

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

SOUND AND
IMAGE IN
DIGITAL MEDIA

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CHAPTER 13

“CHARM THE AIR TO GIVE A SOUND”

The Uncanny Soundscape of Punchdrunk's Sleep No More

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Last night, I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while I could not enter, for the way was barred to me . . . Then, like all dreamers, I was possessed of a sudden with supernatural powers and passed like a spirit through the barrier before me. The drive wound away in front of me, twisting and turning as it had always done, but as I advanced, I was aware that a change had come upon it . . . We can never go back to Manderley again.

—Rebecca (Hitchcock, 1940)¹

[A] William Shakespeare of the future could create kaleidoscopic worlds of dazzling variety that will display the coherence and unified vision we associate with great fiction . . . dictate not just the words and images of the story but the rules by which the words and images would appear.

—Janet H. Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (276)

I'll charm the air to give a sound, While you perform your antic round.

—Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (4.1.129–130)

I step off the elevator into a narrow, dark hallway and take a moment to orient myself to the warren of small, interconnected rooms that open before me. I am just one of several wraiths in beaked, white masks exploring these seemingly abandoned chambers. We've clearly entered a different time period, ostensibly the 1930s, although the precise moment is indistinct because each room overflows with a hodgepodge of objects from

multiple eras, all already heavily marked with age. My sense of temporal transportation is most immediately cued by the music wafting through each room—if my memory can be trusted in this moment of uncertainty, a tinny recording of a Rudy Vallee song, perhaps “Honey” (1929). More masked figures flit past the door as I pause to tentatively handle a silk robe thrown across a bed and flip open a moldering, handwritten journal. The sheer volume of stuff, of dust, of smells, is overwhelming. I’m not sure where to look or how far this hall of rooms will extend—should I linger to open the box on the dresser or scurry down the hall with the other ghosts? Unnerved by the worn doll left on the pillow of a child’s bed, I leave the suite of rooms.

And suddenly, not even sure of how I’ve arrived here, I’m stepping through a set of French doors into the coolness of the night, my shoes crunching on the gravel walkway of a small graveyard bathed in blue light (I have to remind myself, after the shock dissipates, that I’m, in fact, deep inside the third floor of a warehouse in Chelsea on a sweltering summer evening). A breeze brushes my cheek as I am propelled forward, in no small part by the music; Bernard Herrmann’s “Prelude” from *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) swells up as if on cue as I reach the doors. The impact is visceral, my skin prickles and I suppress a momentary spasm of giddiness. I’m gazing down at my feet through the eyeholes of my mask, in part to keep from tripping over the gravestones and rocks, and in part because those feet seem oddly disembodied—I observe my own movements as though they are someone else’s, framed by a camera-like gaze. I’m at once thoroughly, physically engaged in the present of a space that demands vigilant attention and reenacting waves of cinematic recollections that wash over me. At this moment, I’m Scottie or perhaps Madeleine, guided by unseen forces through the cemetery at Mission Dolores in *Vertigo*, not yet certain who I am following or why. I raise my head to see the brightly lit windows of a building beside a tree at the far side of a courtyard (how is this physically possible?). I wander closer and peer through the glass to see a couple engaged in a violent, erotic pas de deux across a bed, encircled by more masked figures. The sharp thudding of their bodies against the furniture breaks my spell, and I step through the threshold into yet another dream space.

I am describing my first experience inside the New York production of *Sleep No More*, the immersive theater piece staged by the London collective Punchdrunk, which first opened in March 2011.² It is a project that defies concise summary. Based on Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, *Sleep No More* (directed by Felix Barrett and Maxine Doyle, sound design by Stephen Dobbie) transposes the structures and rhythms of the play into a tightly choreographed, nearly dialogue-less physical adaptation, set in a fabricated 1930s hotel, The McKittrick (a reference to *Vertigo*), awash with cinematic elements drawn from Hitchcock, Herrmann, David Lynch, and Stanley Kubrick. The action is danced across nearly one hundred rooms, spread between six floors in three interconnected warehouses on West 27th Street. The set includes the hotel lobby and ballroom, as well as a graveyard and suites of rooms associated with certain characters (my initial entry was through the bedrooms of the Macduffs), a street filled with shops (including a taxidermist, a candy shop, an embalmer’s workshop, and a private investigator’s office and darkroom), a forest, a witches’ apothecary, and several wards within a large

sanatorium. After checking into the hotel and stumbling through a pitch black curtained corridor, audience members gather in the Manderley Bar (a reference to *Rebecca*), which is perfectly styled with live jazz and vintage cocktails. Guests are ushered into the performance space in small groups via elevator, dispersed on various floors of the installation, with almost no directives beyond a short list of rules: you must wear your mask at all times, you may not speak for the duration of the performance, and you will do well to remember that "fortune favors the bold."

It may seem odd to approach questions of sound and new audiovisual media through a work that is fetishistically devoted to the past. The musical components of *Sleep No More* consist primarily of Bernard Herrmann's film scores and recordings of popular songs from the 1920s through the 1960s. Sound here works in concert with deeply familiar narrative references (namely *Macbeth*), adapting them to a Prohibition-era setting. Visual nods to photographic and cinematic pasts abound, including a heavy doses of Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) and *The Shining* (1980), two films equally haunted by bygone eras. And the design of the installation materializes the past in its wallpapers, draperies, furniture, and room after room stuffed with artifacts, many reflecting Victorian fixations on death and the natural sciences or even more ancient occult rituals.

Yet *Sleep No More* is, at the same time, a highly contemporary phenomenon, perhaps the most expansive experiment in immersive theater in New York to date. Elements of interactivity and site-specificity have long played a role in the theater, utilized most effectively toward political ends by artists such as Augusto Boal in his Theatre of the Oppressed in the 1960s and presaged by Antonin Artaud in his 1938 call to "abolish the stage and the auditorium and replace them by a single site, without partition or barrier of any kind, which will become the theatre of the action."³ Yet the past decade has witnessed an explosion of large-scale immersive projects, which are emerging as an enormously popular, trans-media and trans-genre trend. Site-specific and immersive performance worlds run the gambit from underground "happenings" and interactive art installations (The Underbelly Project, 2010, The Cans Festival, 2008, public works by Maurice Benayoun), to urban interventions (projects by Pierre Huyghe, Los Angeles Poverty Department, Paul Chan's *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans*, 2007) to classical music (Alina Ibragimova's 2011 collaboration with the Quay Brothers in Chethem's Library, Manchester), to Jane's Addiction's 2012 "Theatre of the Escapists" tour (an immersive environment partly inspired by *Sleep No More*, described by lead singer Perry Farrell as "Twenties surrealist with a Sixties, Warhol pop twist").⁴

There is thus something forward reaching in the conception and promotion of *Sleep No More*'s haunted spaces. The production taps into a burgeoning demand for experiential works that bring to light unseen aspects of our urban environment. Projects such as these often root themselves the abandoned, the forgotten, and the analog; participants thrill in the spirit of individualized adventurousness and an almost nostalgic appreciation of the handcrafted. Yet contemporary immersive works are equally marked by the influence of audiovisual media and of digital technologies, on multiple registers. Intertextual references to songs, to films, and to television abound on the levels of music,

image, and narrative. The stagings themselves are enabled by sophisticated multitrack sound and lighting systems that create synchronized, sensory environments for performers and audience members alike. Happenings are advertised via social networks, and bloggers relish in sharing spoilers and tips for exploring these worlds. And, as I will argue in more detail below, the architecture, and indeed the very premise of immersive theater, has been deeply enriched by developments in digital gaming technology. It is no accident that this trend toward immersive experiences has proven so popular with a youthful audience not typically drawn to traditional theater or performance art. On a structural level, immersive theater resonates with the hyperconnected, technologically mediated modality familiar to a contemporary digital generation.

In the pages that follow, I will argue that *Sleep No More* provides a fascinating forum for exploring new trends in the use of sound in both live performance and audiovisual media. Although a great number of the musical references and cues in the soundscape are drawn from well-known, analog sources, building on the long history of associations embedded within each sonic passage, their deployment marks a decided shift in the role that sound performs in theater and film. The sound environment in the installation serves not merely to establish ambience within the space, although it does perform this task expertly. It also works to guide and synchronize the actions of the several hundred individual audience- and cast members who navigate the environment during each performance. The use of sonic cues, in this context, draws directly from the logic of first-person perspective role-playing video games.

One of my objectives in this essay will be to tease out some of the dense sonic references woven into the soundscape of *Sleep No More*, paying particular attention to the way in which music works to deepen the physical experience of the uncanny within that space. A second goal involves reading the use of sound cues within the performance in relation to digital gaming environments. Finally, I will suggest that the use of rhythm and repetition in *Sleep No More* resonates on an even deeper register with similar architectures of meaning in some of the work's key points of reference: namely Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Herrmann's film scores. My point is that the use of sound and looping movements in this production goes beyond surface-level allusion to outside texts, triggering instead a more foundational, structural link. Given the highly individualized nature of the *Sleep No More* experience, it is difficult to make any conclusive statements about the work's overarching meaning or its narrative objectives. Yet a careful examination of its architecture reveals a complex deployment of sonic patterning, one that activates new connections with a set of historical texts and that challenges our understanding of what it means to experience sound, touch, and performance in our own uncannily digital worlds. On each register of this inquiry, one can locate a tension between the experience of autonomous movement within the space of the irrational and an architectural framework that serves to choreograph and set the boundaries for that experience.

I would like to note certain logistical constraints that have impacted my study of sound in *Sleep No More*, for these limitations have resulted in an analysis based more on the more generalized affective impact of the soundscape than on close readings

of individual compositional elements. In the interest of recounting the work as it was meant to be experienced, I have sought to describe the soundscape as it sounds and feels within the trajectory of the performance event. Many of the raw elements within the sound design have been edited, altered, and layered with other tracks, making them difficult to study outside of that environment. The recorded soundtrack is further extended into the noises produced by performers and audience members moving about the space. And, although I have done my best to accurately recount the scope of that multilayered aural environment, my efforts inevitably fall short. Over the course of two visits, I spent 6 hours within the performance space and made a concerted effort to visit and listen to every space within the installation. Yet, with such a vast amount of territory to cover, and with the sonic elements constantly shifting within each of those rooms as the cast stages multiple, simultaneous encounters across each floor, and with certain areas opening and closing at various points throughout the evening, one individual can only encounter a fraction of the performance and hence only a fraction of the sound design. Moreover, one is often disoriented, startled, and overwhelmed during the course of the performance. My recollections regarding what I heard at those moments are surely suspect. Yet I'm not certain that a detailed mapping of tracks would greatly enhance my project here (as fascinating as such a map would be, from a practitioner's perspective). The more significant point of this essay, and I would argue the point of the performance, has to do with engaging in the physical experience of the immersive environment, in the specific space and time in which it unfolds. My hope is that any inaccuracies or omissions in my descriptions will be outweighed by their fidelity to the embodied, emotive experience.

MUSIC, CHARMING THE AIR

Punchdrunk is one of several theatrical companies staging productions within non-traditional settings. Although objectives vary depending on context, one can point to a common interest in teasing out affinities among performance, text, and space, and in upending established notions of spectatorship. Rather than isolating the theatrical experience in a hermetic black box, site-specific and immersive productions put bodies into dialogue with objects and environments in unexpected ways. Audiences within these productions are challenged to actively navigate architectural constructs and, at times, to intervene in the trajectory of the production. This challenge can be tinged with anxiety; the thrill of the immersive performance often stems from the fact that we don't know what we are expected to "do" in these spaces, absent the familiar rituals of traditional theater. Questions of agency arise, with proponents extolling the creative potential for performative spectatorship and detractors comparing immersive productions to gimmicky ghost rides or haunted houses. I will explore the tensions between audience autonomy and prescribed experience in more detail in later sections, suggesting that the interplay between these tendencies is continually in flux, evolving over the course

of a production in contradictory ways. I'd like to consider first, however, the strategies by which Punchdrunk uses sound to flesh out the particular site of *Sleep No More* in New York, looking initially at uses of prerecorded music and then at the integration of live sound.

Felix Barrett has described the Punchdrunk ethos as one that is deeply sensitive to the specificity of environment—not site-specific but rather “site-sympathetic.”⁵ Although scenarios for Punchdrunk productions are typically planned in advance of entering a location, and those locations themselves are not always the sites originally sought, Barrett recounts waiting to explore chosen sites before solidifying details of an installation. The dynamic he describes seems less about capitalizing on a location's specific history and more about tapping into the latent energies present there, the capacity of that architecture to provide for embodied experiences. In essence, Punchdrunk uses the installation aspect of their productions to invoke an uncanny experience, to render a knowable space suddenly unfamiliar, stirring up that “which ought to have remained hidden but which has come to light.”⁶ The interaction with space here is visceral, an experience that resonates on a deeply sensuous and subjective basis.

This move toward a spatial, material sympathy is not only artistic, but also logistical. In an environment in which hundreds of participants navigate a large space individually, a strong sense of ambience or tone is critical; it allows for an empathetic connection between audience, space, and performance while at the same time remaining diffuse enough to provide for any number of individual variations. The tone of the environment serves as the primary link binding together any number of circulating elements: the affective experience of the audience members, the gestures of the actors and the mood of their performances, the material qualities of the space, and the narratives and texts around which the production is built. Because audience members have so much freedom to roam throughout the installation, tonality must be infused within the full range of sensory experiences they might encounter (visual and sound design, architectural layout, lighting, ventilation, and smell). That the tone is crafted on such a material and corporeal basis furthers the sense of the uncanny. What is experienced is often not registered on a fully conscious level.

The whole of the experience, for the designers of Punchdrunk, is built up from all the physical triggers that might create a sense of simultaneous unease and excitement, “from smells to the use of bass.”⁷ Sound is crucial among these. It registers corporeally, reverberating within the chest or signaling the approach of another body within a darkened room. Memory-images are triggered as well, particularly through the use of familiar songs and musical themes. Preexisting musical elements within the *Sleep No More* sound design, for example, seep into our consciousness sometimes, and, for some listeners, as recognizable references; for others, they linger at the edge of perception as unidentified historical or emotive cues. In all these capacities, sound works to tease out the hidden ambiances latent within an installation. It provides a further tonal bed upon which performers and audience members can interact, entering into the rhythms and themes of the narrative scenario.

One of the most poignant scenes I encountered in this regard occurred in the hotel lobby. A young man (billed as the "boy witch") is lip-syncing Peggy Lee's "Is That All There Is?" (Leiber and Stoller, 1969) under a spotlight, with tears streaming down his face. Much of the furniture in this corner of the lobby is covered with sheets; like the party scene in *The Overlook Hotel* in *The Shining*, it feels as though this abandoned hotel is populated only by specters. The lyrical content of the song reinforces this impression, eschewing even death as a "final disappointment." But the performances, both Lee's and the boy witch's, are filled with emotive life. In contrast to the tonal sound beds that comprise much of the soundscape throughout the space, this song remains intact and is played at an increased volume; it may, in fact, serve as a beacon leading audience members into the room. Lee's resonant voice fleshes out the nuances of the intimate stories she recounts, rescuing them from empty irony. And the boy witch's performance is incredibly moving, attuned to each nuance of Lee's vocalization, which is particularly challenging given the long passages of spoken word. The excessive drama and nihilism of the lyrics could easily tip into parody or camp, as could the gender reversal of singer and voice.⁸ Yet the utter strangeness of this unexpected encounter, infused with traces of Kubrick and David Lynch, resonates as deeply real.

Yet the most omnipresent sonic force within *Sleep No More*, by far, is Bernard Herrmann. Although press for the production often bills the show as "Macbeth meets Hitchcock," the point of reference is not a specific set of images, characters, or plot points from Hitchcock films.⁹ Instead, what we encounter is a far more amorphous mood, one that is in fact dictated most directly by Herrmann's scores, especially those for *Vertigo* and *Psycho*.¹⁰

Royal S. Brown describes Herrmann's collaborations with Hitchcock as partaking in a curious dynamic. Herrmann's emotional volatility, both musically and personally, provide for Brown a productive counterpoint to Hitchcock's cool rationality. At the same time, both artists engage in a similar modality: beginning from a place of everyday normalcy before slipping into the realm of the frightening and unknown.¹¹ "The essence of Herrmann's Hitchcock scoring lies in a kind of harmonic ambiguity, hardly new to Western music but novel in film music," Brown writes, "whereby the musical language familiar to Western listeners serves as a point of departure, only to be modified in such a way that norms are thrown off center and expectations are held in suspense for much longer periods of time than the listening ears and feeling viscera are accustomed to."¹² Just as Hitchcock's troubled filmworlds often begin within seemingly familiar settings, Herrmann's compositions at first seem in line with traditional Western structures and tonal systems. But rather than cycling around toward harmonic resolution, Herrmann's scores rely on unresolved, unstable intervals: seventh-chords and the recurrence of major thirds within minor mode settings.¹³ Through repetition, these destabilized elements begin to function independently from the rest of the composition; in the case of the use of sevenths, they take on the characteristics of a motif. Herrmann's predilection for short phrases or musical "cells" in the place of developed themes allows for the somewhat mobile play of mood and unstable signification. The ambiguous use of thirds, for Brown, leaves the listener in a state of suspension, not certain how to "read"

or contextualize what is heard.¹⁴ And because “harmonic and instrumental color” dominate over theme and motif in Herrmann, musical phrases cannot be contextualized within or subsumed by larger melodies.¹⁵ In the prelude to *Vertigo*, for example, strings and winds play circling arpeggios, periodically interrupted by blaring brass chords. Free-floating signifiers, these phrases shift and are easily defamiliarized, opening into the realm of the irrational. Passages within *Vertigo* and *Psycho* are marked by “mirrored contrary motion,” spiraling upward and downward simultaneously.¹⁶ “What characterizes the Herrmann/Hitchcock sound,” Brown writes, “are the ways in which this downward tendency is counterbalanced to reflect the unique equilibria of Hitchcock’s cinema, and, even more importantly, the ways in which novel harmonic colorations make that descent into the irrational felt as an ever-lurking potential.”¹⁷

The thematic relevance of Herrmann to the modality of *Sleep No More*, in this context, is quite clear. *Sleep No More* is experienced as a series of disconnected, nonlinear vignettes with narrative connections that are primarily rooted in thematic resonances. Short phrases and polytonal arpeggios lend themselves to this ambience-driven space in which extended melodies and musical themes could not properly register. Just as ostinato patterning and unresolved chords provided great flexibility in synchronizing and stretching the score across diverse passages in film, these same structures mesh easily with the movements and emotions of the participants in the installation.¹⁸ The simultaneous rising and falling of Herrmann’s musical passages invoke vertiginous sensations, even in those unfamiliar with the score. And for those who do recognize the references, their presence in this new space triggers uncanny juxtapositions of present and past. Herrmann provides a means of foreshadowing the irrational, making emotional sense out of an experience that could otherwise feel hopelessly fragmentary.

But Herrmann is hardly the only spirit called forth to charm the air in The McKittrick Hotel, which has a fairly rich, more immediate musical history of its own. The “hotel” is in fact a set of empty warehouses at 530 West 27th Street, once home to a series of dance clubs and lounges: Sound Factory (1989–1995), Twilo (1995–2001), Spirit (2003–2006), and B.E.D., Home, and Guesthouse, which shared different floors at the location starting in 2005.¹⁹ Alongside the nearby Bungalow 8, Pink Elephant, Marquee, and Cain, this strip of 27th Street was dubbed “club row” in its heyday. Sound Factory and Twilo were tremendously popular havens for house and electronic music. The tenor of the neighborhood soon shifted, however, from an industrial outpost to a destination for overpriced bottle service, underage clientele, and celebrity gawking: “an amusement park for adults,” “a Disneyland for drunks.”²⁰ A number of alcohol-overdose deaths were linked to the location, and, in 2007 a thirty-five-year-old man fell to his death in an elevator shaft during a fight with an employee at B.E.D.

It would be a stretch to argue that this history had a direct influence on *Sleep No More*, but certain ghosts of this past echoed for me in a scene that might best be described as a witches’ rave-orgy.²¹ The scene took place in a bar on the fourth floor, which is a near-exact replica of the Manderley Bar below, except that the room is now in complete disarray, with broken bottles and upturned chairs, covered in dust and cobwebs. To

walk into the room is to experience the uncanny as a hit to the gut; I was reminded of a similar strategy for generating fear and disorientation in the video game series *Silent Hill* (Konami, 1999–present), where rooms unexpectedly transform into dark images of their former selves. The scene commences with Hectate's laugh and the shocking intrusion of drum and bass music, played at a deafening volume. This was the only contemporary music I encountered in the performance space, with a mix prominently featuring "Reece" by Ed Rush and Optical (Virus Recordings, 2005). The room is launched into pure darkness save for a rapid-fire strobe light, which renders all actions that follow into frozen tableaux. Three lithe female witches grab the boy witch and strip him completely naked; he then emerges from the dark wearing a goat's head. Macbeth enters the room, and the group engages in an extraordinarily homoerotic ritual involving even more nudity, a fountain of blood, and a dead infant, which the witches mockingly pretend to nurse. The combination of sound, light, and truly shocking imagery register with a massive, bodily blow.

MOVEMENT AND SOUND, ANTIC ROUNDS

Indeed, a key component of the soundscape of *Sleep No More* is the material impact of the sound produced there. And a great deal of this sound extends beyond the recorded tracks to include both the choreographed collisions of the performers and the less predictable noises generated by the audience. In a strange way, much of the music in *Sleep No More* seems geared toward shaping the experience of individual wanderers as they navigate the installation. Music and sound thus function quite differently than in traditional theater or dance, where music serves to undergird the performers' movements and a centralized narrative. Although the musical atmosphere does indeed seep into the general mood of the performances, in the heat of that action, by contrast, many of the scenes minimize music to rely directly on the sounds generated by the performers to heighten their dramatic impact. If the majority of the music within the production lures us into contemplation of the past, the thuds and crashes of the dancers jerk us back into the collective, embodied space of the present.

Maxine Doyle, co-director and choreographer of *Sleep No More*, worked to forge a physical language for the piece, one in which dialogue and narrative are adapted into the freighted meetings of bodies and spaces, paring texts down to the "unseen words."²² Nearly all the performers in this production were trained as dancers, and they range across the vast set with tremendous athleticism and command of space. Scenes occur as vignettes within rooms where characters' trajectories collide; these encounters are often violent or violently sexual. As tensions rise, the performers literally climb the walls, hanging suspended within doorframes through sheer momentum and strength. These moments, too, resonate with uncanniness; we are surprised by the unfixed boundaries of the body, by its capacity to do the unexpected, and by the space for accommodating such contortions.

For Doyle, questions of proximity are central within the immersive space of the installation. As the design, ambience, and sound encourage audiences to enter into the materiality of each room, the performers must respect and maintain that spatial relationship, further tightening the sense of physical immersion rather than partitioning space into safe areas for performing or spectating:

There's no concession to the physicality of the choreography in relation to the audience's proximity to it. And that's a challenge; audiences have to become part of the choreography, they have to engage with [it on] a kinetic level in order to survive. It becomes quite Darwinian.²³

There is an inherent unpredictability at work during these encounters and a high degree of intimacy. Audience members are startled into the rhythms and flows of the danced performances they stumble across on their journeys and are forced to react (by moving aside, by fleeing, or by following the performers as they break apart and move to other rooms). "One-on-one" encounters are written into the looping trajectories of each performer, as well, in which they solicit interactions with individual audience members.

The crescendos and denouements of the performers' movements throughout the space are deeply sonic, even if they are not buoyed by music in a traditional sense. The forceful sounds of the performers' bodies pierce through the recorded soundtrack, resonating above the more cautious shuffle of the audience members pulled in their tow. This being an adaptation of *Macbeth*, nearly every scene was marked by betrayal, conflict, and descents into madness and grief. Performers slammed into one another, and the walls, and the floors, with an abandon that was at times frightening. And the sounds of bodies hitting bodies and bodies hitting walls and objects sometimes coincided with shocks to one's own flesh. I was kicked on several occasions when I didn't move out of the way of dueling characters quickly enough, or, most memorably, when I had the misfortune of standing between a lovelorn nurse and a large taxidermied mountain goat she was paying tribute to in an enchanted forest. The experience, for me, generated a jarring awareness of my own physical presence within this space, precisely the realization that the theatrical apparatus, with its prosceniums, cushioned seats, and darkened auditoriums, seeks to avoid.

One of the strangest physical sounds within this installation is produced by the coalesced bodies of the audience members as they gravitate toward various characters. Shortly after entering the performance space for the first time, I realized that a stark division was being forged in terms of the audience's collective psychological response to this experiment. Some, like myself, were drawn toward exploring the space, breaking away from the pack to indulge in the fetishism of objects (books, letters, pelts, feathers, teeth, jars of candy, bins of tiny animal skulls). Others immediately attached themselves to characters and followed them from scene to scene and floor to floor. This is no easy task, as there is no "off time" for the performers, who are continuously partaking in some activity, including running full tilt in pursuit of other performers. Enormous packs of Lady Macbeth followers, for example, are always chasing after her down stairwells, with

varying degrees of athleticism, and getting tangled up with Duncan's entourage as it attempts to move the opposite way. The approach of a character, and thus a scene, could at times be thunderous.²⁴

In short, the experience of a performed scene within *Sleep No More* was always tinged by an acute awareness of one's own presence and the presence of the other masked figures surrounding you, and of the psychically charged, often tense relationships between all present. I felt this tension painfully when I walked into the lobby where Macbeth was in the process of murdering Lady MacDuff. She was extremely pregnant, with the contents of her suitcase strewn about her on the floor. Macbeth had lifted her off the ground and was slamming her limp body against the wall: BAM, BAM, BAM. There was much to signal this moment as a performance, most immediately the presence of a handful of white masked figures like myself watching. Yet the sound of Lady MacDuff's body as it hit, coupled by this strange group of silent onlookers, rendered the scene simultaneously real and surreal. As she fell to the floor, lifeless, Macbeth ran from the room and nearly all the observers took off in pursuit. I stayed behind with several others in stunned silence to witness MacDuff as he found his wife's body. Whatever had just happened felt horribly wrong, a sensation amplified by the masked participants' instinctual and somewhat unseemly responses.

ARCHITECTURES OF PLAY

This is, for me, the central paradox of *Sleep No More*: the uncanny realization that one is in "meatspace," a navigable, tangible world, that is nevertheless experienced as highly mediated, simulated by its architecture and ritualized interfaces (the masks, the prohibitions, the wordless dances of the performers). I felt a constant need to touch things to confirm that they were really there, and I witnessed many other participants doing the same. I suspect this is one reason the modality of immersive theater is so often compared to that of the videogame.

A sense of a transformed reality is key to theories of immersive media. Janet H. Murray offered one of the earliest considerations of immersion as a mediated phenomenon:

Immersion is a metaphorical term derived from the physical experience of being submerged in water. We seek the same feeling from a psychologically immersive experience that we do from a plunge in the ocean or swimming pool.... We enjoy the movement out of our familiar world, the feeling of alertness that comes from being in this new place, and the delight that comes from learning to move within it.²⁵

Digital designers seek to create immersive presence within the simulated environments they program. One can achieve that sensation of thrilling, playful alertness Murray describes through a direct engagement of the perceptual apparatus, although in a digital environment this is no easy task. Immersive presence in these contexts requires drawing many of the participants' senses away from their physical environment and into the

simulated one, as well as psychological immersion, whereby players are absorbed, mentally and emotionally, into the narrative and their own strategic navigation of the simulated world.²⁶

Sleep No More is, of course, dissimilar from videogames in many respects, most immediately because the immersion it provides is physical. Indeed, much of what may strike us as strange about the installation is that it feels like a dream or videogame image, but it is in fact an actual space filled with actual objects. Material immersion is thus *de facto* and requires no division of the senses. Questions of agency, however, are less clear-cut. Within the trajectory of a videogame, participant actions dictate the outcome of each sequence. Limits are, of course, programmed into the simulation, with a finite number of outcomes. And narratives and missions steer game players toward particular goals, namely "winning" or completing the game. But the evolution of gameplay is determined largely by the decisions of the player. Despite the more immediate "presence" of the audience within *Sleep No More*, each individual's actions have very little impact on the trajectory of the show. The storylines of each character continue to loop through their hourly cycle, relatively unchanged. We are present in this world, but seemingly only as mute witnesses.

Yet I would nevertheless argue for the importance of understanding the architectures of immersive theater in relation to gaming, in that each puts the experience of the individual participant at the center of their design, empowering them to experiment within the limits of constructed space.²⁷ Developments in gaming design and theory have complicated our understanding of gameplay and immersion in ways too diverse for me to summarize adequately here. Most relevant for our purposes are those environments and approaches that emphasize gameplay as process and that gesture toward Artaud's theatrical ideal: "direct communication . . . between the spectator and the spectacle."²⁸ David Parry, for example, has written about "sandbox-style" games, such as the *Grand Theft Auto* series (Rockstar, 1997–), open-ended digital environments in which players are given relative freedom to explore the boundaries of the gameworld, including the freedom to ignore or subvert narrative "missions." Parry suggests that digital gaming can be best understood as an event in which gamer and game are conjoined in a process of continual negotiation.²⁹ This process of negotiation in gameplay, for Parry, takes place in the space in between that which can be changed and that which remains fixed, between play and structure. Gamers game because they enjoy freedom and experimentation, the room to play with the new perceptive realities that games offer. Yet play always arises in relation to certain limits, the rules and structures that produce the architecture necessary for exploration to take place.

Sleep No More, too, can perhaps best be understood as a play-based experience. It is a very unusual sort of environment, in that meat- and game-space collapse in ways unattainable via a console. And it is a very unusual sort of game, in that there is no clear objective, no means of "winning." But much like a videogame, meaning in *Sleep No More* is created through the process and experience of participatory play, which is user driven, versus the fixity of a prewritten text or a predetermined finale. And the artistry of the project depends on the delicate balance between that which is open to negotiation and

the architecture that enables that playspace to exist. The designers for this production faced the daunting challenge of granting participants the semblance of unbounded freedom, thus minimizing awareness of any structure or constraints, while at the same time maintaining a safe and functional system, flung out across a six-floor structure, within a fixed timeframe. With such a large number of potential individual variances arising at every turn, the underlying structure of *Sleep No More* is deceptively rigid and tightly choreographed.

If we are to interpret *Sleep No More* as a play-based format, what, then, are the rules that govern participants' behaviors here, and what function do sound and music play in navigating these strictures?

SONIC ATTRACTORS

During my second visit to *Sleep No More*, I was startled to realize the degree to which sound dictated the behaviors of performers and audience members alike. My initial encounter with the production was of complete mystification. Performances seemed to occur spontaneously, and my own movements through the installation felt accidental and instantaneous. I was particularly floored when I found myself wandering into the hotel ballroom just as the final banquet scene was commencing, along with what appeared to be every single other audience member present that evening. Given the large number of us, and the amount of space we had to wander, it seemed inconceivable that we would all happen to arrive at this spot at precisely the same moment. Once I had gained a basic understanding of the floor plans, however, and was familiar with several major plot points, I became aware of the subtle cues that were built into all aspects of the production, from the strategic staging of scenes, the sealing off and opening up of certain passageways, and the use sound and light to subtly encourage participants to move in particular directions. There was something deflating about this realization, in that the mystery of the space was diminished. At the same time, recognizing the rules by which the production operated spurred a desire to "game the system," to methodically explore and push the margins of the installation and to buck the flow of the expected trajectory. Michael Abbott described a parallel response to the production: "I was struck by a familiar sense of open-world freedom, bound by intentional designer-imposed limits, but ultimately responsive to my desire to test those limits, tweak the system, and observe the results."³⁰

The strategic use of sound was most apparent in the moments just before a scene was to commence. Elements in the recorded sound design would shift, sometimes with the introduction of a new musical element played at an increased volume or more often through atmospheric shifts induced by low-frequency chords. The performers' voices intruded in staccato bursts at these moments as well, as did the sounds of their movements, slamming objects or other characters with reverberant force. Depending on where one was within the installation, these sounds served as attractors, turning

heads and luring curious wanderers into range. And, as the performance commenced, the wandering and browsing tended to cease. For the duration of the dance between characters, most participants stopped to watch, rapt. Coupled with lighting cues that functioned in tandem with the sound, the performance vignettes felt precisely like videogame “cutscenes.” Cutscenes or “in-game cinematics” are prerecorded video scenes (usually animated) triggered at certain moments during gameplay; in most instances, player interactivity is suspended for the duration of the scene. Cutscenes tend to provide narrative explication, aid in character development, or provide instructions for an upcoming mission (e.g., introducing a level boss before a battle).³¹ The dynamic of action–contemplation enacted between individual exploration and performed scene in *Sleep No More* is strikingly gamelike; the scenes themselves are deeply affecting, but they appear to function as a supplement to the player-driven modality that comprises the majority of one’s time within the production. That is to say that the relatively prescribed performance scenes within *Sleep No More* are not necessarily the key to understanding the work as a whole, and, although they play a critical role in shaping the experience, they are but one of many components (including design and lighting) that shape, guide, and add texture to the playspace. And understanding how sound functioned within those scenes, as a cue for the performers and as an beacon leading participants toward particular areas within the architecture, reveals much about the larger modality of the production.

In short, sound in *Sleep No More* serves as one of our primary means of experiencing and navigating space, and it does so in ways that resonate with gaming systems. Sound orients us within unfamiliar environments and creates a visceral connection among body, space, and the experience of movement. We might also say that sound can function as an “attractor,” encouraging players to move or perform in a particular way. Alison McMahan identifies attractors in three-dimensional gaming environments as elements that “tempt the user to go or do something”; attractors can include moving or shimmering objects that attract our attention and nonvisual objects that compel us through other sets of sensations, as well as manipulative objects that serve as tools or that shift dynamically through the spatiotemporal coordinates of the game.³² *Sleep No More* overflows with attractors, a great number of them visual (partially open drawers, jars of candy, curtains, and doors that beckon). Sonic attractors, although perhaps not always as obvious, are equally important in defining the experience of play.

Within the architecture of *Sleep No More*, sound moves us, prodding our instinctual responses in ways we may not even consciously recognize. As Karen Collins notes about sound in videogames, “anticipating action is a critical part of being successful in many games. Notably, acousmatic sound—sound with no clear origin visually—may inspire us to look to the direction of a sound, to ‘incite the look to go there and find out.’”³³ Surveying the wide range of sound cues used in *Sleep No More*, we might find that bodily slams attract us to action in a very base way (something exciting or dangerous is happening, come closer, get out of the way). Nonmusical sound effects (machinelike drones, wind) help to dictate ambience, but they also signal pending events. Likewise, sound and music in the installation can remind us that we’ve been in this room before, creating

a sonic map that allows us to navigate toward a desired location. Even within the realm of the "cutscene" performances, where player action is limited, sound (both live and recorded) and movements (which both respond to and produce sounds) prove salient forces in attracting audience attention and providing cohesiveness in the context of the larger installation. Sound and music, like many other structural elements in *Sleep No More*, produce certain "soft limits" that help to manage and make meaning out of the myriad subjective trajectories that constitute an evening's performance.

Attractors work to make sense of the architecture of *Sleep No More* and to build a thick web of intertextual references and conventions into the space. The experience of sound, image, touch, and smell is initially visceral and reactive, oriented toward the present yet serving at the same time as a trigger for buried, Proustian memory images. It is a highly interactive, open system, dependent on the actions of each participant—structured but nevertheless unpredictable. It is key to bear in mind that these sonic attractors operate within an enormous, multilevel space, traversed by hundreds of participants at any given moment. It would be physically impossible for individual audience members to encounter all, or even most, of these cues throughout their journeys, even taking into account the looped nature of the performances (the entire performance repeats once every hour, leading toward the finale at night's end). And there is no guarantee that each participant will respond to a cue in a predictable manner.

For some participants, this openness is experienced as frustration. As one visitor noted in an online gaming journal article, "The Perils of Too Much Choice":

It all seemed deliberate, certainly, but there were no clues distinguishing the melody from the (ample) noise. There was nothing in the McKittrick that called out "Pick me up! Read me! I'm essential to understanding this maze." There was no indication of what floor or which rooms we should visit first so as to be aware of where the performers were or where they were headed. Nothing shimmered. It was all equally enticing, or equally alienating.³⁴

Yet I would argue that this is one of the most remarkable achievements of this production, a feat that is particularly notable given contemporary audience's familiarity with a range of media/performance/narrative models: we are thrown into an environment where we have no idea what is expected of us or where "meaning" should be located. Despite the presence of attractors, significance and direction are left undetermined. This is the challenge Punchdrunk's work poses for those who try to write about it. It accounts as well for some of the contradictory responses to this piece. Within *Sleep No More*, all decisions made are utterly subjective, but the overall experience leaves some participants feeling cast adrift, or, paradoxically, manipulated. Is the key to the game held within the narrative, or is the point a thematic one? Is the objective to master the labyrinth, ferreting out all its hidden clues? Or is it to study the psychological responses of all the human guinea pigs struggling through this maze? If *Sleep No More* is a puzzle, is it a Borgesian garden of forking paths? Or is it a high-art haunted house, sensational and affecting, yet ultimately leading only toward the exit?

RHYTHMIC HAUNTINGS AND UNSEEN WORDS

Criticism of immersive theater as gimmicky or theme park-esque may stem from the realization by some audience members that their individual experience has in fact been preordained by the structure; they feel "had." Similar charges are invariably levied against nearly all interactive artworks that traffic in visceral, physical experiences, and these complaints frequently resort to comparisons with the midway funhouse.³⁵ Evidenced here is a deep-seated skepticism of entertainments based on physical sensations; such experiences might be momentary thrilling, in the eyes of critics, but are ultimately pandering and hollow. They cite a further sense of betrayal upon discovering that an encounter that felt unique and intimate was in fact a recurring part of the show. The coincidence of structure and play, then, might result in a rather duplicitous emotional event: the experience of an authentic, individual, deeply moving human exchange, which is in fact orchestrated in advance and repeated endlessly each evening.

I would offer several arguments to counter the cynicism of such a reading. The first is to assert that a corporeal level of engagement should not be viewed in opposition to critical thought. To do so is to reenact the problematic and politically suspect Cartesian mind-body divide and to dismiss the critical role that our bodies and perceptive organs play in any type of thought or aesthetic endeavor. It is important to recognize, as well, that the structure of an artwork does not necessarily function as a negative limit, nor is it always a vehicle of audience manipulation. A well-orchestrated structure, in a work of art, can serve as architecture for, quite literally, perceiving the world in a new way. If *Sleep No More* is imperfect, it is at the same time endlessly ambitious in its attempts to bring structure and meaning into dialogue with one another in a rigorous way. More specifically, the choreography and audiovisual design of *Sleep No More* work in tandem to translate the rhythms, repetitions, and reverberations of its originary text, *Macbeth*, into a physical, mobile assemblage of bodies and objects. And given that the basis of this adaptation is rooted in its rhythms, repetitions, and reverberations, I would argue that the work as a whole is deeply sonic, not only in its surface-level manifestations, but also in its inherent structure.

Although sound functions as one of the primary elements motivating participants' movements throughout the architecture of *Sleep No More*, it does a disservice to the richness of the soundscape to limit our understanding to this task alone. One of the aspects of *Sleep No More* that few critics have commented on is its strange and somewhat oblique fidelity to the rhythms of speech present in *Macbeth*, in particular to the elliptical songs of the three witches.

Macbeth is the most explicitly musical of Shakespeare's tragedies, with most of the calls for music occurring during the spectacular witches' scenes.³⁶ David L. Kranz discusses the ways in which the rhythm and cadence of the songs sung by the witches in *Macbeth* permeate the play as a whole, recurring in the speech of others (*Macbeth* and

Lady Macbeth in particular) and haunting the actions that follow. Indeed, the form of the witches' speech is as significant for him as the words themselves:

Through the most self-conscious manipulation of poetry—including diction, rhyme, alliteration, anaphora, chiasmus, rhythm, and meter—Shakespeare clogs the witches' verse with repetitive forms, doubling, tripling, and even quadrupling them. Indeed, the manner of the Weird Sisters' speech is at least as prominent as its meaning. No other lines in Shakespeare . . . can match this concatenation of sounds, this poetic compulsion to repetition.³⁷

The witches' songs are marked by recurring alliteration, internal rhyme, and childlike poetry. Yet these patterns seem to be infectious, emerging in the voices of other characters most strongly when they are alone and consumed by strong emotions or when they are sleepwalking or drunk. We hear this shift in meter when characters are in a suspended state of vulnerability, haunted by the past, in moments where there is heightened sensation but limited agency. The echoes of these indeterminate and mobile songs remain mysterious, seemingly generated not by a singular force or will, singing of a destiny that is predetermined.

The lack of dialogue in *Sleep No More* removes the literal language of the witches' poetry from the soundscape. But the exercise is not silent and, in fact, it demonstrates an increased reliance on echoes, repetitions, and conjured sounds. Some of these repetitions are directly sonic (recorded songs, musical themes, whispered phrases), some are gestural (tics and movements repeated by various performers), and some are thematic (the rhythmic recurrence of symbolic images across various rooms, of suitcases, of taxidermied animals). The production places its audience quite literally in a state of vulnerability, haunted by the past, in a suspended moment of heightened sensation. Agency exists, in terms of the range of directions and tactics one might adopt in exploring the location. But in terms of shaping the destiny of the narrative, participants are locked into the role of a ghost-like observer. Just as the Macbeths are consumed by unearthly songs, we, too, are possessed by melodies and sensations we cannot place, which move through us. This is an environment haunted by fragmented phrases and recurring patterns of expression, reverberating through a host of texts, themes, gestures, objects, structures, and bodies. The sound design works hard to set the timbre and rhythm for all these expressive elements, to provide a setting for them, and to move the participants through the dance.

In this context, Bernard Herrmann's scores take on an even deeper relevance. Their somewhat compulsive, spiraling phrases function precisely like the doubled and tripled poetry of the witches' songs, exposing the realm of the irrational swirling in the shadows of our waking life. Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* and Hitchcock's adaptation of that text, too, operate through the vertiginous descent of the narrator's voice, caught up in repetitive and contradictory movements ("Last night, I dreamt I went to Manderley again . . . We can never go back to Manderley again"). Repetition, for Freud, was closely linked to sensations of the uncanny. When we encounter unexplained repetitions (the "obstinate recurrence of a number," for example, throughout the course

of a day), we are inclined to “ascribe a secret meaning” to the pattern, to presume the hand of some cosmic force.³⁸ Each of the texts referenced in *Sleep No More* draws on a similar dynamic, using the repetition of gesture and theme to invoke an uncanny sensation—the irrational lurking behind the mundane. The repetition itself is highly ordered, governed by a structure that eludes and confines us, masking a dark ambivalence, and set on a predetermined course. This dynamic, I would argue, is the engine that drives the entire experience of *Sleep No More*. Like Lady Macbeth’s somnambulism, our actions within the McKittrick Hotel are guided by forces beyond us; we are trapped in a lucid dream.

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

Sleep No More is a production centered on the physical and psychological experiences of audience members, built on a scaffolding of recurring themes drawn from a wide range of cultural references. The connections forged among body, structure, and meaning take place largely through visceral sensations and unconscious triggers, a large number of them rhythmic and sonic. There is a strong evocation of the uncanny in nearly every aspect of the production, whereby the familiar is suddenly rendered unfamiliar and strange, plagued by inscrutable repetitions and fragmentary scenes. One’s navigation through this environment is further conflicted by the tension between agency and fate. Autonomy feels unprecedentedly ample here, but, at the same time, individual participants are limited in their capacity to alter the course of events that have already passed, cursed, as it were, to loop endlessly.

I have argued that *Sleep No More* draws on design structures associated with digital gaming systems. I return to this point as a means of conclusion, to point to another resonance between immersive theater and the videogame: the centrality of *style* in gameplay as a means of generating meaning within a system of preordained order. The most creative interactive games make use of structures that set productive limits, yet that are nevertheless malleable and encourage experimentation. “The challenge for the creator of an interactive narrative is to design the potential for play into the structure of the experience,” Eric Zimmerman writes, “and the real trick is that the designed structure can guide and engender play, but never completely script it in advance.”³⁹ David Parry makes a similar point about sandbox games, which privilege the process of negotiation, one’s *style* of playing, over teleological goals.⁴⁰ *Grand Theft Auto* players might argue in online forums, for example, not about who racked up the most points or finished first, but rather about the merits of their stylistic choices while doing so (what vehicle they used, what outfit they wore, what cheats they deployed, where to perform the best motorcycle tricks, what music they listened to, unorthodox uses for hidden objects).⁴¹ The rules of the gameworld must remain fixed in order to provide a meaningful space in which play can take place. Yet, paradoxically, part of the negotiation of gameplay is to continually push, subvert, and challenge those rules.

What styles of play are enabled within *Sleep No More*, and is there space left open for unscripted experimentation? On the one hand, there are diverse participatory approaches demonstrated at every performance and observing one's own style as it emerges (consciously or unconsciously) is one of the most rewarding parts of the experience. On my second visit, I forced myself to resist looking down when a character caught my gaze; I became more brazen in my engagement with the architecture, slipping behind characters to open doors I had not seen during my first visit, discovering secret passages. I found that anonymity generated a certain confidence in exploring public space, one that is often more difficult to access beyond the boundaries of the game.

I'd further suggest that some of the limits imposed by the structure of the production, such as the inability to alter the trajectory of the narrative, are consistent with the thematic arc of the work, as mapped through its references to *Macbeth*, *Rebecca*, and *Vertigo*. Each of these works centers on a character caught up in a descent into the irrational, on a path they cannot control. Each work invokes the dread of that descent via rhythms and repetitions that are not merely understood, but felt. The designers of *Sleep No More* have created an analogous structure, one that builds on and amplifies that experience. That this experience can be disorienting and frustrating is precisely the point. The stylistic challenge lies in responding to the provocation and in working to understand the nuances and depths of the dynamic.

As is the case with digital games, questions of consumerism have dogged immersive productions. And there are reasons to be wary of the intrusion of capital in the spheres of game-based art, for precisely the same reason that these works are so appealing. Immersive productions are viscerally thrilling, they encourage multiple engagements, and, as such, they are easily marketed and sold. *Sleep No More* has become a full-blown New York phenomenon, with numerous celebrity shout-outs and a featured episode of *Gossip Girl*.⁴² And Punchdrunk partnered directly with Playstation 3 in September 2011 to design an immersive installation in the tunnels beneath Waterloo Station to promote the launch of the game *Resistance 3*.⁴³ I mention these commercial tie-ins not to diminish Punchdrunk's remarkable work. The interest their immersive approach has generated speaks to its inventiveness, which has registered with audiences from well outside the purview of traditional theater. But there is an obvious temptation to commodify experience, and we can only hope that this temptation won't diminish the creativity, breadth, or style of play engendered by future productions. The experience of live immersion can be mesmerizing and, as evidenced by *Sleep No More*, capable of engaging with rigorous ideas in surprising, moving ways. The possibilities for extending and transforming the function of music in these types of environments are seemingly endless. Music, too, is experienced as process, as movement, as flow, as a medium governed by both structure and irrational excesses, by temporal disjuncture, and by a lingering, often unresolved affect. That immersive theater is so sonically driven makes it a format of great importance for the fields of sound and audiovisual media studies. One can scarcely imagine a more fruitful space in which to bring to life a host of unheard melodies.

NOTES

1. Adapted from Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca* [1938] (New York: Perennial, 2001), 1.
2. Earlier versions of this work were produced in 2003, in the Victorian-era Beaufoy Building in London, and in 2009, in the Old Lincoln School in Brookline, Massachusetts. The scope of the project was extensively expanded for the New York installation.
3. Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press), 96.
4. See Andrew Dickson, "Immersive Theatre: It Was a Ghost in the Library with a Violin," *The Guardian*, July 4, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2011/jul/04/immersive-theatre>; Steve Baltin, "Perry Farrell: Jane's Addiction Tour Inspired by 'Boardwalk Empire' Era," *Rolling Stone*, January 31, 2012, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/perry-farrell-janes-addiction-tour-inspired-by-boardwalk-empire-era-20120131>; "Cans Festival, Banksy Exhibition," *Pinewood Design* (blog), May 4, 2008, <http://pinewooddesign.co.uk/2008/05/04/the-cans-festival-banksy-street-exhibition/>; Jasper Rees, "Street Art Way Below the Street," *New York Times*, October 31, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/01/arts/design/01underbelly.html>.
5. Felix Barrett, "Felix Barrett in Discussion with Josephine Machon, February 2007, Battersea Arts Center, London," *Body, Space and Technology Journal* 7, no. 1 (2007): 3–4, <http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/volo701/>.
6. Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny' [1919]," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 241.
7. Barrett, "Felix Barrett in Discussion with Josephine Machon," 2.
8. Other reviewers recount seeing Hectate lip-syncing Tony Bennett's version of the same song (1969) on a different floor, at the same time that this performance takes place.
9. Both the UK and Boston productions of *Sleep No More* incorporated more direct references to *Rebecca* (including characters inspired by the film), and promotional materials for the shows included a poster with a Saul Bass-inspired font and an image of a Victorian home drawn from *Psycho*. See the Punchdrunk website, <http://www.punchdrunk.org.uk/>. The Bass font remains for the New York production, but the direct narrative references have been downplayed.
10. Barrett confirmed that the references to *Rebecca* had been minimized in this production: "I think now we've made it a more broad, generic film noir landscape." Felix Barrett and Maxine Doyle, interview by Leonard Lopate, *The Leonard Lopate Show*, NPR, July 5, 2011. Many interviews and reviews of the work reiterate the presence of "1930s noir elements." See, for example, Jed Lipinski, "He Puts the Maximus in the Circus," *New York Times*, May 4, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/05/fashion/05upclose.html>. The film historian in me feels compelled to call this characterization into question. Although the film noir style is challenging to delineate, nearly all accounts suggest that film noir began in the early 1940s. I'd press this point because my impression of *Sleep No More* did not suggest a noir visual palette, nor did the dynamics between characters resonate with prototypical noir narratives. I would argue for Herrmann's scores as a more relevant reference point here, where conflict is more diffuse, cyclical, and unresolved. Barrett himself intimates that it was Herrmann who inspired his staging more than Hitchcock; see Barrett, "Felix Barrett in Discussion with Josephine Machon," 12.

11. Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 151–152.
12. *Ibid.*, 150.
13. *Ibid.*, 153.
14. Brown gives the example of the G-E-flat third, which "can be the top two notes of the C minor triad (see the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for instance) or the bottom two notes of the E-flat major triad." Brown, *Overtones*, 152.
15. *Ibid.*, 153.
16. *Ibid.*, 168.
17. *Ibid.*, 153.
18. Many thanks to John Richardson for this and other insights on the relevance of Herrmann in this context.
19. See Tara Kyle, "Punchdrunk 'Immersive Theater' Group Seeks to Replace Mega Clubs in West Chelsea," *DNAINfo.com*, November 10, 2010, <http://www.dnainfo.com/20101110/chelsea-hells-kitchen/punchdrunk-immersive-theater-group-seeks-replace-mega-clubs-west-chelsea>; and Isaiah Wilner, "The Short, Drunken Life of Club Row," *New York Magazine*, February 11, 2007, <http://nymag.com/news/features/27845/>.
20. Wilner, "The Short, Drunken Life of Club Row."
21. Interestingly, Colin Nightingale, a producer at Punchdrunk, noted that nearly all the core members of the company had been involved in the electronic music scene in the United Kingdom and suggested that their experiences with multifloor musical happenings were a greater influence on their installations than gaming. Panel discussion, "Theater Rethunk: An Alternative History of the Theatrical," Congress for Curious People, Coney Island Museum, Brooklyn, April 22, 2012.
22. Maxine Doyle, "Maxine Doyle in Discussion with Josephine Machon, November 2006," *Body, Space and Technology Journal* 7, no. 1 (2007): 3, <http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/volo701/>.
23. *Ibid.*
24. At these moments, the New York production of *Sleep No More* can be a victim of its own enormous success. The crush of onlookers during some scenes interferes with one's ability to experience anything but the crowd. And the tenor of the audience at a performance in late 2011 was markedly less respectful than one earlier that year, with some participants pushing to position themselves to be chosen for coveted one-on-one exchanges. It seems that repeat visitors and the circulation of spoilers online have diminished the sense of the unknown within the show.
25. Janet H. Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 98–99.
26. Alison McMahan, "Immersion, Engagement, and Presence: A Method for Analyzing 3-D Video Games," in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003), 77.
27. Gaming practices have been asserting an influence in theater on several different fronts. The Brick Theater in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, stages an annual Game Play festival, featuring works that explore the boundaries of performance and gaming technology and culture.
28. Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, 96.
29. David Parry, "Playing with Style: Negotiating Digital Game Studies," in *The Meaning and Culture of Grand Theft Auto: Critical Essays*, ed. Nate Garrelts (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 2006), 228–229.

30. Michael Abbott, "Blood Play," *Brainy Gamer* (blog), July 6, 2011, http://www.brainygamer.com/the_brainy_gamer/2011/07/bloody-play.html.
31. Numerous bloggers have made similar observations regarding the gamelike qualities of *Sleep No More*. For two of the best, see Abbott, "Blood Play," and Dan Dickinson, "Games of 2011: *Sleep No More*," *Dan Dickinson: The Primary Vivid Weblog*, December 25, 2011, <http://vjarmy.com/archives/2011/12/games-of-2011-sleep-no-more.php>.
32. Alison McMahan, "Immersion, Engagement, and Presence," 76.
33. Karen Collins, *Game Sound: An Introduction to the History, Theory, and Practice of Video Game Music and Sound Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 130, with a reference to Michel Chion, *AudioVision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia, 1990).
34. Katherine Coldiron, "The Perils of Too Much Choice," *Escapist Magazine*, November 15, 2011, <http://www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/features/9215-The-Perils-of-Too-Much-Choice>.
35. Carsten Höller's 2011 *Experience* exhibition at the New Museum, for example, received the following review: "takes every device from a traveling carnival except the concession stands... more about emptying your mind than it is about contemplating a specific philosophical question." Paddy Johnson, "Naked and Nauseated at the New Museum," *L Magazine*, November 9, 2011, <http://www.thelmagazine.com/newyork/naked-and-nauseated-at-the-new-museum/Content?oid=2190773>.
36. Nicholas Brooke cites Frances Shirley in making this claim. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, ed. and with an introduction by Nicholas Brooke (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 36. For a detailed chronology of revisions, musical additions, and contentions regarding the composers for songs used in productions of *Macbeth*, see Nicholas Brooke's Appendix B, "Musical Additions" in *ibid*, 225–233 and Robert E. Moore, "The Music to *Macbeth*," *The Musical Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (1961): 22–40.
37. David L. Kranz, "The Sounds of Supernatural Soliciting in *Macbeth*," *Studies in Philology* 100, no. 3 (2003): 350–351.
38. Freud, "The Uncanny," 238.
39. Eric Zimmerman, "Narrative, Interactivity, Play, and Games: Four Naughty Concepts in Need of Discipline," in *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, ed. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 160.
40. David Parry, "Playing with Style," 233.
41. *Ibid*, 236.
42. "The Big Sleep No More," *Gossip Girl*, season 5, episode 7, aired November 14, 2011 by CW.
43. The installation, entitled "...and darkness descended," put small groups of participants through a grueling live-action mission underground. See Tom Hoggins "Punchdrunk and Resistance 3 Present '...and Darkness Descended,' Waterloo Station Arches (review)," *The Telegraph*, September 5, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/8742127/Punchdrunk-and-Resistance-3-present-...and-darkness-descended-Waterloo-Station-Arches-review.html>.

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