Corporeal-Locomotive Media?: Experiencing first-person being & first-person doing in offscreen-onscreen gameworlds

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Abstract
This article is based on the findings and results of a three-year-long study of various gameplayers activities and experiences across different offscreen-onscreen gameworlds. The findings and results emerged through the use of a mixed methods approach that combined grounded theory method with phenomenography, remix methods, interpretative ethnography and visual methods. The present article will, with the concluded study as its foundation, present some of these findings and results as well as try to develop them a step further. Hence, the article explores and explicates the ‘first-person nature and structure’ of a couple of specific interactions, expressions and experiences that in the study have proven to be characteristic of being a gameplayer in gameplay in digital games – regardless of whether you are a child playing Temple Run 2 or Fruit Ninja on the iPhone, a tween playing Battlefield 3 on your laptop or an adult playing Starcraft 2 on your potent gamer-pc. Through exploring, considering and explicating the above everyday practices and experiences the article establishes the notions of ‘first-person engaged being’ and ‘first-person expressive doing’ as central to these gameplayers’ gameplay activities and experiences across the abovementioned gameworlds. As a consequence, the article points towards the centrality of expressive first-person corporeality and locomotion in digital games – a circumstance that sets the practice and experience of digital games apart from media practices and experiences such as reading or listening to a story and watching a movie or theatre play and other traditional or new media forms. These circumstances make the article question whether digital games can be understood as (new) media form at all and, thus, it points towards a possible new vocabulary for and comprehension of digital games, gameplay and gameplayers.
Keywords
Digital games, gameplay activity and experience, gameplay corporeality, corporeal-locomotive gameplayers, phenomenology

Introduction
When observing gameplayers in gameplay; Selma playing Temple Run 2 and Fruit Ninja on my iPhone, Fenja playing the first-person shooter Battlefield 3 on her laptop and Tue playing the real-time strategy game Starcraft 2 on his gamer PC, it quickly becomes clear how persistently they attend from their corporeal offscreen gameplay actions towards their digital onscreen actions. Their eyes stay firmly locked on the screen as they participate in gameplay in these digital games. It is only when something goes corporeally wrong, such as accidently pushing the wrong keys that they fleetingly become aware of what it is they are corporeally doing. They then quickly attend to and correct the error and then immediately return their awareness to the onscreen activity.

This apparent absence of ‘conscious corporeality’ in gameplay activity and experience has led to a corresponding absence of ‘the corporeal dimension’ in the stereotypical game researcher's field of attention. This is partly due to the fact that when corporeality isn't articulated or considered by the gameplayer it will not surface in the inquiring researcher's questionnaires or interviews, in the collected gameplayer-produced text or talk or in the researcher's own gameplay activities. Importantly, it is also absent when the researcher habitually constricts his/hers attention to the onscreen its digital spectacle. Consequently, the normal way of conducting game research in relation to the nature and structure of digital games and the activities and experiences involved in playing them counteracts the inclusion of corporeality as a meaningful, significant and aesthetic dimension in gameplay activity and experience.

The present article tries to take the corporeal dimension of gameplay activity and experience serious as well as explore an alternative view on digital
games as something other and more than ‘onscreen digitality.’ This is done in an effort to develop a tentative vocabulary for talking and thinking about what is ‘corporeally at stake’ in actual gameplay activities and experiences such as the abovementioned.

The exploration of the corporeal dimension in digital games as well as the development of an alternative view on digital games is carried out through a five-step process:

• Firstly, the present articles central methods and theories are outlined in the section “Method & theory frameworks for catching the corpo-real dimension” to draw up a new way of looking at games, gameplay and gameplayers (method) and a new way of talking about games, gameplay and gameplayers (theory).

• Secondly, the first central component of digital games as corporeal-locomotive activities is outlined in the section “The child: entering a world of gameplay perception” through the development of a new way of thinking and talking about what gameplayers perceive when they are engrossed in gameplaying digital games. This is what has traditionally been considered the ‘output’ side of digital games.

• Thirdly, the second central component of digital games as corporeal-locomotive activities is outlined in the section “The tween: striving to become a shooting star through gameplay locomotion” through the development of a new way of thinking and talking about what gameplayers do when they are engrossed in gameplaying digital games. This is what has traditionally been considered the (less important) ‘input’ side of digital games.

• Fourthly, these two main components of digital games come together in the section “The adult: being an experienced star craftsman through first-person being and first-person doing” through outlining how digital games acquire meaning, significance and aesthetics for gameplayers through the ways gameplayers move in and are moved by these games.

• Finally, the article concludes by returning to the introductory question in the section: “Are digital games (corporeal-locomotive) media?” and points towards a potentially more fruitful way of thinking and talking about digital games.

The abovementioned ‘absence of corporeality and locomotion’ in the gamplayers' attentional field has led to a corresponding absence in the stereotypical game researcher's field of attention causing digital games to be compared with media forms such as stories, movies and dramas. It is this blind spot in the scholarly field of attention this article tries to address and explores in order to problematize such comparisons. This is done by looking at and acknowledging digital games as something that requires the gameplayer to
access them through first-person corporeal-locomotive expressivity. It is only by taking up a first-person corporeal-locomotive relation with digital games that gameplayers are capable of becoming gameplayers. Concisely put, gameplayers need to do things ‘in the flesh’ in order to play games. The article tries to grasp this circumstance by looking straight at the body in gameplay while incorporating concepts and frameworks that enable the exploration and articulation of this corporeal dimension in digital games.

Method & theory frameworks for grasping the corporeal dimension
The article is based on a three year long phenomenographic study of what I in my Ph.D. thesis labeled *gameplay corporeality* which refer to the study of the significance, meaningfulness and (kin)aesthetics of the corporeal dimension in digital games. The study was carried out through the close investigation of a varied group of gameplayers’ everyday corporeal-digital gameplay activities and experiences across different onscreen-offscreen gameworlds. In the investigation of this tacit, non-representational and non-linguistic corporeal-digital dimension of gameplay the study used an amalgamation of different methods (see my Nordmedia2013 article “Endeavors to Represent the Non-Representational: researching corporeal-locomotive media” for a more methodical and exhaustive presentation of the underlying methodological framework). Through the application of this mixed methodologies framework the study investigated digital games and the playing out of this corporeal-locomotive dimension across more than 20 different games.

The article will through building directly on the findings and developed methodological and theoretical frameworks coming from the defended Ph.D.
thesis explicate some of the inner workings of ‘gameplay corporeality’ in relation to 5 year old Selma’s gameplay perception in the obstacle game Temple Run 2 and the slicing game Fruit Ninja, 8 year old Fenja’s gameplay locomotion in the first-person shooter game Battlefield 3 and 28 year old Tue’s competent first-person being and doing in the real-time strategy game Starcraft 2.

Before moving on to the theoretical foundation of the article I will shortly outline the data and methods used to address the corporeal dimension in digital games. Data and methods stem from the three year long study and most centrally involved the following:

- Central methods: Qualitative research methods (e.g. Hennink, Bailey & Hutter 2011), grounded theory method (e.g. Bryant & Charmaz (eds.) 2010), remix methods (e.g. Markham 2012), interpretative ethnography (e.g. Markula & Denison 2000) and visual methodologies (e.g. Banks 2007)
- Data forms: informal/formal observational fieldwork (3 years on a weekly basis), informal/formal participatory fieldwork (3 years on a weekly basis), field notes (more than 200 pages), methodological, analytical and theoretical memos (more than 100 pages), offscreen photos (approx. 1600), offscreen video (approx. 50 hours), onscreen screenshots (approx. 300) and onscreen video (approx. 30 hours)
- Remix forms - the mixing of: phenomenographic narratives, metaphorical writings, photo montages, research music videos, visual bricolages, conceptualizations using grounded theory method, theoretical substantiation of data using philosophical works, empirical substantiation of concepts using data.
- Gameplayers observed regularly (some on a weekly basis) over a period of 3 years: Fenja; 5-8 year old female, competent and hardcore gameplayer, Jon; 36-39 year old male, expert and hardcore gameplayer, Rikke; 32-35 year old female, competent and casual gameplayer, Selma; 2-5 year old female, novice and casual gameplayer, Tue; 25-28 year old male, expert and hardcore gameplayer, Herdis; 59-61 year old female, novice and casual gameplayer, Iben; 27-30 year old female, novice and virtually non-gameplayer.
- Central observation and participation foci: ‘the corporeal gameplayer,’ ‘the corporeal gameplayer in corporeal-locomotive gameplay,’ ‘the corporeal gameplayer in corporeal-locomotive gameplay in a specific offscreen-onscreen gameworld,’ ‘the corporeal gameplayer in digital gameplay’ and ‘the corporeal-digital gameplayer in corporeal-digital gameplay in offscreen-onscreen gameworlds’

Considering the above central observation and participation foci as well as the main objective of the article – to develop a comprehension of the corporeal dimension of digital games – some theoretical frameworks and concepts have proven more productive and suitable than others. Especially well-suited tools
for capturing and conceiving gameplay perception or ‘moving to see’ have proven to be the remixing of the so-called ecological approach as it was originally conceived by James J. Gibson in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1979) and Jonas Linderoth’s further development of it to account for the specificities of gameplay perception in “This is Not a Door: an Ecological approach to Computer Games” (2007) and “Beyond the digital divide: an ecological approach to gameplay” (2011). A well-suited tool for capturing and conceiving gameplay locomotion or ‘seeing to move’ has proven to be the remixing of the philosophical-phenomenological work on locomotion by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone *The Primacy of Movement* (1999). Finally, well-suited tools for capturing and conceiving how digital games acquire meaning, significance and aesthetics for gameplayers through the ways gameplayers move in and are moved by these games as first-person corporeal-locomotive beings doing and experiencing gameplay perception and gameplay locomotion have proven to be the remixing of central philosophical and phenomenological ‘corporeal conceptions’ taken from Drew Leder’s *The Absent Body* (1990), Michael Polanyi’s *The Tacit Dimension* (1983), Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) and Erwin Straus’s *The Primary World of Senses: A Vindication of Sensory Experience* (1963).

Consequently, concepts and frameworks coming from the abovementioned works will constitute the foundation upon which the comprehension of the corporeal dimension in digital games will be built. Occasionally, especially apt quotes from these works will surface and manifest themselves in the text, but generally the works constitute the invisible but vital skeleton of the article that makes it possible for it to stand on its own feet and travel the world.
The child: entering a world of gameplay perception

This section of the article is concerned with how gameplayers’ have to learn to perceive in digital games during gameplay. Shortly put, gameplayers’ gameplay under rather severe requirements and constraints as their eyes have to stay attentively and alert on the screen as looking away for a second often equals instant failure. Accordingly, it is easy to see how gaming in digital games have been equated with ‘screen watching,’ ‘interpreting representations,’ or ‘observing output’ by many game researchers. But, looking to Selma learning to ‘see in order or move’ and ‘move in order to see’ on the iPhone it becomes apparent that gameplay perception cannot so easily be subordinated to watching, interpreting or observing visual output. Rather, Selma has to learn to be a continuously active and alert perceiving body in motion. As such Selma with the iPhone in hand and engaged in a round of the finger-slicing-game Fruit Ninja has to be corporeally sentient to the gameworld impressions she pick up through active and direct gameplay perception. That is, even though Selma’s eyes stay firmly locked on the iPhone’s little screen in a way that looks almost identical to when she watches YouTube-videos the nature and structure of the interrelationship between Selma and iPhone changes drastically when a game of Fruit Ninja commences. Selma is now not so much looking at the screen as she is carrying out perception in the game of Fruit Ninja.

In this way, what Selma has to learn to play games is that perception in digital games is not so much the perception of representations, surfaces or visual spectacle as it is the perceptual learning of what a certain game affords the gamer in specific gameplay situations. Selma has to learn that a fruit in Fruit Ninja affords slicing and earning points while a fruit in the Toca Kitchen Monsters afford cooking and feeding monsters. Consequently, fruit is ordinarily not ‘fruit’ in any representational sense, but a game-specific something that affords doing game-specific things. This entails that information about ‘fruit’ to be picked up in Fruit Ninja is different from information about ‘fruit’ in Toca Kitchen Monsters as ‘fruit’ carry different affordances in the two games – affordances Selma has come to know through partaking in the game through first-person gameplay perception and locomotion.
Following this, each specific relation between gameplayer and gameworld can, in James J. Gibson’s words be said to constitute its own specific perceptual and interactional ‘ecological niche’: “Ecologists have the concept of a niche. A species of animal is said to utilize or occupy a certain niche in the environment. This is not quite the same as the habitat of the species; a niche refers more to how an animal lives than to where it lives. I suggest that a niche is a set of affordances” (Gibson 1979, p. 128).

Framed this way, we can see how Selma is occupying one kind of interactional niche, containing one set of specific affordances, in Fruit Ninja, while occupying a different kind of interactional niche, containing a different set of specific affordances, in Temple Run 2. Accordingly, what concerns Selma-in-gameplay is not the differences in the two games’ representational surfaces (fruit & ruins) but the differences in their affordance structures (slicing fruit & navigating the obstacle course. It is, so to speak, not the nouns of the game that holds Selma’s attention but the verbs. It is through this first-person perceived verb-relation between gameplayer and game that gameplay acquires meaning and becomes important to Selma. Selma’s perceptual absorption in and engagement with the corporeal-digital gameworld of Fruit Ninja can in this way be grasped as the settling in of Selma in a specific interactional niche, which concurrently settles in her. In this way, the gameworld of Fruit Ninja molds Selma’s perception in specific ways through making specific affordances available for her to pick up such as ‘slicing four fruits in one unbroken movement will earn you more points than slicing them in five individual movements.’ And conversely, Selma molds the specific gameworld of Fruit Ninja through carrying out specific corporeal-locomotive actions within the environment based on her perception of the games affordances.

Hence, as gameplayers “We all fit into the substructures of the environment in our various ways, for we are all, in fact, formed by them” (Gibson 1979, p. 131). Accordingly, Selma fit into the first-person perceptual affordances-substructure of the environment of Fruit Ninja in ways that are different from the ways she fits into the first-person perceptual affordances-substructure of the environment of Temple Run 2. The way Selma is formed as Fruit Ninja gamerplayer is qualitatively different from the way she is formed as Temple Run 2 gamerplayer. And the way Selma’s perception (in)forms her Fruit Ninja gameplay is qualitatively different from the way her perception (in)forms her Temple Run 2 gameplay. As such, Selma’s Fruit Ninja gameplay perception emerges because of the affordances that emerge through the first-person perceptual and interactional relations between Selma and the specific gameworld of Fruit Ninja.
Selma has developed gameplay perception as she through playing the games of *Fruit Ninja* and *Temple Run 2* is able to *enter into* their environments as a perceiving corporeal-locomotive organism. Here, she is through gameplay *transforming* the visual representations of the ‘dead and immaterial game’ into concrete perceived ‘dynamic and tangible environments’ for corporeal-locomotive interaction. When Selma encounters fruit in *Fruit Ninja* she not seeing depictions of fruit, rather, she perceives fruit as a verb; as a first-person interactional possibility. Selma is through dynamic gameplay perception not ‘receiving representational nouns as gameworld output’ but ‘acting on gameworld verbs through corporeal-locomotive input based and on the verbs perceived affordances.’ Accordingly, Selma has gameworld perception through perceiving *Temple Run 2* and *Fruit Ninja* as worlds that address her *directly* and necessitates that she addresses them *directly* through direct and active *first-person* perception and *first-person* doing. Hence, a ‘*Fruit Ninja* watermelon’ is in this way not a depiction of a ‘watermelon’ (noun) as it would be in a movie or story but a dynamic structure that affords ‘slicing’ through first-person corporeal locomotion (verb).

In this way, Selma’s acquisition of gameplay perception entails that she is no longer ‘looking at’ (i.e. seeing the representational surface of things) but ‘looking to do’ (i.e. perceiving the interactional behavior of things). Thus, Selma’s gameplay perception is not mediated, indirect or second-hand perceptual knowledge, as it is when she is listening to a story, watching a movie or experiencing a performance. Rather, it is perceptual knowledge acquired directly through first-person gameplay perception, as it is when she is building with Lego, playing the xylophone or catching jellyfish in the ocean.

In *Fruit Ninja* and *Temple Run 2* Selma has the gameworld as a first-person being that is moving and perceiving in a first-person (game)world. Selma is a first-person perceiving body in motion. When sitting besides Selma and observing her gameplay perception in action during *Fruit Ninja* it is clear that it is fundamentally different from her YouTube ‘viewing perception’ or her bedtime-story ‘listening perception.’ As Selma’s finger skates across the screen slicing fruit it is clear that Selma is *surrounded completely* by the gameworld – she is perceptually and locomotory of *it* and *in* *it*. She is a “moving point of observation” (Gibson 1979, p. 66).
Selma connects with and experiences digital games as a first-person being that moves within the gameworld environment and in this way merges the offscreen (finger) movement with the onscreen (avatar) movement in Temple Run 2. To Selma both spheres of movement are unproblematic perceived and experienced as equally first-person expressions of perception and locomotion – Selma is experiencing first-person incarnated perception through partaking in first-person incarnated activities on the iPhone.

That is, when Selma plays digital games visual kinesthesis (first-person perception) and interactional kinesthesis (first-person locomotion) come together to form a structure where gameplay locomotion brings about information for gameplay perception and where gameplay locomotion is carried out on the basis of information picked up by gameplay perception. In this way, to take up gameplay in a digital game is, thus, to enter into a process of amalgamation where onscreen is fused with offscreen, perception with locomotion and digitality with corporeality through the gameplayer's first-person being and doing.

Consequently, gameplay perception is more akin to the perceptual structures of corporeal-locomotive activities such as running, throwing, building, shooting and so on, than it is to perceptual structures of media such as reading, viewing, listening, communicating, interpreting and so on. Upon entering the gameworld of Temple Run 2 Selma’s perception becomes ‘kinesthetic’ as Selma is intensely attentive towards where she and the gameworld are going. Accordingly, digital games are first-person activities wherein perception is characterized by being perception of ‘first-person environments perceived-from-this-point and perceived-in-this-moment’ – A mode of perception that has a radically different structure than the perception taking place on the screen during a movie, on stage during a performance or on a page during a story.
What Selma experiences during *Temple Run 2* is the experience of being perceptually *embraced* by an offscreen-onscreen gameworld in a first-person *temporal-now* and a first-person *spatial-here*. By use of the conceptual framework of Gibson we can see how Selma as a gameplayer is capable of *first-person orientation* in the ‘gameplay niche’ as she travels in the offscreen-onscreen gameworld along familiar pathways. Pathways played out as proficient way-finding and place-knowing through a first-person offscreen choreography (the dancing finger) of the gameworld’s onscreen composition (the perceiving body) – A mode of being and doing that Selma is not capable of taking up in a movie, stage performance or story. In digital games, Selma has the gameworld as a perceptually “being everywhere at once” (Gibson 1979, p. 199) where she conducts herself as a knowledgable first-person *Temple Run 2* being and doing as she *moves and look around* in the gameworld *in accordance with* what she wants to see next.

In this way, Selma is perceptually *in and of* the *Temple Run 2* environment as she perceives the onscreen layout as something to be approached and handled locomotory given that in corporeal-locomotive activities “to see things is to see how to get about among them and what to do and not to do with them” (Gibson 1979, p. 232). Consequently, when Selma is in *Temple Run 2* or *Fruit Ninja* she does not observe or perform movements. Rather, gameplay perception is diving into the unbroken stream of first-person seeing to do and doing to see as the gameplayer locomotory plays along to the perceived rhythm of the gameworld.

**The tween: striving to become a shooting star through gameplay locomotion**

As became evident through the descriptions of Selma’s gameplay with the iPhone, gameplay perception cannot stand alone in gameplay activity and experience if we are to grasp what set digital games apart from media reception and align them with corporeal-locomotive activities. To do this we need to develop a comprehension of first-person corporeal locomotion in digital games. In digital games the gameplayer is simultaneously a perceptual and a locomotive point of origin; when Selma moves within the offscreen-onscreen gameworlds of *Temple Run 2* or *Fruit Ninja* and when Fenja moves within the offscreen-onscreen gameworld of *Battlefield 3* they are in different and distinctive ways experiencing the game through experiencing themselves as first-person moving beings. As Fenja is moving around a corner in *Battlefield 3* by actively using her keyboard and mouse she is experiencing the game through tactile and (kin)aesthetic locomotion. She is literally taking the game of *Battlefield 3* in hand and moving within its world in a way that makes *Battlefield 3* a corporeal-locomotive activity and experience. As Fenja puts her hands on keyboard and mouse and begins to move in the onscreen gameworld of *Battlefield 3*, as she moves in the offscreen gameworld of *Battlefield 3*, she is

Following this, Fenja’s experience as and knowledge about being a gamer in *Battlefield 3* is something she has by way of taking up a first-person corporeal-locomotive relationship with the game. Furthermore, a digital game such as *Battlefield 3* acquires its meaning and significance through the ways it composes and choreographs the gamer’s first-person being and doing in the gameworld – Fenja becomes engaged, present and absorbed in the gameplay of *Battlefield 3* because her hands know their way around. In this way, Fenja relate to and create the emerging gameplay activity and experience because she has knowledgeable *Battlefield 3* hands.

Gameplay locomotion implies that when Fenja is involved with a digital game such as *Battlefield 3* she needs to have keyboard and mouse in hand as she takes up an incarnate and intimate corporeal-locomotive relationship with the game’s composition and choreography. Thus, Fenja is able to avoid being shot by and successfully shoot her father in *Battlefield 3* because she is able to knowledgeably move in and move the world of *Battlefield 3* by moving her hands. Gameplay locomotion transforms digital games into real corporeal-locomotive activities where “Coming to know the [game]world in a quite literal sense means coming to grips with it – exploring it, searching it, discovering it in and through movement” (Sheets-Johnstone 1999, p. 226). This entails that it is necessary to consider the specificities of locomotory knowledge, activity and experience emerging from gameplay in a specific game such as *Fruit Ninja* or *Battlefield 3*. Developing into a competent gamer of *Battlefield 3* is also the ability to express a developing capacity to move and a kinaesthetic development into a *Battlefield 3* moving body. For Fenja coming to know *Battlefield 3* implies growing into the ways of moving with keyboard and mouse in *Battlefield 3* as the natural way of moving and experiencing in the game.
In this way, Fenja is the expression of a specific first-person moving-in-the-world-being when she is playing *Battlefield 3* and another expression of a specific first-person moving-in-the-world-being when she is playing *Fruit Ninja*. Consequently, Fenja relates to *Battlefield 3* as a moving being relating to a moving gameworld through gameplay locomotion. When Fenja ducks, flees, chases, shoots, evades, hides and attacks in *Battlefield 3* she is not responding to moving representations, spectacular surfaces or unfolding narratives but to rhythmical corporeal-locomotive patterns that have shaped her gameplay perception into seeing patterns for moving in the offscreen-onscreen gameworld. A game such as *Battlefield 3* speaks to Fenja not as a visual, dramaturgic or narrative composition, but as a kinetic and dynamic melody.

Gameplay is Fenja’s discovery of herself as a first-person being involved in a first-person activity within an offscreen-onscreen gameworld. That is, Fenja is, through locomotion, responsible for her own gameplay activity and experience.

When Fenja fails in *Battlefield 3*, she fails as a corporeal-locomotive first-person being. That is, it is *Fenja* that fails to do what the game requires *Fenja* to do. Accordingly, shortcomings in digital games can be very hurtful and frustrating precisely because they are personal shortcomings due to their foundation in the gamerplayer’s first-person locomotory and perceptual relation to the game. And, on the other hand, competency is something Fenja expresses through her left hand’s alert, sensitive and delicately moving fingers constricted to the WSAD keys as she moves through the landscape and her right hand’s fluent, smooth and razor-sharp movements with the mouse as she quickly orient herself in the landscape. As a Battlesfielder Fenja lives and expresses herself as competent being through gameplay locomotion. Discovering Fenja in *Battlefield 3* gameplay is the discovery of Fenja as a dynamically engaged tactile, sensuous and (kin)aesthetic being absorbed in the corporeal-locomotive challenges of being competently expressive through corporeally mastering the compositional structures and choreographed patterns of the gameworld. Fenja is engaged in expressing herself as first-person being and doing in the game. For Fenja, every perceivable gameplay action is cut out in first-person tangible reality. This separate digital game from media as Fenja is not experiencing *Battlefield 3* one step removed from first-person actual corporeal-locomotive actions. In gameplay Fenja is looking and moving around as first-person being. She is in and of motion.
In this way, the experience of games refers back to and is incorporated into the gamer’s body; that is, gameplay is inscribed in the flesh of the moving body: “To say that the dancer [or gamer] is thinking in movement does not mean that the dancer is thinking by means of movement or that her/his thoughts are being transcribed into movements [...] What is distinctive about thinking in movement is not that the flow of thought is kinetic, but that the thought itself is” (Sheets-Johnstone 1999, p. 486).

When Fenja hunts her father in Battlefield 3 she is thinking through, in and as movement – her perception of the battlefield and her movement in the battlefield are interwoven and inseparable – Digital-Fenja needs to be inscribed in corporeal-Fenja so to speak in order for her to gameplay competently. That is, Fenja hunts her father through making her corporeal locomotion emerge as digital locomotion. In gameplay, Fenja can only successfully hunt her father down and win over him by having Battlefield 3 as a capacity to think fluently in movement and express this thinking as a fluency of movement. Furthermore, Fenja takes personal pride in her Battlefield 3 competency to hunt and shoot because it is Fenja as first-person being that literally has come to know where she is going. As such, Fenja’s gameplay locomotion in Battlefield 3 is meaning-full in and of itself. Digital-Fenja is not an onscreen digital animation. Neither is Corporeal-Fenja observing Digital-Fenja as an avatar she steers and controls. On the contrary, Fenja is a corporeal-digital unified organic being that has made movement a way to make Fenja and her competencies present in the gameworld through thinking in movement.
Fenja is thinking her corporeal-digital self ahead locomotory. She is thinking in and as movement. And she is expressing this corporeal-digital thinking as movement. Accordingly, she can, when hunting her father, begin to shoot and evade before she consciously perceives why she is shooting and where she is evading to in Battlefield 3. Fenja is a competent gameplayer not because she can interpret, analyze, read or view the digital game as media, but because she is able to think, experience and act dynamically ahead in movement as she is sensibly and sensuously caught up in in the primacy of movement. When Fenja is hunting her father and he evades her they are enacting the core of Battlefield 3 gameplay. A core that can be described through remixing Sheets-Johnstone’s eminent description of thinking in movement with Battlefield 3 gameplay as it unfolds between predator (Fenja) and prey (father):

*The drama that evolves between and through them is clearly played out in movement, a kinetic drama through and through. Precisely because it is a spontaneous dynamic interaction not orchestrated in advance, but played out from moment to moment, it is a drama that involves thinking. To claim that there is no thinking involved would in fact be absurd. It would be absurd to claim, for example, that predator’s and prey’s progression of movement is tied to a set of rules that algorithmically specify both the immediate moment and the global event, as if animals [or gameplayers] involved where following a script, their every movement being orchestrated in advance. Moreover it would be equally absurd to claim that the thoughts [or perceptions] the animals [or gameplayers] think [or perceives] exist separately from the movements of animals [or gameplayers] make, or in other words that the animals’ [or gameplayers’] thoughts [or perceptions] are successively transcribed into movements [...]. All such claims overlook the obvious; predator and prey alike are thinking in movement; their progression of thought – their process of thinking in movement – is tied to the evolving, changing situation itself; the situation they themselves are dynamically creating moment by moment in their very movement. (Sheets-Johnstone 1999, p. 507-08)*

Fenja and other gameplayers are in gameplay beings moving mindfully through thinking competently in movement. This is how digital games become meaning-ful to gameplayers. To be a being in gameplay locomotion is to be undertaking a first-person corporeal-locomotive activity in which you become directly involved and which is directly dependent upon your first-person corporeal-locomotive involvement. As such, gameplay perception and gameplay locomotion is two sides of the same coin; a coin which goes under the name of gameplay corporeality and which will be the focus of the final section of the article.
The adult: being an experienced star craftsman through first-person being and first-person doing

As the above hopefully shows, gameplayers are moving first-person beings put in motion, on the one hand, by the ways the digital game, composes and choreographs the gameplayers' corporeal-locomotive activity and experience and, on the other hand, by the ways the gameplayer patterns and paces his/hers gameplay activity and experience through first-person being and doing. In other words, digital games are constituted by mutual molding; the game molds the player through composing and choreographing the place and pace of the player's hands and the player molds the game through placing and pacing it by moving his/her hands. Taking this a step further this last section will outline how digital games acquire their meaning, significance and aesthetics through the ways gameplayers move in and are moved by these games. Accordingly, this section will be centered on digital games as emerging from the gameplayers' gameplay activity as first-person engaged beings and first-person expressive doings. This is done through telling the tale of Tue in Starcraft 2 gameplay.

Tue is, in Starcraft 2 gameplay, opening up a specific actional field were his very Starcraft-life depends on his ability to synthesize perception, locomotion and thinking into an unbroken stream of “linked corporeal foci” (Leder 1990. P. 24). That is, over time, Tue has, as an expert Starcraft 2 gameplayer, successfully assimilated his gameplay corporeality to the composition and choreography of the game, and conversely, as the composition and choreography of the game has been incorporated into his bodily being. In this way, Starcraft 2 has come to pervade Tue's corporeality as he has become a Starcraft-body. In a way, Tue has become the incarnation of Starcraft 2 – that bodily from which he operates upon the game. He has, in effect, become a self-moving knowledgeable Starcraftsman. That is, Tue's Starcraft-competent
gameplay attention and perception is free to roam in the onscreen gameworld because of his expert corporeal-locomotive relations to the materiality and digitality of the game.

However, even though Tue is able to direct his perceptual attention away from his corporeal-locomotive point of origin and towards his onscreen digital gameplay that does not entail that his corporeal gameplay evaporates or becomes insignificant. When Tue's perception is locked on to the onscreen he has to be able to perceive the onscreen corporeally; that is, as perceived courses for corporeal-locomotive actions. Consequently, gameplay corporeality is always his mode of experience – The p(l)ace of the hand p(l)acing the game and the p(l)ace of the game p(l)acing the hand. In a game where ‘Actions per Minute’ is one of the standardized measures of gameplay competency a loss of pace or place quickly proves fatal.

What comes to separate my competent Starcraft 2 spectator-body from Tue’s expert Starcraft 2 gameplaying-body is that he is Starcraft 2 incarnated. Tue has successfully through hard corporeal-locomotive work integrated Starcraft 2 into his ways of bodily knowing. Tue has Starcraft 2 in the sinews of his hands as the ability to be continually corporeally present, engrossed and engaged during gameplay. He is able to be himself onscreen. That is, Tue is aware of his corporeal gameplay in his perception of his digital gameplay as he experiences himself and his opponent as moving corporeal-digital beings that have Starcraft 2 as activity within them. In gameplay, digital games and gameplayers meet in the intersections of corporeality and digitality, perception and locomotion, compositions and places, choreographies and paces. As a consequence, digital games become activities gameplayers ‘do in person’ through the coming
together of gameplay perception and gameplay locomotion. And digital games become activities gameplayers ‘have in person’ as a meaningful corporeal-locomotive composition and choreography they carry within their bodies.

When Tue dives into Starcraft 2 gameplay his hands take him immediately where he wants to go. He is, as a knowledgeable Starcraft 2 gamer, a phenomenal corporeal-digital body moving and seeing in an offscreen-onscreen gameworld. As such, his opponent experiences Tue’s digitality as first-person corporeality as digitality is created on the grounds of the fact that when Tue wants something done digitally he must do it corporeally and when Tue does something corporeally then something happens digitally. That is, to be a worthy Starcraft 2 opponent Tue must persistently ‘come to grips’ with the perceived digital challenges. And as he perceives specific corporeal patterns with familiar corporeal rhythms and physiognomies are formed beneath his hands as a response to what he perceives. Tue has as Starcrafter a certain corporeal bearing in the gameworld and he finds himself to be corporeally present and engaged in the gameworld.

Importantly, Tue is, as engaged gameplay corporeality, not the ‘creator of Starcraft 2’ who posits the game, rather Tue finds himself thrown into and wrapped up in the offscreen-onscreen gameworld of Starcraft 2. Furthermore, Tue is not, as gameplay corporeality, adhering to his gameplay perception or to the game’s visual output, nor is he adhering to his gameplay locomotion or the delivered input. Tue simply is a natural organic unit of Starcraft 2 perception and locomotion; a perceptual-locomotive corporeal-digital being that interacts in the game through opening up to its composition and choreography. It is a
gameplay corporeality that settles into a game through finding its ‘place’ and ‘pace’ in it.

**Are digital games (corporeal-locomotive) media?**

Selma, Fenja and Tue become, as gameplayers in gameplay, corporeality manifested as a certain *Fruit Ninja*-being-in-the-world, *Battlefield 3*-being-in-the-world and *Starcraft 2*-being-in-the-world. They express themselves through specific corporeal locomotion in a certain game that gets *displayed* as specific digital locomotion in the game that make them *inhabit* a certain game corporeally. Hence, the onscreen is never ‘visual’ but always ‘incarnated.’ This entails that, when Selma and Fenja play together, Selma is for Fenja a specific ‘corporeality-in-digitality’ as Fenja is to Selma a specific ‘corporeality-in-digitality.’ They do not perceive each other as digital entities or narrative characters but as first-person corporeal-digital beings partaking in first-person corporeal-locomotive gameplay. They are, through their tactile and (kin)aesthetic relations with the game, not perceiving the onscreen as displaying *visual* or *narrative representations* of something but simply *perceiving what to corporeally do.*

In this way, gameplay “consciousness is being-toward-the-thing through the intermediary of the body [where] a movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it is incorporated into its ‘world’” (Merleau-Ponty 1958, p. 159-60). That is why Fenja as a knowledgeable *Temple Run 2*-body is capable of lending Selma a corporeal-digital helping hand. Consequently, gameplay can be said to be “knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort” (Merleau-Ponty 1958, s. 166).
As the article draws to its conclusion, it has hopefully shown how games might better be understood as ‘corporeal-locomotive activities to be played’ than as ‘visual media to be viewed,’ as ‘dramaturgic plays to be watched or performed’ or as ‘narrative texts to be read or listened to.’ In short, the games and gameplay activities and experiences treated in this article indicate that digital games have more in common with craft and play activities such as making ceramics, building with Lego blocks and playing billiards than they do with (new) media forms.

Therefore, if we want comprehend digital games in their offscreen-onscreen entirety and their relations and importance to gameplayers we need to develop an appreciation of and embrace areas and concepts such as:

• Digital games as material-digital actuality and reality
• Digital games as seamless offscreen-onscreen gameworlds
• Digital games as compositions and choreographies for corporeal locomotion
• Digital games as corporeal-locomotive expressive and absorbing activities
• Gameplay as corporeal-digital actuality, direct perception and locomotive reality
• Gameplay as corporeal-locomotive placed patterns and paced rhythms
• Gameplay corporeality as the fusion of gameplay perception and gameplay locomotion
• Gameplay as first-person expressive corporeal-locomotive doing
• Gameplayers as first-person corporeal-locomotive engaged beings
• Gameplayers as corpo-real beings in digital games
• Gameplayers as corporeal-locomotive expressive and engrossed beings

The relations between game and gameplayer is characterized by the fact that games are incorporated into gameplayers and gameplayers are inserted into games – Games and gameplayers are wherever there is something to be done. Digital games are, for gameplayers, the activity and experience of corporeally being-in-and-of-place-and-pace. As such, games are not ‘nowhere’ or ‘anywhere’ media but ‘now-here’ activities that are corporeally lived through. Digital games exist in corpo-reality requiring gameplayers to be first-person corporeal-locomotive engaged beings through first-person expressive corporeal-locomotive doing.

Experiencing a game such as Starcraft 2 is the experience of gradually becoming a sensible and sensing corporeal-locomotive Starcraft 2-being. As such, it is an experience guarded by ‘mine-ness.’ The game is mine in the act of gameplay in a way that sets it apart from media. In the novel or movie I am ‘nobody’ and ‘nowhere’ but in the game I am ‘somebody’ and ‘now-here.’ In digital games, I am acting within the game, experiencing it, pacing and placing it as the game is acting with me, sensing me, composing and choreographing me. I move the game and the game moves me. This is a corporeal-locomotive activity.
Gameography

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