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Title: Zombies, time machines and brains: science fiction made real in immersive theatres

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Abstract

Critical thought on immersive theatres is gathering in pace with many arguments centred on explorations of audience/performer interaction and the unique relationship these theatres create. Within this paper I look beyond these debates in order to consider the implications of immersive theatres within contemporary culture, with the aim of furthering the ways in which immersive theatres are presently being framed and discussed. Theatre and science fiction have shared a somewhat limited relationship compared to their burgeoning usage within other forms of entertainment. This paper focuses on how the conceits of science fiction are being staged within this theatrical setting. Primary focus is given to Punchdrunk's *... and darkness descended* (2011) and *The Crash of the Elysium* (2011– 2012). This is considered alongside The Republic of the Imagination's (TROTI) *Cerebellium* (2012–14), an original narrative created for the performance which has been subsequently developed over a three-year period to date. This discussion is presented and framed through my personal experience as both a performer *in Cerebellium* and (later) as audience member. The particular use of dystopian narratives and alternate worlds is given consideration, with reflection on the way these works destabilize and call into question the audience's sense of self either through their ability to survive or understand their sense of self. By making evident the spectrum of practice, I endeavour to delve further into identifying and de-mystifying immersive theatres and their differences to conventional theatre.

Keywords

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Introduction

Immersive theatres[2] have gained popularity in recent years as a form of theatre where spatial, participatory and sensory modes of performance combine, enabling the audience to interact to greater or lesser degrees with the performer or performance space. Audiences may freely roam large meticulously-designed spaces, fully encompassed in the fictional world created for the performance. Alternatively, they may be guided in or partly led through a space where, whilst the route is the same for each audience member, it is traversed alone as an audience of one. Within this form new narratives and reimaginings of stories have been offered to the audience. Familiar plays have been reconstructed within an exploratory framework, offering a fragmented and audience centred account of the narrative concentrated on the audience's experience and journey through the performance. Alternative formats have focused on scenarios and the audience's response to a series of particular situation(s). Other performances use a gentler and unhurried approach, predominantly engaging the audience through the senses.

Collectively, these diverse encounters have been prominently described as 'experiential' (see Machon, 2013; Alston, 2013; Groot-Nibblelink, 2012). Yet, the range of experiences on offer differs greatly in terms of how they stimulate the audience. Aside from the variety of experiences proffered as 'immersive', critical thinking has seen initial conceptualizing centred on understanding the dynamic play enacted by the immediacy of the encounter between the performer and the audience (see Hill and Paris, 2014; Machon, 2013; Bauwens et al., 2013).

Currently there have been no attempts to consolidate the range of immersive experiences on offer, perhaps it will prove an impossible task. Whether an audience of one or many, the audience's encounter with the performance is influenced by their mode and direction of travel through the performance (either self-directed or informed by the space), and whether they are required to verbalize and share personal narratives. In addition, the way the performance is understood through the body's senses, either in interacting with objects or performers or through an awareness of one's physical movements through the space, can also vary.

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[2] . The author uses the pluralization of the term immersive theatre as described by Josephine Machon (2013) to include the range of practices and forms which can be considered under the collective banner 'immersive'. This allows for differences in the employment of the techniques of participation, senses and space, which combine to create varying degrees of immersivity in performances.

This paper will explore the particular use of science fiction narratives within immersive theatres in order to examine the different forms of experience on offer. It will also consider the use of the science fiction narrative's link to dystopian fictional 'worlds' which frequent immersive theatre narratives. It will discuss how dystopian worlds relate to the use of the science fiction narrative as a 'warning' against contemporary lifestyles.

Whilst central to the organization of the performance and the way the audience experiences it, this paper seeks to move the discussion into uncharted territory, in considering a particular kind of narrative that has emerged in several performances: that of science fiction, and how it can be used to understand the different approaches to immersion in theatre.

Background

Assessments of science fiction largely relate to other types of media than theatre (Bould et al., 2009), perhaps because of the rarity with which they come together and attention being given to other aspects of the work. Its inclusion in conventional theatre writing is infrequent, usually representing a terrifying and unpleasant fictional reality, or described as loosely 'futuristic' (Indick, 1997: 19), which has continued into contemporary performance. As an example, Sarah Kane's work has mostly been discussed in terms of the violence of the action portrayed rather than through considering the prospect of the dystopian future world it presents, a feature which has become readily associated with science fiction narratives (Murphy, 2009). Descriptions focus on the brutality of the actions at hand (Göhkhan, 2011) rather than on the dystopic nature of the world Kane created, such as in *Cleansed* (1998), where Tinker brutalizes other characters through surgical procedures. It has been suggested that the infrequent combination of theatre and science fiction narratives in the past may result from the difficultly of staging these types of narratives through a live medium, where they are often associated with futuristic, vast and advanced technological status (Indick, 1994). Whilst the solution is offered in making use of the off-stage theatre conceit (Indick, 1994), immersive theatres offer the potential for vast roaming spaces where elaborate staging can meet with the expectations of presenting 'other worlds' in a more complex way. Although these events may allow for the 'spectacle' of science fiction to be more fully realized, Indick's warning against the dominance of the visual is, nevertheless, an important consideration (1994: 245).

The practice of less conventional forms of theatre, and the increasing use of technology in performance have permitted for advances in their inclusion in theatre. Farnell

has discussed the way performance art has brought together theatre with science fiction through a demonstration of the 'posthuman' body (Farnell, 2000: 109). His description of the work of Stelarc demonstrates a materialization of Donna Haraway's theoretical concepts in relation to the cyborgean body (Haraway, 1991) through a 'literalization of the science fiction metaphor' (Farnell, 2000: 123). Similarly, Orlan's many surgical operations demonstrate the permeability of the flesh with foreign objects and instruments. The use of technology in performance art practices has opened up discussion of the ways in which theatre may address and utilize science fiction within its narratives. The use of the performer's own body to integrate technology within it and be affected by it has been a crucial part of this process. Maria Abramović's *Rhythm 2* (1974) saw the artist explore the side effects of man-made drug treatments, making evident their effects through her work. The use of science fiction narrative in immersive theatres provides an opportunity to explore the ways in which innovative forms of live art utilize and make evident science fiction narratives in newly imagined ways.

Science fiction narratives in immersive theatres

Punchdrunk Theatre has become synonymous with the production of large-scale immersive theatres using epic landscapes (usually warehouses and disused buildings). The company has employed the science fictional narrative in several works which reimagine existing stories in line with other performances the company has produced. First formed in 2000, the company has revised well-known stories such as *Macbeth*, reimagined as *Sleep No More* (2003) in a falling-down hotel building where setting and location merged in the telling of the story. Most recently the company took Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and presented it as *The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable* (2013–14), told as a story of two halves where the familiar characters of the play are presented through two intertwining stories. In line with their re-imagining of well-known narratives, two performances – *The Crash of the Elysium* (2011–12) and *... and darkness descended* (2011) have used existing science fiction narratives and re-worked them into the Punchdrunk form. *The Crash of the Elysium*, based on the popular BBC series *Doctor Who*, was orientated to a younger audience than that of the average Punchdrunk performance. The audience is placed in the role of assisting the Doctor on one of his adventures as he endeavour's to rescue earth. The rescue takes place within the accustomed allotted time of 60 minutes, as in the television series. Several pre-recorded on-screen appearances were made throughout the performance by (then Doctor) Matt Smith. The audience is given the chance to experience the world of Doctor Who as they physically run,

chase after and accomplish a number of tasks to aid the Doctor in his familiar role of saving the universe once more. Similarly ... *and darkness descended* (2011), designed to launch the game *Resistance 3* for Sony PlayStation, accomplishes a comparable task, albeit for an adult audience and within a smaller scope of time (just 15 minutes). Performed underground beneath London's Waterloo Station, the audience is placed in the role of 'resistance fighters' and despatched with a definitive mission to a deliver an important message to the central character of the game. Shadowed figures emerge from the dark and the familiar immersive custom of moving through dimly-lit spaces is paired with a detailed set design, where documents, papers and other objects support and inform the fictional world created. In both performances the audience's senses are encapsulated beyond the usual visual spectacle of theatre, as the performance space marries smell, touch and sound to the fictional environment, thus immersing the audience in the theatrical spectacle. One critic noted:

> Within is a world painted in shadow, but the finer details still impress. As our dim torchlight dances in the blackness, we see scattered newspapers, detailing the fall of man at the hand of alien invaders. As a lifelong gamer, I am virtually trained in exploring every nook and cranny, harvesting detail and information. I'm not disappointed. Ruffling through a wastepaper basket, I find a printed distress call. It doesn't mean anything to our task at hand, but it's there as part of a fuller picture. (Higgins, 2011)

Whilst only a short performance, the level of detail is aimed at creating a believable and scintillating experience that offers a level of encounter beyond that of the video game: instead of an avatar handling objects within the game, the audience member is able to physically and directly touch and hold each item. Although virtual design is edging ever closer to encapsulating the complete sensory experience, theatre (at least for the present) is able to offer a sensory encounter beyond that of the current gaming experience. The status of these events as theatre is certainly precarious and must be considered on a continuum when compared with other events. Similar experiences, such as zombie encounters at recent San Diego Comi Con events, based on the television series *The Walking Dead* (2010–14), offer a less complete sensory and narrative encounter through a limited transformation of the performance environment. These events place emphasis on the thrill of the experience, in attempting to frighten the audience and challenge their survival instincts, even though it is fictitious. From personal experience and anecdotal comments provided by the audience, performances such as *Cerebellium* (2012–2014), appear to offer an experience at the other end of the spectrum.

Whilst Punchdrunk has become ubiquitous, with vast roaming spaces, their formula is not the only approach used in designing immersive theatre performances, nor the only use of science fiction narratives within this form of theatre. The Republic of the Imagination's (TROTI) recent collaboration with Bangor University and Pontio saw the creation of *Cerebellium* in 2012. The performance has undergone two further re-incarnations in 2013 and 2014. I was able to encounter this work both as performer and audience member, constructing a twofold account of the performance which informs this discussion.

TROTI's intentionally misspelt *Cerebellium* (2012–14) plays upon the often wrongly pronounced cerebellum, where an unintended 'i' is often inserted into its pronunciation. The performance attempts to capture the misconception of the 'i' idiom within one's own reality, through demonstrating how the senses provide an illusory version of reality. Created in a university laboratory, the space is designed to enhance the believability of the performance and unsettle the audience's perception of the world through the series of illusory experiments presented. In the 2012 version, the audience's role was based on the pretext that they were part of an independent jury being conducted as part of an ethical review of the project. The audience is provided with a short history of how 'Project K' was initiated, thereby creating consciousness in a brain in a laboratory vat (Figure 1). They are told that they will see the laboratory for themselves and meet with staff from the study, before seeing Project K directly. The audience is provided with three choices: following their visit to the laboratory they must decide whether the project should be terminated with immediate effect, if Project K (or Kevin, as the audience comes to know him) should be told about his status, or whether the research should continue under its current guise.

Figure 1. about here.

The audience is led through the performance one at a time. The performers (in the role of research staff) present a series of illusions to challenge the audience's perception of reality. One room, lit with a murky brown/yellow light (the sodium room; see Figure 2), reveals a spectrum of colour when a torch is passed over any object in the room. Each sense is challenged in turn through a series of interconnecting rooms and corridors. A 'tilted axis' room shifts the audience's sense of gravity through a carefully angled space, briefly dis-orientating one's sense of direction. Another room presents a series of visual illusions to test vision, making flat surfaces appear to ripple and black circles appear where initially only white circles are visible.

Figure 2. about here.

In its second incarnation the same performance space was used in reverse, ensuring that returning audience members would experience something linked to, but different from, the first performance. In its second year, the story is presented in continuation from the previous year: despite the votes made by the first year's audience, the (fictional) ethics committee has decided to close down the experiment. The audience is told that the lead professor has now sealed himself within the laboratory in protest, whilst protestors have been trying to secure the power sources outside of the building to prevent Kevin's termination. Some of the illusions were re-worked whilst new ones were also introduced. Whilst offered as theatrical play, the evolution and continuation of the narrative over the same period between performances and the utilization of psychological illusions cause one's sense of reality to be de-stabilized and questioned.

The difference between Punchdrunk's fast-paced narratives of ... *and darkness descended* and *The Crash of the Elysium* is made evident in *Cerebellium*'s dissimilar style of delivery. For *Cerebellium*, audience members arrive in small groups, being initially introduced to the performance narrative together, before being led off at intervals one at a time. Each action is performed slowly and methodically, allowing time for sensations and ideas to be absorbed. In this way, the performance provides an opportunity for self-reflection, as the narrative turns its attention to the audience, calling on them to question their perception of reality, giving space for pause and reflection. Whilst the audience is manically thrust back into reality in ... *and darkness descended*, *Cerebellium*'s last space, a decompression room, allows time for composure and discussion as the audience are reunited with their original arrival group once more.

Science fiction made real?

Immersive theatres augment some of the ways that science fiction narratives have been contemplated in other literary forms. They offer a physical realization of the 'feelies' described in Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World* (1932), where the senses are utilized as part of the storytelling process. In immersive theatres the audience is able to move within a three-dimensional multi-sensory environment where it is addressed not only visually and aurally but through a determined attempt to induce the additional senses of touch, taste and

smell in a directly acknowledged way. In this way, immersive theatres represent a particular dyad of audience response to space, participation, and the senses. It has been suggested that the 'feelies' in Huxley's novel demonstrate how art can be 'reduced to signifying itself, its emptiness of other meanings' (Mota, 2000: 42) as a symbol of postmodernism. The focus on the senses in TROTI's work results in the performance meaning something in the moment to a particular audience member, as the narrative intertwines itself with their perspective by particularly asking for their response to what they see, hear, feel, touch and smell. The performance effectively means different things to different people, based on their internal perception. This is exposed in *Cerebellium*'s third iteration, as the audience are shown illusions in pairs, experiencing them in turn and listen to their different interpretations. For example, in naming a series of bottled smells as either 'good' or 'bad', they witness one another's different appraisals of each scent. The interaction between performers and individual audience members allows for discrete differences in the story to emerge, as the audience members reveal personal anecdotes in conversation with performers (the late Adrian Howells one-on-one performances perhaps the most well-known of this format). TROTI'S *Cerebellium* (2012–14) narrative encourages the audience members to question their own perception of the world around them through the performance, by turning their reflections inward during the course of the performance.

Immersive theatres frequently resist linear or set narratives in the way they are staged and tell the story. The maze-like structures of Punchdrunk's work means that the audience can stumble upon different aspects of the story in any order. Even the most competent of audience who chase a particular character through the performance is likely to see, at a glimpse other story elements in action. This fragmentation may lead to deviations in the story; the vast structures of some of Punchdrunk's performances often contain more material than can be viewed within the duration of one performance (their recent show *The Drowned Man* (2013–14) contained more than 13 hours of material in the three-hour show). In this context the performance is based on the audience's experience of it, with the narrative being effected by the audience's viewing position in relation to the work, their individual movements through the space, and the extent of the interactions that they may have (either with the props, set and/or performers). In both cases the performance responds to and is informed by the audience members' movements and interactions, whether wilfully or unconsciously decided, dividing the meaning of the performance into multiple strands and possibilities.

Reviewing *The Drowned Man* performance, critic Lyn Gardner described it as disregarding mutual care between audience members to help one another through the space, commenting that 'it can be every man and woman for themselves' (Gardner, 2013). Certainly, the zombie narrative lends itself to an 'every man for himself' approach, although some commentators of *... and darkness descended* have described feelings of comradeship (see quote from Higgins, 2011, below). In the context of this latter performance, this attitude entirely fits with expectations of the narrative: to see if one is able to survive through the zombie apocalypse. Punchdrunk provides a degree of narrative context to the work, with particular aims and objectives. Whilst criticism to date has focused on the work of selected theatre companies, the continuum of immersive practice identified here presents these works in a scale: from complex sets and narratives through to more simplistic events which provide the essence or essential spatial frameworks necessary for the theatrical to emerge. Simplistic goals and storylines offer a way into framing such events where a fast-paced performance both delight and thrill the audience.

The inclusion of *The Walking Dead* immersive encounter at the San Diego Comi Con aimed to provide participants with an opportunity to experience a first-hand encounter of evading 'walkers'. In this instance the narrative is drastically paired down, making the experience largely physical and centred on negotiating past the zombie characters which populate the performance space. Furthermore, the space is only partially transformed for the event and carries advertisements for the programme. In this sense it offers a theatrical event but one that is less complex than works such as *Cerebellium*. The two events share several qualities: they rely on the audience to move through the performance, the audience is able to physically encounter each space using the body's senses, and both place the audience within a particular context in relation to the story. These similarities make evident the sliding scale of participatory events of which immersive theatres are a part. At one end they operate using complex text-based stories with high levels of sensory details, which can be personally evocative and emotive. At the other end of the spectrum, a limited plot provides the essence of a narrative to provide a basic structure to the performance, preferring to rely on physicalizing the event for the audience by providing quick flash reactive environments. As Gardner (2010) notes, these experiences may generate fresh audiences for theatre by re-imagining not only the way narratives are explored but the very subject matter they engage with. Theatre's resistance to popular culture has in the past been acknowledged (Modleski, 1986), but the current trend for interactive and immediate experiences across media platforms

may promote ways for theatre to utilize the nature of the live medium to its advantage, introducing new modes and subjects for storytelling.

Dystopian worlds in immersive theatres

Each immersive theatre company has its own style of working which creates fundamental differences in the employment of the science fiction narrative. The use of science fiction also corresponds with the use of dystopian worlds which populate the settings of many immersive theatre performances these worlds are represented as frequently in decay, the edges torn from pages, buildings and surfaces throughout the space. The examination of these performances will move toward discussing the implications of the dystopian world and the use of the science fiction narrative. Here I emphasize the frequent link to dystopian fictional 'worlds', and discuss how this relates to the use of the science fiction narrative as 'warning' against contemporary lifestyles. I will also consider how these theatres address current societal concerns and the imposed 'fearful state' of 21st-century civilization. It has been noted that science fiction can remind us 'of the 'fundamental relationship between our embodiment and our identities' (Farnell, 2000: 116). It is this, I would suggest, which results in their employment in immersive theatres, in offering relevance and meaning to the everyday in their exploration of analogous facets of the individual through interaction and movement within the performance.

The popular zombie narratives of contemporary gaming, film and television culture explored in *... and darkness descended* (2011, based on the PlayStation game *Resistance 3*, as already mentioned), allows the audience to experience first-hand an apocalyptic world from an established storyline within gaming, offering the audience an opportunity to play the game in the flesh. Locating the performance underground, the space is designed to feel, smell and replicate the game environment, as the space convinces us of and supports the unfolding narrative. In placing audiences in visceral environments, the distance of the screen is removed and with it a sense of safety. Having been 'experienced', these performances provide a sense of belief that the audience can apparently face such troubles and (optimistically) overcome, or at the very least survive them – the voyeuristic audience presented as hero. Nonetheless, the audience may discover an unpleasant truth: its inability to endure in such a precarious landscape. One critic described the experience as 'the thrill of teamwork and interactivity of video games, together with the high production values and human touch of contemporary theatre' (Higgins, 2011). The theatrical performance offers the

chance for the audience to physically encounter the characters and scenarios of the game to see if they can, through their own bodies, survive the gameplay. Whilst still in the realms of fictional narrative, the physical presence of the audience's body within the performance space allows for the experience to be felt as well as seen. Audience members do not watch an avatar on screen moving through the space but move through it with their own bodies. The similarity between the two forms (of immersive theatres and gaming), has been acknowledged (McMullan, 2014)[3], identified in their use of interaction, gameplay and movement through a space. It is therefore unsurprising to see narratives employed in the one form being transmogrified to the other.

Cynically, these experiences can be interpreted as operating within a consumerist framework, driving interest in the game through another source of popular entertainment. Punchdrunk has conducted other collaborative works with alcohol brand Stella Artois for *The Black Diamond* (2011) and *The Night Chauffeur* (2010), neither of which appears on the company's list of past shows, asserting these works as 'partnerships' separate from their main body of work (Punchdrunk, 2014). Yet, as with *The Walking Dead* event (discussed above), they may also be interpreted as operating with an increasing 'participatory culture' (Jenkins et al., 2009) where the same franchise can be accessed through multiple means. *The Crash of the Elysium* (2011–12) is included in Punchdrunk's list of past shows and is a similar tie-in to a popular television programme. The show, directed at a family audience, allows the opportunity to participate in and assist the Doctor in one of his adventures. Both of these performances by Punchdrunk link to other platforms allowing audiences to get closer to their favourite science fiction narratives; it is no longer enough to watch in the privacy of one's home. The opportunity to share an experience with others and encounter a story first-hand is potentially a rejoinder to criticisms levelled at screen technology in removing personal and social interaction (Turkle, 2011). In its appearance at the Manchester International Festival in 2011, some audience members met with (then Doctor) Matt Smith for the final part of the mission (Manchester International Festival, n.d.). Not only are the works blurring fiction and reality by their physical experience of the performance, but in featuring actors tangibly both in character and in the flesh (rather than mediated by a screen) they encourage further distorting of the boundaries between imagined and real-world activity. Yet these well-constructed environments remain a form of play: contained within a visible set space, with

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[3] I do, however, disagree with McMullan's argument that theatre is 'taking its cue' from gaming. Instead I recognize the immersive as having emerged from previous participatory forms of theatre. Nevertheless, one's popularity may have perhaps given rise to the other.

mechanisms of escape, advertised and constructed as theatrical events. The implementation of these parameters acts as a replacement of the screen interface, separating one realm from the other.

Dystopian narratives have been described as a way to 'critique timely political issues' (Murphy, 2009: 477). The use of dystopian worlds is a frequent characteristic of immersive theatre performances, not only where the science fictional narrative is employed, but in their presentation of worlds where there is a sense of decay and lack. This is borne out through the spatial design, where carefully selected locations replicate the plot, as seen in the performances outlined above.

Cerebellium, ... and darkness descended and *The Crash of the Elysium* all refer to worlds which are dysfunctional or ruinous for humanity. The zombie narrative of ... and darkness descended may be the most apparently dystopian, serving to explore the relationship between 'vehicles for expression of the ever accelerating viral nature of global capitalism' (Boluk and Lenz, 2010: 127). This is particularly ironic considering the promotion of the *Resistance 3* game which the performance was designed to support. *The Crash of the Elysium* begins harmlessly, but the peace is quickly interrupted when the spaceship on which the audience is placed crashes. The collision results in the escape of some of the most notorious figures from the contemporary Doctor Who series: the weeping angels, their favoritism amongst fans conceivably a motive for their inclusion over the Doctor's other adversary's. In both cases, a threat to one's personal survival is initiated.

The first incarnation of *Cerebellium* is seemingly diplomatic: the audience placed as part of a jury panel convened to determine whether Project K's existence should be terminated or sustained. However, there is a constant hint at the potential for violence and dissolution, should Kevin's existence be allowed to continue, and a sense of threat in his imminent termination that is ever present. By the second incarnation, the situation has descended into chaos, as the audience learn that the former head of the laboratory has now barricaded himself in to protect the vat in which the brain is contained. The raising of temporary structures outside the laboratory suggests a shift in stability has occurred. These temporary constructs and the destruction enacted within the laboratory building (in the raising of barricades), is reminiscent of scenes from global news reports and reminds us of the potential for societal collapse. In all these narratives, the performances hint at the fragility of human existence and its potential to be compromised in but an instant. If these performances are provoking, as critical comment suggests, the science fiction narrative may incite comparable forewarnings to the 'broader cultural trope[s]' (Hamilton, 2003: 267) which

science fiction can signify. It is, however, through direct engagement in the work that the audience may be transformed and realize the meaning relation to their reality.

Other forms of lack are investigated in reflecting onto the audience deficiencies and absences from their own lives which the performance aims to provide for in some way. The dystopian narrative is therefore fitting if we agree with Turkle's (2011) concerns for the increasingly mediated experience of everyday interactions through screens and interfaces. Embodied performances counteract removed experience by placing the audience within a multi-sensory environment that (at present) cannot be completely simulated in a definite way. Similar to the way Wixson (2005) describes the alienating effect of Sarah Kane's dystopian landscapes, immersive theatres have the potential to point towards one's own lack of physical connections. In being placed within the theatrical spectacle, the audience is able to more readily identify with the narrative because the performance happens both in and through the body.

Conclusion

This paper has offered considerations of the particular use of science fiction narratives within immersive theatres. Initial thinking on immersive theatres identifies and connects a diverse range of practices. By focusing on a particular use of narrative, I have considered why science fiction narratives are perhaps more prevalent in immersive theatres than other forms of theatre. I have proposed that links to forms of media franchise present opportunities to engage further with an established fictional world. Where immersive theatres engage with existing narratives, they offer a new way of encountering familiar plot lines through a first-hand sensory experience, where the space cannot only be seen but smelt, heard, felt and touched directly. These experiences blur the boundaries between fictional and actual realities through their embodiment within the audience's own physical, emotional and mental apparatus. They can extend the gaming experience by including more of the senses within the encounter. Furthermore, they can offer linked occurrences that relate to the audience's experience of a narrative through alternative means via a different mode of participation.

Immersive theatres have also produced originally conceived narratives. I have suggested that these varieties of performance form a continuum with other participatory events which use similar strategies to immerse the audience within very basic narrative structures that provide 'just enough' of a story to inform the audience's encounter. As well as offering thrilling experiences, where the audience is able to test themselves within a playful

environment, they can also profoundly question the audience through interrogations with their own body which question their own perception of their reality. In this way, the story carries over from the stage space into the audience's own understanding.

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