

Dreamland

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Audio experiences are meant to immerse the listener and make them feel a sense of presence as they are hearing the recording. Our minds are able to take us to spaces that we have never been or that do not even exist, which is why I decided to do my project about entering a dream. The scholarly sources discussed throughout the course mainly focused on audio experiences that were legitimate physical places that you could go to in real life. However, with my project *Dreamland*, I wanted to take advantage of the audio-only aspect that takes the listener to a place beyond planet earth. My mobile media project incorporates elements of mobility, telepresence, and edited audio to convince the listener that they are truly living inside someone else's dream, even if it is for a few short minutes.

My project, called *Dreamland*, was based on the idea of entering someone else's dream. Our dreams are typically formed from our daily thoughts and ideas. So, I thought, what would it be like to go inside of a friend or family's dream to see what *they* dream about? With audio experiences, this was made possible. Media can allow us to create fictional worlds without any limits, which is exactly what I hoped to do. Dreams and lucid dreaming have always been so interesting to me. I was greatly inspired by an episode of *Spongebob Squarepants*, where Spongebob was able to go inside multiple of his friends' dreams. This episode stuck with me throughout my childhood, so I thought that it would be interesting to make my own version of it.

I wanted the dream experience to feel as realistic as it could be, so I added an echo effect along with a peaceful background track to make the listener feel as though they are truly present. Although the narrator, otherwise known as the "dream fairy," was

guiding you through the dream, asked you questions, and spoke to you, every listener was still able to have a different experience. While creating this project, I imagined the listener using headphones or earphones and closing their eyes so that it would be much more convincing. I chose to do a mobile media audio project because I like the idea of taking the listener to places that they have never been before or never imagined.

Whenever I listen to my favorite songs, I always draw up a scenario in my head. I love that audio can create a different experience for every person. Not everyone will listen or interpret it in the same way.

In Seaward's writing, "Urban Soundscapes as Narrative: Intentions and Interpretations of Field Recordings," he discusses how audio recordings are somewhat superior to photography, due to the idea that audio is able to "provide a narrative that shifts and changes with the passing of time (Seaward, p. 300)". Although photography gives us a clear view of a location, we do not truly know what it is like being in that atmosphere. It is an image frozen in time. Although we can imagine it coming to life, it still sits still. With audio, we can hear every detail and can get a much better idea of what it is like being in that location.

Audio experiences can be edited and manipulated and take us to imaginary places. Seaward states, "There must be a balance between unedited field recording and sound manipulation, for too much of the latter may mean it loses sight of what is inherent in the field recordist's art; the honest reproduction of a place" (Seaward, p. 302). Depending on the recording that a person wants to create, I believe that adding a lot of edits to an audio experience can make it much more enjoyable and realistic. For example, in my project, since a dream fairy taking the listener into someone's dream is

a completely fictional story, adding edited elements and manipulating the sound to a large extent is not necessarily a negative thing. For the dream portal, I created random noises by banging metal objects. Then, I reversed the audio clip and added an echo effect to make the sounds mysterious and whimsical. Also, the part when the dream fairy and the listener are entering the castle, I added an even more intense echo effect, so that it really sounded like they were inside of a large, stone castle. If the audio was not edited in my project, it would sound very bland, and it would not feel like the person is in a dream.

Field recorder Felicity Ford explains, “Field recording and listening are so key to understanding the physical world, the materiality of a place, the surfaces that surround you, the textures, the size and dimensions...” (Carlyle and Layne, p. 86). Even though my project did not take place in the physical world, I used elements and sounds that I thought that would be in the dream world. Throughout the audio, I wanted the listener to feel like they were in small, cramped spaces, then move them through large, open spaces. Audio experiences should be as detailed and descriptive as possible in order to evoke telepresence. Telepresence “is achieved by projecting the operator's manipulatory dexterity to a remote environment while reflecting sensory feedback so realistically that the operator feels present in the remote site” (Akins, 1983). While creating a mobile media project, specifically audio, it is important that all elements of it are as genuine and well-edited as they can be so that the listener can create a picture in their mind and feel like they are physically in the audio location.

Farman states, “One common denominator among mobile media is the way our uses of these technologies transform our relationships to social space” (Farman, p. 11).

Media can enhance the space around us, but with my project, I wanted to enhance the listener's imagination. Reflecting on the concept of mobility, my project takes the listener throughout multiple different spaces— from the dream portal, the outdoors, and then, into a castle. I tried to make each space as realistic as possible by incorporating distinct sounds that would make the environment come to life. After going through the dream portal, the dream fairy and the listener fall to the ground— in which I made thumping noises to reflect bodies hitting the ground. Then, I included a part where a map is printed, where the dream fairy explains the area that they are in and how they should navigate the location. I decided to add rain sound effects, since it adds to the idea of the listener truly being outside, without it being loud or obnoxious. If I were to use loud wind in the background instead, I think that it would have been very distracting and anxiety-inducing. I wanted to make the audio as relaxing and dreamlike as possible.

The Bull reading discusses why and how people like to listen to music. For example, one listener explains, “John listens to his music through headphones at work rather than plugging in his iPod to his computer thus producing his own aural cocoon within his office, a space inhabited only by him” (Bull, p. 143). Although my project is not focused on a song or the music within it, this is the same concept that I wanted people to experience while listening to my audio project. With headphones or earphones, it closes out all other sounds that you are hearing in the real world. Also, with headphones, you can hear the details in the audio much more clearly, rather than listening to it on a speaker. I wanted my audio project to take the listener to a completely different world, so closing your eyes and putting on headphones makes the experience much more genuine.

In Bull's writing, he discusses how MP3's and iPod's have changed the audio industry forever (and mostly, for the better). Throughout the reading, he discusses people's experiences with mobile audio and how they use it to motivate themselves, to distract themselves, or of course, to entertain themselves. The text states that, "...music (is) listened to conjured up feelings and sensations from their own narrative (Bull, 2006, p. 134)." With *Dreamland*, I tried to make the listener feel like I was talking directly to them, and no one else. Therefore, they could create their own narrative and ideas in their heads while listening.

Although *intimate soundwork* relates to podcasts in the Murray reading, it can also be applied to fieldwork/audio projects as well. Intimate soundwork incorporates themes of "humanity, change, challenge, healing, doubt, and discovery" (Murray, p. 309). I wanted my audio project to be a story and a memorable experience that makes it feel like the listener actually lived through it. I wanted them to evoke feelings of doubt, discovery, and challenge, while also making it funny and entertaining. Murray describes intimate soundwork as a "deeply personal creative sound." I felt as though I made *Dreamland* very personal— about myself, as well as about the listener. The audio was about myself, since it was my voice, and where I wanted to take the listener. It was also about the listener, because I asked a question such as, "Whose dream do you want to enter? Name a friend or family member of yours." I believe that my project was creative because the location that I was able to take you to does not exist in our real world. It was very intimate, since it was just the "dream fairy" (myself) and the listener going on an adventure in an imaginary land.

The process of my project was somewhat time consuming, as I gathered many different detailed sounds that would make the project very customized to the specific locations that I took the listener to. For example, I recorded sounds such as footsteps, rain, thumps, and other various noises. I layered the audio, edited it, and leveled it in a very specific way so that the listener could feel the way that I felt while I created it. Since the requirement for the audio project includes a map, I wanted the map to also be in the audio experience. So, the physical map that I created is the same one that the dream fairy uses in the audio.

I have always been a very imaginative person. I love transporting myself into space, non-existent worlds, dreamlike lands, whether it is with reading, watching movies, drawing, or listening to songs. Creating art is a way that people can understand what I am thinking about and how I view the world. That is what audio experiences should be about, too. The course material explains how audio experiences should be immersive, bring about telepresence, and reflect the concept of mobility. I believe that I achieved these ideas with my project. Although my audio experience was not a realistic world, I used noises that made it feel like it was a real world.

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