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Introduction: The Sleeper's Unrest

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Introduction: The Sleeper's Unrest

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Fig. 1 Artist unknown, *Graffiti in the St. Henri Neighbourhood of Montreal*, graffiti, Montreal, April 2023. Photo ©Alanna Thain

It is astounding how little we talk about sleep. Astounding because it is the way we spend a third of our lives, and astounding because a third of the population is thought to suffer from poor sleep.[1] At the same time, advertising for sleep aids is widespread, constantly reminding us of the extent to which troubled sleep has

1. This number–one third–is an approximation drawn from numerous sleep surveys that consistently report that a significant percentage of the population globally has troubled sleep. The 2019 Phillips Sleep Survey, for example, found that up to 62 percent of respondents reported poor sleep; see KJT Group, "The Global Pursuit of Better Sleep Health: The Philips 2019

become a common affliction. The number of companies fueling the sleep-industrial complex—producing everything from apps to high-tech mattresses to optimized teas—is perhaps only equivalent to the number of guidelines, regimens, and strategies we are meant to follow to cure our personal and collective sleep failings.[2]

This widespread appeal to the troubled sleeper, where the common and the exceptional of sleep exist in an uneasy exchange, requires research on sleep to navigate between individual and shared experience. For one, when we start to dig into the reasons why people are suffering from lack of sleep, we also inevitably enter the intimate and private domain of the sleepless night. Reduced to an individual concern, cures and treatments are placed on the individual: better sleep hygiene, cognitive behavioural therapy, sleeping pills, meditative sleep apps. And yet, if we zoom out from the isolated singular experience, we can often see larger social patterns that might shift the burden from the individual to the collective. Here sleeplessness

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Global Sleep Survey," https://www.philips.ca/c-e/smartsleep/campaign/world-sleep-day.html (accessed 8 June 2021). The 2020 Canadian Community Health Survey also found that one third of respondents reported poor quality sleep. Chinchin Wang, Rachel C. Colley, Karen C. Roberts, Jean-Philippe Chaput and Wendy Thompson, "Sleep Behaviours Among Canadian Adults: Findings from the 2020 Canadian Community Health Survey Healthy Living Rapid Response Module," 16 March 2022.

2. See, for example, specialized lights (Dodow); headphones (SleepPhone); books (K. McCoy and Dr. Hardwick, *This Book Will Put You to Sleep*, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 2018); ASMR soundtracks (sleepbaseball.com); sleep trackers (Oura ring, Go2sleep); pillows (Dreampad); weighted eye masks (Nodpod); mattresses (Eight Sleep Pod); and the list goes on. Among the abundance of sleep advice circulating in popular news outlets, the most prevalent is that addressing insomnia ("Can't Sleep? Here are Some Tips to Tackle Pandemic-Induced Insomnia," *The Current*, CBC Radio, 13 January 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-jan-13-2022-1.6313384/can-t-go-to-sleep-here-are-some-tips-to-tackle-pandemic-induced-insomnia-1.6314209 (accessed 13 January 2022) or "Can Gizmos Cure Insomnia," *New Yorker*, 16 January 2016 (accessed 29 July 2021)). The offerings include everything from tips and hacks (Dani Blum, "Can a Piece of Tape Help You Sleep?," *The New York Times*, 17 November 2022), to testimonials ("'An Eye Mask Transformed My Life!': 10 Readers on How to Get A Perfect Night's Sleep." *The Guardian*, 27 July 2021, https://theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/jul/27/an-eye-mask-transformed-my-life-10-readers-on-how-to-get-a-perfect-nights-sleep (accessed 25 August 2021)), to messages to adjust expectation (Annaliese Griffin, "Just Embrace Your Insomnia Already," *New York* magazine, 12 December 2021, https://www.thecut.com/2021/12/segmented-sleep-pandemic-insomnia-help.html (accessed 15 February 2022)). Advice can come from the unlikeliest of sources, including betting websites ("How You Should Be Spending Your Evening to Get the Best Night's Sleep," *Betway Insider*, 6 January 2023, https://blog.betway.com/casino/how-you-should-be-spending-your-evening-to-get-the-best-nights-sleep/) or your bank, as was the case with Scotiabank's clever campaign Sleep Advisor by Scotia Advice+, which included a Sleep Advisor hotline "to help ease Canadians' worries about their investments and help them get a better night's sleep." Quoted from a Scotiabank press release: "Scotiabank launches Sleep Advisor tools, helping put Canadians' financial and investment worries to bed," *Cision*, 17 January 2022, https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scotiabank-launches-sleep-advisor-tools-helping-put-canadians-financial-and-investment-worries-to-bed-841182665.html (accessed 26 February 2022).

becomes a more complex phenomenon, interwoven into the realities of waking life and a manifestation of larger systemic problems: overwork, anxiety, stress, poverty or precarity, and environmental conditions fostering radically different sleepworlds due to everything from urban design to the impact of climate change (e.g. noise pollution, heat).[3] A more social perspective makes visible the ways in which sleep quality is another marker of social inequities, including gendered, racialized, or economic.[4] The societies in which we live are also responsible for determining their normative forms of rest. In this sense, there is no singular or universally agreed upon way in which humans should sleep. In certain times and cultures, expectations were and are very different from the modern-day North Atlantic region from which we write this text (e.g. daytime naps, near-hibernation in winter, etc.).[5] And, moving back from the

3. For recent work on the impact of climate change on quality of sleep, see the recording of The Sociability of Sleep's roundtable "Hot Takes: Sleep Equity and Climate Change," 17 March 2023, https://sociabilityofsleep.ca/events/hot-takes/, featuring research by Sarah Barnes and Devon Bate, Arun Kumar, Kelton Minor, Jayson Porter, and Benjamin Reiss. See also publications such as Symielle A. Gaston, Rupsha Singh, and Chandra L. Jackson, "The Need to Study the Role of Sleep in Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation, and Resiliency Strategies Across the Life Course," *Sleep*, vol. 46, no. 7, July 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/sleep/zsad070 (accessed 14 August 2023); Minor et al., "Rising Temperatures Erode Human Sleep Globally," *One Earth*, vol. 5, no. 5, May 2022, p. 534–549; Sonia Rubens et al., "Associations Between Sleep Environment and Sleep Patterns in Low-Income Latinx Youth," *Sleep*, vol. 42, Issue Supplement 1, April 2019, p. A319

4. See, for example, Soojung Ahn, Jennifer M. Lobo, Jeongok G. Logan, Hyojung Kang, Younghoon Kwon and Min Woong Sohn, "A Scoping Review of Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Sleep," *Sleep Medicine*, vol. 81, 2021, p. 169–179; or Carmela Alcántara, Luciana Giorgio Cosenzo, Elliot McCullough, Tiffany Vogt, Andrea L. Falzon and Irene Perez Ibarra, "Cultural Adaptations of Psychological Interventions for Prevalent Sleep Disorders and Sleep Disturbances: A Systematic Review of Randomized Controlled Trials in the United States," *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, no. 56, 2021; Dayna A. Johnson, Chidinma Ohanele, Carmela Alcántara and Chandra L. Jackson, "The Need for Social and Environmental Determinants of Health Research to Understand and Intervene on Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Obstructive Sleep Apnea," *Clinics in Chest Medicine*, vol. 43, no. 2, June 2022, p. 199–216. See also the work of the Canadian Sleep Research Consortium, which includes as areas of concern "Health Disparities and EDI," "Indigenous People's Health," and a team focused on "Sleep Equity," https://www.researchsleep.ca/ (accessed 15 May 2023).

5. Consider the recent popular interest in historical and contemporary incidences of bi- or poly-phasic sleep patterns (meaning more than one sleep period during a 24 hour cycle, such as an afternoon nap or a stretch of nighttime wakefulness) in articles found in places like the *New York Times* (Danielle Braff, "Meet Me at 3 A.M. for a Cup of Coffee," 12 February 2022) or the BBC (Zaria Gorvett, "The Forgotten Medieval Habit of 'Two Sleeps,'" 9 January 2022). The work of Roger Ekirch is frequently cited as restoring biphasic sleep to popular knowledge, while more recent work, including by Ekirch himself, has nuanced the normative model of biphasic sleep. See, for example, A. Roger Ekirch, "Segmented Sleep in Preindustrial Societies," *Sleep*, vol. 39, no. 3, March 2016, p. 715–716, or *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2006; Mohammed A Al-Abri, Ibtisam Al lawati, Fahad Zadjali and Shyam Ganguly, "Sleep Patterns and Quality in Omani Adults," *Nature and Science of Sleep*, vol. 12, March 2020, p. 231–237, https://www.dovepress.com/getfile.php?fileID=57371 (accessed 14 August 2023); Sasha Handley, *Sleep in Early Modern England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016; and Benjamin Reiss, *Wild Nights: How Taming Sleep Created Our Restless World*, New York, Basic Books, 2017.

social to the individual, variability between people (in their circadian rhythms, such as is pathologized in delayed sleep phase syndrome (DSPS); circumstances such as shift work, new parenthood, or menopause; externally imposed schedules of school or work; or even the lifetime modulations of aging itself) makes it impossible to establish a universal recipe or standard for what makes "good" sleep.

This is not to say that all troubled sleep could simply be resolved through social redress. There are a number of sleep disorders that are caused by physiology rather than environment, though it would be shortsighted to think the two do not affect each other in more or less direct, immediate, or visible ways. Whether in more common conditions like obstructive sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome, or in rarer forms of disturbed sleep such as somnambulism, parasomnias, narcolepsy, Klein-Levine syndrome, or REM sleep behaviour disorder, among others, a diagnosis does not fully account for "the patient experience"—the actual manifold lived manifestations of medically disordered sleep. What prevails across these varieties of troubled sleep is the tension between the social and the individual, the normative and the exceptional, the contingent and the intransigent of sleep out of order, urging us to pay attention not only to differences amongst sleepers but to the differential of sleep itself. Between a sleeper and their environment there are many x factors shading the space between what data reports as our sleep experience and what sleepers' report back from their rest. Rather than using deviation from a norm as a starting point, a perspective that values differential sleep asks us to consider the knock-on effects of the living, ongoing, and volatile practice of sleep as it resonates across all relations and moments of our lives. The notion of practice is significant; amidst all the advice, anxiety, and aspiration, sleep is increasingly *practiced,* in two senses. First, we continuously cultivate rituals around sleep, even as we know we will eventually succumb to slumber with or without our intentional actions. But we also "practice" sleep across all the days and nights of our lives, beyond any aspirations of perfection; we keep trying, building on experiences and tending to or discarding habits, and desiring different things from sleep at different moments of our lives. Taking the idea to an absurdist extreme, the artists Tega Brain and Sam Lavigne's *Perfect Sleep* is a tongue-in-cheek proposal to tackle climate change by literally sleeping through it. The end goal of this hyper-designed, monitored, and accessorized sleep is survival via a sort of hibernation through the end times. And yet, this imaginary of the "perfectly endless" sleep has a flip side: as fairy tales and horror films alike tell us, 24-hour sleep is a dreadful end

and a sidestepping of the problem of endless growth.[6] The more humble rhythms of imperfect, ongoing sleep as practice might displace techno-optimist fixes with a more intimate and actionable scale of intervention.

We are the only ones living our sleep as sleepers, to experience it as part of our self, to bear its marks on our bodies and minds, making each of us the "experts" of our sleep. But the nature of this experience, or inexperience as some would have it, is an epistemological paradox. While sleep is an inescapable feature of human existence, something we do every day and would, literally, die without (there is a reason sleep deprivation is a form of torture), it remains largely elusive as directly knowable, communicable, or controllable. Thus, despite the abundant opportunity to "research" sleep, in sleep we also become strangers to ourselves, unable to fully access what happens when we lie dormant. We rely on the perspective of human or technological others to interface with and become cognisant of our sleeper nature. In doing so, whether through observation or using tools that measure the body—including by monitoring, tracking, and visualizing—sleep becomes quantified. This datafication and scientific measurement makes visible a positivist cartography of sleep, often sidelining the percepts and affects of the sleeper themselves. The result is a sleeping body disjointed from the phenomenological experience of sleep, a fissure that is reflected, for example, in the epistemological tension between data and storytelling and in the ways we establish and value information about sleep around problematic ascriptions of objectivity. This brings us back to the complicated and unresolved question about who (or perhaps, what) is the expert of (our individual and collective) sleep and where or how knowledge about sleep gets produced and trusted. If we abide by the assumptions that not one discipline can fully and unquestionably know sleep, that no individual can have a complete or objective experience or access to it, and that no craft or technique, art or science, exists to fully capture it, how do we collectively attune to sleep's epistemologies of opacity?[7] How do we make sense of sleep as that most common and also unknowable form of human experiences? What sources

6. Tega Brain and Sam Lavigne, *Perfect Sleep*, https://perfectsleep.labr.io/ (accessed 18 October 2021).

7. We draw here on the notion of opacity from the work of Édouard Glissant and his work on the "right to opacity" of postcolonial subjects, opposing the usual demands for transparency as a precursor for participating in communication and exchange. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, Betsy Wing (trans.), Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1997, p. 189–194, and Zach Blas and Jacob Gaboury, "Biometrics and Opacity: A Conversation," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2016, p. 155–165.

or data are trusted to provide information? How can we straddle the gap between a sleeper's personal experience and external metrics, normativities, machines, and observations?

This framing and questioning of sleep emerges from a two year research-creation project *The Sociability of Sleep* funded by the New Frontiers in Research Funds of Canada and directed by issue editors Kaminska and Thain, with McLeod as an artist-researcher in residence.[8] The work of this project and its many public facing interventions—from our Sleep Salon series to a major public exhibition *InSomnolence* (June–July 2023)[9]—form the critical background of this issue and our desire to explore sleep's intermedial zones as sites of social experience and exchange. That project has sought, through collaborative and interdisciplinary conversation and experimentation, to complexify the question of troubled sleep through careful attention to the heterogeneity and differential affects of imperfect sleep and the creative and critical ways "bad"—i.e., non-normative—sleepers make social demands: for accommodations, representation, and equity, among other forms of essential care and recognition. As we encountered sleep across media forms that expand our shared somatic sensibilities, we tracked how sleep moves across, lingers, and expands in the various states, phases, and thresholds of consciousness, as well as between the public and private, individual and collective, body and environment, matter and mind. All these critical junctures contribute to making sleep a site of radical vulnerability and social risk that requires social forms of care, including care for the collective imaginaries of sleep.

In the spirit of this inquiry and as a contribution to critical sleep studies, the articles collected here seek to better address the heterogeneity of sleep by creating conversations across art and media forms and works that question and expand the methodologies and epistemologies of sleep knowledge.[10] Rooted in different disciplines and drawing from multiple means of knowledge production, they reroute the diagnostic and management imperatives of sleep research to instead

8. The Sociability of Sleep, https://sociabilityofsleep.ca.

9. Exhibition *InSomnolence*, curated by Marianne Cloutier, Aleksandra Kaminska and Alanna Thain, Agora Hydro-Quebec, Montreal, 21 June–13 July 2023, https://sociabilityofsleep.ca/insomnolence/.

10. See, for example, William C. Dement and Christopher C. Vaughan, *The Promise of Sleep: A Pioneer in Sleep Medicine Explores the Vital Connection Between Health, Happiness, and a Good Night's Sleep*, New York, Delacorte Press, 1999, or Kenton Kroker, *The Sleep of Others and the Transformations of Sleep Research*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, coll. "Heritage," 2007.

seek methods to better address the lived experience and somatic time of sleep and sleepers, which can all too often fall out of the capture of medical and scientific interests. Media representations and technologies from across the spectrum of cultural production have always been central in the sharing and meaning-making of dormancy—from storytelling in words and images to the data capture and interpretation of polysomnographic waves—the techniques we use to capture, record, and encode, or to represent and display, tell the story of our varied and shifting epistemologies of sleep. Media are what allow us to explore and register, if not overcome, the fundamental opacity of sleep, shifting sleep's elusive chronotopes onto novel sites of encounter. The essays in the special issue explore sleeper scenes less as representations of sleepers and more as enactments of sleep's paradoxes and potentials. As sleep and rest become increasingly fugitive and political experiences in our everyday lives, how are media helping cultivate spaces of shared rest, restoration, and repose? While the memories of sleep slip through our awakening fingers, how do we imagine media as producing the archives and reservoirs of sleep?

As a social problem with far reaching consequences, the "sleep crisis"[11] has recently been actively taken up by artists, curators, and storytellers, among other social commentators and activists.[12] While not all the essays in this issue concern art works or art practices directly, we believe there is something specific to the way that rest, like art, is increasingly interpellated as a site for action and labour under the nebulous sign of "creativity." Optimized sleep, even for one's own purposes or "dreams" (actual

11. This refers to the widely shared problem of insufficient sleep. See Diletta De Cristofaro's "Writing the Sleep Crisis," a project in which she explores this notion of crisis through novelists who "speak of diffuse anxieties about the contemporary world conveyed through the image of non-sleeping bodies." Quoted from "Writing the Sleep Crisis," *Polyphony*, 11 December 2020, https://the-polyphony.org/2020/12/11/writing-the-sleep-crisis/#_ftnref2 (accessed 10 June 2021). See also the work of Simon J. Williams, who has been working on sleep's social dimensions over his career, including in his most recent book, co-written with Catherine Coveney, Michael Greaney, Eric L. Hsu, and Robert Meadows, *Technosleep: Frontiers, Fictions, Futures*, London, Palgrave, 2023.

12. Some examples of recent sleep-themed exhibitions include *Insomnia* (curated by Sara Arrhenius, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, 24 September 2016–22 January 2017); *Figures of Sleep* (curated by Sarah Robayo Sheridan, University of Toronto Art Gallery, Toronto, 17 January–3 March 2018); *24/7* (curated by Sarah Cook, Somerset House, London, 31 October 2019–23 February 2020); *New Circadia*, (curated by Richard Sommer, University of Toronto's John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, 7 November 2019–30 April 2020); *Sleep and Altered States of Consciousness* (curated by Warren Neidich and Suzanne Prinz, Verein zur Förderung von Kunst und Kultur am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz e.V., Berlin, 19 June–17 July2021); *The Dreamers* (curated by Ilaria Marotta and Andrea Baccin, Belgrade Biennale, 26 June–22 August 2021); *Body Clocks* (curated by Kristin Hussey, Malthe Kouassi Bjerregaard, Medical Museion, Copenhagen, 25 January–14 April 2023).

or aspirational), is newly understood as a cache of creative potential, "wasted" if left untapped. Our interest in sleep has continually returned to artists and art practices that attempt to navigate this parallel. Art may provide a tonic to the downloading of responsibility for good sleep onto individual subjects through opportunities to make sleep more strange, and more shareable, via unexpected encounters, situations, and invitations to and with rest. It can amplify our attention to the stuff of sleep itself, which may be crucial to understand sleep's political and social potential and demands. If our self-image of sleep is already routed through other means and others' accounts, art may be the most relevant sleep commons of our time.

Searching for ways to share sleep is a deliberate reaction to the highly policed and restricted treatment of public forms of sleep. In her study of the sleep of soldiers in the US military during and returning from the Vietnam war, Franny Nudelman questions why the American government found it so problematic to let veterans sleep on the capital's Mall, even as it let them protest during the day. In *Fighting Sleep* (2019), she makes a compelling case for why "we must identify the institutional and discursive forces that have determined our limited, and limiting assumptions about what sleep is, and work to recover an activist counterhistory in which sleep has served as a form of expression, a source of community, and a means to survival."[13] The arguments Nudelman makes still resonate in a multiplicity of ways, including in the ongoing discrimination against certain kinds of public sleepers, most acutely in the harassment, eviction, and abandonment of unhoused people. But even when there are no bodies there, images of public sleepers can cause discomfort. This was the experience of photographer Steven Shearer, whose large close-up photographs of individuals sleeping, culled from the ambivalently public archives of the internet, were enough to cause such discomfort amongst people walking by that they were removed from billboards along the Arbutus Greenway in Vancouver during the 2021 Capture Photography Festival.[14] Jasmeen Patheja's (*Blank Noise*) annual call for sleepers to collectively unite, in her project *Meet to Sleep*, is in a very different register. Part of a cluster of activist art interventions around gender-based violence and street

13. Franny Nudelman, *Fighting Sleep: The War for the Mind and the US Military*, London, Verso, 2019, p. 8.

14. Charlie Smith, "Vancouver Artist Steven Shearer's Images Removed from Arbutus Greenway After Public Complaints," *The Georgia Strait*, 2 April 2021, https://www.straight.com/arts/vancouver-artist-steven-shearers-images-removed-from-arbutus-greenway-after-public-complaints (accessed 19 April 2021).

harassment in Bangalore and beyond, Patheja appealed to action she-roes (and now, they-roes) to sleep collectively in public spaces such as parks. Each year since 2014, the project lives out this ethos as described on the *Meet to Sleep* website: "In sleep, we protest. In sleep, we fight the fear and warnings we have long been taught to carry. In sleep, we surrender in trust. In sleep, we offer a new memory to our bodies and our public spaces. We meet to sleep for the right to be defenceless. We *Meet to Sleep* to create a new reality through collective feminist action."[15]

The contributors of this issue examine a wide range of sleep histories, media technologies, and cultural practices to examine the intimacies of power and control that are negotiated in the ways that sleep is documented, circulated, analyzed, and exchanged. In doing so, the contributors effectively challenge the idea of sleep as a purely individual concern and ask instead what we might learn or gain by considering sleep and its troubles through the lens of shared experience. As contemporary sleep media increasingly rely on the promise of immersive isolation through private and individualized ecologies that control the somatic conditions of sleep, often in an attempt to relax the mind (e.g., sleep apps, sleeping pods), what is lost when sleep becomes an experience closed off to others and to the environment? How does sleep become shareable and communicable? How do we know and care for ourselves and each other as sleepers? How do others help us make sense of our sleep and our sleeping self? If sleep is indeed social, how does this alter or expand our sense of the social and of the sociable? How and when do sleep media reintegrate sleep into the somatic affects and social circuits of its complex transitory experiences?

In our restless times, the (inter)medial forms and practices of sleep media are critical for rethinking sleep and its social demands, which makes particularly valuable the work of media and cultural studies, and in particular the critical impact of queer, racialized, gendered, disabled, and classed perspectives. These provide a vital tonic to accounts of sleep that seek to homogenize, idealize, or extract sleep from within the arid lifeworld of late capitalism. Broadly historical and cross-cultural in their assessment, the authors here both respond to our contemporary condition and ask pointed questions about the media, labour, and socio-political conditions, experiences, and accounts of sleep in the always-on of late capitalism. In doing so we continue a conversation

15. Blank Noise, "About Meet to Sleep," https://www.blanknoise.org/aboutmeettosleep (accessed 14 August 2023).

often understood as sparked by Jonathan Crary's influential *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (2013), a text that justly captures the pressures of potentially non-stop productivity.[16] We resist, however, the idea that sleep exists outside of the logics of capitalism as an "interval of time that cannot be colonized and harnessed to a massive engine of profitability."[17] Rather, we understand sleep as already under attack but whose vulnerability is a necessary quality of existence, one that can solicit care, intimacy, and risk as much as attract exploitation and harm. To attend too much to the latter at the expense of the demands of the former can fail to perceive the work already being done to cultivate a politics of sleep adequate to its enormous place in our lives. Jean Ma captures this precarious state in *At the Edges of Sleep* (2022):

> ...even while sleep always involves the reminder of a limit or the assertion of a boundary, these lines can themselves be inscribed on tilted planes and shifting sands. A politics of sleep must contend with the specific techniques of power that relate to the time, place, and bodies it involves, situating sleep as a wedge into a particular context, as much as a line of flight from the dominant order. It must likewise proceed from a recognition of the combinatorial possibilities of biopolitical and disciplinary mechanisms, along with how these are unevenly distributed across the "power chronography" of the contemporary world.[18]

These days, scientific projects around "sleep inception" and "dream engineering" that aim to insert advertising into our dreams, namely to transform us into more efficient sleepers and better workers and consumers, are some obvious ways sleep is being harvested to contribute to the insatiable demands of capitalism. But these are just some current and futuristic examples of sleep politics seeping into our individual dreams. Other frames of reference that include plantation slavery, care labour, and night shifts, for example, have importantly detailed the complex and heterochronic ways in which sleep has been made to serve capitalist logics even before the intensifications of

16. Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, London, Verso, 2013.
17. *Ibid*., p. 11.
18. Jean Ma, *At the Edges of Sleep: Moving Images and Somnolent Spectators*, Stanford, University of California Press, 2022, p. 33.

the contemporary moment.[19] In the essays within this issue, we grapple with the ways that sleep has long been a site of labour that challenges or undermines the need for rest and leisure (part 1); with questions of equity and community that arise when sleep becomes a site of socio-political resistance (part 2); we consider who makes and how we produce access, knowledge, and expertise resulting from the somatic experiences of sleep (part 3); and we engage with technologies that challenge any ideas about sleep existing in a privileged apolitical domain uncontaminated by social structures (part 4). The research-creation and artist contributions bring together these sites of sleeper unrest by tactically deploying surveillance technologies that extract and make productive the somatic and subjective experiences of sleep and sleepiness.

Part One begins with three essays on sleep as a site of labour. Feminist and Black studies and research into the emergent concept of "sleep equity" have shown us how histories of power and labour are at the troubled root of the indistinction between work and rest. The always-on of care work and reproductive labour has compromised women's sleep in ways that have historically been made invisible, while recent scholarship has shown how contemporary sleep guidelines have longer histories in the relentless control of colonialism, the plantation, and the live-work-rest cycles of enslaved peoples. Following from this work, these essays attend to workers themselves as sleeper subjects and to sites where sleep and labour meet in a variety of ways. We begin with the experimental ethnography of Amelie Barbier's "L'œil et l'oreille du

19. The most effective analyses insist on connecting sleep to wider lifeworlds. Josie Roland Hodson's "Rest Notes: On Black Sleep Aesthetics," *October*, no. 176, Spring 2021, p. 7–24, analyses how "tracing lineages of sleep inequities faced by Black people—from practices of sleep deprivation of the enslaved in the plantation economy to post-emancipation and present-day struggles against extractive labor practices and the everyday stress of discrimination—reveals that Black sleep is one variable in the calculus of what Michael Hanchard calls "racial time," defined as "the inequalities of temporality that result from power relations between racially dominant and subordinate groups," p. 24. For his *The Slave Dwelling Project*, the historical preservationist Joseph McGill sought to document and preserve the history of enslaved peoples in the United States by sleeping in their former dwellings. The outcome of this research can be found in his book, co-authored with Herb Frazier (eds), *Sleeping with the Ancestors: How I Followed the Footprints of Slavery*, New York, Hachette, 2023. A 2019 study finds only one precursor study that considers the effects on sleep of doing care work both at home and on the job. Nicole DePasquale, Martin J. Sliwinski, Steven H Zarit, Orfeu M. Buxton and David M. Almeida, "Unpaid Caregiving Roles and Sleep Among Women Working in Nursing Homes: A Longitudinal Study," *The Gerontologist*, vol. 59, no. 3, 17 May 2019, p. 474–485. Meanwhile, in 2019 the International Agency for Research on Cancer classified night shift work as "probably carcinogenic," as quoted in Marie-Tülin Houot, Nastassia Tvardik, Emilie Cordina-Duverger, Pascal Guénel and Corinne Pilorget, "A 34-Year Overview of Night Work by Occupation and Industry in France Based on Census Data and a Sex-Specific Job-Exposure Matrix," *BMC Public Health*, vol. 22, no. 1, 29 July 2022, https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-13830-5 (accessed 15 August 2023).

sommeil : Lire les vidéo-polysomnographies avec des infirmières de nuit" ["The eyes and years of sleep: Reading video-polysomnography with night nurses"]. From the sleep pathology department of the Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital in Paris, Barbier explores the working and sleeping relationship between night nurses and patients in a sleep clinic. Mediated by polysomnographic imaging and interfaces, the diagnostic goals of this endeavour require that nurses take care of the sleep of the other by becoming workers of the night, compromising their own sleep and circadian cycles to do so. Barbier extends a careful regard for the professional practices of those whose job it is to "veiller," to keep watch by not falling asleep. Through semi-structured interviews and ethnographic participant observation, Barbier follows the nurses' nocturnal work to capture the specific sharing of knowledge and know-how that emerges in the intimate and gendered confines of the sleep clinic in terms of both expertise about how to monitor and track sleep, but also about how to stay wakeful and alert observers through the long hours of the night. Next, Cressida J. Heyes and Hannah Haugen consider a different way in which sleep meets work. In "The New Horizontal Worker: Privacy, Sexuality, and Professionalism in the Digital Bedroom," they survey the paradox of isolation and exposure of the COVID pandemic through the lens of the bed and bedroom, which for many became sites of work at that home-bound time. They examine how telemeeting platforms like Zoom transformed and framed both space and worker and the micro-management of professionalism and class status for white-collar online workers in these private environments. As a point of contrast, they turn to mediated performances of work from bed performed by celebrities and artists as documented in photography, video, and writing that play with notions of privacy, intimacy, voyeurism, and authenticity. The bed, like any workspace, is a site of multiplicity, propped up by different pressures and types of performance. The section on sleep and labour wraps up by considering an altogether different site, one defined by the political geography of the South. In "Everyone Enjoys a Siesta After Lunch in the West Indies: Fictions of Labour and Languor," Nicole Dufoe turns to written fiction from and about the Caribbean from the Victorian age to the present to reconsider the tourist's gaze on the sleeping and idle Caribbean figure. Highlighting the risky vulnerabilities of sleep, she examines how these fictionalized accounts figure two opposing realities of comfort and peril. Through considerations of Black labour, leisure, and racialization, she unpacks fantasies of rest and relaxation grafted onto sites of excruciating work, rampant illness, and environmental destruction.

Part Two more directly considers the socio-politics of sleep and its relations to somatic, liberatory, and surveillant practices. Saelyx Finna and Mia Imani's "Under The Dream: The New Frontiers of Dream Technology and Radical Rest" presents a multidisciplinary and prismatic take on the "sleep gap" within the Black Diaspora; that is to say, the well documented lack of equitable access to good sleep amongst Black diasporic subjects, caused by everything from high rates of untreated sleep conditions to an overrepresentation in noisy or otherwise disturbing environments.[20] They trace this to the historical legacies of slavery, colonialism, and white supremacy, arguing these have shaped the present conditions for Black sleep and dreaming. Offering their experiences as artists, collaborators, and friends who map the intersections of their work within the Radical Rest movement and dream neurotechnology, they advocate for liberatory dream practices to envision a world beyond systems of oppression. Their contribution is in dialogue with some of the most influential voices in popular sleep media and activism, such as Tricia Hersey of *The Nap Ministry*, *Black Power Naps*, and *Black Womxn Dreaming*, to name just a few.[21] Meanwhile, Zaira Zarza provides an analysis of another community of sleepers in her "Heterotopias of Collective Sleep: Sharing Beds in Twenty-First-Century Latin American Cinema," in which she considers environments of collective sleeping as narrative tools in contemporary Latin American films. What do works such as Lucrecia Martel's portraits of neoliberal

20. A panel at the SLEEP 2022 annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies argued that racism and racial discrimination, rather than race per se, is the actual risk factor that explains the higher rates of disturbed sleep amongst Black Americans. The panel featured the work of key interdisciplinary researchers on this topic including Benjamin Reiss, Chandra Jackson, Dayna Johnson, and Philip Cheng. See also Skylar Jeremias, "Race Is Not a Risk Factor for Disrupted Sleep, but Racism Is," *The American Journal of Managed Care*, 6 June 2022, https://www.ajmc.com/view/race-is-not-a-risk-factor-for-disrupted-sleep-but-racism-is- (accessed 1st August 2023).

21. Tricia Hersey's sums up her organization *The Nap Ministry* as examining "the liberating power of naps." This mode of resistance, her website continues, "evolved from *Transfiguration*, a performance where the artist explored reparations, resistance, Black Liberation Theology, and the spiritual practice of rest, and how it can be used as a direct line to our ancestors." Hersey offers multi-platform reflections and practices that insist on rest as "reparations" for Black subjects, from her website thenapministry.com, to her recent book *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto* (New York, Little, Brown Spark, 2022), to a "Rest Deck," 50 cards that prompt practices for radical rest, and a 1-800 number to call for a rest affirmation. *Black Power Naps*, an ongoing installation and performance series, is the creation of Navild Acosta and Fanny Sosa to build spaces and practices for energetic reparations for Black peoples. The project website, https://blackpowernaps.black/ is, as of this writing, private. Ellen Sebastian Chang and Amara Tabor-Smith's *Black Womxn Dreaming* is part of House/Full of Black Women that staged both a public and private event around rest. Chang and Tabor-Smith discussed this work in The Sociability of Sleep's Sleep Salon no. 6: *Sleep Salon 6: Performing Sleep, with Amara Tabor-Smith, Ellen Sebastian Chang & Jasmeen Patheja*, [Sociability of Sleep], 2022, *youtube.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90X0yVMCWvk (accessed 15 August 2023), 1:30:43.

Argentina in her Salta trilogy, or Arturo Infante's *The Extraordinary Journey of Celeste García*, set in post-socialist Cuba, tell us about sleep's inextricability from the conditions laid out by socio-political and cultural contexts and potentials? Sleep is imagined as a site of social encounter, both for its propensity to spill beyond the individual through collective sleeping conditions, arrangements, and practices, and for the expansive edges of its temporal bounds. Ultimately, Zarza considers scenes of shared sleep as affective landscapes that permit the co-existence of contradictory conditions and experiences to arise as a heterotopic, rather than utopic, potential of sleep politics. Finally in this section, Camille Bui continues the conversation on the watchers of sleep first introduced in Barber. In "Des dormeurs confiés à nos regards: Figurer et éprouver la sociabilité paradoxale du sommeil" ["Sleepers Entrusted to our Gaze: Figuring and Living through the Paradoxical Sociability of Sleep"], she considers the politics of watching sleep by questioning how the concerns of media practice and analysis provide methods for the responsibility to care for other sleepers. Bui analyzes representations of sleep and its staging in scientific study, cinema, contemporary art practice, documentary film, and social media, with a focus on both the look and act of surveillance and how it is employed. She examines sociability, consent, empathy, vulnerability, and trust as key components that contribute to the relationship and relationalities between sleeper and viewer, contending that a watchful spectator is much more than a simple voyeur.

While the first two sections also address the somatic experiences of sleep, Part Three is directly concerned with the sensory, focusing on the senses that remain receptive during sleep, such as smell and sound. What epistemologies and practices emerge when we shift "night knowledges"—a term offered by Sandra Huber—from the dominance of the visual? In "The Scent of Sleep," Huber takes an exploratory approach to thinking sleep through what she describes as "air-born epistemologies and methodologies." Pairing the demands of attending to both sleep and scent as atmospheres, Huber offers a series of case studies as a way to think through the "night knowledge" that the scent of sleep demands, including methods and practices for working with experiences that may persist in their unsettled impacts. Undervalued by philosophy, scent (a "lesser sense") and sleep (a "lesser state" of consciousness) have reemerged today as experimental zones for thinking the atmospheric turn in cultural and media studies, and Huber's examples trace a cartography of our longing for a sociable atmospherics of sleep. The next two essays in this section open the ear, first

through curatorial and then through consumer practices, both of which express the competing desires of autonomy and control. Curator and researcher Anabelle Lacroix describes her experimental methodology for "Listening with Insomnia" as a political gesture, one in which the night can be a positive site of community and creativity, neither stereotyped as a time of deviance or anti-social behaviour nor extracted for productive labour. Rooted in the traditions of community radio and queer feminist listening practices, Lacroix curates audio projects for nighttime listening (the first, *Freedom of Sleep*, "aired" online in 2020; the second, *Radio Insomnia*, aired online and over analog airwaves during *InSomnolence* in 2023 with collaborator Nicolas Montgermont), presenting insomnia as a valuable resource and epistemology that is ultimately generative and generous in its potential for shared and sociable encounters. Through this work, she seeks to challenge common understandings of insomnia as demonstrative of deficiency or depletion and as defined negatively against "good" rest. The relationship between sound and sleep is then taken up in "Bedtime Stories: Audiobooks, Podcasts, and Reading as Listening (and Sleeping)," in which Joshua Dittrich looks at the emergence of a specific practice of what he calls "som(n)iferous media," that is to say media in which sleep and sound coincide in the hopes of putting the listener to sleep. He tracks the rising popularity of consumers intentionally repurposing podcasts or audiobooks into sonic sleep aids which, he argues, is a practice aligned with the demands of late capitalism. To argue that the sleeper continues to be a productive subject, Dittrich traces this nightly habit through the history of twentieth-century hypnopedia or sleep learning, arguing that this auditory engagement, with its contradictory command to control the process of "letting go" and falling into sleep, is a technique of self-management that forecloses more creative potentials for sleep audition. As these articles demonstrate, attending to and soliciting sleep's expansive sensorium through media can point us towards neglected or under-considered avenues for sharing or shared sleep.

We conclude with three essays that play with, or consider how, today's technological affordances are expanding ideas about what sleep media is and might become. What do we want—or want to avoid—from making sleep shareable through media forms, and from the promise of extracting creative resources from our somnolent experience? Albertine Thunier's "Beware the LOLCats: Une recherche-création sur les illustrations populaires du sommeil préindustriel" ["Beware the LOLCats: A Research-Creation Project on Popular Illustrations of

Pre-Industrial Sleep"] is an unexpected reflection on preindustrial sleep. Drawing on the longstanding practice of using the figure of the cat to convey popular truths, she recasts sleep historian Roger Ekirch's research on pre-industrial sleep (and, notably, its aforementioned practice of bi-phasic sleep) into meme-sized LOLCat lessons. Doron Darnov's "Do Humans Dream of Electric Ads?" strikes a different affective tone in his exploration of the ordinary and exceptional dystopias of the emergent practice of dream incubation. Extrapolating from the work being done at the MIT Media Lab project Fluid Interfaces, Darnov takes a critical view of dream engineering and examines how it might impact the sleeping subject, what it means for dreams to be reduced to transmissible and collectable data, and for sleep to be treated as a platform for economic productivity. Ultimately, he argues that targeted dream incubation hints at a future in which sleep becomes yet another site of exploitation, where even our ability to imagine and dream different futures is broken down and assimilated into the mythos of capitalist progress.[22] This section concludes with *Intermédialités*' inaugural audiovisual research essay, Dayna McLeod's "Watch Me Sleep: Self-Surveillance, and Aging Queer Performance Anxiety." McLeod compares two of her performance-based pieces that use sleeping as part of her practice, along with an accompanying text that details the stakes of vulnerability, liveness, and self-surveillance using consumer grade technologies. Deftly navigating the pressure of performance to entertain and the often-ambivalent promise of "exposure" for both queer lives and artists as a form of care or compensation, McLeod's reflexive analysis reopens the capture and subsequent display of her own troubled sleep by surveillance media to reinscribe it in social circuits that interfere with the public/private binary in provocative ways.

This special issue concludes with a performative reading by artist and researcher Eloïse Vo, whose current work on lethargy and horizontality explores the interface as a scene of extraction of human energy and cognition. Vo's areas of interest are part of a recent wave of work concerned with performance and lethargy, fatigue (and

22. On the connection between sleep and socio-political imagination: Raqs Media Collective, "Is the World Sleeping, Sleepless, or Awake or Dreaming?," *e-flux*, issue 56, June 2014, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60349/is-the-world-sleeping-sleepless-or-awake-or-dreaming/ (accessed 15 December 2021) or, for a broader perspective, Tiziana Terranova and Ravi Sundaram, "Colonial Infrastructures and Techno-Social Networks," *e-flux*, issue 123, December 2021, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/123/437385/colonial-infrastructures-and-techno-social-networks/ (accessed 12 January 2022).

"hyperfatigue"[23]), and exhaustion that theorize how the constellation of somatic and affective experiences surrounding the need to rest trouble our sense of how productivity, capacity, labour, and embodiment are lived today.[24] In her performance *Grèves Perlées*, Vo produces an interface that repurposes a fatigue sensor from Volvo, a webcam as well as therapeutics ranging from EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), ASMR and more, alongside an interactive atmosphere of sonic composition, speculative histories, and embodied movement in the form of the blink. Via the proposition that blinking produces a microchronics of sleep, Vo reads across the blink of an eye as a media technique.[25] She devised a performance scenario in which she uses blinking to communicate with the machine and control the audiovisual pace of the performance. Through her eyelids' simple communicative gesture, Vo offers an example of how a most common, perpetual, and usually unconscious action is one possible model for a labour slowdown that resists surveillance capitalism. The heaviness of eyelids blinking ever slower conveys the overlaps between a multiplicity of states that range from tired to asleep, so that to think about sleep almost inevitably also opens us up to the consequences of "having" bad sleep or "being" poor sleepers. In Vo's purposeful blinking rhythms she fights against sleep while also succumbing to it, offering a subtle example of sleep's political pressures and somatic powers.

Vo's work delicately constructs a space for attending to sleep on technological, industrial, artistic, social, and somatic terrains that are sometimes challenging for life. The risks of exposure for those wrestling with troubled sleep, the ambivalent assistance promised by tracking devices that extract more than they return, and the experiential disjunction of sleep as a fraught and desirable gap in consciousness, can easily reroute discussion of sleep media into a familiar alternation between

23. Word of the year according to market research firm Mintel, as quoted in Emma Beddington, "Yes, You're Tired. But are you Hungry Tired, Angry Tired, Resignation Tired, Stupid Tired ...?," *The Guardian*, 21 May 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/may/21/hyperfatigue-is-the-big-thing-in-2023-but-what-we-really-need-are-50-words-for-tired (accessed 21 May 2023).

24. On fatigue and related concepts: *Dictionnaire de la fatigue*, Philippe Zawieja (ed.), Genève, Librairie Droz, 2016; *Inflexion*, issue 10 "Modes of Exhaustion," 2017; Ottessa Moshfegh's popular novel *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, New York, Penguin, 2018; a special issue of *Ardeth* journal on "Burn out" (2021); Tung-Hui Hu, *Digital Lethargy: Dispatches from an Age of Disconnection*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2022; Jonathan Sterne's *Diminished Faculties*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2022; or George Vigarello's *A History of Fatigue: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, Nancy Erber (trans.), London, Polity, 2023.

25. Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing*, West Hollywood, Silman-James Press, 1995.

utopian and dystopian extremes. In this issue, we have sought out work that instead explores sleep media as assemblages of technologies and practices that fully belong to life, that attune us to the opaque zones of encounter, witness, documentation, and exchange that make resistance not the work of reaction but of an insistent and uncompromising repetition. Fantasies and nightmares of sleeplessness aside, we will never be done with our need for sleep, or perhaps it is sleep that will never be done with us. We need more conversations, more accounts, more representations, and more sleep sensations generated by art, as well as a wide-range of disciplinary inquiry to make our encounters with sleep more capacious, weird, heterogenous, and unexpected. With every passage onto the threshold of sleep, there is a potential: one to recompose ourselves and our others.

Introduction: The Sleeper's Unrest

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Biographical notes:

Dayna McLeod is a middle-aging, queer, performance-based media artist and Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture research-creation postdoctoral fellow. She earned a PhD from the Centre for the Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture at Concordia University. Her written work has been published in Theatre Research in Canada, Canadian Theatre Review, Ciel Variable, Framework, Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology, and NOMOREPOTLUCKS. She has received support from Canada Council for the Arts, Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, the Faculty of Education at McGill University, PHI Centre, Centaur Theatre, La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse, Concordia University, and Media@ McGill. Her video and performance work have been presented at the Impakt Festival in Utrecht Netherlands, the Mardi Gras Festival in Darlinghurst Australia, MIX Brasil Festival Of Sexual Diversity in São Paulo Brazil, the Modern Art Museum in Warsaw Poland, Le Centre d'art contemporain in Paris, the Tang Teaching Museum in Saratoga Springs, the PHI Centre, OFFTA, and Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois in Montreal, the Summerworks Theatre Festival in Toronto, and Performatorium, Queer City Cinema's performance festival in Regina. For the past year, Dayna has been working with Artificial Intelligence tools to explore human to non-human collaboration, embodiment, and performativity.

Alanna Thain is an Associate Professor of Film and Cultural Studies and Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies in the Department of English at McGill University. She

is the director of the Moving Image Research Lab (MIRL), dedicated to the study of the body in moving image media and expanded performance, and also directs the FRQSC funded research team CORERISC, the Collective for Research on Epistemologies of Embodied Risk, with its current focus on "Unruly Affects: Horror in Media and Performance." She is the author of *Bodies in Suspense: Time and Affect in Cinema* (University of Minnesota, 2017) and is co-editor of *States of Immersion: Bodies, Media, Technologies* (Amsterdam University Press, 2024) and *LoTechPopCult: Screendance Remixed* (Routledge, 2024). With Aleks Kaminska, she co-directs The Sociability of Sleep, a research-creation exploration of sleep's sociabilities.

Aleksandra Kaminska is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the Université de Montréal working in media studies, media arts, and research-creation. She works primarily at the intersection of media aesthetics, material and visual cultures, and the history and philosophy of science and technology. She has worked on a number of edited collections, including recently as co-editor of an issue of *PUBLIC Journal* on "Biometrics: Mediating Bodies" (2020) and an issue of the *Canadian Journal of Communication* on "Materials and Media of Infrastructure" (2021). She is a founding co-director of the Artefact Lab in media studies, the Bricolab space for research-creation and making, and co-founder of the international working group PaperologyRAG.