

BETWEEN SENSATION AND CONTAINMENT: THE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF LISTENING IN *INSIDE*

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This is the first impression players have of *Inside* (2016), the horror video game developed by the independent studio Playdead. The sequel to *Limbo* (Playdead, 2010), this game¹ is a side-scrolling puzzle platformer in 2D (although with scenarios in 2.5D) that depicts a dystopian world where a boy is running for his life, escaping the institutional control that has subjugated his society, stripping it of its humanity. To complete the game, the player will have no more information than that directly presented by the visuals and, especially, by the audio: often, the sounds of approaching dangers and the changes to the ambient noise constitute the only guides in the game. There are no dialogues or texts, or even any cutscenes—except for the brief depiction of each of the avatar’s deaths—to provide context to the narrative or gameplay. According to Aghoro (2019), this absence of dialogue is consistent with the story of control and hostility that *Inside* tells, while also requiring players to use lateral

You start the game. A noise, similar to the sound of trees rocking in the wind, precedes the view of the space: a dark forest, with focal lighting and a minimalist design. Then, abruptly, a faceless boy enters, wearing a red sweater that sets him apart from the grey background. He runs. And without knowing why, or where to, you know you have to do it too, that you’re in danger; you have to run, to hide, to survive.

thinking and pay greater attention to their environment.

As a complement to its environmental storytelling, the experience offered by *Inside* and its game mechanics also represent a communication process, as every right and wrong decision (the latter invariably leading to death) will provide the player with valuable information for completing the game, turning the individual-avatar into a kind of test subject. In this way, “failure and repetition present a dimension and a condition for the possibility of ludic tragedy” (Martín-Núñez, García-Catalán & Rodríguez-Serrano, 2016: 9).

For Jesper Juul (2013), the way a game designs the player’s failures and the pathway to success constitutes a characteristic feature of that game and will inform the user experience from an affective perspective as well. In the case of *Inside*, the death of the avatar triggers a transition that breaks with the rhythm of the game in visual, auditory, and aesthetic terms, with the use of a



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cutscene to return the player to the beginning of the challenge. This has an impact on the player's perception of the game, and on its rhythm and synchrony (Costello, 2019). The representation of the death itself is a fluid experience, marked by a "musical suture" that establishes continuity and places it on the same narrative and auditory level as life (Kamp, 2016).

Inside constitutes a representative example of an indie video game, a label that now transcends the production and distribution process to include aesthetic and narrative aspects that give it the status of a cultural category (Parker, 2013). Indie video games generally stand out for their authenticity and aesthetic value, and for offering experiences that go beyond mere entertainment (Pérez Latorre, 2016). The minimalist aesthetic of *Inside* offers a unique reflection on issues like loneliness, the fragility of the individual, alienation, and power. These are existential themes that are expressed through a powerful use of symbolism (Pérez Latorre, 2016; Parker, 2013), turning video game creation into a political and ideological act (Ruffino, 2013).

As Pérez Latorre (2016) suggests, indie video games exhibit a kind of cultural appropriation of experimentalism through the game design, turning their conceptual limitations into artistic potentialities. In contrast with the hyperrealism and complex mechanics of triple-A video games, indie games usually provide aesthetic experiences

in which attention to detail is key: in *Inside*, any auditory stimulus is crucial to the player's survival. As an example of *memento mori* design (Parker, 2013), Playdead's game fosters a reflection on life as it takes the player on a slow, winding journey which, unlike mainstream games, comes to an abrupt end. In this way, evading death or cracking the puzzle in *Inside* is not experienced as a success, but as just one more step for survival. The music accompanying some of these moments does not sound triumphant; instead, it is limited to alleviating the previous tension and even hints at a kind of hope which, rather than being fulfilled as expected, leads to an ending where the human blob (the "Huddle"²) rests peacefully, *liberated*, in a natural environment.

The particular features of the concept and design of *Inside* have caught the interest both of the gamer community and of professionals and academics. The game has been analysed from diverse perspectives ranging from visual aesthetics (Delbouille, 2017), iteration (You, 2019), agency in video games (Garcia, 2017), the concepts of parasitism and control (Bailey, 2018; Biondi, 2017), the

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subject-avatar and its personalization in the form of a silent child (Reay, 2020), and identity loss (Navarro-Remesal, 2019).

While the absence of speech is one of the identifying features of *Inside*, underscoring the protagonist's vulnerability and solitude (Reay, 2020), sound forms part of the game's very essence. Martin Stig Andersen (2016a), sound designer and audio director for *Inside*, refers to it as a "game

that listens” in the sense that its gameplay is based on the audio: the first hints of a threat are always auditory hints, and the sound constitutes a key element for solving the puzzles. This conception of auditory design has given rise to studies like Arnold’s (2018) on the function of the sound loop in gameplay, and Aghoro’s (2019) on the use of sound effects in the creation of individual gaming experiences, both of which place the emphasis on listening as a key element for success in *Inside*.

Since the progression of the game is based on the sequential exploration of a story of which the avatar is the protagonist, the definition of the sound in relation to other components of the game, as well as its interaction with the players, also results in a narrative experience. With this in mind, the purpose of this article is to analyse sound placement, focalization, and listening in *Inside* as a key element in the gameplay and narrative experience of the game.

SOUND IN VIDEO GAMES: AN APPROACH

Video games are audiovisual products, and as such, their reception involves a process of “audio-viewing” (Chion, 1993) that adheres to the conventions for sound and music in audiovisual media. In her conceptualization of sound in video games, Collins (2008) draws on the ideas of key authors on sound in cinema, like Michel Chion and Claudia Gorbman, to underscore the similarities between the two media. The parallels between cinema and video games in the area of sound design are especially obvious in cutscenes; both the sound production in these non-interactive sequences and the kind of listening they trigger are similar to those of conventional audiovisual media (Bridgett, 2005).

However, the interactive nature of video games—specifically, their gameplay—is reflected in their non-linear and dynamic sound, and in their characteristic use of that sound. In addition to contributing to a video game’s narrative structure

(Aarseth, 2001), sound design should provide feedback on the player’s actions, instructions on player objectives, and guidance within the game world (Collins, 2008). Good sound design informs the player “to head in a particular direction or to run the other way” (Collins, 2007: 8), giving it an essential role in the user experience.

In a video game, sound forms part of the environment; it belongs to the game’s structure, but it is also free, responding to the actions of the player—with “effect sound objects” connected in various ways to the avatar, props, characters, entities, and other events (Stockburger, 2003). This facilitates different narrative and gameplay options within the limits established by the design. For Aghoro (2019), the integration of (simultaneous) action sound and its interaction with the acoustic space leverages the transformative and generative potential of the video game that arises from the intersection between *paidia* (free play) and *ludus* (regulated play) (Jensen, 2013). Both types of sound—which, based on their function, Collins (2007) labels “interactive” and “adaptive”—contribute to the development of the fictional world during the game (Aghoro, 2019).

As an interactive story, the video game’s narrative agency is shared between the player and the system, and mediated by the individual’s interpretation of the system and the latter’s response to the former’s actions (Harrell & Zhu, 2009). The inclusion of more players adds a psychological dimension—the auditory experience and action that Arnold (2018) contextualizes in social terms—and brings some of the ideas of relational aesthetics into play.

The game’s sound positions the player-subject in relation to others and to the environment. In contrast with the image, which is limited by and subject to the frame, sound reaches beyond the space of the game to connect the world on the screen with the world of the experience. The omnidirectionality of hearing effectively expands the game world through acousmatic sound (Chion,



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1993). Advances in sound recording, editing and playback technologies have resulted in the emergence of a “sonic superfield” that allows the player to locate the sound and to anticipate events, as well as to make contact with parts of the game world that are hidden from view (Collins, 2007). As Oldenburg (2013) suggests, the reinforcement and repetition of sounds can even facilitate constant understanding and orientation in game or player environments where visual information is lacking.

This capacity of sound in video games, added to its dual status as a provider of useful information for gameplay and as a contributor to the construction of the fictional world, thereby enhancing player immersion, makes its identification with the concept of diegesis problematic (Jørgensen, 2007, 2010; Nacke & Grimshaw, 2011).

According to Collins (2008), the player participates in the process of sound production in the game while also being affected by sounds. This raises questions about the location of the source as a defining element.

For Shinkle (2005), playing a video game is a diegetic activity as there is a conscious interaction with the interface; but it is also an extra-diegetic activity, as it involves a physical response to the game environment and experience. Diegetic and non-diegetic sounds thus tend to be mixed together, creating additional levels of interpretation that transcend the traditional separation between diegetic and non-diegetic worlds (Jørgensen, 2010).

In contrast with the classical conception of diegetic sound as something located in the world of the story (Bordwell & Thompson, 1995), Grimshaw (2008) defines it as sound arising from some entity of the game while playing. Regardless of its location in relation to the narrative world, Jørgensen (2007, 2010) proposes the term “trans-diegetic”, which fuses information from the system with the game world, as a way of reconciling the dichotomy between diegetic and non-diegetic sound in video games. The use of this term stresses the functional role of sound in relation to the player’s actions in the game world, and highlights the relative nature of its origin (Jørgensen, 2010).

The necessary decoding of these auditory stimuli in order to progress in the game requires a shift from passive hearing to a kind of active listening that allows the player to recognize scene changes or to make decisions based on the sounds (Arnold, 2018). In this sense, sound in video games produces “meaning effects”, which Bundgaard (2010) defines as cognitive responses to a textual stimulus.

In the specific case of *Inside*, the absence of cutscenes reflects a dynamic type of sound practically throughout the game, which results in its conception as a listening game and places the focus on player reception. If, as Andersen (2016a) suggests, the sound in *Inside* indicates to players when and how they should walk, the listening mode adopted will be essential to successful completion of the game, but also to player involvement and engagement.

As Tinwell, Grimshaw & Williams (2010) point out in their discussion of horror video games, the sound design in *Inside* awakens the imagination, facilitating recognition of dangers before they appear on screen; but it also awakens feelings of fear or unease and even elicits a sensation of alienation, through sounds that do not meet player expectations for the scene or others that seem indifferent or anempathetic to the hostile environment in which they occur. The sound of trees rocking in the wind or of falling rain is unaffected by and apparently unrelated to the tension experienced by the avatar, underscoring this feeling of alienation.

In this sense, the combination of interactive and adaptive audio elicits different modes of listening that interact and overlap in various ways, making the gaming experience richer and more complex.

THE COMPLEXITY OF LISTENING IN THE GAME

The subject-avatar in *Inside* is exposed to a soundscape which, in the game’s dystopian world, can be associated with the concept of acoustic territory (LaBelle, 2010) due to the political connotations of its configuration. As the game progresses, the boy, who personifies the “perfect victim” (Reay, 2020; Sjöblom, 2015), has to traverse various increasingly strange and hostile environments (a forest, a farm, a factory, and a lab) differentiated by sounds, in which the dangers that threaten only seem to point to a bigger threat, with philosophical implications for the individual who completes the game (Johnson, 2017).

Listening affects the reception of the video game in terms of both the experience of the game and the player’s ability to complete it successfully

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(Collins, 2013). The sounds provide an impression of the game as an audiovisual construct, but also facilitate recognition of boundaries and goals, and the actions required to respond to them. Certain internal scenarios in *Inside* are thus constructed around a characteristic sound—the buzz of a light bulb, the whirl of machines, etc.—whose rhythm and evolution are essential to the gameplay.

Listening and playing constitute two interactive actions that feed back into each other. In video games, the sound discourse directly engages the player with the events on the screen and creates a haptic experience, with the joystick, that feeds back into the process.

In addition to its narrative and functional qualities, the temporal nature of sound makes it particularly useful as a structural element in video games. *Inside* offers examples of this kind of use of sound to lend continuity to the action, even after death, when everything else disappears, or to identify the spatial location of threats. Along the same lines, Aghoro (2019) and Arnold

(2018) highlight the importance of shock waves in certain spaces whose temporal pattern, and the player's recognition of it, turns them into sound icons, or "earcons" (Friberg & Gärdenfors, 2004), that are essential for controlling the avatar-character. These "earcons" require a range of different modes of listening.

While Collins (2008, 2013) stresses a difference between "listening" and "interacting" with sound, every interaction involves active listening, as well as a relationship with the player's cognitive and physical activity, and with the game and its environment. The integration of the haptic perspective allows for the establishment of additional multimodal relations between viewing, listening, and touch. In this sense, Jørgensen (2007) refers to listening as a precise and complex cognitive activity that vests situations and events during the game with meaning, making it essential to narrative and gameplay.

The idea of listening as a complex practice that involves and affects the reception process has been a key concept in the emergence of sound studies. In his *Traité des objets musicaux* (1966), Pierre Schaeffer highlighted the value of listening



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for conceptualizing and structuring our relationship with the world, and identified four modes—listening (*écouter*), perceiving (*ouïr*), hearing (*entendre*), and understanding (*comprendre*)—based on the attention and cognitive intention of the recipient of the sonic stimulus. Listening, as an involuntary act, represents the most basic mode of auditory processing, while understanding, as a form of active-reactive listening, is the most complex. Schaeffer also differentiated natural listening from cultural listening, which entails the existence of culturally acquired codes and—as Rodríguez-Bravo (1998) suggests—levels of auditory specialization.

This multidimensional conception of listening would shape research on sound in audiovisual media through the work of Michel Chion (1993). Chion's proposition of three listening modes—causal (related to the sound-source), semantic (involving the use of sound codes), and reduced (focusing on the traits of the sound itself)—has informed studies by Collins (2008, 2013), Grimshaw & Garner (2015), and Arnold (2018), among others. More recently, Tuuri & Eerola (2012) considered various taxonomies to develop a classification of

listening modes as pre-attentive (reflexive and connotative), source-oriented (causal and empathetic), context-oriented (functional, semantic, or critical), and quality-oriented (reduced listening). Of interest from a musical perspective is the conception of listening proposed by Delalande (1989, 1998), whose typology involves different modes of cognition: taxonomic (related to comprehension based on structure), figurative (projection of mental images), and empathetic (associated with experiencing emotions and sensations).

As these modes of listening may overlap or complement one another, they constitute a useful tool in the area of sound design (Chion, 1993; Sonnenschein, 2001). As Tuuri & Eerola (2012) point out, while such taxonomies help differentiate between intentions and experiences perceived more than sounds themselves, some auditory stimuli display a greater potential for triggering certain listening modes. For example, reverberation in *Inside* encourages spatial listening, focusing on the cause and location of the sound, while the dissonant music or the heartbeat that accompanies the puzzle of the factory trigger empathetic listening.

This interaction between sound and listening mode is why Tuuri & Eerola (2012) stress the connection between perception and action, as cognition is intimately linked to the game environment and to embodied experiences of interaction with it, both natural and sociocultural. In his conception of auditory emotion, David Huron (2002) thus adopts a biocultural perspective that relates both to the emotions and to the creation of meanings through different triggering systems, ranging from the reflexive system, which elicits spontaneous physiological responses, to the critical system.

The sound design in *Inside* triggers a range of listening modes. As an audiovisual product that displays only part of the setting of the action, the game requires players to make use of causal listening. Recognition of sound sources is essential to gameplay, both to discover and locate the

dangers threatening the boy-avatar and to make decisions accordingly. This kind of causal listening, or listening for causal action (Payri, 2010), becomes essential in *Inside*, for the identification of information on the source and on the effect it produces—the barking of approaching hounds, the splashing of the *water girl* who chases him (signalling the start, speed, or direction of the pursuit), or the appearance of the scene through the avatar's interaction, the movement of props and their reverberations. In this video game, the sound generally precedes the image. A player who waits for the physical appearance of the source of the sound before reacting will probably succumb to the danger, and die as a result (Aghoro, 2019). To avoid this, the player needs to develop an agile type of listening, close to figurative listening (Delalande, 1998), that projects an image of the source based on an auditory stimulus.

THE ABSENCE OF ANY TEXT TO SERVE AS A GUIDE IN *INSIDE* AND THE ROLE OF SOUND IN THE GAMEPLAY NECESSITATES AN “AUDITORY SPECIALIZATION” ON THE PART OF THE PLAYER

The absence of any guide in *Inside* and the role of sound in the gameplay necessitates an *auditory specialization* on the part of the player. The information obtained during the game from the context and from previous errors, combined with the player's experience, functions as a *training process* for interpreting auditory stimuli, even arbitrary sounds like the music and its interaction with the game-story. This auditory specialization can be equated with a semantic listening mode, which is necessary for the adoption of game strategies based, for example, on the presence and rhythm of ambient noise.

But *Inside* also triggers reduced listening. The music, and the sound design of the game in gene-

ral, presents a palette of dark tones, rich in frequencies and dissonances, with an auditory impression that contributes to the creation of this dystopian world, and enhances the impact of the visual experience. Although this added value is essential for any horror ludonarrative (Tinwell, Grimshaw & Williams, 2010), the particular soundscape (recording and processing) created by Andersen (2016b), with its vibrations and resonances, elicits a series of perceptions and sensations that reinforce the vulnerability and solitude of the boy-avatar, and the player's identification with him. Reduced listening is essential to game-play—tone, timbre, and intensity contribute to the identification of certain sound objects as threats—but also to the game experience, giving rise to a kind of empathetic listening (Delalande, 1998).

The heightened intensity and reverberation of the sounds of moving or falling objects used by the character to get past obstacles accentuates the fear of being discovered and captured. Similarly, the silence effect when the player is submerged after escaping dangers (with equivalent sound projection) creates a feeling of respite.

Irrespective of the implementation, overlapping or complementing of different listening modes, any sound in a video game appeals to the critical system (Huron, 2002), as it enables users, more or less consciously, to confirm the perception and attune their response to it.

A SPLIT BETWEEN VISUAL AND AUDIO

In his book *Story and Discourse* (1990), Seymour Chatman proposes three types of point of view, which shape the relationship between characters, audience, and narration: perceptual, conceptual, and interest point of view. In this classification, the perceptual-conceptual relationship is particularly interesting: the position from which we see—which we are culturally conditioned to view as natural—and our perspective (thoughts, beliefs, feelings, etc.) on what we see.

Genette (1983) introduced the idea of focalization to distinguish between *who* is speaking and *where* the focus of perception is located. In his conceptual framework, he posits three types of focalization or “field restriction”: absence of focalization or zero focalization; internal focalization, with access to the character's inner world; and external focalization, where such access does not exist.

In video games, the most common type of focalization is external (Arjoranta, 2017). Despite the apparent relationship between the mode of viewing (or perceptual point of view) and focalization, especially in first-person games due to the identification with the avatar, there is a divergence between the sensory-behavioural perspective and access to the character's subjectivity. As Navarro-Remesal (2019) points out, control of a character does not necessarily entail access to that character's subjective perspective.

The description of *Inside* implicitly involves a particular mode of viewing. As a side-scrolling puzzle platformer, it presents a third-person point of view that follows the avatar's actions from a lateral camera angle. The game's sound design, however, does not conform to this distant visual perspective; instead, it stretches the conventions of the genre to offer the player a more immersive experience.

In *Inside*, Andersen (2016b) sought to recreate sounds as if they were being heard inside the avatar's head. To create this effect, he experimented with a human skull to enrich the soundtrack with the echoes and reverberations that generally affect human listening, achieving a vibrating sonic effect that is at once disturbing and familiar (Andersen, 2016b).

From a perceptual point of view, it could be inferred that *Inside* has external focalization. This assumption is supported by the absence of texts, dialogues, or cutscenes to allow the character to express himself (Arjoranta, 2017; Vella, 2015). Nevertheless, its sound design aims to have the

player identify with the avatar despite the distance imposed by the mode of viewing. A split thus occurs between visual and audio perspectives, with direct implications for focalization that make it necessary to reassess the aforementioned assumption.

Drawing on Genette's perception/focalization dichotomy, Jost (2002) proposes three different concepts for audiovisual narratology: ocularization (the relationship between what the camera shows and what the character sees), auricularization (the relationship between what the microphone captures and what the character hears), and focalization (the narrator's and character's level of knowledge) This taxonomy facilitates an analysis of the divergence between the visual and audio perspectives in *Inside*, both perceptually and conceptually. While the video game experience, as a ludonarrative, is multimodal, the contrast between ocularization and auricularization gives rise to a unique experience from both the sensory and emotional perspectives.

According to Cuadrado Méndez (2013), in auricularization processes, sound components elicit reactions from viewers which, based on their exposure to the audiovisual narrative and their experience, contribute to the establishment of their own auditory location. In the case of *Inside*, exposure—especially to visual information—and experience—auditory and audiovisual—are placed in opposition to each other, giving rise to a highly unique experience. Aspects like the camera angle, the minimalist design, or the colour do not hinder the player's immersion in the game world and identification with the avatar afforded by the sound.

The processing of sounds, the recording and treatment of the different effects and compositions, in order to simulate the experience of listening inside one's own head with all the attendant echoes and reverberations, reflects a subjective auricularization. The player seems to be hearing exactly what the boy hears, filtered by his own ears—Chion's internal-objective sound (1993). This is evident, for example, in the accompanying heartbeat that adds tension to the character's camouflage when he merges with the line of

people in the factory. It could even be suggested that there is an internal auricularization of the music (Cuevas, 2001), given that its processing and its reactive nature facilitate its identification with the character's mental activity—Chion's inter-

nal-objective sound (1993). But suddenly, death comes: one of the various deaths to which the avatar succumbs during the game, and yet the sound continues.

This continuity places the character back in the same place, but this time a review of the listening perspective is necessary. The treatment of the audio places the player inside the game world, in a marked auricularization, although external to the character, given that the sound continues after the character's death. This positioning will be made clear when the boy-avatar disappears into the "Huddle".

The auricularization adapts to the gameplay and enhances it. In a listening video game, where the first information on a change of scene and of approaching dangers is always auditory, and where sound plays a crucial role in the development of the puzzles and the avatar's survival, Andersen's unique treatment of sound fosters an immersive sensation close to the idea of transportation

WHILE THE VIDEO GAME EXPERIENCE, AS A LUDONARRATIVE, IS MULTIMODAL, THE CONTRAST BETWEEN OCULARIZATION AND AURICULARIZATION IN *INSIDE* GIVES RISE TO A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE FROM BOTH THE SENSORY AND EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

posited by Suruchi Sood (2002). Sood's notion of "transportation", refers to an imaginative experience with a high level of engagement that leads the audience to feel the characters' sensations as if they were inside the story themselves. The capacity for auditory stimuli to elicit mental images can favour this kind of transportation, while at the same time facilitating the player's identification with and proximity to the avatar, especially in terms of attention (to the different sounds, spatial relations, and movement) and emotion (Green, Garst & Brock, 2004).

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

Sound constitutes a fundamental component of the game *Inside*, and an integral part of its experience. The auditory contact it provides "paves the way for the upcoming acoustic definition of the social and environmental structures governing the game world and the aural involvement in non-player character interactions as well as player relations" (Aghoro, 2019: 260).

Despite the striking nature of its visual production, the game mechanics highlight and expand the importance of sound in the experience of playing *Inside*. Every player movement and action elicits an auditory response that contributes to the creation of the player's experience of the game world. While death constitutes a key feature of the video game, its sonic accompaniment, like a musical suture, forms an inherent part of that experience on a more or less conscious level.

This conception of sound, which has led to *Inside* being described as a "listening" game, requires the active participation of the player to decode it. The experience offered by *Inside* as a ludonarrative involves a multidimensional reception process in terms of the mode, the focus of attention—from the source to the intrinsic characteristics of the sound or its effects—and the cognitive process, allowing for a range of interpretations and meanings, although the critical system (Huron, 2002)

is needed to successfully complete the game as an ultimate aim (of gameplay).

From a narrative perspective, the sound design of *Inside* plays with the focalization of sound to offer an immersive experience. Although in this game the mode of viewing and the concept art seem to shun any attempt at visual realism, it is the sound design that contributes to the "granularity" of the video game, or the level of detail in the description of the game environment and the richness of the elements that comprise it (Bundgaard, 2010). If, as Arjoranta (2017) observes, there is a basic phenomenological level on which individuals are conscious of their environment, paying special attention to any stimulus, sound effects like the crunching leaves accompanying the steps of the boy-avatar, the snorting of the pig that he confronts, the sound of the rain or the barking of the dogs that hunt him down not only produce meaning effects, but also contribute greater granularity to the game, vesting the depiction of the environment with realism and the minimalism of the image with *added value*. As Oldenburg (2013: para. 20) suggests, "with audio, the player is relying on a time-based medium to convey what the eyes take in within a fraction of a second." ■

NOTES

- 1 Despite their different implications (see, for example, Arjoranta, 2017), “game” and “video game” will be used in this article as analogous terms.
- 2 The “Huddle” is a large blob of human flesh, limbs and organs that the boy-avatar merges with towards the end of the game, which from that point on is controlled by the player.

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BETWEEN SENSATION AND CONTAINMENT. THE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF LISTENING IN *INSIDE* (PLAYDEAD, 2016)

Abstract

Sound is a critical element in the conception of video games as ludonarratives and in the gaming experience. Despite sharing features and functions of other audiovisual narratives, the non-linear and dynamic nature of the audio in video games gives it a key role in the gameplay that will require active reception on the part of the player because, as Collins points out, listening is not the same as interacting with sound. In this context, the purpose of this article is to conceptualize listening in video games as a complex, multidimensional act. Through an analysis of the sound design of *Inside* (Playdead, 2016) and its interaction with the other components of the game, I explore the nature of listening and its location from a functional and narrative perspective.

Key words

Listening; Sound Design; Auricularization; Video Games; Gameplay; Storytelling; *Inside*.

Author

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ENTRE LA SENSACIÓN Y LA CONTENCIÓN. LA MULTIDIMENSIONALIDAD DE LA ESCUCHA EN *INSIDE* (PLAYDEAD, 2016)

Resumen

El sonido constituye un elemento esencial en la concepción de los videojuegos como ludonarrativas y en su experiencia. Pese a compartir rasgos y funciones de otros relatos audiovisuales, el carácter no-lineal y dinámico del audio en los videojuegos le otorga un papel fundamental en el *gameplay* que va a hacer precisa una recepción activa para su desarrollo y superación porque, como subraya Collins, no es lo mismo escuchar que interactuar con el sonido. En este sentido, el presente texto tiene por objeto efectuar una conceptualización de la escucha en los videojuegos como un acto complejo y multidimensional. Tomando como referencia el diseño sonoro de *Inside* (Playdead, 2016), y su interacción con los restantes componentes del juego, se aborda una aproximación a la escucha y a su emplazamiento desde una perspectiva funcional y narrativa.

Palabras clave

Escucha; Diseño sonoro; Auricularización; Videojuegos; Jugabilidad; Narrativa; *Inside*.

Autora

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