turn the quest in, earn some experience-points and levels up.

But even though Drew Leder's excellent work on the self-effacing body provides an explanatory framework for the 'misreading' of the tool-wielding moving body within game research, it does not procure the tools needed to perform qualitative accounts of the gamer's corporeality and locomotion.

THE PRIMACY OF MOVEMENT[2]

Clearly, movement in a quite literal sense informs perception. (p.183)

Maxine Sheet-Johnstone is in her phenomenological work, *The Primacy of Movement* [26] foregrounding corporeal action and locomotion, stating that: "A descriptive account of the sheer phenomenon of self-movement as it is experienced kinesthetically is distinctly by-passed" (p.140). This bypassing is also characterizing game research, where the centrality of self-movement in gaming – is typically evaded as quickly as it is mentioned (if mentioned at all).

Nevertheless, it is precisely in and through the gamers' self-movement that computer games acquires "life and reality": The game can only unfold through the gamer's interaction with material input-devices: We create and experience the game as we move ourselves. Given the fact, that it is concepts such as 'interactivity', 'agency', and 'embodied interaction' which stereotypically are put forward as the hallmarks of computer games, it may be difficult to explain why researchers consistently overlook the dimension of self-movement in gaming. This is true, even in papers that manifestly is concerned with the corporeal dimensions of gaming, like Perron's "The Survival Horror: The extended body genre" [24] or Gregersen & Grodal's "Embodiment and Interfaces" [12]. Instead, corporeality is generally framed as a combination of in-game embodiment and emotional 'affective space' [24] or as an embodied mind issuing intentional, instrumental actions of the form "she performed the [virtual] action *by* performing a P-action [physical action]" [12]. In this way, 'corporeal' gaming is reduced to a mainly virtual/affective experience or to the mechanical carrying out of intentional/instrumental acts. Corporeality thus becomes grounded in a methodology "which either typically disregards movement by considering only objects in motion [e.g. in-game events], and in effect, ignores self-movement, or typically instrumentalizes movement by de-cognizing it [e.g. to reflexes and muscle memory], making it no more than a means, a necessary but purely serviceable accouterment of perception (or

[2] Unless explicitly stated otherwise all quotations is from [26]

knowledge): or finally, taking no model at all, simply trivializes it [e.g. to ergonomics or teething troubles]" (pp.135-36). But this is not a negotiable road if we want to acknowledge corporeality and locomotion as something significant, aesthetically, experientially, and qualitative *in and of itself*. When I am gaming, my movements are not just means for creating an affective space or experiencing virtual agency, neither are they only reflex motor patterns or instrumental actions created by my (embodied) cognitive intentionality. My corporeal interaction is (also) knowledge enfolded into movement (p.229) and sedimentation of meaning into corporeality. Gaming is an activity where "there is no "mind-doing" that is separate from a "body-doing"." (p.487). Gaming is instead an experience of being a spirited, mindful, moving body – a kin-aesthetic awareness of the hands as they dance the game. Gaming is also a *feeling* of rhythm, a *kinetically* growing into a gaming body, a sensuous *tactility*, and corporeal *kin-aesthetics*. This view on gaming as a 'corporeal art' can be illustrated by the following 'accidental' observation of my 6 year old daughter playing the bull running Flash-game *Power Pamplona*. It is a very simple 2D 'obstacle' game where you steer the avatar using the arrow-keys and jump using the spacebar while you try to stay ahead of a stampeding bull running behind you:

I was passing my 6 year old daughter's doorway on my way to fetch some coffee, when my attention was caught by a chanting murmuring. I silently slipped my head into the room and saw her playing a simple Flash-game called Power Pamplona *on her laptop. Her body was bent over the keyboard and her eyes were intently focused but at the same time strangely hypnotized and distant. Her body was rocking back and forth like a Muslim reciting the Koran – concurrently tightened and flexible in its posture. Her lips were chanting two words in a regular beat that coincided with her rocking body and her pointy finger rhythmically hitting the spacebar. The room was filled with an intently but low-voiced 'singing of the game' as she murmured "and…**now**…and…**now**…and…**now**" spelling out the pulse of the game in order to stay in the rhythm and not get caught in any obstacles as she was running as fast as she could to stay ahead of the stampeding bull. The activity was loaded with a dense tactile enjoyment – the 'meaning of gaming' **was** this rocking the body, chanting, moving with the rhythm, and dancing with the game as her body learned and found delight in the game's kinetic melody.*

Thus, our "gaming intentionality" can be (just as much) a bodily-locomotive enjoyment where corporeality, movement, perception, cognition, and sensation form a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. If we are to grasp this 'whole', we must as a point of departure acknowledge the fusion of thinking, doing, sensing, and moving as inseparable and equally significant and integral dimensions in gaming. Gaming can then be viewed as an activity where the gamer is "thinking in movement" (p.485), and not merely thinking/sensing *by means of* movement or *transcribing* cognition/perception *into* movement. The recognition of the gamer as a spirited, mindful, moving, and tool-wielding body is not a move towards the naïve, reductionist, or uneducated, but a move towards a more inclusive view on the gamer and gaming: A view where there is also room for a self-moving body.

The Meaning and Quality of (Corporeal) Movement

In sum, whatever our differences, movement is our mother tongue. (p.226)

As gamers, we are *"movement-born"* (p.244), not stillborn. In the beginning is movement as the gamer's corporeal actions flows from his body – Movement is our mother tongue. Through movements the gamer epistemologically constitutes the game for himself. He gets to know the gameworld's objects from relating them to his performed corporeal actions and movements, and additionally, from moving himself in relation to them. Here, "Coming to know the world in a quite literal sense means coming to grips with it – exploring it, searching it, discovering it in and through movement" (p.226).

An accessible path to recognizing and investigating corporeality and locomotion in gaming could be opening a door to novel, unfamiliar frameworks that on the one hand, *automatically* and *naturally* revolve around corporeality, self-movement, and tool-use as something significant in and of itself, and on the other hand, *automatically* and *naturally* treats the present divided framings of the gamer's body, movements, mind, perceptions, and sensations as a unified whole. Frameworks that, at the outset, (also) acknowledge the significance of corporeality and locomotion, because of the overtly corporeal and locomotional aspects of the activity itself. Such potential theoretical or analytical frameworks could be frameworks revolving around activities such as: Sport, craftsmanship, gardening/landscaping, musical apprenticeship, dancing, or martial arts to name but a few possible pathways. Turning to novel, 'corporeal' frameworks, furthermore has the advantage of being unfamiliar and estranging. Frameworks that, by their very 'otherness' and 'strangeness', could *force* us to frame the gamer and gaming anew. Subsequently, the frameworks presents a possibility for game research to escape the 'theoretical imperialism' of native and familiar frameworks Espen Aarseth warns us about ([1], p.16]) or the 'hegemony of occularcentrism Bryan G. Behrenshausen talks against ([2], p.335)

We could maybe, in a beginning way, commence to examine our own experience of corporeality and locomotion in gaming. Or theoretically investigate the

'genres' and styles' of corporeality and locomotion across different games. Or simply "reflect upon what we customarily assume as given and just as customarily relegate to the domain of the merely physical" (pp.225-26). By calling forth a reflective and appreciative approach to corporeality and locomotion, we could perhaps begin to sense the *quality* of movement in gaming. Or begin to build analytical frameworks for the different corporeal and locomotional *styles* in gaming by way of terms such as: rushed, sudden, slow, erratic, fleeting, smooth, jagged, accentuated, softened, fading, surging, explosive, accelerating, decelerating, uniform, irregular, compressed, or drawn out, and thus call the structure of locomotion to the fore. Or we could try to import theoretical, analytical, or methodological frameworks that might facilitate an acknowledgement of the gamers' tactile-kinesthetic consciousness and their attunement to corporeal actions and movement. Such frameworks might force us to reconsider our own theoretical preferences, stances, and consequently habitually framings of the gamer as (only) a cultural/social entity, a virtual in-game entity, a cognitive learning entity, a communicating entity, a perceiving entity, or a personal/individual entity. And if not dissolving our routine divisions of body, mind, sensing, and moving, then at least make us acknowledge and incorporate a framing of the gamer as tool-wielding, moving body within game research.

This is however perspectives, which could prove difficult to get a scholarly grasp on, given that corporeality and locomotion is basically pre-cognitive, pre-perceptual, pre-linguistic, pre-cultural, and pre-personal, as well as self-effacing. Nevertheless, it is necessary and critical that we at least make the attempt. Presently, when traversing game research one could easily get the impression that gamers are stillborn, or read more favorably, that they possess a trivial, irrelevant, and uninteresting, robotic, programmable body which they control and steer in order to game. One needs only to consult the archive of e.g. *Game Studies – The international journal of computer game research* [10] to get a clear idea of just how all-encompassing the absence of corporeality and locomotion is: There are numerous papers like "Living a Virtual Life: Social Dynamics of Online Gaming" [15], "Moral Decision Making in Fallout" [25], or "Computer Games have words, Too: Dialogue Conventions in Final Fantasy" [28], but not a single paper (out of 99) that focuses on the significance of gamers' corporeality, locomotion, or tool-use in computer games.

SENSING AND MOVING

The subject who sees is a being who moves ([32], p. 384)

In closing, I will present one of my own provisional attempts to acknowledge corporeality and locomotion within my own research practice as I try to theorize and analyze the practice of high-end raiding in *World of Warcraft*. The description has its origin in an observation I made when doing a preliminary fieldwork on communicative practices in high-end raiding:

One evening, when watching my brother raid with his high-end raiding guild in World of Warcraft, *I accidently happened to focus the camera and my vision on his 'raiding hands' instead of the on-screen interaction. In a flash, I suddenly envisaged the entire group sitting at their individual material interfaces with their fingers dancing on the keys, their mice moving in figure skating patterns while rhythmic waves of key-taps and mouse-clicks ascended as a kind of corporeally orchestrated music. From then on, I could no longer view their raid-communication as purely being 'conversational, 'meaning-making', or ''discourse.' From then on, their communication was just as much a symphonic coordination of their individual and mutual corporeal action. Their gaming practice acquired a corporeal stratum, where the gamers simultaneously played their own idiorhythmic part and flowed with the polyrhythm of the group. And this corporeal dimension of gaming also found its way into my view on their communicative practices, as I suddenly saw their raiding-communication as constantly reflecting upon, responding to, requesting, and coordinating the actions of their moving, tool-wielding bodies.*

Thus, my PhD-project accidently got 'fragged' by myself as I carelessly pointed the camera in the wrong direction. In reality, I should be analyzing the discourse of and doing 'traditional' conversational analysis on *World of Warcraft* gamers as they play together in groups. I should be writing papers on the syntactical structure, semantic meaning, and pragmatic use of gamers' communication while they raid, quest, and hang out. But instead, I found my subsequent field entries inevitably focusing on the bodily experience of gaming, the fingers dexterous and 'sensuous' feel of the game, the game's locomotional quality, and the rhythm of raiding. Trying to get a hold on this 'disturbing' and ongoing development of the project, I came to realize that I couldn't describe the gamers' communicative practices without understanding their corporeal practices. And I couldn't describe their corporeal practices by describing their motor processes, as: "the sum of sensations can never add up to sensing, nor can the sum of particular motions add up to locomotion. Both sensing and locomotion are understandable only as a totality relation" ([c32], p.248) – Neither my subtlest analysis of their muscle performance, nor my most thorough explication of their intentionality would reveal the significance of their corporeal practice. Their movements were never individual motor processes, but always sequences of movements intertwined with sequences of other gamers' movements. Furthermore, their individual raiding-practices were expressed as much through their modes of self-movement as through their

modes of communicating. Through the virtual, embodied interaction the gamers intuitively 'read' the other gamers' corporeal interaction, and could thus request that a gamer's corporeal movements became more smooth, more in beat with the pulse of the raid-occurrences, faster, more precise, or more attuned to the collective corporeal locomotion of the group. A significant and qualitatively part of their raiding-practices was this moving body, moving to the beat of the game and pulsating with the rest of the group. Over time, the gamer's corporeal practices, the beat of the game, and the pulse of the group sediments within his gaming body. The gaming practice becomes something (also) obtained, experienced, and understood with the body. Consequently, gaming cannot be fully understood without acknowledging and incorporating what Edward S. Casey labels 'body memory': "I speak of "body memory," not of "memory of the body." Body memory alludes to memory intrinsic to the body, to its own ways of remembering: how we remember in and through the body. Memory *of* the body refers to those manifold manners whereby we remember the body as the accusative object of our awareness, whether in reminiscence or recognition, in reminding or recollecting, or in still other ways." ([4], p.147). In this way, the gamer is not as much a virtual embodied entity when gaming, as he is a corporeal self-moving entity.

This papers outlining of corporeality, corporeal action, and movement in computer games has been an attempt to elucidate how thinking in movement is at the core of the gaming experience, how gaming is an unfolding, ongoing flow of movement in relation to an ever-changing kinetic gameworld of possibilities, and how gamers are characterized as much by a dynamically "I move" and "I do" as an incorporated "I can." The tactile-kinesthetic attunement of gamers is the reference point not only for organizing their experience of themselves but also their experience of the game: What gamers see is seen kinesthetically, what they know is knowledge through movement, and how they act is in the form of movements creating and responding to movements.

Consequently, the paper challenges the comprehension of the gamer as cognitively and perceptively always being one thoughtful and visual step ahead of the body. Gaming is not the doings of a stillborn thinker or observer. Such claims overlook the obvious; that gamers are thinking in movement. Their progression of thought and their process of thinking in movement are inseparably intertwined with the ever-evolving movements of gaming itself, a situation they themselves are dynamically creating moment by moment in their very movement (See [26], pp.495-508 for a similar account of improvisational dancers). Gamers consistently think ahead dynamically in movement as they notice and respond to things that move – they are caught up in the primacy of something quite other than cognition or perception, they are caught up in a kinetic activity, connecting moment with moment as a kinetic melody.

Caught up in a scholarly world filled with theories and methodologies derived from areas concerned with cognition, linguistics, narration, communication, texts, perception, visuality, virtuality, in-game interaction, representation, identity, sociality and so on, we easily lose sight of corporeality and movement in gaming. As a concluding remark, the present paper is not to be taken as a persecution of game research or game researchers, as it is just as much a persecution of my own game research history. The call for a corporeal and locomotional ontology or phenomenology of gaming and gamers, is just as much a call for a corporeal and locomotional framework in my own research. Thus, the critical, provocative, and coarse reading of game research, is just as much a call for a corporeal wakefulness within my own future research as I investigate the relations between the gamer's interaction and communication in *World of Warcraft* as it is a call for corporeal wakefulness within game research in general.

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