Navigating Digitally-Mediated Theatre with Intermediaturgy

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Abstract

Traditional dramaturgical practice does not adequately account for how emergent digital media can interact with elements of performance in intermedial theatre, leading to an art form that is critically and compositionally inaccessible. When live and not-live components interact on stage, how does that reflect a contemporary notion of the body? And how does theatre that grapples with this interaction speak to the digital beyond the stage?

This thesis explores the impact of media on notions of the body, identity, and space through a new genre of theatre, called digitally-mediated theatre (DMT). The increasing reliance on media platforms as a form of social exchange and digital media saturation have created a society that is integrated, infested, and extended by the media. DMT artists criticize this media relationship and encourage mindful awareness of its influence by taking the self-same digital media technology, embedding it in performance.

A selection of DMT performances will be analyzed using an intermediaturgical process to break down the mechanisms that are used to play with notions of body, identity, and space. As intermediaturgy is concerned with human perception and navigation of mediated environments, this will allow for an analytical framework that will be resistant to obsolescence as digital media technology continues to evolve. By demonstrating this method of analysis, the aim of this thesis is to help clarify a field at odds with itself, demystify the artists from their auteur status, and increase the accessibility of the form to new and emerging artists and students of the arts.

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Introduction

How Can We Look at Media?

In 2003, American/German performance company Troika Ranch produced *Future of Memory*, a production that skews boundaries of space and time to tell a story of the difficulty and untrustworthiness of memory. As actors move and dance across the stage, selectively recounting their life experience, stations set up with livestreaming cameras capture emotionally charged, expository, and often deeply personal dialogue and monologues. A huge array of windows and doors covers the back wall of the stage, and the livestream is projected over top of them. Sometimes the images and sounds are directly played alongside the actor speaking, creating a doubled sense of sound and movement. At other times the projection is offset, and it stutters. Sometimes it is rewound, intercut with images pertinent to the memory, or slowed down and repeated as the dancer/actor moves back into the action on stage. The images are broken up along the seams of the windows and doors, and as some are opened and closed the image is partially obscured or fractured (see figure 1).

The play, according to the creators, demonstrates that "the process of how we store, recall, and embody the events of our lives defines who we are as individuals and, thereby, who we become as a community" (*Future of Memory,* 2003). Through its narrative, it builds a sense of how events and recollections can be troubled, interrupted, or even fabricated by the person recalling them, but nonetheless contribute to our understanding of who we are. In the play, this effect is amplified

by digital projections that function beyond a high-value production gimmick, adding important meaning through the juxtaposition of projection and actor.

This performance has issues being categorized due to its multimedial design: the digital media and the movement style have earned it the designation of both a video dance and an interactive video performance, as opposed to simply a piece of intermedial theatre. *Future of Memory* is a layered performance that uses digital media as an integral part of its mise-en-scène. Because it draws the eye and has a different sense of motion and narrative than the actors on stage, the media takes on a sort of life for itself, and it seems to possess its own intelligence (Yung, 2003). Troika Ranch mandates using emergent, interactive and immersive media technology in their performances. Their plays question how these devices and techniques alter or disrupt our perception and understanding of how humans connect, and they are not the only performance creators interested in exploring these ideas.

*Figure 1:*Future of Memory, *Troika Ranch.[1] A performer speaks into a confession-style camera while his image is projected onto the objects behind him.*

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[1] Source: *Future of Memory, The Duke Theatre, NYC 2003,* troika ranch, Troika Ranch – Older Works (1989-2004), 2015. <vimeo.com/119578722>. You can find archival video of this performance and others by Troika Ranch here: https://troikaranch.org/portfolio-item/future-of-memory/

The purpose of this thesis is to find a way to dig deeper into the rationale of artists and companies like Troika Ranch that have incorporated media and digital technology and theatre in non-trivial ways to explore the implications of navigating a world increasingly saturated with media and digital technology. What ideas do they grapple with, how do they function on stage, and how might we unpack their significance as theatre speaks to a media-saturated society? To accomplish this, I propose digitally-mediated theatre, or DMT, as a theatrical genre that is especially suited to these explorations, and use a process of intermediaturgy to analyze them.

This thesis adapts a discourse analysis method for investigating how certain mechanisms function in DMT productions. Using intermediaturgy, a type of dramaturgical lens that will be expanded upon in the next chapter, I will demonstrate DMT's social and perceptual impact on its viewer and their relationship to digital media and media platforms. Instead of a case study where a few productions are analyzed in-depth for elements like content, narrative, theme, and function, I will be looking at many different works as exemplary of theoretical principles or mechanisms. Where possible, descriptions and analyses will be accompanied by links to video or imagery of the productions in question to allow for an applied engagement with the works outside of the moments being more deeply engaged (see Appendix I: Links to Productions for a full list). An in-depth analysis of few works does not do justice to the breadth of ways interaction, media, bodies, and issues of identity and space manifest in DMT. The sheer diversity of performance speaks to the multitude of ways that digital media impacts contemporary society, and the problems that follow that impact. Discourse analysis is interested in the social contextualization of a text, and often structurally incorporates deconstructive and phenomenological approaches.

Further, looking at the productions in their context, their relationality, and their impact on an audience or multiple audiences underlines the socio-political power relations of the dynamic performance archive while allowing for an analysis of the multiplicity of iterations of the work. A reading-in-detail case study would limit the attention to a specific production, hindering a synthetic view of the orientations and assemblages that make up DMT and that are constantly evolving. The approach adopted in this thesis is thus meant to be an active response and a critical intervention in the emergence of an ever-shifting field beyond the documentary, figural or descriptive imperative.

As a result, productions will be broken down into moments, scenes, and ideas, with special attention paid to how a particular digital element or interaction functions within the scene and within the wider context of the play. The productions featured show artists using digital media to critique digital media's presence in society, and using highly interactive, often immersive theatrical environments critique our own engagement with media outside the theatre. This reciprocal relationship between the material on the stage and structures of contemporary society lends itself to a discursive and critical approach rather than a descriptive one.

This method reinforces the importance of having a delimited genre and underscores the importance of mechanisms and dynamic relationships in DMT productions. The purpose of the genre is to show a trend in theatre making in the last 30 years of artists tackling the often problematic and continuously evolving issue of digital space, digital media, and digital society. Critical conversations around these topics often brackets out the mechanism of interaction, focusing either solely on the technology at play, or reducing its importance in favour of more traditional narrative analysis. The problem of bracketing

comes up throughout this thesis in the form of bracketed technology, bracketed bodies, or bracketed social elements. A focus on the discourse created through interactivity in these productions allows for a more focused, if less overarching approach to analysis.

The sensibility DMT evokes is a catalyst for exploring the digital world and media, and how the social impact of these things alters our perception of everyday life. While the specifics of DMT will be unpacked in greater depth in the next chapter, its foundation has two key components. First, it has a relationship with digital technology that is more than novel – there is meaningful interaction or integration of digital technology, performers, and the narrative of a piece. This theatre significantly uses, explores, and/or criticizes digital technology and media. Second, it features the body, a sense of identity or presence, and space as fundamental principles in the composition of performance aesthetic, in the communication of meaning, and/or in the themes explored by the piece.

The body is a central concern in this research, and regardless of theme the body always returns to be a key component for grounding our understanding of this work: how has the digital age affected our perception of the body, and how is this reflected in or criticized by DMT? The body has always been a central figure in performance, but digital technology and its integration into the theatre space has allowed that body to become more pluralistic, more fragmented, and tele-present. Some point to this as a sign of de-sacralization of the form, or a movement away from the purity of theatre as a live performance form, removing its essential spirit and replacing it with a non-original recording. Others see this as theatre absorbing and remediating yet another facet of culture and creating an extension of the body through integrating, interfacing, or infesting bodies on stage with media. To contend with these views, I ask how theatre makers are exploring

these questions by mindfully including and interacting with media on stage. DMT is simultaneously self-critical of the digital world, and reliant on it to communicate meaning, and often theatre makers in this genre tread the line between embracing the power of media and exposing the fear associated with the loss of sense of place, embodiment, privacy, and fear of control (or the loss of it) that digital media exhibits.

The analysis of theatre and performance in this thesis will take key mechanisms found at the juncture between media and performer, focusing on the point of interaction to demonstrate significance. I look to intermediaturgy as proposed by Donia Mounsef as a framework to do this. DMT uses media compositionally and speaks to how we engage with media outside the theatre through both design and narrative. Both the compositional elements of a given play as well as the meaning or communication being produced are vital to understanding how DMT utilizes media, so some form of dramaturgical outlook will be valuable in unpacking how the composition and communication on stage interact. As opposed to a more conventional dramaturgy, or the more media-centric mediaturgy, intermediaturgy is concerned with how media, media spaces, and the digital world are navigated and perceived, and the reciprocal effect that navigation has on our sense of self (Mounsef, 2017). As we are more embedded in the digital world, how we navigate and how we understand ourselves is increasingly impacted, and how we engage with the digital world shapes that understanding. Intermediaturgy creates a space where that impact can be understood and unpacked through performance. Broadly, this research is concerned with concepts and practice related to intermedial theories of performance and offers to clarify some key conversations surrounding intermedial theatre through the lens of these highly evocative performances.

Chapter Breakdown

Accepting that the primary quality of DMT is mindful interaction with media on stage, it is important to note that notions of the body, identity, and space appear repeatedly as central to the meaning, message, or communication espoused by these plays. They are often used narratively and aesthetically in the creation of the stage space. Any criticism of digital technology or media in DMT centres on how we are impacted in terms of body, identity, or space. These notions are present in all DMT examples, although some more readily showcase one over the others.

This thesis is divided into four major chapters, starting with an exploration of how DMT and intermediaturgy functions, then investigating body, identity, and space respectively. Each chapter will contain specific examples of DMT that either demonstrate or problematize the concepts being discussed. Some performances will feature in multiple chapters to show the variety of ways in which important mechanisms can function, tracking how the three organizational components of this genre can build upon each other. While different performances have different statements to make about these three key topics, starting with the body as a site of troubled ontology makes the most sense for this thesis. Theatre is at best a difficult performance medium to isolate, but almost always the presence of the living, material body of the actor is the primary way of distinguishing theatre as opposed to another type of performance. The body leads to identity, and the special sense of presence created by DMT. Identity takes on a dual role in DMT, showing how it is expressed via interaction with the digital world, and stimulating reflection on how we identify ourselves and perceive the identity of others. Finally, these two major topics are grounded in the theatre space itself – after discussing how the mechanisms of the theatre

help us navigate these issues, the space of the theatre becomes yet another site of inquiry into the reciprocal relationship between DMT's creation and the digital or media culture is it interrogating.

In the first chapter, DMT will be clearly defined and demonstrated as a genre of theatre with significant investment in exploring the important themes of body, identity, and space through digital means. DMT separates itself from both theatre that does not include digital media elements, and theatre that does not engage heavily with digital media. The second half of the chapter tracks intermediaturgy as an analytical and compositional tool for DMT. Because interaction and engagement with media is such a central tenant to this theatre there are weaknesses in both conventional dramaturgy and the more recently delimited mediaturgy in reconciling how this interaction impacts both performance aesthetic and perception. Intermediaturgy focuses on mechanisms of navigation and perception with an emphasis on contemporary media-saturated experience. A breakdown of the functional differences between dramaturgy, mediaturgy, and intermediaturgy reveals the benefits of using it to analyze this theatre.

Chapter two will focus on the body as an object of artistic fascination, a troubled site for liveness, and its relationship with the virtual body that inhabits the digital world. The body as a focal point is not unique to DMT, but it is central to understanding the themes featured in later chapters. I will engage with the liveness debate to emphasize the elusive nature of the body – the body exists and is interesting, but it resists definition to a certain extent. Bodies in theatre are a site of reconception: they have the power to anchor an audience and extend their understanding of their sense of self – when these bodies are

inundated or infested with media, technology, and the digital world the liminal space of the stage reveals the implications of interacting with new technology.

Chapter three expands the discussion from body to identity and its attending feature, which is presence. In the case of DMT both identity and presence are seen as fractured or pluralized by interaction and integration with virtual space. Presence is also evoked as co-presence, and sometimes telepresence, while identity and digital identity are problematized by creators focusing on how we interact with the digital world, how we conceive of ourselves in it, and how it shapes our conception of the self and other. Further, the performances used in this chapter touch on how we identify and interact through digital means as well as how our identities and understanding of presence are complicated by the introduction of the digital representation of the post-human, the more than human, or the person-that-may-not-be-a-person. Discussion of the cyborg functions as a bridge between body and identity, showcasing how the latter grows out of an understanding of the former. Theorists and creators alike use the cyborg as a way of disrupting the self, removing the notion that it is a singular object and emphasizing its networked existence.

Chapter four is concerned with space, specifically the in-between space of the digital, how digital and live interaction on the space of an intermedial stage changes perspective and perception of action, and what sort of environment is created by this interaction. It focuses on how navigation of space is the key to grounding the body and identity in the stage environment. Telepresence is expanded into telematic action to add to the discussion of how the dissolution of spatial boundaries between the stage and digital media problematizes what the *real* in real life signifies. The chapter questions what sort of

spaces are navigated in the digital world, and how increasing time spent navigating those

spaces impacts our sense of space and inhabitance.

Accessing Intermediality in Theatre and Performance

As with any taxonomy of genre of a medium, the edges of DMT are bound to be fuzzy. There may be theatre that uses digital technology in a trivial way, such as using a microphone purely for volume or using a projection in place of a painted backdrop for the sake of portability. There is also theatre that criticizes or explores the very topics covered in this thesis without any digital or media technology involved. However, the combination of the two, and the interactivity that it offers, creates an interesting perspective of using the tools being criticized in order to make cogent, impactful criticism of how contemporary life embedded in these digital technologies is navigated. Ultimately, DMT belongs to intermedial theatre and practice – a term that will feature in the next chapter. Marking it as a distinct genre within the larger framework of intermediality allows for a closer look at some of the mechanisms of performance and meaning making that DMT artists rely on.

The importance of demarcating and unpacking DMT has two origins. The first has to do with the genesis of this thesis topic – the original impetus for this research came as a result of interacting with several cohorts of young, eager theatre makers at several different institutions in Canada. These were often students or former students of universities in Canada with excellent performance and education track records. While there was great interest among these students in using digital technology and interacting with issues of virtual, digital, and living in the digital age, few had any real formal education in the subject. This is further complicated by the status of many of the creators being used in this thesis. Many are considered critically and professionally as auteurs, or exemplary for their atypical educations in theatre and performance, or their propensity to use non-formally trained cast and crew members to create their performances. Even Troika Ranch, which

styles itself as creating theatre in theatre buildings, is described as a video dance company as opposed to a theatre company by more than one outlet (Salisbury, 2003). Few, if any, of the examples that follow are made by people trained in the manner that most theatre makers are formally educated in Canada today. Isolating and unpacking this genre becomes an opportunity to break down the mechanisms through which these performances operate, and through intermediaturgy provide a method of recreating or innovating on the ideas inherent to DMT moving forward. As a critical tool, intermediaturgy will enhance the understanding of compositional elements of DMT plays and performances. It will also help demystify the perception of these performances as needing a rare skillset to an audience unaccustomed to unpacking these types of creations. An intermediaturgical approach, I hope, will make the genre, and as a result the field, more accessible to an audience of practitioners that are eager with it.

This genre also facilitates what I see as a divide between novel and non-novel use of technology in theatre. Theatre is a field constantly in flux, and intermedial theatre is always undergoing a rapid shift as technology outpaces the traditional research and reporting process. As a result, the language used to describe this body of theatre is constantly at odds with itself. By narrowing down to the more specific genre of DMT, even if that genre is ultimately created through a process of reverse engineering like-minded-seeming performances, there is space to solidify a vocabulary and grammar of mediated performance. Some intermediality in theatre and performance falls prey to linguistic slippage – researchers and artists use the same words to mean different things, and different words to describe similar processes. By focusing instead on interaction, the granular

distinction of how the media is concretized in performance is made less central, and both effect and communication come to the fore.

Theatre can be an effective tool for solidifying, problematizing, or criticizing cultural and social phenomena. DMT uses the very tools it is being critical of in the process of theatrical creation. It comments on the state of digital culture, virtual inhabitance, and media influence. Non-trivial use of media and technology within the theatre itself allows the art to acknowledge the aesthetic of the media and the inextricable bond media has with consumers, while leaving an opening for deep criticism of both the media and the culture it impacts. This creates a genre suspicious of the binary relationships between live and not-live, virtual and real, and deeply self-critical while championing the potential growth of these spaces, technologies, and the culture they impact.

Accessibility is an important feature in the arts from the perspective of creation – art is driven by the integration and adaptation of new ideas. If the cutting edge of thought surrounding theatre is inaccessible to those wanting to make it, it runs the risk of stagnating. To improve access to this kind of theatre, mechanisms of performance will be highlighted, and the way they display, solidify, obscure, or otherwise challenge important social and cultural notions will be discussed. While not a manual for creating effective or impactful DMT, the conclusions drawn from this thesis represent a foundation by which intermediality in theatre and performance might be more easily accessed by scholars and practitioners even as it changes to accommodate new and unexpected technology and social development.

Chapter 1: Tracking Digitally-Mediated Theatre and Intermediaturgy

1.1 Introducing Intermediality in Performance

This thesis falls under the broad umbrella of intermedial study, and as such it is important to be aware of diversity of definitions within that field. To begin, intermedia as a field of study springs from the work of mid-twentieth century artists and theorists such as Dick Higgins who defined intermedial art as that which merges pre-existent art mediums (for instance painting and theatre, or photography and poetry) (Higgins, 11). This sort of merger has always occurred in performance: throughout history theatre has notoriously borrowed from and merged other art forms, including but not limited to visual art, music, dance, and poetry. Since at least the modernist period of art, we have been dispossessed of the notion of so-called pure art as the blurring of the boundaries between the plastic, the time bound, the visual, the aural, and the oral became the hallmark of modernity. The intermedia of the twentieth century became popular, as Higgins suggests, out of the "social problems that characterize our time, as opposed to the political ones," resulting in an art landscape that could "no longer allow a compartmentalized approach" (11). Intermedia supplants singular media when the complexity of social problems calls for an equally complex reflection in the arts. The mid-twentieth century saw artists taking aim at ruling bodies, which have been a long-held subject of art criticism, as well as more intimate and personal elements of society that had been previously considered unworthy subjects for theatrical inquiry. The family, the mundane, the actions of the everyday person became a prime subject of study. The expansion and diversification of art subject matter at a grand scale caused a reconfiguring of artistic language and communication structures, resulting in

an explosion of new art forms. This reconfiguration resulted in classic intermedia like Claes Oldenburg's furniture-food sculptures which were not furniture, not food, but took from both mediums to create their aesthetic; the de-collage painting movement that used organic intermixing of media to create a new type of painterly graphic; and the live collage interactive performances that were the Happenings in America in the 1960s. Since intermedia developed alongside telecommunication as both a function and cause of an expanding global media, it became a format through which blurred global lines translated into converging and dissolving distinctions within art disciplines. As media evolves, so too does intermedia and in contemporary times the organic intermedia of the mid-century has grown to encompass synthetic and digital media as well.

Intermedial studies is driven by the medium, creating a field with many sub-fields. In the case of performance and theatre, I follow Chiel Kattenbelt and Freda Chapple in defining the focus of intermediality as paying particular attention to the mediatization and figuration of the theatre itself. In intermediality, performance functions as a hypertext. A hypertext stems from the notion of text as an expression of language in books, speech, history and culture (Derrida, 158), specifically the layering of multiple texts on top of each other, to be read synchronically. An actor's performance can be considered another type of text, and one can read the elements of the stage as texts as well. When we consider intermedial performance, then it follows that media usage on stage is also a type of text. When the elements of a performance are viewed simultaneously more is revealed than the sum of the individual texts, creating a hypertext.

The stage allows for a plethora of uses and configurations of media, and each type of media interacting with another asks to be treated in a slightly different way. Because of the

vast combinations of possible media on stage, creating a method of inquiry and analysis cannot rely on having a discrete method for every possible combination. The solution, as Irina Rajewsky argues in her overview of intermedial frameworks, is to embrace the variety inherent in intermediality: "such a variety of definitions and emphases in no way reflects a limitation on the part of any single conception of intermediality but is due to the extremely broad and heterogeneous nature of the subject-matter itself" (49). Because of this, my analysis of DMT, itself a type of intermedial performance, will focus on the element of interaction. Interaction allows for many media on stage, and if there is interaction between media and other performance elements the analytical framework can remain consistent even if the specific technologies involved do not.

A central issue to the study of intermediality as it pertains to performance is that the basis for understanding what constitutes media is, at best, hotly contested. The field is laden with nomenclature that has not always found a central organizing principle. This should be expected of a field that is not only (relatively) new, but also one that needs to contend with a constantly shifting and evolving subject matter. New media by its nature continually evolves to jostle systems that have been put into place. New media in this sense comes from Marshall McLuhan and his contemporaries' work studying the diversification of media following the popularization of television and other broadcast technology. It is effectively either a newly developed media technology, or a technology that dramatically changes the way media is utilized. For McLuhan, for instance, television was the new media arising in his time and constitutes both a new technology and new utilization. The primary distinction of his new media was a "[c]oncern with *effect* rather than *meaning* is a basic change of our electric time" (26, original emphasis), which divided media between

hot (highly participatory like writing) and cold (low participation like television). This spectrum partially drives the categorization of contemporary new media. Telecommunication has likewise expanded into many different formats and the frequency at which it is accessed has only increased. We now communicate using telecommunication both many-to-many and one-to-one (and one-to-many/many-to-one). This expansion creates what Russell Neuman calls a blurring of interpersonal and mass communication, merging and confusing the public and private spheres (12). As communication, social, and cultural exchange continues to change and develop so too will new media arise to fill the gaps. What this means is that as a field of study and a style of practice, intermediality must be attentive to shifting landscapes and deep divides.

Media technology has developed at a breakneck pace over the last half century. It has blossomed into a multi-headed consumerist engine and taken the social and entertainment realms by storm. Both the frequency and diversity of media engagement has increased across the population. The potential for a media device or platform to reach a person has become synonymous with its ability to influence. Brands become social instigators and corporate enterprises have meaningful interactions seemingly one-on-one with individuals, all through media engagement, demonstrating the "power of the 'like'" and the power of the media that facilitates that engagement (Lipsman et al, 40). This increase in interaction comes with an increase in classification of media and media events as well.

Media events shape the social landscape as much as political and environmental ones, creating a situation today where powerful people and organizations determine the value and spread of art more thoroughly and insidiously than ever. Large media platforms controlled by wealthy individuals regularly use algorithms and other covert tactics to determine who

gets access to what media easily, and these tactics are more easily influenced by those in power like politicians, celebrities, and the people deemed important by the platform creator as opposed to its users. This has a ripple effect: as a social phenomenon, the way that new media is expressed and to whom it is expressed has an impact. An example of the impact of media on the hierarchy of social or historical significance is well established by sociologists John Fiske and Black Hawk Hancock, who track important media events and their reciprocal relationship with important contemporary political moments in recent American history. They put into perspective media impact by looking to powerful moments for the United States itself, saying,

> In its review of 1992, Life called it "a year dominated by a presidential race, a firestorm in L.A. and a single mom named Murphy." The election of the president of the United States and the costliest urban uprisings in this nation's stormy history would conventionally be considered historic events, but the birth of a baby to the unmarried heroine of a sitcom hardly appears, at first sight, to be of the same order of significance (xi)

This points out an incredible shift in the public imagination, and by framing it from the perspective of Life magazine, itself a media enterprise, Fiske and Hancock are further exemplifying the power of media to reconfigure perception of society. Given that media has such control over the way society is shaped, it should be no surprise that artists have turned to creating art that explores, confounds, unveils, or otherwise challenges media's hold on us.

This chapter is concerned with intermedial theories of performance. If the intention of this thesis is to explore the effect of media on contemporary conceptions of the body,

identity, and space, then first I will have to outline the qualities of digitally-mediated theatre in greater depth. This is in an effort to limit the scope of this study and highlight a set of circumstances creators are utilizing to tap into both the current cultural imaginary and the troublesome relationship we tend to have with media. Further, I will track intermediaturgy as a framing device to critically analyze the plays found throughout this document, and position intermediaturgy as a useful tool for both understanding and creating future DMT productions. To arrive at intermediaturgy I will first introduce its predecessors/contemporaries, dramaturgy and mediaturgy, and discuss the potential benefit of using the former over either of the latter. An intermediaturgical lens will then be used throughout the thesis to investigate how theatre makers are employing the very tools of media platforms to flip the script on issues central to media and performance itself.

This chapter will also address several theatrical productions and one film to serve as examples of the processes being described. These are not an exhaustive list of DMT productions – for a field like intermediality that must contend with its own rapid shifting a certain amount of flexibility needs to exist when defining a genre of performance – and they are not the only productions to appear in this essay. Productions in this chapter showcase the importance of meaningful engagement with media, and the different ways media elements in performance can interact with the actors on stage and with each other. Meaningful engagement with digital media is perhaps the most distinctive aspect of DMT. Intermedial performance is a broad field, but not every production that is intermedial engages directly with the media. It means that some effort is made to centralize media elements as an active meaning-making part of performance, that the elements are interacted with directly by the performers or even other media elements, or media technology is used

as a fundamental part of the narrative or compositional design of the piece in a way that would be difficult or impossible to produce using analog means.

British, Finnish and New Zealander cyber-performance company, Avatar Body Collision, offers examples of early explorations of intermedial performance with such works as *Screen save her* (Wales, 2002) and *S W I M* (Slovenia, 2003). The performances begin a dialogue explored throughout the thesis that challenges what constitutes live or present bodies in performance. *Les Cenci: A Story About Artaud* (Grahamstown, 2016) by South African actor/director Gopala Davies is the first of many productions that will be explored that demonstrate DMT's ability to encourage self-criticism of media use, showing how integrated media is in contemporary society and the way it effects the sense of materiality of those using it. *Wicked,* produced in 2014 at the Edmonton Jubilee and *Einstein on the Beach* (France, 1976) by Americans Robert Wilson and Phillip Glass are also briefly visited in this chapter. They represent productions that may have some commonality with DMT, but due to compositional or narrative design should not be considered a part of the genre.

The second section of the chapter is devoted to a more thorough breakdown of what intermediaturgy is, how it differs from mediaturgy and more conventional dramaturgy practice, and why it is particularly suited to framing discussions around DMT. American multi-media artist John Jesurun's *Firefall* (New York, 2009) is used to introduce mediaturgy as it was one of the founding productions upon which the practice was built. Conversely, the film *Searching* (2017) by Aneesh Chaganty, *Alladeen* (London, 2003) by New York based performance and media company, the Builders Association, and *House/Lights* (New York, 1999) by the American theatre company Wooster Group serve as

prime examples of how intermediaturgy can be used to dissect both the compositional and narrative affect of intermedial elements of performance in DMT. The final two theatre productions are perhaps the most iconic examples of DMT studied in this thesis and as a result will be revisited over several chapters to articulate how different aspects of DMT can be found within the same piece.

The defining feature of the productions in this chapter is their commitment, both in terms of aesthetics and composition and in narrative design, to using digital media elements on stage in non-trivial or simply scenographic ways. Projections are engaged as more than just complicated backdrops; emergent technology is used creatively to double, fracture, and create overstimulation on the stage; and indirect or direct interaction with and between media elements is common in all examples. The productions serve as introductions to concepts that will be explored throughout the thesis and clarify the mechanism through which future productions will be analyzed.

1.2 Digitally-Mediated Theatre as a Genre

The term "digitally-mediated theatre" is intended to evoke a sense of dynamism. Theatre is an immediate, emergent artform, and the works that fall under DMT use media to enhance that immediacy. The digital is already a type of mediation, but the term DMT describes an exchange of information, between audience and performance, happening in the now. By considering DMT as a distinct theatrical genre, a diverse range of performances can be analysed under the same scope. A theatrical genre, in this sense, is a delimitation of performances that have common structural, compositional, or thematic elements. The edges of a genre are not clearly defined, but in this case similar subject matter and means of communication should always be present. DMT requires a focus on body, identity, and space as well as an interactive relationship between media elements and the stage. Theatre journalist Aleks Sierz, who coined the genre of In-yer-face theatre, considers theatrical genre a combination of sensibility and technique (2010). Sierz uses the term sensibility to evoke a sense of shared communicative purpose, which is echoed by communications theorist John Swales, who presents genre as a necessary, if messy, method for categorizing similar communication events (58). Theatre is a communication event and thus any theatrical genre must hold a somewhat shared communicative purpose.

There are other genres that DMT could be subsumed into, for instance the overall genre of intermedial theatre. Intermediality does not have an inherent focus on interactivity, nor does it privilege the notions of body, identity, and space with which these artists engage. Further it does not distinguish easily between media/technology as a gimmick and as a part of the meaning-making process. Intermedial theatre assumes intertextual communication between media, and DMT takes this further to focus on the juncture of that

communication. Finally, intermedial theatre does not necessarily mean solely digital media. There is value in looking specifically at work using digital media because of its relatively new and saturating presence in society and trying to conflate intermedial performances that use digital media with those that do not will only muddy the waters.

Notably, DMT shares many characteristics with post-dramatic theatre, defined by Hans-Thies Lehmann as theatre that is does not follow what he calls the dramatic paradigm and is not "subordinate to the primacy of the text." (21). Post-dramatic theatre is characterized by a rejection of the primacy of the plot or narrative and focus on an avant-garde performance aesthetic (16). He isolates several characteristics of theatre that may call into this category, including extreme densities of signs, heterogenous performance styles and a focus on the performer as an interactor, all of which are apparent in many examples of productions found in this thesis. Several of the artists in this thesis have been described as post-dramatic theatre makers, and there is significant overlap in the forms. However, post-dramatic theatre can be characterized as a dissatisfaction with two important elements of drama: the construction of time and representations of the external world (Barnet, par 1). While DMT may not present the world as we perceive it on stage, the structure of time (even if it non-linear) is key to understanding how space functions in relation to media. Further, the world represented in DMT is often a very clear analogue of the external world, many of the plays studied in this thesis foreground the world outside the stage and our relationship to it through digital media. The notion of narrative is more important to some performances in this thesis than others, narrative elements are present as conduits for expressing the social connection between live bodies, media elements, and society at large.

Because of this, central tenets of drama that the post-dramatic is heavily invested in circumventing do not match up with the intention of a lot of DMT.

DMT's treatment of media covers both the aforementioned interactive quality and the methods that artists use to criticize that media. Given that media is such an expansive concept, some limitations need to be established in the use of the term as it pertains to performance, and consequently delimiting the type of theatre that qualifies. I am resistant to demarcating a solid, objective definition for this grouping of theatre, as that would fly in the face of the evolving nature of the subject matter, but rather want to present a series of qualities that best fit the theatre and performance within this framework. The social and political discourse generated and confronted by this theatre is more important than many of its aesthetic qualities, and as a result the body of work described in this thesis appears broad in design, while remaining quite closely related in terms of meaning or message with regards to digital media. While digital media holds a strong presence in many types of theatre due to its ease of use, availability, or production value among other reasons, DMT refers to theatre that leverages either digital media or familiarity with digital media architecture as a central feature in its meaning-making apparatus. The architecture to which I am referring denotes the fundamental structure or shape of the digital media – that which makes it familiar to a user and defines the way in which it is interacted. Most digital media technology is accessed through a screen, but what appears on that screen and its functionality differs. User experience is easier, faster, and more complete the more familiar one is with the specific interface. When a DMT work uses a particular media architecture, it is representing on stage the key aspects of that digital media device, technology, or platform, as a way of signalling to its audience what precisely is being modelled.

Intermediality, perhaps due to its shifting and evolving nature, lends itself to emergent terminology. This is to say, terms are created to describe new processes and techniques that do not necessarily have a clear historical pathway, or the historicity of the term is less important than its function in the moment. This is not to deny the importance and relevance of an historical approach to intermediality with a genealogical focus, and several theorists and practitioners have done this to one extent or another: among them are Jennifer Parker-Starbuck (*Cyborg Theatre: Corporeal/Technological Intersections in Multimedia Performance*), Matthew Causey (*Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture: from simulation to embeddedness*), Peter Boenisch ("coMEDIA electrONica: Performing Intermediality in Contemporary Theatre"), and Sarah Bay-Cheng (*Mapping Intermediality in Performance*). They and others have made efforts to trace the generation and figuration of intermedial performance, and I do not with to repeat that work here. Instead, I opt to explore DMT from the position of presence and function: given that theatre artists are making works with a particular shared communicative purpose, I am most interested in what that purpose is, and the mechanisms through which it works.

To briefly contextualize DMT, it speaks to a body of work that, despite having some clear historical roots (which will be especially evident in Chapter Two), wades into uncharted performance territory. In terms of its own growth as a concept, one could consider DMT an extension of computer-mediated theatre (CMT), a term coined by theatre theorist Benjamin Unterman in 2004. Unterman uses CMT to denote a hybrid of the artistic and cultural traditions of theatre and "technologically driven forms," which in this case mean cinema and virtual reality (4). His contention is that this blending of forms has created an artistic practice that leverages presence and telepresence as important

experiential elements. DMT deviates from CMT by being less concerned with a blending of forms, and more with the interaction between discrete forms. While blending may occur, it is not required. Further, it does not require a specific media or technology, although there should be a digital component, as the focus is on the way the technology impacts our perception of the stage and narrative. Instead of a hybrid, DMT creates what Jens Schröter calls "synthetic intermediality," (2) drawing on Higgins and other early intermedia theorists. Synthetic intermediality creates a super-medium intentionally formed of individual, distinct media that is more than the sum of its parts. The distinct media presence within DMT, even while it may create an overall sense of fusion, separates it from CMT.

From a practice standpoint, DMT stems from a perceived commonality of media performance aesthetics, narrative discourses and techniques of several notable arts groups, early examples of which are the aforementioned Troika Ranch, and Avatar Body Collision. Avatar Body Collision is a live/media performance group that made some late-century theatrical interventions that mindfully integrated media into their staging, using medial and technological concepts in the design and implementation. They consider their performance as a data stream of information, wherein the technological elements play with the living bodies to create patterns recognizable by their users (Ptacek, 184). While Unterman proposes a sort of smoothing-over that occurs with the hybridization of theatre and technology, making for a performance aesthetic that uses each media to cover the flaws of the other, Avatar Body Collision highlights the failure state of digital media – its inability to move beyond the restrictions of its programming without outside intervention.

Media allows for the singular body of the performer to become the "sustaining, multiple, distributed self," (Ptacek, 187). Some of Avatar Body Collision's performances

centered around, as in the case of their 2002 production of *Screen save her* at the Time Based Media Festival in Wales, digital avatars controlled by human actors, visible via webcam to an audience that could be in one room or several. Different perspectives and fragmented storytelling through media devices created a sense that the normally singular performer was in many places at once, being seen from many angles. The production was supposed to confront audiences with their own understanding of liveness, but several technical misfires meant that the play did not communicate as well as they wanted to. The feedback they received on the piece, however, revealed something unexpected. When their audience was familiar with using media beyond the stage, they tended to substitute technical difficulty with a misunderstanding of the mechanism at play, creating their own interpretation of what was supposed to be happening, "producing their own totalising account of the show despite the loss of key narrative data." (Ptacek, 190). The crucial element that DMT draws from this is the value of using digital technology to comment on technology, and the importance of allowing the stage to consider media elements as distinct yet important parts of the meaning communicated by a play.

Genre distinctions, of course, will always be hazy at the edges. There are performances using new media that do not comment on it beyond the theatre. There are media devices being specifically adapted for use in performance which do not really comment on media in a significant way. For example, while the 2014 production of *Wicked* at Edmonton's Jubilee Auditorium used digital microphones and some clever projection techniques to create moving backdrops, I would not necessarily consider that production DMT because ultimately the same production using non-digital means would create a similar effect on its audience. The digital elements amount to ease-of-use gimmicks or best

practices stemming from increased access to and reliance on technology and are not significant, aside from instrumentalisation on stage.

On the other side there are performances with little to no digital media that interrogate the very same ideas being explored by those that do, albeit in different ways. The absence of digital tech, however, adds an extra layer of complication that, while fascinating and potentially very provocative, does not fit within the bounds of the argument. Robert Wilson, for instance, in some of his more famous works comments on our relationship with media, celebrity, and popular culture, but does so using more analog means. His work with Phillip Glass on *Einstein on the Beach* (France, 1976) illustrates this very point. The production is endurance-testing theatre taken to the extreme: it directly pressures the audience with vignettes questioning popular misunderstandings of celebrity – pointing out that as a person becomes more famous, and the more media is produced about them, their iconic status overrides their individuality (Glass, 67). The production surely has some questions about how society interrelates with itself through media, but it does so without engaging those very media in its composition.

Ultimately, the purpose of this thesis is not to force yet another categorization to the already (over)nomenclature-ridden field of intermedial performance. DMT is meant to indicate clear trends in the use of new and emergent media in exciting and sometimes troubling ways by contemporary artists. Obviously the more clearly important the media is to understanding the impact or message of the performance, the more clearly that performance could be considered DMT. What is important for the topics covered in this thesis is that DMT refers to the drive of some productions to leverage, adapt, obscure, or

otherwise play with our understanding of what media is and how it works within society to deliver a theatrical message.

When DMT contains instances of media architecture within a "live" performance (the next chapter will discuss the significance of those quotation marks at length), it can speak to the function of that architecture beyond the stage. To clarify, I return to Avatar Body Collision and their more recent production of *S W I M: an exercise in remote intimacy.*[2] Produced in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2003, *S W I M* uses digital display projections to connect four separate audiences to one performance piece. Each section of the audience sees a different performer live while the remainder are displayed digitally. The performance features what they call a laptop dance (see figure 2), where all four actors attempt to find each other amid a confusion of chat windows. How the performers interact with the text, video, and frames of the windows creates a basis for the narrative. The media architecture employed by the play removes the actors' distance from each other and allows them to interact intimately while remaining physically separate. The effect supersedes the content in this case, including how the effect is received, and "[i]nstead of seeing contemporary performance practice in either live or mediatized terms, it is more useful to focus the attention on the sensory modalities of our perception" (Mounsef, 2019). Digital media is a flexible tool, easily manipulated and developed to conform to a multitude of shapes and uses. I suggest that in terms of analysis how media is situated and interacted in performance is just as important as the category of the media itself. As we develop an

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[2] Excerpts from their 2003 performance at the Mesto Zengsk Festival can be found here: https://www.creative-catalyst.com/abc/swim/swim.html

intermediaturgical framework to assess DMT performance the inter-operability and

architecture of media will often feature as much as the narrative content of a play.

Figure 2: Screen save her, *Avatar Body Collision.[3] A single present actor searches through multiple chat windows in a laptop dance.*

In a sense this prompts a reinvestigation around new media, and its function in DMT.

New media is a contemporaneous term, Lev Manovich's delimitation of new media for

today cites media objects that are native to or reliant on computers for distribution. This

includes websites, internet platforms, digital interfaces, computer animation, digital video,

special effects, interactive media, and virtual reality (49). What makes these contextually

very divergent platforms and devices all fit under the umbrella of contemporary new media

has to do with both their use and the way they handle information. New media in this sense

generally incorporates "two-way communication," and is "easily processed, stored,

transformed, retrieved, hyperlinked, and perhaps most radical of all easily searched for and

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[3] Source: "Screen Save Her: an Avatar Body Collision production coming soon to a monitor near you" *Avatar Body Collision,* < https://www.creative-catalyst.com/abc/screensaveher/sshinfo.html>

accessed" (Logan, 7). This issue of access significantly impacts the way new media functions in DMT. However, the mere presence of new media is not enough; mindful integration with the stage should include some instance of direct interaction.

The presence of new media technology does not necessarily make a play DMT. The interaction between elements of the stage and media objects or systems, as well as the perception of that interaction, is necessary for the production of meaning; regardless of whether that occurs on the body of an actor, as another communicating agent on the stage, or as a force in the environment of the stage that is pointed at or used to blur edges between media. The ubiquitous nature of many digital technologies means that conventional theatre practice often necessarily includes devices or techniques that make use of digital or computer mediation. However, there needs to be a distinction between meaningful use of technology in the production of meaning in a performance and digital technology that simply takes the place of legacy technology. For instance, digital lightboards are nearly synonymous with contemporary lighting design. However, despite being controlled by a computer system in a way that is more easily processed, stored, or retrieved than older analog systems, the mechanism functions in essentially the same way it has since the concept of the lighting plot gained popularity.

This delimitation is important as it touches on a central precept to intermedial theatre and performance. Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt in their work on the subject pose a definition for intermedial performance that solidifies its relationship to mediatization, which is to say the way media shapes and frames processes of social and political discourse. Following the position of Lev Manovich, Chapple and Kattenbelt map the function of mediatization as the "junction points where the different media meet, and it is

there – at the point of their meeting – that we locate intermediality in theatre and performance, which in turn triggers a response in the audience" (18). Mediatization represents a large-scale structuring of the discourse surrounding media – the effect of media and other forms of communication on social relationships, politics, and social processes. Through intermedial performance, the spectator is illuminated to the inherent mechanisms of illusion or interface present in performance (38). By foregrounding this illumination, an audience can be drawn to see how mediatization functions outside the theatre as it is confronted, embraced, and challenged from within. This definition is by necessity broad, and verges on too broad. Peter Boenisch points out the all theatre is inherently intermedial due to its assimilation of other forms of art like dance, music, and visual arts. He proposes that without an underlying media theory strategy for analysing performance with multiple media, the formula that creates intermedial theatre is ultimately banal (37). Theatre natively combines and repurposes different medial texts to create meaning, and just as a projection screen is a media device, so too is a statue or poem or merely the interweaving of varying levels of performance text. While I do not dispute this, I agree with Boenisch that focusing subsections of intermedial performance that favour a specific media framework and technology is the path to gaining different nuanced understanding of contemporary society. Looking at DMT from a compositional perspective is what will separate it from other intermedial theatre. Part of that composition concerns which media elements and devices are present on stage, as well as the larger systems and architecture to which the performance refers.

DMT often uses its component digital media elements to comment on contemporary media systems like the internet, social media, and smart phones. Many of the examples

being unpacked throughout this work represent how we might understand digital medial architecture outside the theatre through questioning our relationships with these devices and platforms. Theatre is a transformative art, capable of showcasing an object, concept, person, or narrative while simultaneously usurping both the way it is popularly envisaged, and also the way it is interacted. It should be no surprise that many of the harshest critics of new media and its influence on broader culture are also the artists who utilize that same new media in their art. As a result, many examples found here will include performances that, for instance, replicate the user interface of media platforms like YouTube, Skype, or Facetime to make a point. The conscious choice of media representation on stage impacts how an audience might understand its use in performance; while one screen may look similar to another, the context of how we use that screen and the way things appear on it can impact our understanding of it.

Looking back at our previous example, the projections in *S W I M* should be familiar to anyone who has visited a chat room. The specific performance text communicated by that conscious choice over, for instance, a smartphone text messaging window, impact our understanding of the piece. The 2016 production of Gopala Davies' *Les Cenci: A Story About Artaud* in Grahamstown, South Africa, offers a different way of using mindful choice of media overtly to challenge our interactions with media beyond the theatre. An intermedial adaptation of Antonin Artaud's own *Les Cenci* (1935), Davies uses livestreaming to juxtapose the actions of the actors with themselves. Artaud's original conception comes from the theatre of cruelty, which sought to use cruelty as a violent force to shock and awaken an audience, transforming them. He was rather famously unable to represent his theories of performance on stage, but produced many highly evocative, raw

playscripts full of unstageable effects. Artaud wanted an audience to believe, for instance, that they were in danger while watching a performance even though the space was assured to be safe. However, Davies' adaptation uses media to overcome some of the limitations Artaud faced. Davies' *Les Cenci* overwhelms and confounds with a sense of doubling and blurring the visceral actors with their recorded selves and creating a "synesthetic experience as audience members [are] confronted with their own materiality" (Coetzee, 2017). He achieves this by projecting a livestream of the performers over themselves, with size, shape, and timing distortions. The moments where the livestream and performer are offset, the effect is disorienting and jarringly reminds of both the artificiality of the projection and the physicality of the performer. The livestream has become a more and more popular form of leisure, and this production upsets the screen separation inherent in the media outside the stage by placing streamer and stream onto the same plane, which is further exacerbated by the violent nature of the narrative text itself (see figure 3). The effect is twofold: first, we are made aware of the materiality of the body via the simultaneity of the image and actor. Second, we are reminded that the streamer, a body used as an entertainment object outside the theatre, is also a person. Davies calls this a "dismemberment" of the body of the performer, situating it within a layered performance and blurring the divide between the live and not-live (Coetzee, 2017). This example shows how DMT effects our experience with the performance text and alters our understanding and relationship to a popular media technology. In both *S W I M* and *Les Cenci* we see attention is paid to how the media on stage is packaged, either to reinforce the familiarity

an audience may have with said media, or especially in the case with *Les Cenci* to pointedly undermine that familiarity.

Figure 3: Les Cenci: A Story of Artaud*, Gopala Davies.[4] A live-streamed image of the actor overlays them and the surrounding scenery.*

Theatre like DMT showcases the shift in the social and cultural systems that inform contemporary art, as well as the new ways audiences interact with and consume media outside the theatre itself. This shift comes along with another need – by interrogating through and with media, DMT requires a different sort of critical and analytical process to understand how the meaning-making apparatus of the stage functions. Conventional notions of dramaturgy need to be expanded on and refocused to encompass the interactive, interrelated nature of DMT performance.

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[4] Source: Coetzee, 2017. Photo credit Danielle Brews. Clips of this and other works by Davies can be found on his Demo Reel: https://www.gopaladavies.com/gallery

1.3 From Drama-, to Media-, to Inter- Analysis

Intermedial theories of performance frame theatre, which is a singular medium, as a set of systems working in concert that requires some media literacy to gain a fuller sense of understanding. Theatre is a complicated art in terms of its meaning-making apparatus in part because the resultant product and the process that create it are deeply interlinked. This is unlike a painter who, through a process of engagement with their art, produces a painting that makes meaning in two distinct temporalities, that of the art making and that of art perception. A separation occurs where the artist and art part ways, or at least the process of creating the art stops and the production or showcasing of the meaning the art is meant to provide starts. The painting does not inhabit its function as a cultural object until after the painter has stepped away from the canvas (and found a place to house it). In theatre (and other performance-based art like poetry and music) the process of creation continues through and during the moment of presentation – the audience is party to the meaning-making process as well as the product.

Dramaturgy is broadly the process of generating or observing the generation of meaning in performance. It can be concerned with the textual base of a performance, the effect of production elements, the impact of the performance on the wider social, cultural, or political world, or a combination of any of the above. Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt isolate dramaturgy as the practice of considering the meaning of drama as it is situated in the world (3). Marianne Van Kerkoven uses what she calls New Dramaturgy to distinguish dramaturgy as an unending process of alternation between "'looking at something' and 'walking in something', an alternation between observation and immersion, between surrendering and attempting to understand" (11). While a director or

designer might be concerned with the concretization of a text, and the playwright may have a narrative goal with a text, the dramaturg's function is to examine the textual communication of a performance and extract various levels of meaning from it. The practice is ongoing and, as Peter Eckersall states, it involves "being undecided and, by virtue of the fact of creative indecision, of being in a relational state of intercession" (284). Inquiry, instead of decision, is the driving force of dramaturgical practice, and there is no product other than the performance itself. The practitioner and the act create room for dramaturgy to be both a compositional framework as well as a critical, analytical method. According to dramaturg and theorist Theresa Lang, dramaturgy has the responsibility to "curate an experience" (8) for an audience, and this should infiltrate every exchange a dramaturg might have in the creation process. Further, dramaturgy becomes an organising principle for how one might evaluate or criticize a performance. However, as we shall discuss, the conventional practice of dramaturgy has some difficulties with intermedial performance, and the curation of a singular experience is one of the major contentions.

Doubtless there are examples throughout theatre's history of artists trying to upset or control the communication of process through product, but even looking into the modern era a number of trackable conventions arise whose sole purpose is masking or obscuring the process of theatre making in the final product. The most obvious of this is in modernist, specifically realist, set design and implementation. The black box stage, the most widespread stage space in North America, was specifically designed to hide the edges of set pieces, to remove the ability for an audience to see the unreal elements and present a 'slice of life' aesthetic. Masking has become a best practice in theatre design education due

to its prevalence. A popular acting process, again from the perspective of the very popular North American tradition of psychological realism, stems from creating a convincing illusion. Even though the rules of modernism have relaxed in its more contemporary iterations, the same principles still permeate a great deal of populist or, in the case of Canada, large-scale theatre. The idea that artists should be trying to hide the rough edges and present a polished or finished product skews this notion of the process always being present.

The positioning of process and product, the tension between the two that is inherent in theatrical performance, is where I start to carve out a place for expanding on conventional dramaturgical practices. Dramaturgy needs to be considered in the creation or analysis of an intermedial performance piece. As an example of the necessity of dramaturgy in considering intermediality, we can look at the New York-based theatre makers Wooster Group and their production *House/Lights*. In development since 1996 (although in this example I am referring to their 1999 production in New York), *House/Lights* is a sort of modern-day Faustian drama, where everyone is able to be satisfied through electronic means, at the cost of entering into a sort of modern-day slavery to the contemporary media engine. It creates this narrative through contrasting scenes featuring two older films: Joseph P. Mawra's S&M movie *Olga's House of Shame* (1964) and Gertrude Stein's opera *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (1938). The action on stage sometimes mirrors, sometimes underscores, and sometimes interacts with these films. It creates a commentary on technology driven life and does so through this juxtaposition, showing how the more the performers are enveloped by media technology, the more they are forced to emulate what the media is saying and doing (Brantley, 2005). Reviews

generally herald the performance as a landmark in criticizing contemporary techno-saturation and the multi-media aspects of the performance often receive detailed functional description. There is a large, new-cinema style movie screen as well as several smaller monitor-style screens simulcasting the two films throughout the production.

Figure 4: House/Lights, *The Wooster Group.*[5] *An actor (downstage) mimics a scene from a classical film that is simulcast around the stage. Two others perform a dialogue simultaneously.*

The issue here is that while the content displayed on the screen and the way the performers interact with it are treated with care, what the screen ultimately represents does not receive the same attention in reviews. Looking back to the earlier definition of dramaturgy, we come up against the notion of curation. Curation of an experience is a singular drive, and the issue with looking at an intermedial piece is that it is anything but singular. When we consider the whole-art nature of theatre and theatrical criticism, while we might pay particular attention to one element over another in a performance, the

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[5] Source: The Wooster Group. *House/Lights (1999)*, Kanopy, <https://kanopy.com/product/houselights>. A full video of the production can be accessed here.

overarching consideration is that each element on stage is a part of a greater whole that is performed. The original purpose of an object or device is overridden by its new designation as a piece of the theatre. In the same way that an actor dons the cloak of a character, media elements on stage, dramaturgically, become a part of the set and narrative as they both metonymically represent more than the sum or their parts and simultaneously fulfill a niche in the overall meaning espoused by the play. The very notion of mise-en-scène echoes this: mise-en-scène considers the component pieces of a given stage, including the set, costumes, positioning, characterization, blocking, and textual interaction. However, the focus on these elements in performance concerns the way they are used. In the case of *House/Lights* the function of the media itself gets overridden by the dramaturgical purpose of the media in the scene. The scene makes sense under this lens, it still communicates meaning, but there is an important element of media interaction missing. Looking at critical response to the production, attention is paid to the literal presence of media on stage and some, like the *New York Times* review cited above, even push at describing the way media is used. What that usage means, however, is lost or overlooked and the impact of media on the message featured in the performance is reduced by the omission.

If conventional dramaturgy can struggle with isolating media in performance, it might be that a different compositional framework can cover for this. Bonnie Marranca uses the term mediaturgy in a conversation about The Builders Association, an American theatre company that uses media technology to provide a wealth of social and political commentary through performance, as an alternative. Mediaturgy in performance arose primarily out of a focus on looking at the "languages of the stage" (Marranca, 2010, 24) in theatre that are not dramatic narrative, in particular digital and media technology that is

integrated into performance. Mediaturgy supposes a media-saturated society and asks how the production of meaning is impacted by that saturation. It examines the influence of "modern telecommunication and media technology on social interaction, systematised power, and our corporeal bodies" (Marranca, 2009, 173). The trick with rapidly developing and evolving technology is that a certain amount of learning needs to be ongoing in its adoption, and as a result when a piece of media appears the content of that media is not the only element that matters.

Marranca draws a comparison between mediaturgy and one of its predecessors, the theatre of images (another term attributed to her). Theatre of images can be easily seen in the works of Robert Wilson, Lee Breuer and Richard Foreman (2009, 175). These were artists that took an a-narrative but not anti-narrative approach to the creation of theatre. The performance text was derived more through dance, music, and imagery rather than traditional dialogic narrative. Mediaturgy grew from this challenging relationship to textuality, looking at a broad scope of theatre practice but focusing on the increasing tendency for artists to embrace and adapt media technology into the design and implementation of the performance.

Instead of being concerned with the narrative impact of a piece of media, a mediaturg would look more to the structure of the narrative and how media is imbricated in it. In an analysis of John Jesurun's *Firefall* (2009), Marranca uses a close reading of media presence in the performance to comment on the meaning of the performance expressed through its medial framework. She likens the production to the Living Newspaper performances of the 1930s, describing the media elements of *Firefall* as "a form of literary cut-up now digitized into live collage" (2010, 18), and foregrounds the highly interactive

nature of the performance (see figure 5). Mediaturgically, the narrative of the production – one of characters searching for and accessing information or knowledge, to the point of absurdity – feeds into the medial framework that puts live, recorded, and virtual characters in a world dominated by flowing, shifting information in the form of projected websites and chatrooms. The medial framework in turn feeds back into the narrative: neither can be fully understood or experienced without the other.

Figure 5: Firefall, *John Jesurun.[6] Film, data, live broadcast, and live performers come together in an overwhelming, fractured space.*

The difference between mediaturgical and dramaturgical analysis can be felt in the close examination of media in a given performance. Contemporary media experience is governed by both the function and form of the media involved. The specific digital media brand or platform being used in a performance has a more impactful effect the more

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[6] Source: Collard, 2018. Further, Jesurun has a Vimeo channel with several clips of *Firefall*, the first section of which can be found here: https://vimeo.com/32691073

familiar one is with it. While the focus of this thesis is on theatre, perhaps the clearest example of this principle at work can be found in the film *Searching*. Directed by Aneesh Chaganty in 2017, *Searching* is a thriller/mystery that follows a man as he investigates his daughter's unexpected disappearance. As he digs deeper into her personal and public online personas, he discovers his daughter's fate while coming to terms with the difference between her lived presence in his home and her expressed presence online. The film's major conceit is that the story is told from the perspective of a multitude of video and audio capture devices: shots are framed as Facetime conversations, or recorded livestreams or voicemails. Every shot is presented as if the audience is watching the screen of the computer these programs are loaded onto. In fact, the first moment of the film is a lengthy start-up process of the computer being turned on. We are never shown a shot of the action happening in real time outside of the devices (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Searching, *Sony Films.[7] The frame of the movie never leaves this series of overlapping media platforms, although the main actor (John Cho, right) is always present.*

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[7] Source: Anderton, Ethan. "See How 'Searching' Immerses You in a Screen-Based Thriller Through a Complex Editing Process." *Slashfilm*, 2018. <https://www.slashfilm.com/making-of-searching-featurette/>. A clip of the effect being described can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2ecZiVEs70>

This frame setup is significant because it so clearly illustrates the mediaturgical necessity of understanding the distinction between different media types, even if they broadly serve the same function. All video screens look essentially the same, however there is an important affective difference between watching someone talk on a Facetime window – designed for chatting with another person known to them – versus for instance watching that same person speak to viewers on a livestream – where the other "side" cannot necessarily respond in kind. In the movie, the different media platforms produce different tones or moods based on the type of communication that occurs on them. The component pieces may be the same, but more nuanced meaning is gleaned from understanding their purpose outside of the performance piece itself. We are privy to the experience of lead actor John Cho as he digs into his missing daughter's activity online. His emotional response to her online behaviours helps guide the film, but further nuance is gained from paying attention beyond the context of his daughter's media interactions to the specific media platforms upon which they occur. For instance, in a scene where he discovers someone commenting on her Instagram-like picture feed, he is worried. A livestream he discovers where she was interacting live with the person via built-in chat causes greater commotion. This is because the interaction is more dangerous, even if the content is effectively the same, and the film leaves the burden on the audience to piece together the importance of the specific media interaction. Whether it is a personal resonance, or realization, or even just an acknowledgment of familiarity, the film is designed with the understanding that an audience will colour their reaction to the content of the piece in part through their understanding of the medial framework in which it is presented.

From the theatre, this example is also present, albeit in a different expression, in The Builders Association 2003 production of *Alladeen* in London. One scene in this play features several overlapping layers; a call centre agent, misquoting the sitcom *Friends*; a hopelessly lost traveller using a telephone booth; an old geotracking map software plotting out an impossible course that is fractured in the process to show many simultaneous destinations. The gist of the *Friends* joke is explained earlier in the play in another scene, but again familiarity with the media makes the jokes clearer. And like *Searching*, anyone with experience using the software featured in *Alladeen* to find their way around would feel the tension of its presence on a different level. The performance will be revisited in greater detail in chapter four, but ultimately the important question it addresses for the moment concerns access: is the performance inaccessible without knowledge of the pop culture references and technology involved? No, the skill of the creators brings it out to a wider group. But mediaturgy would dictate that the specific media usage demands an attention to its specific language of the stage, without which the full impact of the play is lost.

Looking back at the earlier example of *House/Lights*, from a mediaturgical perspective the meaning-making apparatus contains an additional element. The projection going on behind the action is a film, specifically a classic film, but played on a flat black, sleek background that does not look at all like a classic nickelodeon screen. The grain of the image, the colouration, and the set up of the projection (a large, flat, rectangular space with no other framing device) reveal the specific iteration of projection device the artists are trying to mimic. The audience is given some insight beyond the content of the film itself simply by recognizing the architecture of the projection. This is underscored by the contemporary framing, and the other simulcast screens to really play on the nostalgia and

tension between old and new, mediated and remediated. In this example, the meaning communicated by the scene leverages the media literacy of the audience.

Mediaturgy is not a perfect solution to the dramaturgical quandary of media in performance, especially when contending with issues of media literacy and intermedial framing. Mediaturgy assumes that an audience viewing a piece of media embedded in performance must see its inter-operational significance and that the media object must hold significance to the viewer outside of the use on stage. If a screen appears on stage, a mediaturg would point to the function of that screen and the video/images projected on it, specifically how they impact the narrative. This has a twofold problem if we consider one of the purposes of mediaturgy is to crystalize the meaning-making apparatus of intermedial performance. First, an audience may not perceive or understand the use of the object outside the performance – I understand what a Facetime window looks like, and how it is different from a YouTube window because I am intimately familiar with both and have been engaged in an environment that heavily uses those systems. If an audience member does not have a similar relationship, some of the mediaturgical value of the object is lost. Again, if we look back to the example of *Searching*, the audience may be familiar or willing to suspend familiarity to engage with the narrative even if it is not familiar with the media platforms being used. However, it relies on the media doing a lot of legwork in communicating, so a lack of familiarity leads to a lack of nuance being transmitted. To take the example outside of digital media technology: for instance, if the audience does not understand or recognize a poem integrated into a performance, the scene can still be understood, but part of the effect is lost if the significance of the poetry is not foregrounded. In our first look at *House/Lights* this tactic of analysing meaning through

media was taken: stripped of understanding of what the function of the media represents outside of the stage the scene continues to transmit meaning to the audience. However, it is incomplete and not necessarily representative of the understanding an audience could have if the specific qualities of the media representation are familiar.

The second issue with a mediaturgical reading is that over-reliance on media function and design further affects analysis, just in the opposite direction. Distilling a performance down to independent media function or ignoring drama in favour of media composition does the actual drama of the piece a disservice. Indeed, even looking to the previous examples in this chapter, despite in some places my best efforts to avoid it, the drama always creeps back in. This creates a tension where dramaturgy and mediaturgy need to meet in order to really look at how media in theatre functions as a compositional tool, and how the dramatic interaction with that media impacts the meaning-making apparatus as well.

Mediaturgy is thus a solution to and complication of the already fraught relationship between media objects and their position in performance. It offers a method for investigating media in performance that speaks to contemporary networked society, one that is connected fundamentally to the media objects being presented on stage. It stands to reason that the more integrated society is with technology, the more some form of literacy can be taken for granted. That said, an over-reliance on looking at the media of a performance piece can have just as reductive an effect on the critical outlook of that performance as ignoring the media's unique signature. While mediaturgy presents a "media-induced sense of simultaneity as organizing principle" (Collard, 265) over a more traditional literary/linear progression, the emphasis of the processes of media in

performance over the resultant product limits its ability to critique performance from a non-generative point of view (Collard, 269). An important element of intermedial performance is "slippage," as media scholar Henry Jenkins calls it. Any intermedial performance, due to the broad range of way people become familiar with a technology, creates slippages between understanding (Jenkins, 105). These slippages represent moments of unfamiliarity or disconnect with otherwise known media objects. As slippage is involved in the reception of an intermedial product, mediaturgy with its requirement for media literacy falls short in accounting for it.

Conversely, mediaturgy lacks some efficacy when looking at performance as an environment versus the typically single-function medium that most media are housed in. Mediaturgy proposes that media objects individually create their own meaning, which can then be read diachronically as an overarching sense of meaning. This ignores the fundamental interconnectedness of theatre, in a sort of reversal of what has been mentioned earlier. To contend with this, I will be using a process of intermediaturgy to look at how DMT treats the three landmark issues of body, identity, and space through contemporary, media-heavy performance. As proposed by Mounsef, intermediaturgy is "the reflection on contemporary modes of perception and existence in the digital and material world that consider the human and post-human actor's body as it negotiates its way in non-traditional, immersive and virtualized environments," (2017). The focus on navigation and interaction allows for the previously described tunnel-vision of mediaturgy to be addressed without falling prey to dramaturgy's potential tendency to smooth over media function. Intermediaturgy embraces issues of slippage by focusing on the mechanism and configuration of the performance as an environment, and how both audience and actor

negotiate, interact, and communicate with that environment. It goes without saying that the audience, as an integral part of this environment, must be considered when reflecting on issues of perception.

Going back one last time to our example of *House/Lights,* an intermediaturgical approach diverges somewhat from the others. A dramaturg might ask what the scene means, taking the medial elements as being yet another piece of staging, and a mediaturg would focus in on those media elements, looking at their function and compositional structure. Looking at this intermediaturgically, I would ask what we gain from watching both films in concert with the performance, particularly when looking at the moments where the actors interact and inter-act with the screens. What is revealed? It foregrounds important things; first, it reinforces the narrative nature of bargaining found in the play's plot and both films, really privileging the Faustian nature of the bargain we have with technology. Coming from the other direction and looking from the perspective of the media systems on stage, the dark side of the bargain is revealed, showing that for every ease of access the media gives us, it entwines a dependency as well. The actors are sandwiched in a fragmented space, trapped between the screens. They exercise their own autonomy on the stage but are continually dragged back into line by the movement, two-dimensional landscape, and soundscapes of the films. Intermediaturgically, the play simultaneously speaks to the clash of old and new – one reviewer found the vocal modulation of the play appalling as it detracted from the poetry of Stein and the voice of the actor speaking the words (Klasfeld, 2005). Taste aside, this element of the performance speaks to how we create hierarchies of good and bad in our relationship to art and the objects and concepts it speaks to – the vocal modulation changes the feel of the original poetry, while cementing it

in place temporally through recording and replaying devices. Finally (for this example) media interaction in *House/Lights* showcases a theme of inability to escape technology – a common theme found in much DMT work. Despite this, it gives the characters in the piece a sense of choice, and the media allows them to do things with their bodies and voices they could not otherwise achieve. The play asks us to consider how we trade our own freedom for these seemingly wonderful abilities via the materiality of the medium. When tied into the larger framework of the tripled-narrative of the piece, we see an important message about unknowingly entering into bargains, and the caution needed when navigating new and potentially dangerous encounters.

Obviously, this is not the only possible reading of the piece. It is meant to showcase the value of focusing on the impact of interaction. Given that contemporary society, or the early days of proto-networked society under which early intermedial performances like this were made, constantly adapts to new ways of interacting with technology, this type of framework should be able to speak volumes about how contemporary concepts of perception and existence are impacted by media technology in performance. In effect, intermediaturgy's focus on the environment and immersion brings back to focus the issues of access – how does an audience access a performance that takes place partially on a digital plane? Intermediaturgy speaks precisely to this, placing the virtual alongside the real and questioning our relationship to it. My position is that contemporary media technology constantly re-frames what should be a familiar landscape (virtual space) inside a more complex and contentious one (the stage), and the interaction with these spaces is revelatory of the contemporary issues of body, identity, and environment which will be discussed further in the following chapters. The body, as a central subject to meaning making in

performance, is the first issue that intermediaturgy can comment on, with the others

stemming from our understanding of what a body is and how it functions in a media-

saturated performance environment.

Chapter 2: What is a Body in Digitally-Mediated Theatre?

2.1 Introduction, The Elusive Body

Contemporary theatre practice fascinated with the body on stage: investing in it, pushing it, glorifying it, or dissecting it for sensorial or experiential fulfillment. This fascination positions the body as an object imbued with politics, used to react against a contemporary social and cultural structure that places bodies, our bodies, in a perilous position of consumerist want or desire. Current culture upholds the mainstream idea of an idealized body (pretty, thin, conforming, hetero, etc.) as the norm, and the remainder (which describes most people) as abnormal. On the other hand, the body in contemporary performance ranges from the ethereal to the grotesque, as the material body is pushed to and beyond its breaking point by artists seeking to convey a better understanding of the skin we inhabit.

Contemporary performance artists are critical of mainstream conceptions of the body, and frequently create art that represents the "strategic implosion of binaried distinctions," which "impacts 'the body' directly as it occurs in the fraught space between subject and object" (Schneider, 19). In other words, by emphasizing the objectification of the body and showing the impact it has on the personal subject, space for other bodies in culture opens up. As digital media takes an increasingly important role in daily social interaction, I propose we look to the body in performance as a critical tool for understanding how interaction and even integration with media and media-saturated platforms changes our perspective of what constitutes a body. Evolution of higher-fidelity

projection, recording, and media display technology in the theatre allows for bodies that were once always necessarily present on stage to fracture, shift, and go beyond physical limitations, instigating a conversation about what our bodies are, how they are presented to us, and how this affects our understanding of ourselves in our environment.

Despite the enthusiasm artists and scholars have for it, the body is also elusive. It cannot be easily described, and while material and artistic practice might point towards the importance, even the centrality of the body in terms of meaning and identity generation, what a body is beyond its material function remains insubstantial. This is amplified when new media is involved. Sociologist David Beer criticizes trends of scholarly and critical writing about the intersection of body and technology, saying "the body has been largely bracketed out of the analysis" (Beer, 123). Discourse focuses on whatever technology is interfacing with the body, and the body is just assumed to be self-explanatory. This is not necessarily the case in theatre, as the largely experiential quality of performance privileges the body as a central defining element. The body in performance is an object that helps us negotiate "the relationship between people's self-identity and social identity" (Beer, 82), which is to say that it can allow us to see ourselves on stage and also aid us in understanding how we can and do navigate our environment, new media, and digital technology.

The productions and artists visited in this chapter all share a specific questioning of bodies. They ask how bodies inhabit new media spaces, showcasing bodies that are shaped and impacted by media and digital technology, extending or enhancing the capability of the human form. All DMT should foreground the body, and these works very specifically demonstrate the importance of foregrounding the body in this genre of intermedial

performance. Brief descriptions here will be followed by in-depth analysis throughout the chapter. *4ᵗʰ Skin* (Linz, 2013) by Austrian dancer-creator Michael Kavdanska, and *Boom!* (Edmonton, 2016) by Canadian performer Rick Miller are used to demonstrate DMT's ability to complicate or even challenge the notion of the live body. Both productions use the body of the actors involved, either live on stage or through digital representation (and sometimes both), as a site of communication.

This chapter also looks at a precursor to contemporary intermedial performance: the bodyism movement, which foregrounds a different sort of fascination with the body. Carolee Schneemann's *Eye/Body* (New York, 1962) serves to illustrate another common theme that we see within DMT – using the body as a cite of resistance. Resistance in Schneemann's case refers to the fetishization of the body found in the work of her peers, and we see this carry forward into DMT. Media has a powerful influence on how our perceptions of the body are shaped, and DMT creators resist this through delving into the implications of interacting and creating interface between bodies and media.

Finally, two Canadian production, *Needles and Opium* (Toronto, 2013), by Robert Lepage and *Peepshow* (Montréal, 2015), by Marie Brassard are both used to showcase another important intersection of bodies in DMT performance – extension. Media and digital technology as vehicles for extending awareness, consciousness, ability, and even the body itself are common themes in media discourse and are expressed consistently in composition and narrative by DMT creators. They compositionally use media to aesthetically extend, magnify, and alter the body of the performer on stage in real time, while narratively employing a suite of technology to fracture and extend the body and voice of the performer, effectively melding them with the stage environment.

A common thread through these productions is that media and digital technology meaningfully and interactively to extends, fractures, doubles, complicates, or challenges the body on stage. The impact of media on our perceptions of what a body is, what a body should strive to be, and how we inhabit our bodies in a media-saturated world permeates the composition and narratives of these pieces. The body in this chapter is a vehicle that allows us to interact with the media and cultural elements that shape us, and introduces ways we can embrace and rebel against the influence of these elements as well.

2.2 Liveness and Media

From the perspective of intermedial performance studies, the subject of the body is quintessentially represented in the problematic division of liveness with the not-live. The concept of liveness entered discourse when not-live performance mediums such as film and television were created. These mediums increase distance between the audience and the performing subject, disrupting traditional communication processes between audience and performer. DMT, however, leverages this disruption, and problematizes critical aspects of liveness by blurring the distinction between what functions as both live and not-live.

Traditionally in theatre, music, singing, dance, and acting would be considered live performance, centralizing the living, present body. Contemporary media technology has introduced not-live performance such as projection and recording, as well as digital effects. These can still centralize the body, though they remove the materiality of the body from the stage. However, liveness is still a fraught concept, and many of the artists in this chapter blur distinctions between media we would normally easily divide between live and not-live, challenging the validity of the distinction itself and making it sometimes difficult to tell in the moment which is which.

Discussions of liveness often focus on the intrusion of technology into spaces normally controlled by live bodies, and performance is no different. American literature and media scholar Philip Auslander situates liveness as a function of mediatization – proposing the former would not exist without the latter. His belief is a "live event is 'real' and that mediatized events are secondary and somehow artificial reproductions of the real" (3); we only understand the separation between real and reproduction as media representations become more complex. He begins with the popularization of television as a

dominant media form in an increasingly saturated culture, observing that other media platforms must adapt to resemble television to maintain the gaze of their audience. Auslander considers liveness and mediatization as two poles of cultural production in constant competition with each other - his examples cross media platforms from television to rock music in order to show how the dominant media (in this case denoting popular by volume or frequency) alters or causes adaptation within other platforms, one of which is theatre and other forms of live performance. He posits that liveness and mediatization are effectively indistinct, questioning: "if live performance cannot be shown to be economically independent of, immune from contamination by, and ontologically different from mediatized forms, in what sense can liveness function as a site of cultural and ideological resistance?" (Auslander, 7). This position is counter to those that place the liveness in theatre as essential to its spirit and the primary vehicle for creating this sense of resistance.

While I agree that media platforms influence each other, and that adaptation or homogenization between platforms is certainly one result of that influence, Auslander's examples rely on a feeling of novelty, or of gimmick-ness to create competition amongst platforms. What his argument avoids is that gimmick and novelty rarely sustain themselves. How does perception of these dominant media elements change as their presence outside of performance spaces become ubiquitous? His use of the term 'mediatized event' to contrast liveness implies an inherent political motive to media, one that becomes less obvious the more embedded a media technology becomes in society.

The expansion of global telecommunication technology has created an age of media interaction. The popularization of online platforms like social media and large-scale online

gaming as increasingly popular and necessary social hubs has created a globalizing culture

that is unbound by geography. This combined with the dominance of media systems that

turn a traditionally passive viewer into a more interactive user changes how we perceive

and interact with these media platforms. Theatre as a media platform has adapted to the

notion of interaction and liveness in some interesting ways. Traditionally the theatre

centralizes the body through the live performer. What is the role of performance that

integrates, or even privileges other forms of media over or against the live performer?

Some criticism of this field is that the infestation of other forms of media into performance

changes it into something else, creating a sense that any performance with excess media

representations must be a documentation or artifact, losing some of its power. American

performance scholar Peggy Phelan reminds us of the power of performance as both process

and production. It is dynamic, fluid, and the meaning it creates is a result of the ethereal,

now-ness of liveness. She sees the spirit of performance as a central factor of its power:

"performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the

circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something

other than performance." (146). By integrating or giving over communication power to the

circulations of representation, Phelan seems to be arguing that performance is giving up

some of its essential spirit. When she speaks about media in culture and its reciprocal

impact in performance, she is unconvinced that media and technology in performance can

do anything but feed into the already dominating forces of media outside the theatre.

From another perspective we could look at Phelan's rejection of recordable

performance as a commentary on theatrical choice – by losing the ethereal quality of a

performance, we lose the potential for choice to occur – like film or other recorded media,

when a performance is stripped of its ability to change from moment to moment, it in a sense denies the potential for choice and change. Despite theatre's constant preparation against accident in the form of rehearsal, the potential for change in the moment, for the dialogic of live performance to occur, is powerful. As we continue to look at examples of DMT, interactivity becomes key to understanding a different perspective on how media and recording can still preserve the fundamental power of performance to resist. For instance, in Michael Kavdanska's *4ᵗʰ Skin* (2013),[8] produced in collaboration with Kotki Visuals, the actor blends and links his body with overlaid projection and sound. Kavdanska's performance uses colourful, sometimes abstracted imagery projected directly onto his body to show how media frames and guides public perception of him both as a performer and a person outside of the stage. Sometimes he projects his own body onto himself, emphasizing media's framing potential even to the extent of shaping the perception of his physical appearance. He becomes an agent of change in this performance, using the moment-to-moment decisions an actor makes in how they hold and shape their body to communicate with the media systems on stage. This again shows a crucial distinction of DMT versus, for instance, an entirely pre-recorded performance – the interaction of different media elements, including the dancer's body, is what drives the theatre. Kavdanska might be at the mercy of the dominating force of media, but his choices in the moment to interact or reject it allow for a sense of resistance to occur.

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[8] For a visual of the effect, see: https://vimeo.com/98286574

Figure 7: 4th Skin, *Kavdanska in collaboration with Kotki Visuals.[9] The frame of the movie never leaves this series of overlapping media platforms, although the main actor (right) is always present.*

What both Auslander and Phelan appear to agree on is that media technology is dominant and overwhelming in contemporary culture – but each creates a problem for the position of liveness within that culture. If instead we look at live and not-live as functionally less-distinct in contemporary theatre practice, it responds to both Phelan and Auslander's criticism of media in performance. DMT proposes a theatre that is still a site of cultural or ideological resistance even when it does not solely feature the live body. It uses media speaking to each other and to actors on a flattened hierarchy to produce meaning. The drawing-power of the new media elements does not necessarily take any of the fundamental communication from the theatre, and it still allows us to see familiar concepts in a new light through a new method of production.

The sheer ubiquity of media in culture actually responds to both of these concerns, situating liveness in DMT as a site for criticism of cultural simulation. Cultural simulation

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[9] Source: *4th Skin, Real-time Intermedia Dance Performance*, Kotki Visuals, 2018, <http://kotkivisuals.com/portfolio-items/the-4th-skin-av-interactive-performance/>. More images and video of the performance can be found through Kotki Visuals.

in this case is building on Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation. Baudrillard uses simulacra as a way of relating overabundance of symbols and signs reshaping the nature of reality: our perceived reality is built upon the signs we read from culture and media. As media becomes more and more prevalent, so does the impact of these signs, and as a result of this simulation eventually supplants that which is being simulated. Auslander cites Baudrillard's simulation and its relationship to power as he describes the diversification of media property (Auslander, 116). Using music as the media in question, Auslander takes the position that MTV not only popularized the music video (ushering music into an age of simulation), but also creates an antidote for those who do not want to engage with the media in the form of MTV Unplugged, which just plays music without accompanying videos. He suggests this creates a false power struggle within MTV's own domain, offering an alternate avenue for consumption while maintaining control over the entire market. In effect it pits two simulations against each other as the latter is as much an endpoint of development as the former (112). Culture, a sign system in its own right, has become simulated through media representation to the point where the distinction between original versus represented culture becomes moot. This reifies Baudrillard's concept of simulation as a removal of authority of an original, and creates a type of self-seduction within the media property (Baudrillard, 1995, 257). We are drawn in by the promise made by the dominant media in terms of its visuality and its situated-ness in culture. Auslander calls this a paranoid reading, but I wonder if it is not taken quite far enough.

To create a new sense of paranoia, I propose that mass media has, in a manner of speaking, won this competition of platforms – media influence is ubiquitous in social interaction, and an increasingly globalizing world has spawned a plethora of ways to

interact through and with media, and media enterprises. As corporate twitter accounts become viral communicators, and isolated talents are discovered by world-searching industry giants, how can we not accept the simulation as a governing force in cultural production?

The implications of media being an openly dominant force in cultural production are not inherently negative, however. The danger in cultural simulation is when it remains unnoticed, and the critical nature of DMT challenges this. Media can be both a marker of cultural dominance and take on other forms. As we exist socially online, media representations and technological production on stage can mirror lived experience in ways that the physical actor is not able to by themselves. Theatre has always existed as a multimedial platform, and by existing beside or within media elements, the body of the actor once again becomes the device through which we understand what holds media has on us, and how we might leverage them in our favour more consciously. In effect, by leaning into the prominence and impact of digital media, the body in DMT becomes a clear vehicle for understanding the implications of how we navigate media outside of the theatre.

The 2016 Edmonton production *Boom!* challenges how we perceive and navigate culture through interaction between the body and media. In his one (live) person performance*,* actor/producer Rick Miller creates a visual and sonic landscape that presents the cultural, musical, and visual memories of the Baby Boomer era, and juxtaposes them with personal conversation with two characters represented through recorded projection. While he has a frank conversation with his mother, and her older paramour, about their experiences growing up, we hear classic Elvis playing, and images of everything from 1950s advertisements, to political rallies, to the atomic bomb can be seen drifting across the

otherwise bare stage. The imagery and sounds are made through projections on a wide,

tubular mesh framework that Miller at times walks through, in front of, and interacts with.

He shapes his voice and body into iconic personas of the period (including singers,

politicians and other orators) to create a foil to the narrative being told. The effect is a fluid

one: as the light obscures Miller so to does he obscure some of the image transitions. The

switch between recorded music and his impressionist singing is difficult to spot and often

one will flow into the other. The imagery and music overwhelm at times, due to its

figurative density and literal sound and light production, but at the end provides a deep-yet-

clear cut into the emotional and rational insight gained by living through these times.

Figure 8: Boom!, *Rick Miller.[10] Inside a tubular projection system, and displaying iconic
Americana from the boomer generation, Rick Miller is enmeshed in history*

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[10] *Boom!* is part of a trilogy still in development. Excerpts from the first two installations can be found here:
http://www.boomshow.ca/. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exFJVWNJJ3c for a full scene from the
Theatre Calgary performance.

In a sense, the media admixture could be written off as a gimmick, or novelty, or as unnecessary noise that clouds an otherwise touching narrative about a son learning about his mother's dreams, regrets, and memories – sometimes the conversation is lost, and Miller interjects, creates repetition, and tries to piece together the story when it fragments. The media enhances the meandering nature of the narrative, and representations of present, historical event, and memory jump from one to the next without a clear through-line. From an intermediaturgical perspective this serves two functions, concretizing the body while disrupting a linear sense of time. When presenting the performance as a medial framework that both acts on and acts with Miller's body, his integration with the media brings it closer to the audience by virtue of the enlarging and enmeshing quality of the media technology system on the stage. The processes of interaction in the play guide our understanding of this cultural period through the lens of his body. Conversely, the performance is brought into a temporal flux through the media, allowing Miller to exist in all three previously mentioned temporal states simultaneously. While some of his historical recounting was noted to be skewed, the meaningful elements of the narrative were the ways in which individual characters reacted to and lived within the images created by the play (Ruprecht, 2016). This relationship relies on both an understanding of the mediatized culture within which the performance occurs, and an emotional connection to the liveness of the actor, neither functions fully in this context without the other.

DMT is not a focus on spectacle for spectacle's sake, but rather an intentional, driven use of media towards specific ends that reflects on the state of media and the consequences of engaging with it. Dismissing its lack of media purity for a lack of clarity or centrality creates a similar problem – DMT is not just the takeover of digital media on

the sacred space of performance. Instead, what if we consider DMT, not as a place where new media takes over in the sense that Auslander suggests, but as a place where media is integrated holistically in order to serve a new purpose outside of itself?

If theatre is a site of uneasy ontology between live and not-live, DMT addresses this by embracing the messy spectrum of representations that exist between them. If there is a distinction between live and not-live components to DMT, they rely on interaction and interrelation, with the body as the central revolving point for the relation. *Boom!* works because of the integration of media, performer, and the juxtaposition of the real physical materiality of Miller with the more evocative music and imagery of the projections. Intermediaturgical navigation of this media-heavy theatrical space allows us to consider the reciprocal impact of culture on body and body on perceived culture. Liveness and media do not compete on this platform, relying on each other instead for concretization – each is a partial expression of a total message that is only understood through the juxtaposition and interoperation of both.

There are other positions to the distinction between liveness and media, however, and point out the difficulty with simply doing away with the separation of the two. Liveness and media in performance pose a troubling confrontation of "original corporeality" (Wagner, 127). Original corporeality denotes the living body of the actor on stage as an original object and is put into opposition with mediated bodies on stage as representations. Original corporeality suggests that any actor being presented to an audience through a mediated form (through film, projection, audio recording and so on) by virtue of not being directly in front of them and sharing that liminal space, is a representation of flesh. Media-saturated theatre is then a representation of a representation.

The argument follows that when one separates live performance from other representations of the body, theatre as live performance becomes the sole domain of original bodies, and everything else cannot be theatre as a result.

However, the problem only occurs when one considers a live actor on stage an original body, which problematizes both notions of *originality* and the body. The transformative power of theatre can be used to further push these ideas when we are considering media and recording on stage. When an actor acts, they are transformed by enduring the experience, just as an audience is transformed by receiving it. When the actor's body is present the function of theatre creates a certain degree of irreproducibility. On the macro level, the character is changed and made original by each new performance, and on the micro level each individual performance is a dialogue that changes the actor. In this sense the idea of original as Wagner conceives it is problematic. The position is that only actors, agents of change, can be original in each performance as they are transformed by the act of performing. Can this not also apply to mediated bodies? While the technological production of the mediated body may not change from night to night, the impact or effect of that body might. There is still a dialogue occurring, between at least media and audience that varies between performances. Further, when one considers DMT as a place where the body must share space with media elements, how can we critically reconcile the place of the body, be it live, mediated, or otherwise, within that space, and what do we gain by doing so?

The arguments that theatre must be live or that there is a corruption of the form through the use of not-live media presences have already been established, however the language used to describe intermedial theatre – which is most often characterized by its use

of multiple non-traditional media on stage – still reveals a dichotomous discourse which
privileges the living actor's body over media representations. While there might be some
use in critically distinguishing elements of liveness and media in performance, I would
argue that their interaction is more interesting and ultimately useful than considering the
two elements in competition. DMT relies on the presence, as well as the disruption of, this
elusive and exciting body. In order to fully come to grips with the critical potential of
DMT, the fascination with the body in contemporary performance benefits from unpacking
of some of its recent historical roots in performance.

2.3 Bodyism

As Chris Shilling notes, while the body is an exceptionally popular subject for social thought, it is elusive, and the question "what is a body?" rarely has a concrete answer. Reacting to the academic approach to examining the body, he cites that while "the body [is] significant to a range of other subjects of established intellectual significance" (2), a more personal, internal understanding of the body tends to fade away in pursuit of other social, anthropological, or cultural aims. In the wake of two world-changing wars, economic and social instability, and an influx of new technological and social opportunity created immense political, social, and philosophical upheaval, the trauma of which birthed artists seeking to use the materiality of the body to generate meaning. While the body faces a troubling bracketing in contemporary discourse, DMT draws on a history of avant-garde art that forces the body back into focus.

Media and the body have clashed through several art movements in the mid-twentieth century, and we can see a similar clash happening today in DMT. The body-art movements such as the Vienna Actionists, Fluxus, and the Happenings, are all art engagements that specifically link conscious awareness of the body as a tool to devalue, among other things, the increasingly tight grip capitalist-run media has on our lives and perceptions of our own bodies. Given that media saturation and consumer culture evolved hand-in-hand, looking back at an historical example of how artists used media to rebel against those that control media systems and other power structures will help show how these tactics have been adopted by DMT.

A very clear example of an artist using media-saturated art and the body to rebel against the oppressive elements of her culture, including her own oppressive colleagues,

can be seen in the work of Carolee Schneemann. She was an artist, performer, and feminist critic who worked heavily to disabuse the notion of neutral politics with regards to the female body in America in the 1960s and 70s. Schneemann was both accepted into and later expelled from the Fluxus performance-art group, including a brief interaction via the "Happenings-Fluxus" association with Dick Higgins. This group used participatory, audience driven and generally object-heavy performances to build community, disrupt the boundary between high and low art, and create art for the masses that was intellectually or emotionally challenging. Echoing the proto-performances of hysterics from the early twentieth century, Schneemann sought to place her body as the central element to a performance-canvas. This had a polarizing effect on both her audiences and her career.

In her creation *Eye/Body* (1962), she stepped into a space filled with broken glass, photographs, and bits of personal ephemera. She would then lay onto the mess filling the space, naked, and cover her body in grease, paint, and chalk, incorporating herself into a sort of organic intermedial kinetic environment. She would then be observed by an audience and photographed. This piece, on top of a history of pressing the envelope of her place in the art scene, pushed the predominantly male Fluxus to excise her. She characterized the reaction to *Eye/Body* as somewhat negative, in terms of how it related back to the larger group, with people viewing her as a female mascot for the group, a token to fill some sort of progressive box. The explicit nature of the work and her inclusion of her own body as the figurehead created a sense among some that the art was merely "self-indulgent exhibitionism, intended only to stimulate men" (Schneemann, 25) and added to the reasons why the group wanted her out. This, of course, was also part of the point of the work – by drawing this ire Schneemann also very explicitly unveiled the objectification of

the female body, and the western capitalist tendency to fetishize in order to control. The rejection from her colleagues, especially in the face of other women producing work in this vein, also showcased the equality gap between the sexes. She said through this work, as Rebecca Schneider suggests, "[if] I am a token, then I'll be a token to reckon with" (Schneider, 35) and created a performance expression that combined art, artist, media, and culture, blurring the edges and defiantly using the platform of creation itself as a site for rebellion against the medial structures (and the politics that define and reinforce them) that allowed the art to function in the first place.

Figure 9: Eye/Body, *Carolee Schneemann.*[11] *A series of images from the* Eye/Body *portfolio available on ArtNet*

The body-art movement, which is likely better described as a shift in experimental performance practice, is identifiable by its reliance on the artist's body to create dialogue around identity, visuality, and the social expression of the body outside of performance in

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[11] Source: PPOW, *Artnet*, New York. <http://www.artnet.com/artists/carolee-schneemann/eye-body-portfolio-a-J7n6yBSzZgNrnK5v6mrMew2>

the media and everyday life. Prominent artists such as Annie Sprinkle, Hannah Wilke, and Marina Abramovic have taken this practice and continued its tradition to create visual, sensorial performance that is extreme in its process and product. Notable of this style of performance is the way it confronts both hegemonic authority and our own role in its proliferation, that "by looking at the violence or horror we become complicit in its creation, part of the cause—hence part of the discomfort in looking" (Gavin, 7). Body-art is physically and viscerally explicit, and the personal nature of the art forces its viewer to confront their own position in the machine, so to speak.

While not all body-art challenges ideas and pre-conceived notions in the same vein as Schneemann, a common element on which it frequently converges is the relationship between body and society at large. These mid-century artists are in a sense creating an experiential demonstration of corporeal realism as defined by Chris Shilling. Corporeal realism is a sociological concept that positions the body-society relationship as central to understanding social structures (17). Society is a set of pre-existing systems, classes, and ideologies, but it is continually confronted by its constituents – it is emergent, and the members of these systems react to its pressures, sometimes updating and sometimes driving the ideologies to further extremes. Corporeal realism contends that the body must also be emergent, as it depends on the body as a reaction to the social structures that causally inform their habits. Where it intersects with performance is in how the body delimits and reacts to society, namely the "body's importance as a location on which the structures of society inscribe themselves, as a vehicle through which society is constructed, [and] as circuit which connects individuals with society" (19). Shilling's position is that understanding what a body is and how it is inscribed by society allows for a deeper and

more nuanced understanding of that society; both body-art and DMT leverage the body to facilitate this.

As consumerism, a class-based social system, drives society to accept the physical body as an increasingly important element of self-identity, it simultaneously proposes an impossible standard to achieve. Social and media analysists in the twentieth century predicted this trend as it began, with thinkers such as McLuhan warning about the dominating power of advertising media. In his typical pithiness, he relates the rise of the advertisement as a warning sign for the dominating power on social systems: "Far more thought and care go into the composition of any prominent ad in a newspaper or magazine than go into the writing of their features and editorials" (203). More recently, media theorists Maggie Wykes and Barrie Gunter created a syllogism by which the larger media acts on the body:

> the body is both the object of knowledge, the site of social/sexual control and the material evidence of the self […] mass media, with their constant, repetitive and familiar 'languages'', are acting on identity, both directly in our reading, viewing and listening and also indirectly, as media content is so much part of our conversation (61)

The historical roots of media influence, as demonstrated by Schneemann, showcase the dominating effect media can have on the body, and current practices of normalizing unobtainable, perfect bodies in media representation has only increased that domination. Media has the potential to create a feedback loop, reinforcing consumerist tendencies to reach towards an unachievable ideal, creating epidemics of body-hatred, and a deep shame of self even as we enter an era where revelation – be it intellectual, emotional, or

innovative – is more attainable than ever due to an increased access to information. However, theatre and performance are arenas where the idea of a perfect or normal body can be challenged.

The body in performance is an intersection of politics, art, identity, and material. Theatre is a site of critical, visceral response to this intersection as consumerist culture influences both the producer of art and consumer/viewer. As artists come to terms with their own materiality, the theatre being created reflects this simultaneous obsession and shame with the body and the projected impossible standard it is made to attain. The body in contemporary theatre is thus an objectified subject entity, capable of being fetishized while revealing the fetish culture that impacts it, simultaneously existing as a material reference, effigy, and stand-in for an audience increasingly dissatisfied with itself. Body-art, Happening-style performance and DMT can create a situation where the dominant, hegemonic powers are subverted through the use of a-typically represented, subordinate body types. Judith Butler places this power-through-subordination as central to challenging power systems, even as they re-establish themselves through cultural machinery:

> Doubtlessly crucial is the ability to wield the signs of subordinated identity in a
> public domain that constitutes its own homophobic and racist hegemonies through
> the erasure or domestication of culturally and politically constituted identities. And
> insofar as it is imperative that we insist upon those specificities in order to expose
> the fictions of an imperialist humanism that works through unmarked privilege,
> there remains the risk that we will make the articulation of ever more specified
> identities into the aim of political activism. Thus, every insistence on identity must

at some point lead to a taking stock of the constitutive exclusions that reconsolidate

hegemonic power differentials [...] (118)

Media saturation (or over-saturation) has created a pendulum effect when one considers the

body, meaning the flesh, in performance. Showcasing the messy, so-called *real* body has

been a byword of much contemporary theatrical production. However, media saturation has

also opened the public eye to atrocity in the form of an unending news cycle, which creates

a desire for space – space from the atrocity, and space from the mess. It is precisely the

moment we are desensitized to the violence in media – from pictures of post-violence club

scenes, to graphic images on Pro-Life billboards – that the body, mediated or otherwise,

holds the most creative potential. Flesh is a powerful tool for art to act against aggression,

oppression, and by mediating or inter-mediating that art and flesh we create a new realm of

possibility for confronting the media platforms, brands, and systems that dominate culture.

Just as Schneemann and her contemporaries featured and usurped critical

understanding and indeed experience of the body, technological interference and interface

with the self has created a newer playing space for the body in performance, treating media

in a wholly new manner. Our contemporary bodies become integrated with technology and

media on several different fronts. Saturation, branding, body-image insecurity and

attainability all come together on our bodies as media, forcing us to experience and

reconcile them viscerally in everyday life. Further, and this will be expanded on in the

fourth chapter, where we occupy space with our bodies is becoming more involved with

media and media platforms. As the globalized, neo-liberal, capitalist market engine that

body-art and other artists rail against distributes what it thinks of as the perfect unattainable

body across the globe, we are simultaneously driven by social structures to accept a

homogenized view of what the body is while a deep-seated need for something different continues to emerge.

2.4 The Posthuman Debate

What happens when we are confronted with a screaming wall that tells us our own body is the source of our misery, and the solution is something impossible? The impact of media on conceptions of the body has this very effect. The despair and anxiety inherent in the relationship between media, body, and self-identity is one of many things that drives the posthuman condition. The posthuman is both a result of and a reaction to a dissatisfaction with the notion of free agency and normative definition of what qualities a human possesses (Ferrando, 13). Humans occupy niches in contemporary society that were non-existent or historically erased by hegemonic forces, and a natural or essential human quality is neither useful to consider nor possible to locate. We are simultaneously aware of the forces at play that limit our agency and are unable on the individual level to do anything about them (Ferrando, 14), Because of this, the idea that progress and humanity are the result of some sort of individual free agency becomes difficult to reconcile – how are we not at the mercy of the forces that assault every waking moment? Thus, we see a rise in the posthuman: that which privileges an understanding that human identity is fluid, not universal, and questions the autonomy and free will of action. The posthuman self is not stable, but emergent, and suspicious of essentialized views of what constitutes a human. While the notion of the posthuman predates its categorization, it is often placed into a contemporary position of the body being fused, infested, invaded, or hybridized by technological processes. In this case technological refers to social, institutional, and epistemological practices that enact on the perception and reception of the body. Olliver Dyens calls this the "interface between being and living" wherein "on [the body's] surface, being and living mesh" (Dyens, 55), describing how the body itself becomes a site of

reconception. The body is a surface, perhaps a medium, for individual notions of being and social systems of living to blur together. The posthuman body becomes a site of shifting and multiple perspective, but similar to the earlier discussion of the body's elusive qualities, it is difficult to pin down *what happens to it* as it becomes more and more enmeshed in technological processes.

Posthumanism, like the humanism it criticizes, has an uneasy relationship with the dichotomy of the mind and body. Especially concerning integration with technology, including media technology, the body always seems to be dropped in favour of a new conception of awareness, privileging the mind or thought over the physical frame, and that privilege seems counter to the contemporary posthuman condition. We can see this in philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard's treatment of the posthuman as an affair of the "after" (132). He believes as we engage more with technology, we seek to replace the mechanism for thinking and being with something that has more longevity. Medical, scientific, and technological advance all seem to point this way, and all are trying to address "the problem of the technological sciences [which] can be stated as: how to provide this software with a hardware that is independent of the conditions of life on earth" (133). Again, we see the body being left behind – the assumption that increased technocratic autonomy will result in a leaving behind of the physical, positioning it as a shed-able part of our being and framing it as only holding back human development.

Jean Baudrillard holds a position on the posthuman that is popular, but also difficult to reconcile, conflating the appearance of the posthuman with the function of technology. He illustrates the contemporary body as one infested with technological means, regardless of choice or desire – and along with this he posits that even while we create these devices,

systems, and interfaces, we are simultaneously creating a dependency on them. He warns

that a dependency of creator on the created will result and is indeed resulting in a populace

becoming "immunodeficient" (2000, 35) from the influence of technological systems on

the material physicality of the body. The digital revolution has allowed us to access and

integrate technology, and because of this we are becoming part of the extended nervous

system that McLuhan remarked is the end state of integration with media (McLuhan, 247).

Baudrillard uses this to suggest how the computer virus becomes an analogy for how

virtual isolation and protectionism result in the ravaging of the self. To do this he cites the

Boy in the Bubble, a child who was so immunodeficient that he had to live in a plastic

bubble to interact with the world (2000, 61). It became a viral news story, reaching out

everywhere, and was earmarked as both a miracle of technology-as-accessibility and as a

doom cry for a world too far gone for concerning itself with special needs. There is an

irony in the use of the Boy in a Bubble to illustrate his point about a culture of transparency

creating this system – the Boy (and I use the term to denote a trend here) has been revealed

to be a fake. There was no Bubble and the Boy was a clever ploy by a parent or authority

looking to make an indent on the fame engine of contemporary media virality. The virus

exists, but the body is no more are risk of being ravaged by it than our minds or emotions.

This linkage of technology to virus is a disturbing trend in posthuman discussion –

perhaps more than I am representing as this is by no means comprehensive – that credits

technology and our engagement and consumption of contemporary media with plagues and

disease that appear to be on the rise. Baudrillard conflates the immunodeficiency of the

Boy in the Bubble with a supposed increase in cancer and AIDS (2000, 63), while Lyotard

posits his theory of posthuman awareness amidst a discussion of how issues surrounding

gender diversity has been formed as a result of our need to consume and the forces of mediatization (Lyotard, 128). These figurations are troubling from their moral and frankly reductive implications, but also from the perspective of understanding the body as a conduit for understanding the relationship between media and society. It positions technology as the method for escaping traditional notions of humanism, while seeming to damn it for causing a plethora of seemingly contemporary problems. This all-or-nothing style of positioning the posthuman also ignores the very real way the body embedded in a media framework can actually re-invigorate that ever-elusive fascination with the material of the body itself.

Ultimately it seems the issue with the posthuman condition as a method for understanding our situated-ness in a contemporary technology and media saturated environment is that it still relies on a fundamental privileging of the body as a separate entity; it still denotes the mind-body dichotomy even as it tries to unseat it. The posthuman is supposed to move beyond their body, discarding the notion of a fundamental human essence but is still tethered by the notion that the body is a blockage to some sublime or perhaps transcendent achievement of consciousness. To help reconcile this tension, contemporary performance has used iterations of bodies-that-are-not-bodies in conjunction with media to indicate where the contemporary body is *going.*

If we accept the posthuman body as a part of contemporary narrative and wish to see where it is left in the conversation of media and technological saturation, I would look to a consistent theme found in the media interaction inherent to DMT. Whether it is Internet-based recording, social media, or even the evolution of the forum, interaction and interrelation with and among media is quickly becoming the norm. YouTube, for instance,

becomes the home of the YouTuber, a persona that interacts with its audience, encouraging a reply, and the mechanisms of the platform enhance this by reducing the visibility of timestamps in favour of pushing conversation that is meant to feel immediate. The body in this case is temporally removed, remembered only via its media ghost, but the persona persists. The thought and body can be resurrected as needed and even the audience participating becomes a ghost as well, body and thought being immortalized through the media. But, importantly different than the shell Lyotard posits, these ghosts can and do return, furthering the conversation or being enacted upon by future ghosts.

Looking back to the theatre, *House/Lights*[12] by the Wooster Group serves as an excellent example of DMT playing with ghosts. The play uses simulcasting, classic film, and a plethora of media broadcast devices to create "a portrait, both fractured and fluid, of a world in which any set sense of chronology, culture or identity can no longer be taken for granted" (Brantley, 1999). The live cast acts with the recorded classic films, sometimes playing scenes concurrently, sometimes allowing the scene to bleed from stage to screen and back again. The effect is trying to mimic Stein's passion for cubism by creating an entirely frontal performance. As discussed in the previous chapter, the films are designed to look and feel historical, and so we might consider the characters of these films, when juxtaposed with live actors, as ghosts. The interplay between living person and ghost, as well as the fracturing of voice, body, and palimpsestic interweaving of multiple narratives creates a notion that the body is something that exists as a mechanism for interaction and interface.

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[12] See <https://vimeo.com/128433023> for an example of the effect, paying special attention to the actor wearing goggles and the multiple television monitors around the stage.

In *House/Lights* the body is part of a whole; the mind of the performers and their emotional evocations are all rooted in bodily action. The bodies of the actors extend through the digital and medial nervous system of the stage, becoming an enmeshed part of it. When an actor gestures, and that gesture is taken up by the character on film (or vice versa), the eye and attention is drawn in such a way that one gesture feels like an extension of the other. This effect positions the bodies on stage interacting and extending through media as synecdoche for the contemporary body in society. Media intervention with the body may shift, change, or hybridize it, but emotional engagement – which combines mental and physical response – remains, sustaining a critical link to the body regardless of how far beyond normal it becomes. What we might traditionally conceive of as simply the body – that physical material – becomes mediated as a synecdochally representative metaphor of the whole body; a whole that encompasses mind, body, emotion, and hybridization with technology and media.

This discussion will shift in the next chapter to address the fundamental problematic of identity in DMT, and the posthuman, or more specifically one of its offspring, the cyborg, will return to the fore. While the posthuman might have some troubling conflation of technology and humanity, as the idea is refined into the form of the cyborg, we can see a perhaps more immediate and functional method of critically understanding the junction between the self and media. Before that, however, it will be useful to look at one more facet of body as it is confronted and transformed by media, specifically how the body immersed in media and technology can be reflected through performance. This body, which I am calling the mediated virtual body, is another way of seeing the relationship between society, media, and body exercised on stage.

2.5 The Mediated Virtual Body

The virtual as a method for understanding the self is not a new idea. Maurice Merleau-Ponty uses the term virtual to envision the body's relationship to imagination. He distinguishes it from the actual (or habitual) body with a dialectic representation that shows an ability to move between actual, encountered action and imagined action – in essence the virtual body allows humans to imagine completing actions that they would not otherwise complete – without imagination action grinds to a halt. In terms of performance, Merleau-Ponty uses the professional actor as an example of the virtual body at work, "the actor [does] not mistake imaginary situations for reality but extricates their real bodies from the living situation to make them breathe, speak and, if need be, weep in the realm of the imagination" (105). The body, in this sense, is virtual in that it fabricates through representation the means to allow it to live fully in the audiences' imaginations. James Steeves expands on this position, noting that "the virtual body also allows us to assume alternative positions within a scene" (372), creating a sense that the bodies on stage are merely conduits for the imagination. Citing Walter Benjamin, Susan Buck-Morrs describes the virtual body as being able to "endure the shocks of modernity without pain " (Buck-Morrs, 17), creating a path whereby the imagination (of the audience) and habitual body (of the performer) working in tandem acts as a social shield, creating a buffer for what Benjamin calls "excessive energies" (qtd in Buck-Morss, 16) of external stimuli. A key to understanding the virtual body of performance is the convergence between imaginary capacity and habitual material. It is a refutation and possibly an elimination of the mind-body hierarchy, and instead suggests that each shapes the other.

When media becomes involved, the contemporary body has the potential to become virtual, both in the sense that it can be represented there, and the technology that creates virtual platforms allows us to project a sense of body into them. The mediated virtual body is particularly suited to dealing with issues of self, identity, and capability in lived experience, as the imagination and physical material of the body come together through the intertextuality of media and intermedial performance. In DMT, the mediated virtual body can be a body caught between material habituation and medial imagination. This body is integrated with media elements that transform, manipulate, or subvert the notions of separating the real material flesh and the unreal or impossible imaginary.

Many DMT performances use a mediated virtual body to extend or delimit the abilities of the habituated body of the living actor. The overlays of Davies' *Cencis,* the video-call effect of *Boom!,* and the livecast features in *Future of Memory* and *House/Lights* are all different ways of presenting a mediated virtual body. It is distinct from a mere projection, by virtue of its relationship to the living actor – as we have discussed, the live element of theatre is present, despite its increasing closeness to mediatization elements, as it creates the closeness necessary to lift the media into a three-dimensional position of understanding. To have a mediated virtual body on stage is to create dialogue with that body – whether it is a hybrid of technology and materiality, a user-operated digital creation, or a combination of the two, there must be dialogue within the liminal confines of the stage.

The actor's body has limitations, and the mediated virtual body helps to overcome them while presenting a new way of looking at the body that is enmeshed in a virtual world outside of the stage. An actor is limited by the mechanics of their body, however virtuoso it

may be, and is spatially and temporally locked onto the stage. The mediated virtual body

can enhance and extend the emotional and physical expression of a performer beyond their

normal capability and allows for the actor to circumvent traditional structures of time and

space beyond what is normally offered through plotting. It creates again a sort of hypertext

in the form of a hypertextual body that exists at the convergence of material, habitual

bodies of actors interacting with the electronic, virtual bodies and worlds created by digital

media on stage. Robert Lepage's *Needles and Opium* presents a useful example of this

method of expression.[13] The production in Toronto in 2013 utilized simple-seeming

projection overlays on a giant, rotating three-walled cube for a set. This works in

combination with the live actor to show micromovements of the body not normally visible

from the stage, inviting the audience to intimately share the experience of addiction with

the characters on stage. In the play, Lepage prepares himself to take heroin, while in the

background a projection of his own arm in high detail is displayed. This real-time arm is

overlaid with another image of a needle, which is slowly plunged until the liquids inside

overflow, covering the screen. As this occurs, the audience can observe as "Lepage's head

tilts back languidly in sensual pleasure and release as the drug takes effect" (Dixon, 2007a,

502). In another version of the production, pictured below, the effect is described as feeling

"both elegant and tragic," to the audience, highlighting "three things a needle cannot fix:

anguish, low self-esteem and heartbreak," (Colby, 2015). The effect creates a mediated

virtual body, one that is simultaneously limited to the human form, and expanded to a

larger-than-life scale, existing at the interaction points between the two (see figure 10). It

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[13] See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbDJJHsPZF4> for a trailer that shows the media environment projected onto the otherwise bear walls of the stage, as well as some of the projection tricks used to integrate and extend the performer's body into the media system.

revels in the materiality of the body by showcasing movement and visuality that is not possible to experience in a conventional format, while also combining notions of media, humanity, addiction, and weakness. The imagery of an arm being pricked by a needle is disturbing, and by enlarging it, the emotions projected by the actor become overwhelming, creating an opportunity for empathy or critical reinforcement through media integration. Traditionally, the breakdown of the fourth wall and the blurring of the audience and stage are tools can be used to pull an audience in closer to the heart of the performance. The techniques used by LePage do so in a different way: instead of inviting the audience in and close, there is a simultaneous distancing (through presenting action via media) and microscope-like focus that serves to entrap the viewer in this medial framework. In this sense, DMT's utilization of the mediated virtual body is in fact another form of body-centralizing performance, showing partial roots, or at least some common goals, with the legacy of bodyism and body-centric art. However, the mediated virtual bodies' use of this material extremism is aimed at an entirely different purpose by extending the limits of what a body *is* or *could be.*

Figure 10: Needles and Opium, *Robert LePage.[14] Projected capillaries expand as the heroin enters them, and the actor falls back in ecstasy.*

The mediated virtual body functions as an extension of the habitual body and its capability. Throughout Marie Brassard's *Peepshow* (which premiered in 2007 and was remounted in 2015 in Montréal among other locations), we see the concept of media extension expressed in a multitude of ways. Brassard plays a multitude of characters enacting several short, potentially linked stories with themes of darkness, love, sensuality, danger, and indecisiveness. All this is created from a relatively bare stage, a projected array of images, and live sound mixing conceived by sound designer Frederic Auger and video editor Pascal Grandmaison. The interaction between performer and digital apparatus allows for Brassard to play many characters in quick succession or simultaneously, and the manner in which they are overlaid creates a sense that these characters are not just found

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[14] Source: Colby, 2015. LePage's theatre company, Ex Machina, hosts clips of many productions on their company website: http://lacaserne.net/index2.php/theatre/needles_and_opium/

within her but are infused in the space itself. Her body and the projected images –

fragmented, sometimes blurry, sometimes her and sometimes not – create a sense of

fractured closeness similar to LePage in the earlier example. We see her body on stage as

one piece and are confronted with its fractured material components through the

projections. When we see, for instance, a moving wolf in the background it becomes a part

of the narrative with which she is interacting and a part of the greater media network of her

body. When the wolf transforms into her shadow we are once again caught at the edge of a

blurring between live and media that serves to heighten the effect both elements have on

the narrative being told.

Figure 11: Peepshow, *Marie Brassard.*[15] *Tiny screens rapidly assemble and disintegrate the actors face and other images as video and abstract colour plays behind.*

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[15] Source: Peepshow, *Espace GO,* 2015, <https://espacego.com/archives/2015-2016/peepshow/>. More imagery, audio, and video of this production can be found on the website.

The mediated virtual bodies in these examples reveal several things. First, they are reliant on the interaction of living and media processes, although to privilege one over the other is to ignore the power of their effect – to have Lepage simulate the euphoria of narcotics can be horrifying, surreal, or beautiful as one takes it; to see the vein bulge and the liquid overflow has the potential to create a visceral, overstimulating emotional and physical response. Likewise, Brassard's performance is reliant on the fragmentary, sensorial experience to be representative of the alien action of seeing another's thoughts play out. Second, they refute, in a sense, the Benjamin-ian perception of the technical as inert. Through the dialectic interaction of live and media, the media becomes capable of "returning our gaze," unlike the camera, (Benjamin, 204), and likewise the living actor interacting with the media is animated – ideally creating a sympathetic reaction in the audience perceiving it. In a sense this is the same resistance that Schneemann and other body-art creators seem to be trying to represent, albeit in a different way. Media platforms are frequently revealed as tools of capitalist, western, neo-liberal oppression (and recent proliferation of white supremacy and political instability via media certainly reinforce that). Placing them on even ground with the body removes some of their power and authority over us. If we can stare at media such that it stares back, it can be turned, disarmed, or used in a different way. Finally, by existing within a theatre space augmented by digital technology, the mediated virtual body in performance reveals the way that virtual can still be experienced virtually, perhaps more so now than ever as media influences and infiltrates the body and society. Whether the action is dissonant, as is the case with Lepage, or sympathetic and fragmentary with Brassard, they situate themselves within a media framework that reflects, disrupts, and alters their material essence.

A performing body requires internal physical and emotional processes in order to present what appears to be a single expression, thought, action, or feeling. The mediated virtual body and by extension DMT explode these processes outwards, displaying them to the audience through extension and enhancement. As we connect with the performing body, we connect with the materiality of their expression, including revealing the internal processes that motivate that expression. Put another way, the mediated virtual body becomes a proprioceptive organ for the audience. It creates, through revealing the inner mechanism of expression, an awareness of how expression is generated. David Harradine looks at the body as the only site on which identity can be read, as a "locus of complex processes of ideological construction" (69). He believes that "the body is always a performing body, a body that performs its own presence, its own material status" (69). If this is the case, then the mediated virtual body creates room for construction of self that happens outside of our physical body, despite necessary separation between live and media, the material status of the performing body is representative of a contemporary sort of presence; a presence that can also function via absence. I will argue in the following chapter that this change of self-identity is in fact a reconfiguration, not of some mind/body split, but rather of the habitual body itself.

The extension offered by the mediated virtual body is central to DMT's method for using both media and the body as vessels for the disruption, if not outright defiance of consumerist and even historical or hegemonic dominance. The theatre tradition is one overwhelmingly of logocentricity – despite contemporary development towards textlessness or a refusal of the text found in the mid twentieth-century avant-garde, theatrical production in the mainstream is based on literary foundations. As theatre is

bound up in its history, so too are social conditions – as stated above, society might be emergent, but it is continually assaulting a monument created by its own history. While body-centric theatre offers an experiential break, it does so often by removing the narrative text. The mediated virtual body instead has the potential to balance the competition of logocentricity and experience by leveraging new avenues for interacting. As we move forward into a discussion of identity, and then space, questions surrounding how we understand our self-identity, and how we interact with the media that define our social and cultural makeup will be confronted and clarified through the foundations set by the body in a mediated, media-saturated world.

Chapter 3: Troubled Identities/Conflicted Presences in Digitally-Mediated Theatre

3.1 Co-Present Digital Identity

The body is the vehicle through which we understand our relationship with media, and identity adds important context to how we see ourselves reflected by the interplay of media, society, and the self. Broadly defined, identity is how we see ourselves and are seen by others, and how we are conceived of as we act in the world at large. It is a social currency that creates opportunity for action, change, and the influence of one subject upon another. In theatre, identity and identification are compounded and reconfigured as actors and the characters they inhabit interact physically, emotionally, and intellectually with the audience. Performance often can grapple with how our identities form, what shape they take, and how they are expressed outwardly. DMT creators use the stage as a space to comment on and challenge notions of identity, criticizing the impact that media has on shaping identity. The intermedial framework at play in DMT challenges our physical sense of identity and the growing, fractured identity that exists digitally by showing how each reflects the other. Who you are and where you are situated is not static, and DMT uses the physical, embodied self, and the digitally, problematically non-embodied avatar to ask questions and challenge conventionally held beliefs surrounding identity.

DMT's usage of both reproducible and immanent elements invites a conversation about the nature of personal, singular identity in an increasingly controlled digital, and virtual reality. Online architectures, social media, and ubiquitous digital communications have altered the way we self-identify by creating what Davey Winder calls "a collaborative

you" (221) that is a combination of many different digital personas, all existing separately online and pluralistically within our physical self. In the previous chapter, the fetishization of the body by popular media platforms was used to explain the attempt by artists to take back their bodies and to reveal the body as a site of control by hegemonic forces. DMT artists take a similar attitude of resistance when considering the self, using the space of the stage to question self-identity and perception of the self. This questioning is taken one step further to ask how our identity and perception of the identity of others impacts our interaction with each other through media.

This chapter will locate identity in relation to DMT while challenging notions of presence and co-presence. Notions of virtual,[16] versus so-called real presence are often put at odds with each other in performance, creating a troubling clash of identities. DMT can be used to reveal to spectators how their sense of identity and their perception of others' identities can be manipulated by powerful groups, particularly through the erosion of privacy. DMT uses the mediated virtual body to explore identity and presence, breaking down the separation between physical self and virtual selves and replacing it with a more pluralistic understanding of personal perception and social communication.

The productions analyzed in this chapter question, obscure, or challenge the notion of a singular identity that exists in the physical world. They examine presence and co-presence, critiquing the impact of telepresence on our sense of self. Some productions were used in the previous chapter and are being re-investigated to show how DMT's commentary on the body also impacts notions of identity and presence. *House/Lights*

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[16] References to "virtual" in this chapter and the next denote the contemporary colloquial usage of virtual to mean "existing online or electronically," as opposed to the phenomenological definition used in the previous chapter.

returns in this chapter to expand on notions of interactivity and the oftentimes fracturing aesthetic utilized by DMT. This aesthetic is used by the Wooster Group, among others, to destabilize the action on stage in order to create a sense of depersonalization, making the viewer aware of their own materiality. This is picked up by *Hamlet 360: Thy Father's Spirit*, a 2019 production in London by the UK-based Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, and *The Body in Question(s)²* (Edmonton, 2016), by Canadian performance companies Van Grimde Corps Secrets and Brian Webb Dance Company. In their own way each uses interaction with media elements on stage to configure a sense of presence that challenge the singular nature of identity – as we become increasingly dependent on media devices and platforms, the online element of our identity becomes more concretized even as it is revealed to be fractured.

In contrast, several DMT productions serve as examples of how a sense of anxiety, fear, and isolation can be triggered by using digital and media technology, even as they are touted as global community-building tools. The ever-present surveillance of the digital world and media machine, and their effect on our sense of self is brought to bear through *ANXIETY,* a 2016 production by Alberta-based Theatre Yes in collaboration with other small-stage Canadian theatre companies, *Call cutta in a box* (Zurich, 2008) from the German media-performance company Rimini Protokoll, and again *Peepshow* (2015). I return to the latter to demonstrate that even within a framework of media as extension of the body, media's overwhelming presence of it has an impact on our perceptions of our own identity. All three productions use and challenge notions of singular identity and the influence media environments and online platforms have on the creation and concretization of that identity.

The end of the chapter is concerned with the cyborg, another site of resistance in DMT, and one that problematizes self-identity by re-investing in the materiality of the body, albeit in a different way. It is here that notions of body and identity collide. In productions of *Kamp* (2005) by Hotel Modern, a Netherlands-based theatre group, and *Reincarnation of St Orlan* (France, 1993) by French body-artist ORLAN we see body and identity as being mutually constitutive. Both productions comment on the state of the contemporary body, namely how media shapes our ability to view and understand that body. They link a sense of identity to the body through the use of grotesque performance aesthetic that is guided by an immersive and interactive media technology strategy.

Identity and presence are useful principles in DMT for challenging and opening up discussion about the reach of media and media platforms. Many of the productions in this chapter use media architecture to reveal this reach, revealing how media platforms influence many facets of identity. The function of these productions is to ask audiences to consider mindfully how their identity is potentially at risk by giving media environments and devices unfettered access and preaching, instead of pure fear, active engagement with the media instead.

3.2 A Question of Presence

Presence in theatre is a circuitous force, and one that can be expressed in multiple ways. It is the aura emanating from the stage that dictates what we perceive to be the relationship between the characters on stage and the actors embodying them. Because presence effects the horizon of expectations of an audience, it also supplies a space for communicating the so-called magical aspects of theatre. Cormac Power, in an analysis of the function of presence in contemporary modes of theatre, uses presence to explain the function of the stage, actor, and fictitious or otherwise mediated elements of a production. To him, the theatre is a site of convergence between different figurations of presence, that "the 'magic of theatre'' can suggest an overlap of the three modes of presence; the literally present is manipulated to make-present fictional propositions, whose very interaction points to the 'aura' of the stage with its potential to put presence into play" (205). In a sense, to Power, presence in theatre can point to the powerful signification of the stage itself, grounding the physical reality of the performer in the imagined reality of the fictional character. Notably, there is no distinguishable hierarchy between these three things – the reality of the stage, of the performer(s), and, if applicable, the fictional reality of the play – and indeed there is no limitation as to what form presence may take. A living being is not required for the production of a sense of presence on stage under this ideology. This demarcation of reality and presence echoes earlier discussion about liveness – generally we see the living actor as the producer of a sense of presence on stage, however Power is implying that interaction is the real generative force for presence. It should follow that other elements of the stage, including media representations, can aid in the production of presence as long as they are interacted with or interact with each other.

As in the distinction between liveness and mediatization, Herbert Blau points out that presence as a determinant element of theatre comes from a position of absence. Marking, among other events, the Fluxus films of the mid-twentieth century as an exercise in removing presence, Blau emphasizes the "living theater" over its rivals in the film industry as a site wherein we attempt to "attribute to real bodies on a stage more presence than some of those bodies may actually have in performance, no less anything like a charismatic wholeness, which this or that body may appear to have, if nothing more than appearance" (249). Blau seems to be questioning why there is a tendency to look at living bodies on stage as the primary generators of this sense of presence, and as a result the determiners of how our horizon of expectations is managed. This attribution may be illusory, but it is an important illusion which once again invites the intermedial destabilization of DMT and the virtual body.

Presence becomes especially complicated within a DMT framework, as the digital elements often take the form of an interface. Interfaces work through illusion – they transport the user, masking their function so the user is only aware of what is contained within, not the interface itself. A screen ceases to be a screen when it is active, instead becoming a portal that the user journeys into or experiences as the system determines. However, when placed within the theatrical medium, a complication occurs. Performance theorists Kurt Vanhoutte and Nele Wynants differentiate digital mediums from the performing arts by nature of their transparency:

> The medium becomes transparent and the user is no longer aware of the functioning of the machine. Performing arts, in contrast, are characterized by the simultaneous presence of both actors and public. From this point of view, theatre is real in its

material presence: one-off, irreplaceable, unique, and radically uncontemporary.

This quality principally entails the possibility of theatre not only to represent but

also to stage other media. (277)

Theatrical presence could thus be seen as a means to upset the illusory quality of digital

media, revealing the wires, while simultaneously challenging the reality of presence on the

stage space itself. The intermedial stage in DMT presents an interface as part of a larger

organism, forcing awareness of the content of the interface that makes it appear

transparent, paying special attention to the form that interface takes and the way it is

situated in the performance space.

However, the function of interface in media is itself a difficult thing with which

users need grapple to take better control over media's impact on the self. Juho Hamari

illustrates the elusiveness of digital communication and media through an investigation into

collaborative consumption (CC), a descriptor of the exchange that occurs in online

economies: "CC has been expected to alleviate societal problems such as hyper-

consumption, pollution, and poverty by lowering the cost of economic coordination within

communities. However, beyond anecdotal evidence, there is a dearth of understanding why

people participate in CC." (1). Under this idea collaborative consumption, the basis for a

sharing economy, is an intersection of enjoyment, social commerce, reputation, and

economic benefits and these aspects are major determinants of one's behaviour in a digital

environment (6). Digital environments are by their nature places of consumption: they are

accessed through services to provide yet more services, from literal buying/selling

platforms, to the more innocuous online entertainment industry found on websites like

YouTube, to the social media industry, where consumption takes place on a massive scale.

Sociologist Frank Biocca, working with Chad Harms, takes this notion further, positing that there is a complicated relationship between humans as social creatures and interfaces. When contributing to an interaction through media or in a media environment, the user of a media environment does not actually have any way of knowing that the recipient of their communication is a real living person, interacting in real-time, or some form of representation of a person contrived by the machine. Yet they claim the hallmarks of social interaction, including emotional engagement and response, remain present (6). Social media users react to two-way interaction with another human in real-time and interactions with an artificial intelligence purporting to be human in essentially the same way (until the machine is revealed to be non-human), and there seems to be a correlation between the normalization of the interaction (i.e., how often it is done) and the fidelity of the response. However, they do not let this rest, pointing out that despite optimism that this indicates an increase in the quality of social life, there remains a lack of methodological study on the actual impact of media technology on the ability to connect socially to one another (8).

Like Auslander's proposal that we understand liveness only through its juxtaposition with the not-live, our understanding of non-virtual presence shifts when introduced to telepresence. Telepresence and co-presence become the byword for understanding the subject experience of inhabiting a virtual environment. This inhabitance creates questions about our understanding of conventional presence itself. Our self-identity and its relationship to virtual environments requires that we consider both the mechanism of the relationship and how it affects us. Conventional definitions of virtual or digital environments are reliant on the machines and systems used to create them. Much like the

body, when we talk about inhabiting virtual space, the conversation is often guided by a fascination with the technology being deployed rather than its affect on the user. This is, however, ultimately a troubled way of viewing the subject. Jonathan Steuer points out the faults of virtual reality as a concept, positing that it is most effectively understood not as a collection of machines, but rather a particular method for creating experience (73). By focusing on the user-experience, conversations around virtual reality extend beyond the matter of their implementation to speak about the ways in which they create social impact. Steuer brings a useful further definition of presence to this discussion, one that is intrinsically linked to the notion of digital media. If presence, or the sense of presence, is determined by our environments and our ability to enact change within them, then we can say it is "the perception of those surroundings as mediated by both automatic and controlled mental processes" that creates "the sense of being in an environment." (74). Steuer separates presence into two categories – presence which describes being in a physical environment, and telepresence which is the "experience of presence in an environment by means of a communication medium." (75). Virtual or digital environments have the potential to skew how we understand proximity – while presence is directly related to physical location, telepresence allows for an understanding of closeness outside of traditional locationality. Further, Steuer claims that in a state of telepresence the virtual presence or reality is privileged over the physical presence. His claim is based on the drawing-in power of media to fascinate and links this fascination to an almost forgetfulness of the physical. When this concept is taken by intermedial theatre, the claim becomes shaky at best – to be truly intermedial, the media elements need to be pointed to in order to be understood as meaning-making elements of performance.

Digital presence is a form of co-presence; a digital presence is shaped by interaction through and with digital media and interfaces, while at the same time the perception of that presence by others is shaped by their interaction with the same interfaces. The relationship between space, presence, and identity, influenced by family, locationality, affluence etc., is also influenced by media consumption and politics. Moreover, the globalized nature of digital society simultaneously extends and condenses the public spheres, by creating a plethora of ways to engage with the public that circumvent geographic limitations while still maintaining separation based on platform or interest. The removal of the face in favour of a more anonymous screen changes how you behave in one social sphere does not need to carry over to others. You can create essentially limitless personas with great control over when or if they will conflict with each other. Who you are and what you identify as in one space does not need to be consistent with other spaces. Internally your identity remains compositionally similar, but its expression certainly shifts in a way that seems very freeing. There are compelling oppositions to what this means vis a vis how an identity forms, including the danger inherent in treating online or digital relationships as momentary or anonymous, risking a loss of empathy or increase in indifference towards others. Michael Heim, in a discussion of the ontology of identity production in cyberspace, shows how an expanding global network allows people simultaneously ample opportunity to connect, while remaining physically alone (100). Because our online identity is only a "stand-in body [that] reveals only as much of ourselves as we mentally wish to reveal" (99) it stands to reason that our ability to invest in bodily interaction, however bracketed by technology, is narrowed.

How we exist in cyberspace and how that affects our identity is a very robust theme in a lot of DMT. Exploring the theme leads back to intermediaturgy as a compositional and critical frame through which presence and identity can be analyzed. By looking at performances from the perspective of how we navigate their important themes and media architecture, we discover how DMT uses digital media integration to show and challenge how identities are formed and pluralized, especially through digital and online engagement. By paying special attention not just to the media elements on the intermedial stage, but how they are interacted with, put upon, and what emotional resonance they convey, we can also come to see how both the production and disruption of presence on stage seek to push awareness of how we are adorned and saturated by media outside of the theatre.

The Wooster Group's *House/Lights* (1999) returns as a useful example of how digital presence can be an effective measure of how one interacts with media environments, and how that interaction impacts a sense of identity through culture. The performance simultaneously displays live performers and classical cinema, with the live performers adapting, aping, and contrasting the action broadcast on several screens. It intertextually splices a text by Gertrude Stein with the soft-core porn film *Olga's House of Shame*, by Joseph Mawra. The play's structure and its media system both impact how presence is generated on stage, and how that presence could be analyzed by the audience. Classic-looking black-and-white film holds a similar cultural position as very old theatre. Because of its age, it is assumed to be some form of higher art; but just as the sophistication of Shakespeare has been debunked, so too does *House/Lights* demystify the visual aesthetic of classic film as high art. By aping the soft-core pornography, the lewdness of the moment is

amplified.[17] It questions what a classical or memorable moment on film means to an audience when placed appositionally to actors on stage. The nostalgic aesthetic of the classical film is contrasted by the live performers, destabilizing precedence. With this destabilization also comes a challenge to identity, and how our preconception or glorification of the past is a social construct. The jarring reality of the lewdness of the film, juxtaposed with the actors on stage leads to a commentary on the value we place on art and history and its impact on our conception of the self.

The play's projection and live-streaming system has other effects. The actors are displayed on screens in front of themselves, while microphones digitize their voice. The effect of this performance is one wherein the audience is incapable of focusing on one media format versus another – through overstimulation, the environment is destabilized, as is our ability to belong within it. Destabilization through media intervention is something George Landow locates as a special function of the form. Media technology, because of the broad ways of engaging with it, allows for unprecedented access to information. While writing, for instance, allows for a democratization of information it still "drives a wedge between the literate and illiterate," (338) whereas media technology has an almost libertarian hands-off approach to information diffusion (335). Despite being relatively easy to access, most media platforms are tempered by a lack of guidance – and when guidance is lost, so too is the ability for the user to confidently determine what information is trustworthy. Indeed, it questions the very nature of those terms as media influencers determine what can be accessed and what version of available information becomes

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[17] It is interspersed throughout the play, but significant sections can be found at 00:24:00-00:30:00 and 00:49:00-00:52:00 <https://kanopy.com/video/houselights>

popular. Looking back at the play, the historical position of the film, the technology it comes from, and the moment in time in which it is presented on stage, becomes more difficult to parse as the digital sense of presence espoused by the play becomes destabilized. The challenge to the audience, as in many Wooster Group productions, is to engage with how these concepts of nostalgia and familiarity can clash with a contemporary sense of presence that even at the turn of the millennium was shifting into new territory as online spaces grew.

Another important element established in *House/Lights* is the ontological place of technology in understanding cultural belonging. Several scenes take a similar structure – the black and white film is displayed through the simulcast televisions, and instead of interacting with the large screen the performers ape the film itself. Aping in this sense meaning not quite replicating it – there are jumps and cuts, and while the soundscape is exclusively the film, the actors take liberties in miming sound effects, playing with physicality, and occasionally duplicating the filmic action by having multiple performers perform at once. The performers break from their direct communication with the media to seemingly adorn themselves with it, integrating themselves and embodying the projected characters. The performance speaks to how our engagement with media structures our sense of identity in a way similar to Tom Boellstorff's *Coming of Age in Second Life* (2005). In his anthropological exploration, he shows how digital multi-user environments restructure our ability to perceive and cultivate a sense of community and identity. He claims that virtual environments reflectively create systems to provide "humans with radically new ways to understand their lives as beings of culture as well as physical embodiment" (58). For Boellstorff, the "new way" of reading text is the key to

understanding cultural belonging. *House/Lights* accomplishes a similar feat, using a destabilized intertextual dialogue to question physical, social, and cultural embodiment. From the perspective of intermediaturgy, a major theme explored in this play is depersonalization, where the audience viewing becomes imminently aware of their own subject position. The body is a material object engaging with a lived set of experiences grounded in that materiality. By depersonalizing the body in performance, the enmeshing of materiality and lived experience becomes more apparent. The actors in the play interact with media on stage, and by significantly pointing out the materiality of the body as a text to be examined, they reflect the relationship between self and media, allowing us to see how we interact with media, both older and newer, and understand how that interaction frames our understanding of ourselves and those around us.

Telepresence, and digital presence revolve around the social adherence possible in virtual worlds. Our sense of belonging in these worlds is intrinsically tied to how we understand embodying and behaving within digital environments as DMT leverages this understanding to access the benefits of destabilizing intertextuality through digital means. DMT both crystalizes and challenges the extent to which identity is formulated through this sense of digital presence, reflecting back and making us aware of how we participate in digital and media environments. By understanding how this social relationship between environment and sense of belonging is situated, we can move forward to question how the destabilizing force of DMT can counter some of the worst elements of contemporary digital culture.

3.3 Honing Digital Identity

Digital culture and digital identity have the appearance of a kind of discrete plurality: as a user you might find yourself embodied through many types of virtual avatars in many places. This virtually embodied presence is no less real than your physically embodied one. It is what Slavoj Žižek calls a surrogate self, and he relates it to the Chorus of Classical Greek theatre. The Chorus is a multi-bodied group that features warring voices who eventually reach consensus through the plot, dictating the ideal morality for the audience. It is a surrogate that takes the decision of what to feel out of the hands of the audience. Žižek believes that digital and cyberspace engagement creates multiple surrogate selves for the user in a very similar way. Interacting with digital media allows for the construction of a surrogate self: "even though the subject is 'active' in ways previously unimaginable, its capacity to 'passively enjoy' its widened field of experiences resides in this surrogate self, in the symbolic order." (1997, 109) The surrogate experiences an environment or interaction, and it imparts this experience to you, extending your sense of presence into the environment and vice versa. DMT takes advantage of this by, among other things, disrupting the sense of presence in order to make a point about how we construct identity through contemporary digital means.

Hamlet 360: Thy Father's Spirit, a virtual reality theatre/film piece produced by the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company in 2019, uses digital environments to create an avatar that disrupts traditional conceptions of presence. Somewhat a departure from most of the productions studied here, *Hamlet 360* is closer to a film than conventional intermedial theatre, but its creators used theatrical convention as a guiding principle in its design and implementation. It demonstrates the notion of the surrogate self very clearly in

both its use of media and the position of the audience member. The performance is a one-hour cut of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that focuses on Hamlet's relationship to his father, and takes place in a single, timelessly styled room. The conceit is that the participant wears a VR headset and plays the part of the father's Ghost. They have full visual autonomy to look around the room and are occasionally moved, and if they look into a mirrored surface, they see themselves in the form of the ghostly king in this world.[18] The VR environment creates a forced self-surrogacy, because while the participant is free to look around, they are not in control of any movement. The inevitable conclusion of the play still happens, and the participant is forced to intimately watch it while unable intervene even as the actual ghost. In an immersive, all encompassing world, they are unable to look away without completely disengaging with the performance. The effect is one felt viscerally and is at times disorienting due to its relentless nature (Aucoin, 2015).

Figure 12: Hamlet 360: Thy Father's Spirit, *Commonwealth Shakespeare Company.*[19] *Hazily in the mirror (left) you can see yourself as the Ghost. As you move, so does he.*

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[18] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jc88G7nkV-Q&feature=youtu.be> will allow you to watch from the perspective of the Ghost and use controls on the screen to look around as the action of the play occurs.
[19] Source: Aucoin, 2019. Trailers for upcoming productions of this performance can be found on the company website: https://commshakes.org/production/hamlet-360-thy-fathers-spirit/

The way presence is affected by this play is an example of the Place Illusion, posited by media scholar Mel Slater. The Place Illusion, along with the Plausibility Illusion, are what allow for that moment of defamiliarization or dissociation within an immersive environment like DMT or virtual reality due to its configuration of presence. Slater views presence as a constructed illusion made of two parts, and the Place Illusion dictates that when we are given time to allow our perceptual systems to be accustomed to a space, we allow the reality of that space to supersede any otherwise perceived flaws (Slater, 2015). This might be why, despite not having an embodied presence, we sometimes respond to situations in VR environments as we would outside the simulation. However, as he notes, we are always aware of our physical self. In *Hamlet 360* the Place Illusion is broken if the user looks down: because there is no filmed body of an actor that the audience can see and still maintain the proper field of view, so looking down shows a void, breaking the illusion that they are inhabiting a body. This may cause the jarring realization that one is inside a simulation, despite how otherwise perfect the sense of presence may be. The stark awakening to what presence is and how it can be obfuscated impacts how we understand digital identity.

Online and social media culture is pervasive and increasingly ubiquitous. How we understand our sense of presence, the way in which we belong to a community, becomes complicated when looking at issues of identity. While media ecologies do a good job of purporting neutrality, they are often deliberately not neutral, and predicated on the economy and market value they represent. The masses that inhabit them are rarely made aware of just how much power the economy has to shift how the media functions. Since media spaces have a shaping effect on identity, and the economy of a media platform

dictates its use, that economy has a deceptively large impact on the identity of its user base, whether they are aware or not.

Conversely, despite a trend in DMT to problematize the notion of presence and how it is impacted by digital interaction, person's "digital identity" is not necessarily as destabilized as many performances imply. In a study of new media and self-representation, Knut Lundby comes to several conclusions about contemporary formation of identity. Lundby asked participants to construct a representation of their identity as they understood it. Ultimately, the study revealed that identity, to these participants, was not something developed or even desired in isolation, that "the most common theme found across all of the identity models […] is a tension between the desire to be a distinctive individual and the need to be a part of a broader social community." (Lundby, 263). This is echoed by Frank Biocca, who conducted an experiment to determine how one perceives oneself in virtual space, Biocca determined that the presence (or rather telepresence) inherent in occupying virtual spaces is generated in a similar way to an "everyday" sense of presence,

> When we experience our everyday sense of presence in the physical world, we automatically generate a mental model of an external space from patterns of energy on the sensory organs. In virtual environments, patterns of energy that simulate the structure to those experienced in the physical environment are used to stimulate the same automatic perceptual processes that generate our stable perception of the physical world. (20)

Digital presence and identity, then, are the result of performance and exchange in the digital sphere – by acting in response to stimulus, the identity is created, and vice versa, in a similar way to how non-digital presence and identity are formed. The distinction between

Lundby and Biocca's studies, however, is important: while the latter was specifically geared towards the impact and influence of media on the body and mind, the former was not. Lundby was looking for evidence of media impact on identity formation, and participants were not forewarned about the desired conclusions. Unless prompted, participants did not appear to count digital media influence as a factor in their process of generating (and then constructing) identity. Biocca, on the other hand, specifically primed participants to talk about digital media and identity, and had more participants come to understand the connection between the real and virtual.

Given that identity retains a kind of unity and stability in the face of digital media integration, why does it remain a popular theme for exploration in DMT? It may be that in challenging notions of identity, stable or otherwise, digital media's influence (overt or covert) on our identity is revealed. *The Body in Question(s)²,* co-produced by Van Grimde Corps Secrets and Brian Webb Dance Company in 2016, creates a space where the idea of identity in a digital age can be challenged. Before entering the performance space, a large poster asks us to consider "what is the role, indeed the fate, of the physical body in an age where technology allows us to alter it, and virtual reality transforms the way we relate to the world?" The performance uses several immersive environments to create a narrative of both resistance to and acceptance/integration of technology on the body. While a performer's body is slowly altered by light and projection media, audience members are invited to observe and navigate the room. In a separate room, video is broadcast showing the performer and any audience members currently in the room. On another wall, a projection of what appears to be yet another room is displayed, however it is a recording. This setup (which is only part of the performance experience) created interesting tensions

in the audience. Groups would come out of the first room, only to be made aware of their

unknown celebrity – exclamations of embarrassment and laughter were common sights.

Conversely, audience members that entered the projection room first would often be more

reserved or less adventurous as they entered one of the recorded rooms.

Figure 13: The Body in Question(s)², *Van Grimde Corps Secrets and Brian Webb Dance Co.*[20] *Images from one room are projected into another. In other rooms, the projection could be you.*

What this performance exemplifies is the troubling nature of identity in a digital

sphere. While an audience member might not be aware of the impact of digital media on

their identity, it has implications for how we see ourselves and others. In one specific scene

two performers stand behind a transparent sheet, while between them coloured fractal

shapes are projected. Moving slowly, the lights seem to change based on their proximity to

each other and to the sheet. Neither appear to be able to see the lights from their vantage

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[20] Source: The Body(s) in Question², Van Grimde Corps Secrets, 2018.
<https://vangrimdecorpssecrets.com/en/oeuvres/le-corps-en-questions-the-body-in-questions/>. More imagery and video can be found at their website.

point (walking into the room affords a look at the performers from the side), and yet their actions have a distinct impact. In another area a large pile of what look like feathers are strewn about the room. Audience members can stand and look at the object like an art piece while also having the opportunity to go into the middle of the room to play; at one point a performer enters and takes a central position. What nobody can see from this perspective is that in the following room there is a large screen recording and displaying in real time. If one simply walks from one room to another, until the performer arrives it might look like a static picture. But by waiting around you are privy to the actions of the group behind you, and immediately become aware that you may have been observed yourself but would never be able to know. This creates a tension when one considers the earlier position of Biocca – by inhabiting the role of both viewer and potential representation, where does the sense of presence sit in a scene like this? This tension is replicated in *House/Lights* as well, or indeed many of the examples found in this chapter – when a performer interacts with a being that may be there or may simply be a representation, the sense of presence is simultaneously truncated by the interface of the digital media and extended through its potentiality. By placing the audience into a position where they are unknowingly observed–trading duplicity rather than complicity with the audience – their capacity for action is put into question. And calling back to Žižek, this shows again that the dual nature of contemporary identity is one of illusion. Online interfaces can propose a world that is infinite in terms of possibility, but large forces of power and economy control it, and as a result the identity we form through it is not as infinitely shapeable as it may appear. Žižek points out that there is a tension between the freedom of online spaces and the nature of the economic exchange and interface that frame them. He posits that "in cyberspace everything

is possible, but for the price of assuming a fundamental impossibility: you cannot circumvent the mediation of the interface, its 'bypass', which separates you (as the subject of enunciation) forever from your symbolic stand-in" (2017, 130), which effectively traps the user within the bounds of the interface, even if it appears to offer limitless opportunity. From the perspective of the play, one can ignore the tensions in the situations in which *The Body in Question(s)²* bases itself but must always abide by the hidden interface rules of the digital and cybernetic technology in which these daily interactions are situated.

Conversations around digital self-identity in part showcase that body and existence are not summative, and indeed the integration of digital media begs us to consider how, given a potential for a plethora of virtual personas with identities to match (Winder, xi), the notion of a singular body persists. The singular body is a denial of the influence (desired or otherwise) of media on our conception and enactment of self, and this serves as an extension of the warning that the digital means to which we have become accustomed, and that in fact figure into our sense of presence and identity, can be used to manipulate and control our behaviours, oftentimes without our knowledge. DMT, by leveraging digital media architecture in performance, creates a space wherein questions and problematizations of identity come to the forefront. When sociologist Steve Jones speaks about the location (or lack thereof) of a digital cybersociety, he suggests we focus on narrative, not locality, to construct identity, saying that contemporary digital culture "is an imagined and imaginary space, and thus is a narrative both because it is an area of discursive interaction and because it contends, often very successfully, for our imagination" (15). Jones is speaking of an earlier iteration of the consumer Internet, which he likens to a silent world. While it has now evolved and grown into anything but silent,

the Internet remains a narrative space, and a performative space, and DMT performance to critiques and problematizes how we handle our identities within it.

The Body in Question(s)² and *Hamlet 360* both illustrate this notion of the digital world as contending for the imagination quite well. The point Jones appears to be making is that when presented with the option to view or experience some piece of media we are bound to be drawn to it. Our imagination creates a narrative that situates our sense of self and describes how that self is seen in the world around us. *Hamlet 360* uses the draw of digital spectacle to create illusion, and *Bodies* uses that same drawing power to remind us of the ever presence of media around us. As the presence of media and digital culture has grown, so too has the need to contend with it because of how it can shape us. Despite its ubiquity it still manages to draw the eye. When we consider how the imagination, digital culture, and identity intersect, media's shaping power on our personal sense of identity and the community structures we build and inhabit is undeniable.

3.4 The Impact of Mass Communication and Surveillance

Digital cybersociety is a form of community, and the method by which that sense of community is communicated has implications in DMT. Community relies on "inhabitance," the sense of both being in the same place as others, and also "being part of the place" (Jones, 16). The internet and other social media networks invert this notion, as "we are struck […] by the sense that there are others out there *like us*." (17, original emphasis) in places outside of our locality. Instead of belonging to a community that is grounded in a pre-existing place, we find community in people and the place is built around us, belonging to us.

Digital communities form differently than physical ones in part because of the way we communicate within them. Digital culture constitutes a computer mediated culture (CMC), specifically what Marta Dynel calls a multi-party interaction, which involves "many producers of turns, one (or more in the case of choral production) taking the floor one at a time, and many individuals at the reception end, who can be classified as various hearers/listeners to an interactional turn" (38). This method of communication, which Dynel classifies as interaction, "transcends the prototypical speaker-hearer dyad," (38) allowing for more complex communication and participation to occur among participatory bodies on both the creator and spectator sides of production. The interactive nature of DMT plays on this as well – when tangible interaction between spectator and creator is not possible (as it is in the case of, for instance, *The Body in Question(s)²*), many of the productions show a direct connection between performer and media system, which amplifies and complicates the communication occurring from the stage to the audience.

That said, communication on online platforms is driven by the creators of the tool, and those creators are at the mercy of market forces. Mass communication can be an exciting method for proliferating new ideas and creating a sharing economy – indeed we have created a digital culture where Google may well feel to the masses like the sum total of knowledge. When we forget that this is a corporate enterprise with shareholders, capital interests, and ultimately profit-driven individuals at the helm, its ability to manipulate us and how we see ourselves is increased. Lev Manovich posits new media's tendency to claim an externalization of the mind as a central part of this problem – one purported function of new media is taking one's private, internal thoughts and communicating them externally in new ways. This externalization plays directly into the desires of these corporate gatekeepers to be in control yet invisible to the mass user-base:

> What to make of this modern desire to externalize the mind? It can be related to the demand of modern mass society for standardization. The subjects have to be standardized, and the means by which they are standardized need to be standardized as well. Hence the objectification of internal, private mental processes, and their equation with external visual forms which can be easily manipulated, mass produced, and standardized on its own. The private and individual is translated into the public and becomes regulated. (Manovich, 74)

Such a process of standardization relates directly back to earlier conversations of the "why" of DMT's obsession with digital and non-digital identity. A goal shared by many DMT productions is criticism or revelation of media impact on the self. Part of that process is bound up in showing the original impetus of that impact on identity, whether it is commercial, social, or political.

In order to dig into this notion of externalizing internal thought and behaviour, I look to *ANXIETY*, a 2016 co-production by Theatre Yes in Edmonton and several small-scale Canadian theatre companies. It explores how standardization in digital culture and its communication systems create and sustain community relationships while at the same time generating a deep, personal anxiety in the user. The performance features several digital media infestations – a room coated in security camera recordings as a security guard recalls her abuse at the hands of intruders; a doctor of the future utilizes a shaky online database of supposedly real doctors to create a desperate vision of healthcare where empathy and pathology are mutually exclusive; and a wake wherein the audience is recorded, photographed, and encouraged to share with each other deeply personal secrets. The performance is fragmented, forcing the audience into moments of troubled reflection on the tyranny of choice offered by contemporary digital media. This performance is not replicating the architectures of surveillance or medicine or telecommunication to celebrate their existence – the audience's presence relies on the recognizance of these elements. Instead it uses familiarity with these systems to disrupt the sense of presence by making the audience aware of the digital media interfaces' intrusion in the scene and beyond the theatre as a result.

One vignette showcases this sense of intrusion significantly. It takes place in a small, dark room where a security guard enters and begins watching a video feed. On a screen a face-chat style recording is played. It is the same security guard making the final rounds of the evening. As she speaks to you as if you are a friend or possibly family member, the video monitor shows her walking about the grounds (in real time, ostensibly). The themes explored in the vignette include a sense of paranoia, fear of being attacked by

men, and a growing sense that something is not right. As the tension rises, the guard seems unable to put down the phone for fear of being alone (see figure 14). This vignette denies the notion of standardization by making the audience aware of the consequence of surveillance, recording, and the duplicitous permanence of digital interaction. Having the intimate-but-distant video of the face-chat contrasted with the decidedly sterile-but-proximal and real-time surveillance video emphasizes questions of anonymity and privacy. It challenges the earlier notion of how truly discrete our various digital identities are, and instead pushes for a more pluralized, holistic understanding of them. Even within the safety of a performance space, the production provokes its eponymous emotion by forcing the audience to come to terms with what is at stake when every action is recorded, standardized, and made ubiquitous.

Figure 14: ANXIETY, *Theatre Yes.[21] Surveillance video frames the performer as she discloses a close and personal story to* you*.*

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[21] Source: "The Anxiety Process," *Intelligent Theatre for Adventurous Audiences,* Theatre Yes. <http://theatre-yes.ca/the-anxiety-process/>. Theatre Yes details the creation process here. It includes links

ANXIETY questions our ability to belong as the discomfort of sharing a secret in the physical public is juxtaposed with the supposedly anonymous media sharing structure of, for instance, posting on a forum or chatting in a chat room. The latter may offer a feeling of anonymity, but the act of sharing still impacts identity, and still has implications for the sharer. *ANXIETY* forces the audience to come to terms with their own behaviour by encouraging and even requiring a more active partaking in other vignettes than the one already described. In one scene several small medical puzzles are presented while actors perform a brief, repeated dialogue about surgery practices in the future. You are then presented with a robot that broadly speaks to the puzzles and challenges the notion of an increasingly capitalist healthcare system. The audience is encouraged to remain silent while being directly asked many personal questions and challenged to think about how they may be impacted by increasing care costs and a lack of empathetic doctors. At one point a "real" doctor calls in to give you a brief diagnosis, cancer of course, before running off to dinner. Herbert Blau implies that interactivity with digital or virtual media is a smokescreen, that "the space is interactive, and the virtual is a lure, but the real agency is the artificial intelligence, the prior programming, that creates the virtual scene." (250). DMT like *ANXIETY* reflects this sentiment back to its audience, forcing them to consider how they interact with these technology and media elements outside the theatrical space and what that says about how that interaction has structured their sense of identity.

So far DMT appears to paint a pretty bleak picture of interaction and identification in the digital sphere, given its inherent adherence to a sort of corporatized reality. However,

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to the theatre companies that came together to produce this show, many of whom include video and imagery of their creations.

it is not strictly adversarial, and does not need to be this way. The examples presented thus far do not necessarily demonize digital identity, but rather problematize the contemporary blank acceptance of its presence and deny the notion of true, impact-less anonymity. It illustrates a principle of the double-edged sword offered by a digital community at the expense of truer privacy found via disconnect – some element of *you* is always online, and that remnant can be acted upon, interpreted, criticized, and controlled even without your input. Baudrillard's prediction that "self-seduction will become the norm of every electrified particle in networks or systems" (qtd in Kellner, 148), illustrates the need for awareness of these concepts – in an age of full simulation; intelligent users need to negotiate the relationship between a largely consumerist culture and an onslaught of opportunity for expression of identity through digital and virtual means on one hand, versus the reality that quantity of exposure and access does not necessarily guarantee the curation of positive social growth and identity on the other.

While presence and identity are troubled concepts in contemporary culture, DMT makes headway at accessing and revealing the mechanisms and how they are influenced by the corporatized nature of digital environments. Identity in digital culture also brings to light questions of how the body is understood in a digital environment where the physical is integrated or perhaps contaminated by digital media devices. How does our understanding of the body change as our collaborative identity is increasingly tied up in the devices in our pockets? And can embodiment, a trait traditionally belonging to the living actor, be expressed by a body that is not necessarily or entirely human? The body-as-effigy, as Didier Plassard argued when speaking of acting, brings to question the distinction between physical and virtual experience through performance. If we consider mediating or

digitally altering of live performers as a type of adornment, Plassard argues that there is a potential for denaturalisation (284) that separates the living presence of the performer and subsumes it in the adorned object. This is almost in opposition to earlier claims discussed by McLuhan where we see media as an extension of embodiment. In order to situate this tension, I consider the cyborg in performance as a discursive method for understanding how issues of adornment and embodiment are treated by DMT. The cyborg will also demonstrate another perspective on the temptation to integrate posed by media platforms as well as how those temptations affect our sense of identity.

3.5 Cyborg Intersections

The cyborg occurs when the human form is altered or extended through technological means. This can be as simple as the technology of reading glasses, up to major surgery, major sensorial operation, and beyond. The key to a cyborg is that it is as much a social structure as a technological one – reading glasses in contemporary culture are not really cyborg-making material because they have become normalized, but integration with artificial systems, advanced prostheses, and non-critical or function-first alterations to the body are still on the fringes of acceptability. Cyborgs are pointedly not normal. In performance, the cyborg acts as a type of adornment through which issues of metamorphosis, presence, and originality collide within a body to impact a sense of self-identity. An actor on a screen is not necessarily cyborg, because there is no sense of adornment, but an actor being infested, integrated, or otherwise enmeshed with digital media elements on stage becomes a sort of mediated cyborg being. From an intermediaturgical perspective, cyborg theories can be used to discover how non-live or even more-than-live bodies might still be the site for authentic experiences, and indeed break down the distinction between what is and is not authentic from the perspective of intermedial engagement and perception. Following Simon Shepard, my position is that a mechanism of cyborg performance is a neuro/physiological engagement with spectators. Despite the cyborg being in a sense dis-embodied, it remains "the marker of the new and its rhetoric is cathected" (Shepard, 144). The continuous evolution of digital culture becomes a platform upon which DMT can encourage an audience to acknowledge its divergent digital identity.

The cyborg in performance represents a stepping-stone between earlier discussed notions of DMT as a site resistance and a site of self-identity. It inhabits this role through its unique realization of adornment. Richard Schechner classifies most actors as generally hybrids of multiple styles of acting and performing. The question for him becomes whether this hybridity is a "melding or a quilt" (205). While some performance types meld together, he makes a point of saying that most performers are quilts – moving from one distinct performance style to another as needed, assisted by mediating bodies. He suggests that a mediating body attached to an actor is a "second being," (203) and in his examples this mediating body is the mask, costume, or puppet. The same relationship can hold true for more modern media elements as a second being adorned in a very particular way by the living actor. By adorning these elements on the body, we draw a parallel between the familiarity and fascination of the flesh and the alien or otherworldly media. In effect, we create the cyborg.

As a being that is at the same time living and machine, virtual and physical, using materials that are both inorganic and organic simultaneously (Parker-Starbuck, xiv) the cyborg can facilitate performative reproduction while remaining present. Stemming from theories explored by Donna Haraway, the cyborg has expanded into theatre as a tool used in performance to enmesh the virtual/mechanical and the live, simultaneously blurring and highlighting the distinction between the two. The cyborg allows for a theatre experience that alters the perception of what the body truly is, its limits, and what it can be used for. On the other hand, it also reflects the perception of technology, and the way technology encourages dependency through its use.

Jennifer Parker-Starbuck goes into great detail about what precisely constitutes a cyborg. She suggests that when "a subject technology emerges when what has previously been considered solely tool, prosthetic extension of the body, or system begins to claim concepts of agency" (41) that it is a sign that a cyborg has manifested. The migration of technology from being a novel costume or set piece to a part of the narrative function of performance, is what allows the live actor to interact with the technology in an impactful way, creating a dialogue between human and media elements, and reducing the flatness of the latter. Cyborg theatre creates yet another step on this evolution spectrum of interaction, because the division of where the actor ends and technology begins is difficult to see, if not invisible. There are two major categories for depicting this sort of media integration, the cybernetic actor and the virtual actor. The cybernetic actor is a human body on stage being augmented by technology, or having technology used upon the body itself. This allows for a performance that is both real and unreal, tapping into the critical mind and allowing for an audience to be given a physical representation of the high-tech culture that exists today. The central character of *Peepshow*[22] serves as a clear example of this. Despite not being directly clothed in the projections and soundscapes surrounding her, the performer is encased in a media system that responds to her actions and movements. She is integrated into the system for all appearances, even though it is essentially stage tricks that accomplish this. Conversely, the virtual actor is a fully technologically realized body, projected or otherwise created in physical form on stage through inorganic technology, controlled by a computer system, but voiced by a living actor and operated by a live user. The media and live elements are linked temporally, creating closeness and allowing for the

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[22] For a reminder, see the video posted here <https://espacego.com/archives/2015-2016/peepshow/>

spontaneity and embodied choice significant to the theatrical process. The security guard from *ANXIETY* is a virtual actor– for most of the vignette she is wholly projected into the room but is also live in another location. When she enters the room physically and the projection is shut down, her virtual cyborg quality vanishes. Interestingly this last example mimics the increasingly cyborg nature of everyday life. Interaction over digital media, surrendering tasks to machines, interfacing with digital technology are all signs of the cyborg, and DMT, like in many other examples, serves to point out the significance of these daily interactions.

The cyborg represents the limits of the human body by going beyond them. Donna Haraway places the separation in that "[p]eople are nowhere near so fluid, being both material and opaque. Cyborgs are ether, quintessence" (152). This ethereal nature of the cyborg is showcased clearly in the virtual actor, who is not actually present, and also in the cybernetic one. While this might seem counterintuitive, that a person laden with technology is in fact more grounded, material, and opaque, the nature of technology is what grants this quality of ether. Technology is always changing; planned obsolescence places a death certificate on each piece of technology at its conception. With the cyborg actor, we are reminded of this obsolescence as the technology used in performance is outpaced or circumvented outside the theatre environment. This creates a feedback effect that reveals our own connection to the consumerist culture that spawned the cyborg. The transient nature of technology is a key in the cybernetic actor, and what separates it from the human operator. Technology can always be removed, or replaced, but its presence reminds the audience of its role. The living body, however, creates the sense of space and agency that

shapes our relationship to the cyborg elements, including pointing out the cyborg aspects of the world outside the theatre.

Returning to the problem of resistance in theatre outside of the body, virtual theatre scholar Gabriella Giannachi points out the implications of the cyborg as a type of adornment:

> the cyborg thereby constitutes the borderline of what is socially, politically and ethically acceptable [...]The strength of the idea of the cyborg lies therefore not only in its hybridity of human (organic) and non-organic but also in the subsequent impossibility of reading the cyborg as a finite and easily classifiable creature (47)

The cyborg creates awareness of the limits of social rules. Because not everyone requires or can access cyborg technology, its presence reveals inequality. As the cyborg seeks to share, problematize, and transform bodies, it upsets states of hierarchal resistance. For instance, one of the foundations of cyborg feminism is in revealing how we conflate the perception of the male and female body with the perceived relationship that exists between body strength and mind strength, even though that relationship is at best anecdotal (Haraway 157). The cyborg creates resistance through the obfuscation or destruction of traditionally held boundaries.

Cyborg feminism, a foundation upon which cyborg theatre is based, seeks to problematize the separation of the mind and body. This dualism exists internally, socially, and culturally, shaping how we perceive and interact with other bodies. While mass media floods the market with products designed to hit upon stereotypes of gender, age, and capability, the cyborg dissolves these boundaries by showcasing the fragility and

adaptability of the body. Technology has led to the achievement of many feats previously thought impossible. The proliferation of the computer interface and consumer internet has allowed for an increased ability to access and disseminate information, regardless of intellectual prowess. The invention and popularization of the smartphone, for example, has created a generation of cyborgs, human beings with instant access to the technological world hidden in the airwaves.

In perhaps an extreme example of how far the cyborg can infest and extend, I look to French performance artist ORLAN. In a series of surgery-performances started in 1993 called *Reincarnation of St Orlan*, the actor uses morphology software to script and structure body modifications on herself, to transform her face and body to more closely resemble bodies from classical paintings. The performance is literally the surgery time where ORLAN answers faxed questions and responds to the surgeons at work. The transcripts of the performances are explicit, detailed, and combine the visceral action of the surgery with commentary on the appearance of ORLAN as it shifts. Her perspective on the surgeries was that they would intermix her own physiology with those famous visages that inspire her work (O'Bryan, 52). The goal was the bring her internal picture of herself to match the external. The performances followed a similar course of questioning challenging, and ultimately "unleashing" (O'Bryan, 53) binaries – mind/body, internal/external, medical/artistic etc. Alongside the surgeries, images and imaging software are used to interrogate issues of fragility, falsity, and inequality. Her work often targets the ways women, herself included, are forced to adhere to mediated, fake, impossible standards. Questions of "what is the internal image? Where is it?" (O'Bryan, 54) arise as ORLAN points to the presupposition that natural materiality of the body is flawed – indicating

instead that it is flawed because power, imbalance, and colonization of bodies say it must

be. The digital media aspect of this performance series is limited – hardly beyond imagery

and some legacy equipment like faxes; ORLAN is predominantly working physically.

However, the impact of the medical technology on her sense of identity and the sense of

presence being produced through the performance cannot be underestimated.

Figure 15: Reincarnation of St Orlan, *ORLAN.*[23] *ORLAN prepares for a surgery. Teleprompter and props are mixed with medical equipment.*

While ORLAN is questionably doing theatre with her reincarnation, the questioning

of the mind/body unity is used in more conventional cyborg theatre as well. Cyborg theatre

allows for a depiction of human bodies that are separated from their specific flaws or

shortcomings, allowing the performer to perform anything they wish. A prime example of

this is Cathy Weis, a US-based choreographer with multiple sclerosis. While this sort of

[23] Source: "Saint-Orlan Reincarnated: The Artist's Body as a 'Medium of Transformation,'" *Beauty and Race: AMST 225*, Beauty and Race, 2013. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/2019/01/24/all-virtual-world-stage-hamlet/xpMd7Kjqh4wCCLPXbASxdJ/story.html>

disease would normally spell the end of her dance career, Weis is able to use technology to create a "co-bodied cyborg" (Parker-Starbuck, 68) by combining her physical body with projections of other dancers, choreographed together to make one image. In her Dance Theatre Workshop performance series *Electric Haiku* (New York, 2002),[24] Weis performs with projection and soundscapes created by Foley artist Steve Hamilton that allow her to splice her body and the body of other performers together, not only overcoming her own perceived disability, but transcending the limits of human ability itself. The cyborg nature of the performance for Weis "reflects how I see myself both as a performer and as a person living with MS in the everyday world; an artistic reflection of my ever-changing physical state." (Weis, par 4) This allows for a perspective of the human body acting beyond its physical means by commenting on the Western "obsession with impossible 'norms,' bodies too perfect, too healthy" (Parker-Starbuck, 69). A two-way discussion is thus set up, with the technological nature of cyborg theatre altering our understanding of perception with regards to what is viewed as the norm not actually being normal. Interestingly both Weis and ORLAN seem to locate the flesh as a site of resistance or response to questions of media influence on identity – this seems in line with, for instance, Merleau-Ponty and the notion that perception is as much corporeal as it is conscious, as it exists in both (or possibly between) the body and mind, if there is to be a distinction at all.

The cyborg in DMT becomes a mechanism by which the crucial element of emotional and visceral interaction with technology and media can be seen. When viewed through an intermediaturgical lens, the body signified by the cyborg, and indeed the

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[24] Excerpts of this performance and others by Weis can be found here:
http://www.cathyweis.org/works/works/electric-haiku/

mediated virtual body itself becomes a site upon which presence and identity are

constructed, constrained, and interrupted. To move onward, focusing on the other side of

the equation, the interoperation of media and fleshy materiality becomes necessary.

3.6 Playing with Distance and Engagement

Whether it is direct through interaction, as is the case in *Hamlet 360,* or witnessing interaction of actor and media, DMT frequently attempts to destabilize familiar texts of culture, society, and media. By leveraging digital frameworks into the aesthetic of performance, the audience becomes a new type of user, accessing an interface that is simultaneously live and digital, familiar and uncanny. This destabilization is brought about by a combination of stage elements working in concert. Aleksandar Dunjerović, writing about scenographer Robert Lepage, calls this the *techno-en-scene*, a "form that is content" that can be used to understand how interoperation of media impacts both the composition of a performance and its expression of meaning. Techno-en-scene is a design and production aesthetic that attempts to mindfully integrate media elements into the emotional and psychological narrative of performance to find an "echo in the audience" (70) and connect to them not just through dialogue or actors' emotional cues, but to the whole of the performance. Through integration of media elements throughout all aspects of a performance, DMT often exhibits the notion of techno-en-scene, using it to reveal otherwise under-the-surface relationships we have to digital technology. This revelation can be used to criticize the control media platforms have on our society, or to explore the emotional or psychological impact of media as an increasingly important element of culture.

In Rimini Protokoll's *Call cutta in a box* (Zurich, 2008) the audience and performer both negotiate a particular kind of presence and interpersonal identity via a digital communication framework. The performance is simultaneously in a private office-style space in Zurich, and a busy call centre in Kolkata. The performance has a single participant

who directly communicates with the performer first via telephone, and then through a video call. The performer has several mechanisms at their disposal to change elements of the room (for instance making some flowers appear or playing music). Loosely scripted, the performance wanders as the two participants negotiate the space through conversations of distance, lifestyle, and the power of personal story.[25]

By interacting over video and presenting a performance in real time, the performer becomes a mediated virtual body, signifying their own performative acts while leveraging the signification of the video call itself to communicate to the participant. In a sense, the actor and the technology blend together as a single interface in which the participant/user both receives and produces meaning. Again, we can see the Place Illusion at work here: as the performer makes the participant more comfortable with their presence and the space, they increase control of both how and when the participant is jarred out of the illusion and reminded of the many interfaces at work to produce the performance. The personal nature of the video call leverages both the human empathy of sharing stories with the technological framework of the performance environment to create an emotional, cerebral response in the participating audience, forcing them to come to grips with what they *know* versus the ontological difference of a larger reality in which they exist.

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[25] The following trailer shows off many of the ways the call centre agent/actor and audience member can interact <https://vimeo.com/49314900>

Figure 16: Call cutta in a box, *Rimini Protokoll.*[26] *A performer shares a story with an audience participant, combining several technologies mindfully to bridge distance.*

Using a similar technique in a different direction, Dutch theatre group Hotel Modern's *Kamp* (2005) removes the performative turn from the live performer and places the impact of the moment in the hands of a digitally-projected, animated body. *Kamp* tells the story of World War II and the Holocaust through the close-up destruction of impressionist puppets. The space is created in front of the audience by camera operator-performers, but a huge screen dominates the space, showing a macro shot of the narrative as it is constructed. The mechanism of performance in this case removes a sense of identity from what we normally call the actor, as the actors are merely inanimate puppets, controlled by the live camera operator/builder/performer who is ultimately removed from the narrative action of the piece.

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[26] Source: Rimini Protokoll. *Call Cutta in a Box*, Rimini Protokoll. <https://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/project/call-cutta-in-a-box>. More imagery and a video documentary can be found at their website.

Figure 17: Kamp, *Hotel Modern.*[27] *Performer/operators manipulate a tiny town, superimposed on the background.*

This process of displacement exemplifies how media elements can accomplish an authentic experience with an audience, and conversely how a disruption or even complete lack of original (in this case meaning flesh-and-blood) body can create moments of meaningful, impactful connection. The performance is described as gruesome, grim, and a powerful presentation of the "faceless, dehumanizing drudgery of a single day in the camps, in which human beings are unloaded from trains and sent to their deaths with mechanistic efficiency" (Hilsman, 2018). It opens up the theatrical space to consider how one accesses an authentic experience by creating empathetic or sympathetic reactions with non-live or disrupted digital presences. This performance plays with space, liveness, and reality to create a pluralistic sense of presence using inanimate bodies and a media system which simultaneously removes distance through the interface of the screen and brings the bodies eerily, uncomfortably close.

[27]Source: Hilsman, 2018. Hotel Modern hosts many clips of it's productions on YouTube, their channel is found here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCf7v_8CteDG1tldogXpWdkA

In one scene,[28] we witness a guard dumping poison powder on huddled prisoners inside a chamber. The scene is live-cast close enough to the puppet that we can see the powder falling out of the bucket into a hole in the top of the room. After some time, the camera pans down to seeing a pile of pair shoes, neatly arranged inside an empty cell. A guard watches through another hole in the wall, and as the trapped prisoners die another one is left to gather their discarded clothing. The effect is horrific, and the intermedial involvement in the action only heightens this. The camera is not a fixed object in this play, each evening the video is erased, and the operator chooses what to focus on anew. Given the huge size of the stage, and its continual state of flux as scenes are built and then broken down, this means that what is seen from performance to performance can vary wildly.

In effect, this play uses displacement to skillfully mitigate a difficult element of embodying violence on stage. Generally, a puppet show has an element of distance: the smallness of the object requires either large, evocative movement, or highly detailed design to translate emotional meaning. By creating a close-up eye via the camera and using it to guide the audience as the creators create the horrors around themselves, the audience is made to be a witness to the brutality. It also upsets what mediatized violence represents, as even when *Kamp* was first being developed, the notion of de-sensitisation to violence through television and film was a well-established idea. Like a lot of provocative theatre at the turn of the millennium, *Kamp* attempts to "[break] the codes of how we see and experience that brutality" (Mounsef, 2017a, 258) by overwhelming the audience with a dominating frame only allows us to look away if we totally disengagement with the piece.

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[28] Found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C785noC2h44>

Identity and presence are important themes and compositional structures in DMT. By inverting the traditional notions of community, digital media could be imagined as a subversive or coercive force in an age of full simulation. While it does not necessarily have to be this way, the subtle manner in which digital media informs digital presence and a sense of pluralistic digital identity is at best a troubled mechanism, and at its worst is indicative of a consumerist, neo-liberal force trying to influence how society communicates and functions. It should be no wonder, then, that DMT often rebels against this, challenging these themes by performing them within an intermedial environment that shows the puppet strings and reveals the corporatization of identity through standardization of privacy. As a result, it challenges the illusions we tell ourselves about digital media interaction, making their reality uncomfortable.

Both plays serve as useful examples for investigating how DMT grapples with identity by uniquely utilizing the space evoked by the stage to produce meaning. In the next chapter the analysis of these two pieces, as well as others, will be expanded to showcase how the interaction with media on stage alters a perception of space as much as identity and the body. When space is sometimes actually non-space in the digital world (and DMT by extension), plays like *Kamp* and *Call cutta in a box* challenge us to consider how we both understand and navigate space and how that space interacts with identity and presence. DMT requires that theatre be an active environment; active in the sense that it requires social partaking, as opposed to passive reception. Otherwise, digital media's covert influence threatens to invade the theatrical environment as well. The next chapter will establish what the space of DMT is, and how it blurs the perception of conscious and unconscious experience, and toys with the notion of distance, proximity, and the ecological

implications of the place in which the virtual resides, which is not so much a place as a

non-place space.

Chapter 4: The Non-space of Digital Environments in Digitally-Mediated Theatre

4.1 Locating Body and Identity in Space

How a person navigates space is a key component of intermediaturgy. So far, this essay has tracked the body in virtual and digitally mediated environments, and how notions of presence and identity can be formed and challenged by those environments. What remains is the treatment of space itself. To look at how DMT engages with space, we need to consider the space of the stage, and perception of space in digital environments outside the theatre as well. Body, identity, and presence are contextualized through their relationship to the space of the theatre and the space that digital environments create. In DMT there is a mixture (or admixture) of physical spaces we might call real spaces, conceptually perceived spaces, and digitally-mediated spaces. On top of the dramatic or narrative sense of space created by a production, these three sorts of space combine and blur to leverage several notions that are important to understanding how the contemporary body navigates contemporary space and society.

In this chapter I will delimit contemporary inhabitance as existing increasingly between states of *here* and *there.* These two spatially-oriented ideas feature in many DMT productions, problematizing where the spaces we inhabit are located, whether real or imagined, present or diegetic, and how we identify with fractured presence in many places at once. This is further complicated by the inclusion of the supermodern non-place space, a transient, use-driven conception of public spaces that in contemporary culture has spiraled into an entirely new way of interacting with space (and vice versa how space reacts to us).

Configuring the stage space as an environment capable of immersion, DMT uses the conceptualized frame to indicate how the relationship between performer, audience, and space comments on important contemporary social issues.

Further, this chapter will look at how DMT uses the relationship between inhabitance of space and navigation of space to dissolve boundaries between the spatially close physical theatre stage and the spatially distant digital architecture of DMT. If we can consider the contemporary mindset to be an example of Turner's "*Homo perfomans*" where performance is reflexive and self-revealing (81), we can consider how the performance of interaction with digital environments has a reciprocal effect on ourselves. Digital environments, because of the way they utilize space, alter our perception of the performance of the everyday, and more importantly what kinds of activity constitutes the everyday. So far discussion of digital culture and digital impact has been focused on its obscuring and disrupting nature, or the way it alters perception; however, in this chapter we shall see many performance examples where the use of digital technology in performance is revelatory or encourages some form of self-reflection.

As space is a crucial element of DMT, several previously studied performances will be brought alongside others that significantly use space or comment on our engagement with virtual and physical spaces. Beginning with *Bury the Wren* (Calgary, 2019), by Canadians Beth Kates and Neil Christensen, the intermediaturgical value of considering human navigation of space is made clear in this augmented and virtual reality-filled historical piece. This leads into a discussion of how virtual bodies can inhabit and interact with live actors in an intermedial environment, demonstrated through the international

performance *LEO* (2011), developed by Montréal-based artists Gregg Parks and Daniel Brière.

The Builders Association returns in this chapter with a re-visitation of *Alladeen* as well as their production of *Jet Lag* (Brussels, 1998), which uses telepresence to narratively layer space in DMT. This layering reveals how communication spaces are themselves occupied with increasing levels of engagement as media and digital technology evolves to provide them. The intermedial hybrid space troubles the distinction between representational and material spaces on stage. Much like in the exploration of identity, themes of loss and isolation in the midst of seeming-connectivity come up as challenges to think about how we inhabit and use digital spaces.

Media saturation can be overwhelming, and some DMT productions use space, immersive space or highly mediated space, to show how space impacts body and identity – German director Kay Voges' 2014 Theatre Dortmund production of *4.48 Psychosis* creates a situation where a virtual space, designed to be inhabited, is both difficult to navigate and openly hostile to its user. It challenges the opacity of interface, discussion of which will also prompt another exploration of *Kamp*. As an audience is drawn in, the interface fades and the digital environment forces that which was normally distant to become unavoidable.

As the chapter turns to non-place spaces and how digital environments are framed in intermedial performance, we see that the intermedial theatre is one of non-singular vision and pluralistic space. *Ipperwash* (Blyth, 2017), by the Indigenous-Canadian Native Earth Performing Arts Company, and *Blue Heat* (New York, 1991) by John Jesurun demonstrate how space in a media-rich environment requires that each element be considered to gain the full effect. Using live-casting and intercutting pre-recorded and live

recorded video with live actors on stage allows these productions to normalize the notion that inhabiting a space is not simply the action of being in a physical location, nor is it necessarily concrete. These productions instead position a media-saturated space as one that is organic, interactive, and connected to more than just a sense of geography.

Finally, media and digital technology have allowed for a dynamic and active engagement with past, future, and distance through digital and virtual environments. This unique utilization of space is a common theme in DMT, particularly Rimini Protokoll's productions of *Call cutta in a box* and *Granma. Trombones for Havana* (Berlin, 2019). These productions break down barriers of time and space to allow audiences, performers, and media elements to occupy the same multi-layered space of communication, which demonstrates through the navigational function of intermediaturgy how we move through and interact with media-saturated spaces. As with issues of body and identity, the plays that feature in this chapter create worlds that use the same media environments that exist outside the theatre. By leveraging and criticizing how these media environments function, DMT poses a challenge for us to consider how we function within these spaces as well.

4.2 Here and There: Telepresence and Telematic Action

Previous discussion of telepresence denotes that when interacting online we are simultaneously multiple, existing in many places atemporally, while also singularly physically present. The atemporality of time online is deceptive: we are given many indicators of how long an action like watching a YouTube video may take, but ads interrupt that time, expanding it. Further, linking back to earlier discussions of the drawing power of media on the imagination, online platforms are full of distractions, or at least potentials for distraction. There are other elements essential to these platforms that toy with traditional understandings of time – lag, input delay, and hardware buffering are all background actions that slow or shift user experience, and the lack of geographic grounding means things like time zone separation do not really exist online, even though they still impact the user of the environment. In a networked or online environment there is always an element of displacement, both in terms of hardware limitations, and in terms of how many online platforms are designed to interrupt or immerse you in a space with no beginning or end. Unlike more legacy-technology methods of telepresence (like sending a letter, or leaving a voicemail for instance), digital telepresence carries with it a feeling of immediacy despite its inherent displacement. You cannot be sure if the person you are interacting with is real and live, a representation of the real, or a placeholder that will be filled with either at some point. Interactivity is fluid and unpredictable, which carries over into DMT's treatment of space. Space in DMT is pluralistic, as is the audience's relationship to it, revealing a contemporary condition whereby the notion of space can not simply settle into a divided binary where lived, corporeal space takes precedent over other types of inhabited space – at least not in terms of how we identify with and use these spaces.

Frequently the notion of space in theatre is dominated by the physicality of the building, the stage, and the set. This domination can create an unsatisfactory hierarchy when digital or virtual spaces are integrated into performance. Beth Kates, co-creator of the Augmented Reality theatre performance *Bury the Wren* (first produced in 2019 in Calgary),[29] tries to sidestep the hierarchization of space by introducing the idea of carbon-reality. As an opposite to virtual reality, the carbon-real is anything that can be touched without interface or interacted with directly (Kates, 2019). By creating a new prefix, she seeks to dehierarchize space by focusing on the different ways of interacting with different types of space, as opposed to a real/virtual binary. However, physical presence and distance are integral parts of our understanding, and therefore navigation, of space. Even virtual spaces are governed by our perception of their architecture. In order to reconcile the divide between real and virtual from a different angle, I propose to look at space in DMT as existing on a spectrum between *here* and *there.*

Here spaces are directly inhabited, used in real-time, and our relationship to them is reliant on overlapping notions of conception, perception, and lived experience. *There* spaces are spatially or also temporally distant; where the user is physically, and where they conceive themselves to be inhabiting are two different spaces. *There* is imaginary space; when we use a computer, we do not literally believe ourselves to be inhabiting some electronic space inside the guts of the machine, but the interface provides a satisfying illusion of a real space that evokes its own sense of inhabitance. It is not a carbon-real space, so to speak, but through our interaction with the interface the feeling of inhabiting a

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[29] A trailer that showcases the performance space and some of the effect from the perspective of the participant can be found here: https://vimeo.com/346001695

space presents itself. One might even consider the letter or phone call to be a type of *there* space due to the way we interact with them, but digital technology has advanced to take this idea to another level. The relationship we have to both *here* and *there* space is a complicated one because it implies a binary relationship, and needs to account for spaces that are neither *here* nor *there*, or those that are both at once.

How we inhabit space is necessarily tied to discussions of time, how we experience time, and what happens when a traditional sense of time breaks down in its relationship to space. The spaces where the separation of *here* and *there* breaks down frequently occur online when connecting to someone else. Robert Hassan speaks about "networked time" when considering the global sense of the connected world, challenging traditional conception of how we organize ourselves according to a static sense of time;

> [n]etwork time may be seen (experienced) as a temporal fragmentation of time(s) into numberless network contexts; into the time(s) that we create and experience online and in the increasingly networked forms of work and education and leisure that fill our waking hours. In the network the zoned hour of the clock becomes more and more irrelevant as the entire planet becomes the theoretical context of our networked connections and for the experience of time. (106)

For Hassan, how we experience time is linked to how we use the spaces we are inhabiting, whether physically or digitally. Conventional considerations of space look at our ability to situate ourselves within them – a space that has a function or an emotional connotation becomes an inhabited place. However, the inhabitance always carries the air of physicality. Spaces that have potential to become places, but without the potential for physical inhabitance, virtual spaces do not easily fit into this configuration – such as the space of the

internet, or the video call, or that of any social media: the primary distinction is that they are telematic in nature. Telematic meaning they are distant in relationship to time and/or space, but also immediate in the sense that the mechanism of engagement offers up either the ability or the illusion of the ability to communicate in a *here* manner with someone or something that would otherwise be considered *there*, bridging and blurring the gap between the two. The theatre, and especially DMT, represents a valuable medium for contending with issues of time and how it relates to the space of the digital world: in the material, physical world we generally experience time analogically, which is to say at a consistent rate. The advent and expansion of the digital world interrupts this, and as a result what we might call digital time can interrupt, extend, and otherwise obstruct our experience with time, often without our control. As the theatre has always been a mediated space, it allows for an experience in the analog that can match the qualities of the digital: despite being in the room for only a couple hours, days or weeks may pass. The theatre does this perhaps more authentically than other mediums due to the interactive, environmental nature of the space it creates. In terms of DMT, more closely the production captures the architecture of digital platforms, or the feel of the digital world, the more it introduces a space that reveals the impacts of digital time outside the stage as well as inside. *Here* and *there* hinge on the interconnection and interplay of space and time, both analog and digital: they are so closely entwined one is not easily separated from the other.

The intermedial space of DMT forces the problematic of blurring and bridging *here* and *there* by situating the stage environment as emblematic of experience increasingly found outside the theatre space. *Bury the Wren* uses emergent technology to interrogates the fluid exchange between *here* and *there* by using augmented reality and virtual reality

devices alongside physically present performance and historical artifact to create a
discombobulated experience of spatial and temporal navigation. The performance begins in
a blank, grey room that prominently features a VR headset. The single audience member is
acquainted with the room, the headset, and given a brief on the way the performance will
function, relating a story from the perspective of a previously unheard-from member of the
infamous Donnelly family of Lucan, Ontario in the late 1800s. After the participant dons
the VR set, the performance begins. *Bury the Wren* revolves around several historical
artifacts, which are represented virtually, and given via a tracking device to the participant.
The performance space shifts as the experience goes on, with technicians adding to the
space as the performer and participant engage in a more virtual space. Eventually a switch
occurs from purely virtual video to augmented reality, grounding the participant in the
physical reality of the performer, who had until that moment been a voice and presence. In
theory the participant is not supposed to notice the switch, but the technology and
switching mechanisms are not flawless yet. The effect, however, is startling – objects in the
performance that were once assumed to be wholly virtual are suddenly alive and within
arm's reach.

In a performance like *Bury the Wren*, position and inhabitance become problematic.
The space of the play is at once virtual and physical, it exists both *here* and *there*
simultaneously and separately – some of the elements of the performance are entirely
virtual, others are only present in the room, and some exist as representations in both. But
from the perspective of the participant, what is *here*, physically present with them, and
what is *there*, separated by time or space, is obfuscated, especially after the moment of first
contact. There is almost a betrayal of the senses that accompanies the shift from virtual

reality to augmented reality. Kates describes this as the "deep intimacy and transportative quality" (toasterlab, 2020) made possible through the juxtaposition of VR, AR, and carbon-reality. It brings the history of the piece forward into the hands of the participant, grounding them in the materiality of the room. In virtual reality, the participant could not see their own body, so the effect is one of floating within a void, enveloped by the story. The performer's presence, and the shift to augmented reality where their body appears in space, reminds the participant of their place in the environment. By re-introducing a form of liveness into what was (to the participant) a virtual event, notions of presence once again become important elements of meaning-making in this performance.

In order to explore this further, how presence interacts with space in DMT needs to be unpacked, with a focus on telematic action. Telematics is described by Johannes Birringer as being "present in a distant image world which is being created as I become present in it" (248). It is a form of action that combines the physicality of being present with virtual procedural generation – even with a pre-created virtual environment, the effect of experiencing it is generative: it is streamed in and created before your eyes. As we cross between *here* and *there* spaces, the tension between the static nature of physical presence and the generative nature of virtual environment becomes all the more apparent. Outside the theatre, the explosion of social media platforms and popularity, as well as the commercial drive to integrate communication and sharing elements into media platforms like YouTube, Zoom, and news websites, has enabled a generation to exist in a synchronic fashion both in corporeal reality and digitally mediated realms. The delimitation of *here* and *there* becomes fuzzy when existing online, and calling back to Žižek and Biocca, the

medium of interaction (online or otherwise) does not seem to equate to a specific experiential quality.

The interaction of presence and space intersects with a lot of DMT in what Gunhild Borggreen and Hanne-Louise Johnneson refer to as the "elitism" of contemporary telematic media (2017). In setting up a Fluid State North conference, which included many virtual performances and occurred in several geographic locations simultaneously, they observe that although many media platforms designed for communication (like Skype) are increasingly designed to "just work" (2017), differences in connection speed and hardware between locations creates misperformance, or instances where the media notably does not work as intended. When this occurs, the users are made aware of the platform and the interface is no longer transparent. Even something as simple as eye contact, a staple of communication, involves an element of misperformance when used telematically: in order to make the appearance of eye contact through a media interface, one needs to sacrifice looking at the recipient on their end of the screen, or settle with the reality that the recipient will not be able to see their line of sight. The interface is the only method through which the distance can be crossed, but it also creates a significant barrier to social interaction, and so Borggreen and Johannesen posit that it is the live actor who is central to facilitating intimate or close communication in a more authentic manner through a telematic system. Despite the interface being central to the communicative property, the performer had to fill the gaps left behind by the technology. Further, they suggest that the interaction that occurs in this space can be used intentionally to create emotional or tele-physical connection despite (and sometimes because of) the presence of the mediating interface.

DMT creates a space where live and mediated elements are positioned on a flattened hierarchy, emphasizing the transition across and between thresholds. Looking back at *Bury the Wren* we see this very clearly: when the reality switch occurs, the experience is made different, as opposed to better, by the interaction with physical actors. Another example of this can be seen in Gregg Parks and Daniel Briere's *LEO* (Edinburgh, 2011). In *LEO,* actor Tobias Wegner appears to defy gravity as a projection of himself is livestreamed on the opposite side of the stage, splitting it into a real and virtual space with no clear dividing line. The projection is sometimes subsumed by other animation and live drawings, and is rotated 90 degrees, which not only adds to the illusion, but makes it appear as if the actor is in two places at once (see figure 18).[30] While not perfect, the image has uncannily high fidelity to the extent that what is virtual and what is not is difficult to distinguish at a glance. From the viewer's perspective the real and virtual are difficult to distinguish, and the exchange between the two creates a different spatial experience, not uplifting the digital or the real but rather flattening the hierarchy between the two. The simultaneous interaction between the real and the virtual representation creates a telematic action. The stage space is specifically and intentionally telematic while at the same time the presence of the actor becomes a "caretaker" (Borggreen & Johannesen, 2017) of the virtual space on stage. Just as we inhabit *real* spaces, telematic action allows for the bridging of inhabitance into *virtual* spaces, closing and blurring the divide between *here* and *there*. And as we will discuss further, despite not actually existing physically in a *there* space, telepresence can encourage a bodily reaction to that space. Digital architecture creates this

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30 A trailer showing these visual effects can also be seen here <https://vimeo.com/171572856>

image world and the specific engagement of the performer with this architecture, as we have seen throughout this analysis, creates a sense of inhabitation.
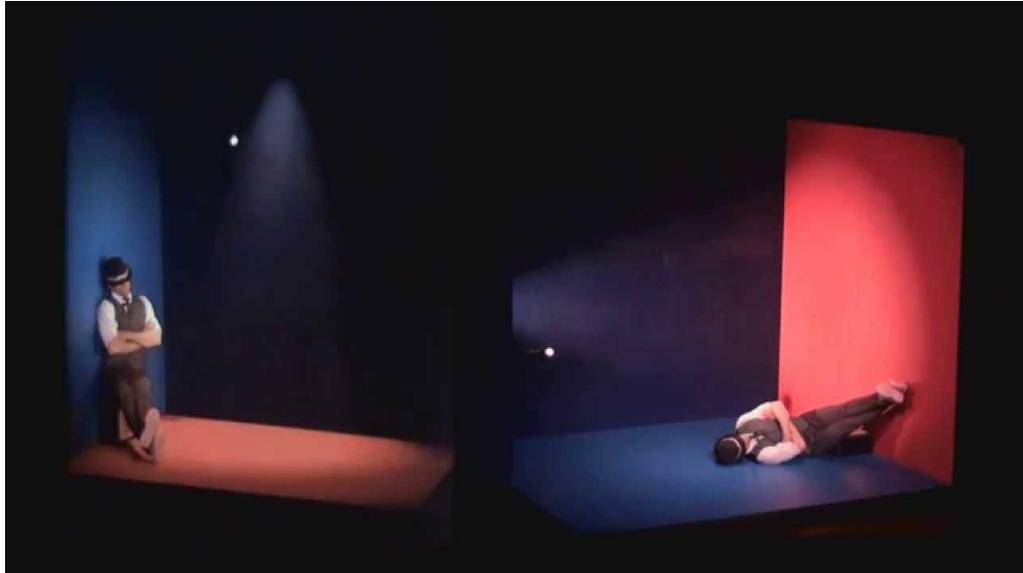
Figure 18: LEO, *Parks and Briere.[31] One actor, one stage, two images.*

Along with altering perception of spatial inhabitance, telepresence and telematic action can also modify how one constitutes presence in a contemporary context. Telecommunications technologies have radically changed both the way we communicate and inhabit spaces of communication. Considering mass many-to-many communication technology, Hans Gumbrecht proposes the dream of omnipresence as an end-goal. In his words, the dream of omnipresence is "the dream of making lived experience independent of the locations that our bodies occupy in space" (139). It follows that an effect of this dream of omnipresence is that we lose the sense of our bodies in space, as our lived experience vicariously begins to spread over this omnipresence network. World-wide news, social media, and long-range instant communication attempt to facilitate this dream,

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[31] Source: "Representations," Odyscene, 2020. <https://odyscene.com/programmation/leo/>.

forming what Vanhoutte and Wynants call a "hybrid space" (277), one that takes the evocative and functional elements of two different types of spaces and lays them over one another. Hybrid spaces could also be what Gabriella Giannachi and Nick Kaye describe as media spaces. Media space is mediated space, existing at the site of production, as well as a site of interaction like an interface or screen. A media space is never singular and "is produced in a collocation of spaces in paradoxical or dissonant relationship: in a layering of one space in and over others" (188). *LEO* is an excellent example of this concept in DMT. The stage space is not a perfect illusion, but the combination of compelling animation and very skilled movement on the part of the actor creates a sense that what is carbon-real and what is virtual is not always immediately clear. While at any moment one could retreat from the experience of watching the performance to recall which side of the stage is the live one, the layering of media on stage and the drawing power of the media makes the separation of live and projected is difficult to discern in the moment. The effect of *LEO* only works because the live and projected sides of the performance are considered one space within the frame of the stage, brought together through the narrative of the performance and the extra layers of media on top of and behind the actor. DMT takes the idea of the mediated space, one that in theory exists live in one place and mediated through an interface, and creates an almost Cubist representation of it: showing all sides and perspectives of the space frontally, even those that would normally remain hidden. As a mechanism of DMT performance, the media space as well as its component pieces are shown at the same time, showcasing process and product meaningfully. While all theatre is in a sense an exploration of process and product at once, this figuration of space comments directly on how media spaces are often deceptively layered or opaque. Narratively, *LEO*

does not necessarily point out this layering specifically, but the function of the media space on stage is nonetheless an important part of how we understand the process of meaning-making in the performance. This process carries implications for other media spaces as well. Media spaces are used functionally in many DMT productions, and while *LEO* has a special relationship with medial layering, The Builders Association shows other possible ways for this relationship to play out.

From early on, The Builders Association has created performances that push the boundaries of interaction between live and electronic means, and two productions stand out as examples that purposefully upset expectations of *here* and *there* using telepresence, telematic action, and medial layering. The first, *Jet Lag,*[32] produced in 1998 as a co-production with media artist/architects Diller and Scofido, tells two stories about travel featuring a suite of media technology. The first is the story of a man (Donald Crowhurst) who, after boasting about his intentions to circumnavigate the world, uses camera equipment to instead make a fake documentary. The other story is a woman (Sarah Krassnoff) who uses constant trans-Atlantic flights to keep her and her son safe from a man pursuing them. In both narratives the themes of forgery, travel, and loneliness are expressed through interaction with media to create a seemingly organic and shifting world. Donald uses film, recorded sound, and image/video splicing to craft the image of his perilous journey, while the space around Sarah shifts and morphs to mirror her increasing exhaustion. The mediated stage space created by this effect is one of constant re-ordering and reassembling. What is real, present, and even functional is constantly shifting,

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[32] The following video shows how both stories use projection and sound technology to enmesh the actors in a medial environment <https://vimeo.com/338484130>

mirroring the narrative themes of escape and forgery told by the characters. What appears to be a functional microphone in one scene is later revealed to be a mere prop; the voice you are hearing is always suspect in Donald's story – is it his voice? A recording? An historical recording being lip-synched? Consequently, questions around who and what is immediately *here* and what is being reproduced at any given moment arise. The space around Sarah shifts until it is difficult to tell if the chairs around her are set pieces, projections, or a combination of the two; while the non-place of the airport boarding area takes on an emotional quality as she travels. Overall, the apparatus of the play and the sometimes-deceptive way the actors perform with it questions the connection between what we see playing out live, what the screen displays, and how many layers of representation feature from moment to moment.

Jet Lag takes the unreliable narrator to a new level; but instead of merely asking whether we should trust the speaker in the room, it questions the how much we should trust that the spaces we see around us are what they seem. From an intermediaturgical perspective *Jet Lag* raises an interesting question through its use of media layering and its creation of a media space – when media is presented in real-time to us, or when we are in an environment where we are required to interact with media as in this production, how and what do we use to separate fact from fiction? Or are we just as susceptible to the falsity that the characters in the play experience or play into? And ultimately, does it even matter? From the perspective of space, does a separation of *here* and *there* really impact me if I perceive myself as interacting in between them?

Figure 19: Jet Lag, *The Builders Association.*[33] *A performer tells his story, sometimes to the audience and sometimes to himself. His voice is not always his own.*

Similar questions haunt another production of The Builders Association, *Alladeen* (London, 2003). It examines the politics of representation by re-imagining the Hindu and Muslim versions of the Aladdin story with contemporary employees in training at an outsourced call-centre. Set in contemporary time, in an undisclosed but likely South Asian nation, the play features a group of South Asian actors being taught American pop culture references to seem more authentic in their call-centre support job. The play then goes through a series of vignettes (including episodes from the iconic television series *Friends*) that revolve around themes of being lost, being overwhelmed, and dealing with distance and time in contemporary culture. Space in *Alladeen* is at times fluid, allowing for both specific locales to exist as well as a lot of unlocalized, general space that is used,

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[33] Source: "Jet Lag 2010," *The Builders Association*. <https://www.thebuildersassociation.org/prod_jetlag_images.html>. More images and video can be found on their website.

sometimes simultaneously. The sense of place in the play becomes overwhelming as layer after layer of digital media is overlaid in the performance space. It is described as a triptych, with each layer of media coming together to create a whole that says more than the sum of its parts (Sussman, 696). The media involvement is not just technological, but cultural as well: a running gag throughout the play has the call centre agents using references from the sitcom *Friends* to explain personality tropes and attempt to connect with their clients. The scene where this begins has the characters from the show superimposed over the agents as they are taught in a classroom environment. Not only does it showcase the powerful position of media cultural icons in the West, but it also foregrounds later incidents that use transcultural misunderstanding as humour. The production takes aim at media's creation of idols while also underscoring the false face of digital homogeneity. Despite being a place that purports equal access and engagement, the content and usage of digital and media spaces is still heavily impacted by the materiality of the user's location, including the nationhood of that location.

Figure 20: Alladeen *The Builders Association.*[34] *Live streamed projection, static images, pop culture, and live performers come together under a single frame/interface/stage space.*

The digital interface becomes the window through which two people connect despite multiple misunderstandings.[35] The call centre agent is trying to help a lost American traveller to find her way in Las Vegas. The dialogue spins out from just the functional purpose of the scene, and as the trail is marked out, the conversation moves to cover pop culture, shared feelings and dreams, and sometimes confusing mistranslations as both sides try to understand each other. The call centre agent's directions are also vague: "You see that street, the 15 in Los Angeles, you follow it all the way, you are going to hit this desert. You can't miss it because there is nothing else there." Images of the Nevada desert flash on the screen. The irony that immerses the scene is that the call centre agent will never and has never been to either California or Nevada, yet is in control of finding the way out. As she plots a course, she remarks on the geography using pop culture knowledge she has learned instead of organically experienced, as unfamiliar as the geography itself –

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[34] Source: "Alladeen 1999-2007," *The Builders Association.*
<https://www.thebuildersassociation.org/prod_alladeen_images.html>. More images and video can be found on their website.

[35] Seen here <https://vimeo.com/338484927>

for instance fawning over the (seemingly incorrect) location of a popular actor's home. The pop culture connection is rote rehearsal and devoid of context, emphasized by the awkwardness of the phone conversation that hinges on superficial pop culture references. In another scene,[36] the call center agent responding to a banking related question asks the caller where they are located. She tells him, Chicago; his response is: "the Cubs, the Bears, the Bulls … Oprah." When the caller asks him where he is located, he lies: "Me, oh, I live in New York, you know, I got a great place on Central Park West...".

Interaction with the digital map creates a secondary layer in the performance space, transforming what otherwise looks like a fractured space into one organic and fluid place of finding oneself. However, this relationship does not flow effortlessly; it becomes on the contrary disjunctive, as Giannachi and Kaye note "the live performer's actions cross thresholds between material and electronic sites, their 'presence' is realized in disjunctive relationships between spaces and processes: in their actions' simultaneous articulation of different and conjoined spatial orders, which, in turn, qualify and inform the narratives they unfold" (191). *Alladeen* seems to be pointing out a key issue regarding the conception of space in DMT: despite the existence and drive towards in-between spaces, the lack of physical exchange between characters cannot be ignored. Space is similarly deceptive in *Jet Lag*, and only clarified by the characters' interaction with the interface of the media present on stage. The dream of omnipresence, from the perspective of The Builders Association, is still an in-process goal, not one that has been achieved. The lived space is not really the physical locality of the characters, but rather the space in between that they must share in an unequal economic power relation, governed by the 'haves' using the 'have

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[36] Seen here <https://vimeo.com/338484922>

nots' or labour from the global south to navigate late capitalism's spaces of alienation. Both sides of the divide are created by the imaginative sense of space that they construct through call centre conversations where only the 'haves' are capable of inhabiting physical spaces. The call agents in *Alladeen* exist in a virtual, pop culture geography divorced from the physical location that can afford them the conditions of possibility of creating a privileged relationship to space.

The disjunction in these productions highlight the tension between what users of telecommunications and the telepresence generated from it tend to want to accomplish, and what unintended side effects can happen through their use. It is a sort of paradox. We use social media and other digital technology in part to satisfy the desire for reaching out; however extended use of these environments can actually back-fire, creating a need to return to a purer sense of lived space, as Hans Gumbrecht observes:

> The more we approach the fulfillment of our dreams of omnipresence and the more definite the subsequent loss of our bodies and of the spatial dimension in our existence seems to be, the greater the possibility becomes of reigniting the desire that attracts us to the things of the world and wraps us into their space (139)

He seems to be pushing for a retaliation against the digital as it continues to influence and dictate social exchange. By focusing on social exchange through distant spaces, the belief appears to be that we lose some fundamental need of the body existing in immediate presence with others. On the other hand, this social exchange has altered the way we relate to space itself, creating a built-in anxiety that is only satisfied on return to physical space. Looking back to *Alladeen*¸ this anxiety is present not only in the tone of the production, but even its composition. While pop culture and geography are central to the narrative of the

piece, the call centre agents, normally distant figures existing in the *there* space of the phone, are the only real presences on stage for the audience. This represents both an explanation and an exacerbation of the contemporary conception of presence via telepresence. Gumbrecht believes that we are fascinated by presence on a primal level which is due to "a longing for presence that in the contemporary context can only be satisfied in conditions of extreme temporal fragmentation" (20). By revealing the mechanisms of both performance and the technologies dominating our lives, DMT represents a world wherein temporal and spatial fragmentation are caused by the blurring of the *here* and *there* in our inhabitance.

Interactive digital technology is reliant on an interface, creating an artificial barrier into an artificial world. The machinations of the technology and the background are hidden from view in order to create the illusion of a perceived space, which in theory removes from the user the knowledge that they have left their body behind. This is in direct opposition to what we see in DMT, which often reveals the mechanisms of the technology at play, sometimes jarringly, as well as the space between the mechanism and the action of the stage. Thinking in terms of *here* and *there*, the illusion created by an interface is one that allows a person to exist in a space that would be conceived of, in another circumstance, as *there* as if it were *here*. This illusion grows stronger as the interface becomes less visible and more transparent:

> [S]tudies on immersion and presence tend to stress the possibility of being
> completely in an artificial world, thus relating the degree of presence to the
> transparency of the interface: the more transparent the medium, the more one feels
> surrounded by the world that the medium represents. The ultimate goal of

contemporary developments in digital technologies thus seem to be a full virtual

embodiment, to become the perfect simulacrum of full, multisensory bodily action.

This supposes the exact adaptation of the disposition of the human senses to the

immersive imagery (Vanhoutte & Wynants, 278)

This describes a separation between an understanding of live and virtual inhabitance. Seen this way, the difference between inhabitance in the real world and the virtual world is one of interface – with the real world seemingly having no inherent interface to interaction. The screen is easily seen as an interface object, but I take the position that the divide between real and virtual, if there is one, is not one of interface. Contemporary society is panoptic, in that every exchange is potentially monitored, and the monitoring itself is becoming increasingly normalized (and foregrounded). We know that our every move online, on our phone, any digital transaction is monitored, and yet, we seem to have willingly given up on resisting it or have succumbed to the idea that it is inevitable. The separation of public and private breaks down when every engagement could be monitored, and the notion of a separate private behaviour effectively disappears as privacy is eroded. Our physical navigation is similar to how one might navigate the interface of the internet, the only difference being that we have let the interface of the 'carbon-real world' fade into invisibility in exchange for not having to worry about its machinations. We forget there is an interface of the everyday, normalizing its impact on us. I would argue a lot of time in DMT is spent pointing at not only how our telematic interactions can be just as worthwhile, but also how in our carbon-real experience there are hidden mechanisms at work that impact our behaviours and understanding. This is taken a step further in one example of a

DMT adaptation to show how the result of these interactions can be no less real or traumatic.

In a 2014 production of Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis* for Theatre Dortumund*, director Kay Voges and designer Jan Brandt create a world where immersion in a digital apparatus is forced, violent, and ultimately destructive. The play, self-styled as In-yer-face and new brutalist theatre by journalist Aleks Sierz, has a massively diverse range of productions in terms of aesthetic and form. Voges creates what looks like a cage of intermedial apparatuses, surrounding the single "patient" character. Using several large transparent screens and monitors, the character is forced to watch the words they are saying and remain aware of the words they said. Further, they must also engage with the words of others, images of their medical and mental health, and explosions of overwhelming numbers and letters that left the character ultimately broken down from the exhaustion of having to interact constantly (see figure 21).

The play presents digital space as a force, one that is in this case controlling, dominating, and indifferent to the anguish of the patient. The narrative of *4.48 Psychosis* is frequently interpreted as a personal down-spiral of a narrator suffering from the effects of and treatment of severe mental health trauma (although the structureless-ness of the text itself does leave it open to many interpretations). The character grapples with both the external voices of the doctors' involved in treatment, and the social stigma attached to declining mental health. In Voges' production the media captures every thought and reaction, making it visceral and inescapable. However, even from within the cage, the character is continually reminded of their own bodily existence. The media may appear opaque from the outside, but from within it dominates the space, effectively transparent

because everything is immersed within it. Intermediality in part reveals the mechanism of communication: as Chiel Kattenbelt proposes, theatre's inclusion of the spectator in the performance space inverts the function of media technology, which is normally an agent of "transparency" or "illusion," illuminating the spectator to the mechanism of illusion or interface present in performance (Kattenbelt, 38). The play takes this illumination into the space of the stage as well, having three unnamed actor/technician/manipulators present at a technical table, making the technical manipulation in the performance obvious, when traditionally is it hidden away from the audience. In this case, the revelation comes with a condemnation as well – while digital spaces may cross and dissolve special thresholds, the desire for the body in physical reality is impacted, and possibly increased, through interacting with them – which in some cases may include a drive to eventually get away from the overwhelming nature of the interface.

Figure 21: 4.48 Psychosis, *Kay Voges and Jan Brandt.[37] Barely visible in the middle of the cube of light, language, and sound, is a performer playing the brink of desperation.*

This production of *4.48 Psychosis* uses the overwhelming nature of digital spaces to reinforce how interaction with the digital can in ways be no less real, impactful, or traumatic as bodily interactions. By problematizing the notion of interface as a barrier to real or authentic interaction, the play comments on the sense of omnipresence which is allegedly the goal of contemporary digital development – omnipresence through virtual embodiment does not necessarily need to denote a loss of body, however. Instead, it could be viewed as a more totalizing sense of the body which is reified through the blurry boundaries of carbon-real and virtual. We are reminded that the body is impacted by external forces, whether they are carbon-real or virtual in origin.

Manipulating our perception of how we inhabit carbon-real and virtual space reorganizes how we understand our position in relation to the things we engage with. Digital or virtual spaces are mediatized and designed to be actively inhabited by users. The examples from both The Builders Association and Voges specifically impress on the notion that the media systems, despite bridging distance, are not strictly benevolent or necessarily easily navigable. Active inhabitation means the user of a mediatized space is knowingly engaged, implying a sense of knowing the structure of engagement. In speaking about how the digital interface alters our relationship with perception and reality, Donald Hoffman states "the user interface is there to facilitate our interactions with the computer by hiding its causal and structural complexity, and by displaying useful information in a format that is tailored to our specific projects, such as painting or writing" (154). In other words, to use an interface is to entwine an imaginary process with a corporeal interaction. Throughout the performance of *4.48 Psychosis*, the character inside the media walls rails, shrieks, and furiously reads the writing and texts as it appears around them. They appear lost or almost

dissociative, until there are periods of relative calm. It is at these points where the

character's mood seems to drop, falling into a suicidal, or at least severely depressive state.

It is almost as if being long in the overwhelming, overstimulating media for a moment

transports the character from the room they are trapped in, and when they are jarred back to

the reality of being *here,* their emotional state collapses.[38] The interface, and interaction

with it, can dissolve boundaries between *here* and *there*, as can the drawing power of

media, but ultimately the corporeal body is what this sense of inhabitance is grounded in.

As a final example of the interaction between digital space and presence, I look

again to Hotel Modern's *Kamp*. As discussed earlier, the 2005 production plays with

distance, presence, and corporeality in a way that brings an audience close to the action and

the experience of trauma through the interface of a live feed system. The play exists as a

kind of puppet show/landscaping construction hybrid. Operators construct, manipulate, and

move the pieces of a crafted, replica holocaust-era concentration camp. Dozens, if not

hundreds, of tiny figures are tortured and huddled together to create some macabre and

frighteningly powerful movements/situations. A camera operator films the narrative,

capturing the dramatic action and live-feeding the video to a screen positioned either in

front of or above the playing space.[39] This architecture acts to bring the visuality of the

piece forward, literally allowing the audience in close and usurping the normal removal of

detail inherent in conventional puppetry – by getting in close, the camera operator allows

the audience a closer-than-ever view of the action. Incidentally, the camera live feed is

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[38] This feeling is evoked throughout the production, but a clear example begins at (00:27:00). Found here in the recording of the Theatre Dortmund production: <https://youtu.be/_JS2l3HwDts>

[39] This varied depending on the venue, but the 2005 production referenced in this and other chapters had a screen that covered the back wall area above the stage/creation space.

often involved in relating highly violent actions and scenes with intolerable brutality, exacted on the puppets who metonymically stand in for the prisoners of Auschwitz. However, this level of detail is only visible through interaction with the interface of the projection. The operators interact with the digital elements, ensuring correct facing and negotiating space with the camera operators in a smooth choreography, and manipulate the puppets. This method also illustrates the earlier point about refiguring how we understand our spatial reality – by bringing the audience in closer to the otherwise inanimate figures, the performed trauma they experience and the historical trauma it references are put in our faces in a way that is hard to avoid. If the interface is a barrier, the narrative of *Kamp* serves to reduce its opacity, drawing the audience into the intimate horror of the piece. While we might want to create distance due to the traumatic nature of the piece, the mediated space pulls us in closer in order to experience it, reminding us that looking away is a luxury that we are not always afforded.

This is not to say that there are no barriers to this performance: *Kamp*'s accessibility requires a certain amount of suspension of disbelief. The puppets re-enact horrible events to which an emotional or sympathetic response is the goal. The interface of the screen in this case not only re-emphasizes the materiality of the puppets, it also brings the audience in close and allows them to engage emotionally in perhaps greater depth with otherwise intolerable narratives told by inanimate beings. In fact, it is because the puppets are not real, living actors, that there is no limit to the damage that can be inflicted on them. Combined with the drawing effect of the media, we are forced to watch these violent acts with what feels like a suffocating level of intimacy. Consequently, the trauma, while it creates distance, becomes more visceral and overwhelming as the internal audience – the

puppets "watching" other puppets being brutalized – and the external audience, us, the

spectators in the theatre, become captive witnesses to unimaginable atrocity (see figure 22).

While familiarity with the screen is not necessarily needed to fully experience the horror of

Kamp, that familiarity nonetheless questions how presence and closeness and corporeality

work together to produce meaning, and how the digital manifestation can work to dissolve

the boundaries and allow for a sense of presence and a material imaginary to both exist.

Figure 22 Kamp, *Hotel Modern.[40] While the puppets appear as a faceless horde, the livestream pulls in close to force the audience to contend with their individuality, and the brutality visited upon them.*

Ultimately while intermediality in performance suggests an interweaving of media

within the stage space, this interweaving is tied to the metonymic function of space. The

participants/viewers of a performance need to understand the contiguous link between the

digital media architecture leveraged by the stage and the outside-the-theatre counterparts

from which it is designed. In DMT part of the message communicated by the play is reliant

specifically on the way media functions and is interacted. In a sense, the horizon of

expectation set by DMT not only covers typical notions of space, place, character, story,

and world, but also technology and media function. If one does not go along with, for

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[40] Source: "Hotel Modern," Hotel Modern, *Vimeo*¸ Rotterdam, Netherlands. <https://vimeo.com/hotelmodern>

instance, the screens in *Alladeen* being representative of a mapping and telemarketer program, then the inter-media forms an admixture instead. And while the screen is ubiquitous today, the specific usage of the screen offers more nuanced understanding of the purpose of the medial mixture – recall the discussion from chapter one of *Searching* and the importance of understanding the different media spaces it features. The way the screen is interacted with, and how much the audience identifies with this interaction, affects the reaction to the media and how it is understood beyond the theatre. Conversely, those that find resentment in this modality could be missing the feeling of returning to a more familiar lived space that is more attainable through so-called traditional theatre productions. In either case, the impact of media on space, and how media and space are used to interact on stage, unavoidably creates commentary on what kinds of spaces exist to be inhabited.

In effect, this compels us to pay more attention to not only the thresholds of space inherent in DMT, however blurred they may be, but also to the functionality of being immersed in these spaces. This immersion creates an environmental or even ecological conception of the stage, spilling outside the traditional frame of the digital interface to proffer an insight into how one navigates these interfaces and how users and interfaces reciprocally influence processes of communication. As I have argued, such a conception of space is reliant on notions of telepresence, the imaginary location of the non-physical body actually tapping into the very intimately familiar space of the imagination, in addition to a type of space that is determined by its use-value, the non-place space.

4.3 Supermodernity and "Non-Place Spaces"

To further understand space's centrality to many DMT productions the notion of

here and *there* needs to be placed alongside supermodernity. Supermodernity, a term used

by Marc Augé, develops from modernist and postmodernist frameworks of thought – while

modernism attempts the construction of meta-narratives and postmodernism is concerned

with their unpinning, supermodernity relies on plausible or heuristic truths as explanations

for how people and systems work (Lipovetsky & Charles, 34). Past behaviour is

determined through present relevance, and as a result supermodernity is concerned not with

the attainment of truth, per se, but rather doing away with true/false dichotomies. The

themes in *Alladeen* present a clear way to distinguish between the three potential

frameworks. A modernist perspective on the play might look at the meta-narratives created

through the action of the piece – for instance the solidification of cross-cultural

misunderstanding or reifying the metanarrative that the Other is always going to be behind

Western culture. A post-modernist would be suspicious of these meta-narratives and look

at the humour of the production as evidence that they should be broken down and

examined. Supermodernity tries to side-step the need to prove true or false altogether by

instead asking what is implied through the interrelation of all the pieces on stage. What is

the relevance of the relationships between media and actor, or actor and actor etc., and

therefore what can we discern about the represented system's function or behaviour?

Supermodernity is how Augé conceives of the contemporary situation of excess of

information combining with excesses of spaces, including what he terms as non-places

spaces, or "transitory places, where human actors pass through as anonymous individuals

but do not relate/identify with in any intimate sense. Airport terminals, hospitals, movie

theaters and shopping malls are great examples of such public spaces, where social action does not take place" (122). These are spaces that are continually reset or wiped of residual human inhabitance. How one occupies space and relates to distance and telepresence is a fundamental part of the contemporary lived experience, and by extension of DMT.

Throughout this essay DMT and the intermediaturgical turn show how the connection between cultural understanding, embodiment across thresholds, and the critical value of interactivity in these in-between spaces is crucial for a contemporary understanding of some element of the human condition through performance. Ultimately, this points to the relationship that we make with spaces as being significant – that through our interaction with a space we give it an attribute of space/meaning. When the spaces we interact with become increasingly transient, the supermodern non-place space becomes a fitting tool used by DMT to explore this relationship.

Supermodernity comments on the reciprocal relationship between society, culture, and space. Augé considers the contemporary lived experience as a process by which culture increases the integration and impact of non-place spaces – spaces that are anonymous, and not concerned with connecting use and identity or social reference. Augé's definition of the non-place is rooted in the physical – he describes essentially the market or leisure space as having no fundamental "place-ness" until they are being inhabited for use, much like theatrical or performative space. This description of space sounds very much like Peter Brook's famous description of what makes a theatrical space: "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" (Brook, 9). The space itself mediates its use and the relationships of users within it. This is different

than a conventional place, wherein the user's relationship to the space and other users within it gives its place connotations – a home is not a non-place space because even without the occupant inside, it provides an emotional or cultural function to its owner. Without occupants, a market space loses its place-hood, but when it is occupied, the space of the market dictates its use.

For Augé, the relationship between space and use can equally apply to digital, transient, anonymous spaces:

> [T]he word 'non-place' designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have to these spaces. Although the two sets of relations overlap to a large extent, and in any case officially (individuals travel, make purchases, relax), they are still not confused with one another; for non-places mediate a whole mass of relations, with the self and with others, which are only indirectly connected with their purposes. (94)

Increased access to "non-places" through digital media creates an excess of space and information that leads to a profound (albeit incoherent) sense of awareness and a flattening of hierarchy, as databases and hypermedia networks create a less static software-based "liquid architecture" of supermodern transience (32). The lifespan and nature of this transience is changing, however, and continues to change as media systems interlink and take up increasing amounts of social and economic time. Supermodern transient spaces exist (be it, for instance, online) and are driven by ends and the individuals that use them (for instance, to make money), however the users do not simply occupy and leave the space – unlike the market that closes, a trail of history saving, user accounts, and popular social

discourse all point back to the user, preserving their inhabitance of the space. Recording and tracking are the byword of digital culture; so, while one's engagement with a digital space might be momentary, a trace of evidence is left behind to be interacted with even after the user has logged off. If, as discussed in previous chapters, engagement with digital culture and digital spaces creates a fractured or pluralist sense of identity, then it follows that the more we immerse ourselves into digital culture with the more fragmentation should occur. Inhabitance of non-place spaces is disrupted by the nature of always-online spaces, and the fractured bits of identity that inhabit them – even while these spaces are conceived as being transient, the constant potential for engagement extends their place-like use well beyond the physical analogues. Even though you may not inhabit a non-place space at the same time as another user, you can still interact with them in a more-or-less lifelike way. This has an impact back on the engagement itself, where the more we expect and anticipate our actions being recorded, or that we will engage and be engaged in atemporal ways, the more this figures into the way we use and understand these spaces.

As everyday interactions increasingly occur in environments traditionally considered non-spaces, the concept of the theatre as an empty-space-to-be-filled takes on a new meaning. DMT answers this filling by positioning a theatrical space that takes advantage of increasingly familiar architecture, while blurring the lines of *here* and *there* performatively, metonymically linking the space to the viewer who is covertly reminded of their connection to said architecture. While I have been arguing that the way we inhabit space has been fundamentally restructured through oversaturation of media and media technologies, the embeddedness of that restructuring cannot be overstated. Looking back to the theatre, while any empty space may be called a stage, the practice of going to the

theatre (and therefore the theatre space) is, as Carlson puts it, a site of preserving and

configuring cultural memory (132). This rejects the notion that space can be empty, which

in turn implies that even a seemingly empty stage is merely a vessel to be filled. As an

empty vessel the space of the theatre in DMT, when combined with the non-place spaces of

the digital world, becomes a site on which culture, history, memory, and media interaction

can be problematized.

Supermodernity illuminates an important quality of intermedial theatre –the nature

of interacting media on stage is one of conflicting vision, conflicting space, and

troublesome resolution of identity, as opposed to the more traditionally singular theatrical

medium. DMT creates, through significantly pointing to the architecture of these media

platforms, a sense of the transpositional nature of the body and its component identity

through interaction with space. An example of the power of this manipulation can be seen

in *Ipperwash*. Created by the Toronto-based Native Earth Performing Arts Company (in

collaboration with the Blyth Festival), and written by Falen Johnson in 2017, *Ipperwash* is

a semi-fictional account of the clean-up of a military base that is also situated on

Indigenous land. It is based on a real place and real people, and these people invade the

stage space through digital projection and display. The play describes a real account of a

local reservation area in Stoney Point, Ontario that was ousted by the military to make

room for an ordnance base in the 1940s. The owners of the land were pushed out with the

assumption that they would be able to return after the war. However, the base was kept in

use and the land held back until the 1990s and only started to be released after protest and

occupation by the Chippewa and Stoney Point First Nations. The base remains difficult to

inhabit to this day because of stores of unexploded munitions and unsafe buildings. In the

production, traditional Chippewa music is played live alongside recorded music captured

from before the inhabitants of the base were evicted. Historical photos and videos are

overlaid on the faces of the actors and expanded outwards to fill the back of the stage. Live

actors interact with digital projections of historical performances and speeches and

recorded memories from people have since passed away, treating them as occurring in real

time. The effect focuses and layers the narrative even while fragmenting the time and

distance of the stage space.

Figure 23: Ipperwash, *Native Earth Performing Arts Co.*[41] *Present conversations collide with history as performers interact with each other and recorded conversation, song, and dance in the background.*

This case is an important use of DMT as a strategy for reinforcing ideas of identity,

body, and history in a non-place space. By connecting the live actors to the mediatized

past, we are covertly reminded that although this space no longer exists – it disappeared

when the people who lived there were evicted – we can still inhabit it and communicate

with it in real time through our engagement with history. Calling back to Augé, the play

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[41] Source: Blyth Festival. "Blyth Festival presents Ipperwash," *YouTube*, 2017.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmUQS0XwIhE>

reinforces attributes of history that were whitewashed through colonial power structures. By attaching a new sense of relevance to this history, its attributes change. The non-place space and the transpositional movement that occurs within the production covertly reconfigures the physicality of the stage space to encompass the imaginary, allowing the historic and mediatized spaces to exist in tandem with the physical. The digital overlay highlights the issue as one of both inhabitance, ownership, and power. In one moment of the play, the central character Bea is confronted with her own complicity in the state of her ancestral homeland. She is an Anishinaabe corporal working for the Department of Defense, and the play focuses on her return to Ipperwash to help rehabilitate the area. She finds the reserve land contaminated with weapons of war and bunkers, including stores of unexploded munitions scattered throughout people's homes. A moment in the play features a village man recounting a story of the events which led to his people being forcibly removed from the land to make room for the military base. As he talks about the people tearing down their homes and gathering their belongings to leave, flashes of images of munitions and soldiers performing training drills light up the stage. In between are images of indigenous artwork and drawings. The power struggle being hinted at in the story is explicit in the imagery, the brutality is thus more foregrounded than in the person-focused narrative the man is telling.

The purpose of this power struggle is twofold and highlights how space in DMT can be used to ground or trouble notions of identity and history. The theatre in this case is attended by a predominantly white audience in a predominantly white county, whose own sense of history frequently erases that of the indigenous culture that existed before settlement. The play uses media to upset how settler culture takes for granted the privilege

it has in feeling like it owns familiar objects and places – while simultaneously using that same media to celebrate and relish the history of normally silenced indigenous people. The space of the stage, because it brings history forward to contend with the present, makes the power dynamic inherent in this story unavoidable, and emphasizes its presence outside the stage space as well.

The theatre space in DMT is not only a non-place, but also often functions as an immersive one as well. A final facet of space worth exploring in DMT is how unconscious relationships between body and space help to create a sense of an immersive environment. If space is how DMT grounds both the body and identity, how we understand being immersed in that space will impact our sense of self. And given that DMT often uses media architecture in composition, how we understand our use of that architecture outside the theatre helps draw us into the environment as well.

4.4 'Environmental Unconscious' and Framing Digital Environments

Intermediaturgy offers a way of conceptualizing the space of DMT as an environment. Conventional dramaturgy struggles with simultaneously isolating and incorporating interaction with diverse media on stage, and conversely mediaturgy cannot contend easily with media as an interrelated part of a whole. An intermedial stage is not an exhibition or gallery, where multiple media sit in isolation, but rather an organic environment with component pieces that are more fully understood while interacting with other elements, each other, and notably performing bodies. Intermediaturgy considers the space the contemporary body navigates to be an immersive environment, but one that is framed by the bounds of the stage. In DMT the normal frame of the stage is complicated by the introduction of frames within frames of media systems and interfaces. Further, the interactive quality of DMT ensures that any frame, because the boundaries of it are blurred or disrupted, is conceptually reorganized as conventional notions of space are altered. While the relationship with space changes, the original theatrical structure remains intact. This creates a sense of a new environment that is at once immersive and interaction, as the stage space is surrounded or bombarded by other media forces.

Interactivity in DMT does not carry the same connotations as, for instance, an interactive installation art piece. Most of the examples cited in this thesis in fact feel like conventional theatre in many ways; the audience sits and observes the performers and some form of threshold exists between the two. However, as an environment there is an invitation to assume that all component pieces in the theatre have the capability of some kind of life or action. In more conventional theatre the set, props, lights, and other technical elements are utilized primarily for their function. In DMT the space itself carries its own

feeling of *aliveness*, imbuing it with transformative power, as telematic elements inform both the literal transformation of space and the figurative transformation of the audience's relationship with space. Laura Levin, while speaking about environmental theatre and performance studies philosophy, looks towards the articulation of unconventional space by bringing up the environment-as-ecology model of performance. She cites Richard Schechner to illustrate how an "environmental performance is one in which all the elements or parts making up the performance are recognized as alive. To be 'alive' is to change, develop, transform, to have needs and desires; even, potentially, to acquire, express, and use consciousness" (qtd. in Levin 243). Levin leverages this environmental model in order to explain a function of participation and spectatorship in a seemingly interactive space. The "environmental unconscious" (Levin, 250) is a process she uses to acknowledge the covert manner in which an environment draws one to consider their relationship with space and self-identity. Levin is drawing on Walter Benjamin's "optical unconscious" (qtd in Levin 250), where he suggests that, for instance, only when an image is viewed through the lens of a camera is the power of the eye revealed. By interacting with the photograph, the viewer is made to realize the details they receive through sight and take for granted. Similarly, by interacting with an immersive environment, the environmental unconscious reveals what we take for granted in our spaces, and in ourselves. DMT is a prime form for processing the environmental unconscious as it induces awareness of the physicality of the theatre space, the body, and identity through interaction with virtual spaces, media systems, and the virtual body. Further, as many examples have already established, that awareness goes in both directions as DMT makes participants intimately aware of media machinations beyond the stage.

Environmental unconscious combines with non-space places to offer an understanding of space that emphasizes the fluidity of the stage environment and foregrounds important relationships with space. By inhabiting a transient space meaningfully, we are reaffirming how that space is part of our environment and how we are shaped by it even as our use and presence shapes said space in return. When we consider the environmental unconscious in contemporary digital media, a phenomenon that I would describe as medial nesting plays a key role. Medial nesting is present in many digital environments that contain multiple layers of different media. In a digital environment, one often has to navigate one media to access another, like reading through an article to access a video within that article or opening a series of windows to experience a livestream. The previous layers do not just disappear; they remain as hypertextual layers the more one is immersed in the environment. To view a YouTube video, the other videos, comments, and advertisements are all also simultaneously and intermedially present. This not only speaks to the commercial, profit-driven imperative of digital environments, but reconfigures our relationship with media in a pluralistic, multidimensional fashion as one can never interact with a singular media in a digital environment without being immersed, plunged, or steered in a variety of platforms.

In DMT, the role of medial nesting benefits a contemporary media-savvy audience as they interact with a digital environment. DMT complicates the uncanny nature of media in performance through toying with the familiarity of media in everyday life, creating a sort of momentary environmental unconscious when the audience is forced to consider (consciously or otherwise) their position and engagement in an increasingly mediated world. This is different than the traditional environmental unconscious that is found in most

site-specific environmental theatre because the place of the production takes on a different sort of significance. Site-specific theatre intentionally removes the structure of the theatre building from performance, whereas DMT allows a theatre building to become site-specific through its transformation of, and reliance on, a relationship with space. Instead of experiencing a place and making connections to it through production, as in site specific theatre, DMT is constantly reframing how place and space function via media integration, infestation, and saturation. Again, we see the non-place space having an impact on environment in this sense of mutual reframing. As we are made to reconsider place and space our understanding of and relationship to both necessarily shifts. The environment is physical, and virtual, but ultimately it is transient – theatre spaces are seemingly empty spaces driven to be filled.

John Jesurun's *Blue Heat,* first produced in New York (1991), aesthetically showcases the way DMT can manipulate how space is conceived and related to, creating an environment within a traditional theatre building. It combines the themes of noncommunication, and immigration in a production that plays loose with reality, inhabitance, and media. The play takes place predominantly backstage or offstage and tracks a group of Hispanic performers as they rest somewhere in Ohio after a performance at a club. They are livestreamed on a screen from backstage where most of the action takes place. Through the performance there are moments where a second and third level of separation are introduced as additional actors are brought in via screens in the backstage area. Media is put inside media, normalizing communication and interaction through interface as conversation drops off among people in the same physical space in favour of communication with people on the other side of one screen or another. We are made to

contend with the panoptic, ubiquitous presence of media: even while it is not actively being engaged with, the frame exists and can pull attention at any time.

This distinction does not only go in one direction – the media environment in this theatre does not simply override the structure of the theatre itself. As *Blue Heat* demonstrates, the theatre has the functionality of a type of interface built into it. DMT leverages the advantage of the alive space of theatre to alter the narrative of what digital media can express. Unlike in a wholly digital environment, the incorporation of live performers and simulated environments changes how the digital element is perceived, because "live action, unlike avatars in synthetic computerized environments, brings corporeality as dynamic material energy to a remote physical location" (Birringer, 248). In a sense, the melding and blurring of digital and live elements on stage creates a space where the medial nature of digital is highlighted specifically through interaction with live bodies. DMT is constantly at odds between the materiality of the theatre space itself. Traditionally theatre is an organic construct, and digital or media elements are synthetic. By situating media within the theatre and intentionally sharing space and interacting with it, the media can be reframed as part of the organic composition. Just as the theatre space in DMT is refigured to mirror the way digital media and technology creates an environment, so too is our understanding of the digital re-framed by its organic melding with the theatre space.

In digital media the frame is both the literal bounds of the interface and the figurative effect of the eye on the media – digital media, because it is framed, is always assumed to be watched, recorded, or otherwise surveilled. This creates an interesting interaction when it is placed within the theatre, which is itself an environment with a frame.

When the digital media is transposed into the environmental framework of DMT that frame is simultaneously dissolved and problematized. This is especially true when the performer crosses whatever threshold that frame purports. The framing mechanism exists – digital media is framed in its construction and implementation – but the telematic action of the performer disrupts this. The digital media's impact or meaning is now taken outside of its frame the moment the performer moves away, and the performers themselves integrated into that impact.

To further explore how this relationship between impact and frame functions on stage, *Blue Heat* aptly demonstrates how interaction around and within a frame on stage can impact our perception of meaning in a performance. A play about avoiding communication (a staple theme in a lot of Jesurun's work) wherein the normally hidden world of the backstage is brought centerstage through a media space, *Blue Heat* simultaneously requires the presence of the frame to be understood and makes the hierarchy or importance of real vs virtual almost ridiculous. As media is nested in the performance and conversations are moved further and further away from the *here* space of the physical stage, the play does not stop to question or problematize the relationship the actors have with each other across distance. It is simply the way things function. The set appears to be a largely empty cube, with sloping walls and several monitors embedded into the back wall high above the ground (see figure 24). The action of the play takes place in four separate studio rooms backstage, and no actor actually appears in person on the main stage where the audience is seated. Monitors are embedded within scenes, further dividing the space while also opening it up, expanding the normally fixed space of the stage to encompass layered, nested medial spaces within it. It asks questions of "the art of theater:

where does the play actually take place, what exactly is the theater play if it does not happen on stage in front of an audience" (Schmidt, 423), provoking further questions of how the notion of a frame impacts the way space is constructed in DMT.

Figure 24: Blue Heat, *John Jesurun.⁴² The massive media system dominates an otherwise empty stage. The action of the play takes place in four separate studios backstage.*

        Christophe Collard looks at *Blue Heat* as an example of not only the importance, but also the ontological issue of the frame. He sees the play as a disavowal of unmediated spaces in that it denies there can be places anymore where the reach of the digital cannot touch:

        Thus, there is no outside to our mediated world – a Jesurunian appropriation, if you like, of Derrida's famous quip that "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte." [12]. On this, mind you, he emits no value judgment, fully aware of the pointlessness in speaking about

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⁴² Source: "10. Blue Heat (1991) 11. Iron Lung (1992)" John Jesurun. <https://sites.google.com/site/johnjesurun/10blueheat(1991)11ironlung(1992> . Jesurun has several videos of many of his works on his Vimeo site (unfortunately, the copy of *Blue Heat* seems to have been removed) <https://vimeo.com/johnjesurun>

"purity" or "essential," unmediated meaning. Technology, as it can hardly be denied

these days, forms part and parcel of our cultural landscape. (Collard, 2018, 2)

The lack of value judgement is an important element of this play. As with many of these

productions, *Blue Heat* seems to take an asymptomatic approach to media – it may be an

oversaturation, it may have a dominating affect on cultural production and practice, but

ultimately the reality is it has a presence that cannot be ignored. Instead of placing media as

a poison or panacea to some sort of problem within drama, it is simply a challenge to our

understanding of a contemporary mediated world by featuring a performance space where

engagement with media is obtuse and necessary. Only by breaking the system and going

backstage could the audience de-mediatize themselves in this production. Even then, the

nested media frames would thwart them. In removing the action from the stage, *Blue Heat*

reveals the frame of the theatre, drawing connections between it and other media. It has an

interface, and while we might regard it as a more natural one due to (in the case of more

conventional theatre) a lack of digital infestation, the capability of the interface remains the

same.

The problematization of the frame in DMT is also a result of the environmental

unconscious. There is a risk in seeing the use of performers in this context as only

reinforcing the distinction between live and mediated discussed earlier – that the live

performer and unlive virtual frame being crossed simply strengthens the divide between

them. On the contrary, seeing DMT as an environment maintains the importance of

dissolution and disruption. Even while one might be able to distinguish a live actor from a

mediated one in a given performance, the nature of an immersive, intermedial environment

continues to covertly influence how an audience might understand their own relationship to space.

The environmental unconscious of DMT points towards an understanding of how we inhabit carbon-real and virtual spaces and how media and culture simultaneously inform each other. As theatre can reflect society, treatment of virtual space on stage showcases how they are inhabited beyond the stage. Rimini Protokoll's 2019 production of *Granma. Trombones from Havana* in Berlin constructs a divided presence through the manipulation of virtual and physical spaces, encouraging audiences to confront their own understanding of locality and history through interaction with digital memories. The performance space is predominantly inhabited by several performers playing the trombone. They are all representative of locals from Havana and use the play to explore how Cuba is romanticized as a utopia, and the way its failures to achieve perfection are criticized internally and externally. As they talk and play, navigating personal and intergenerational memories of revolutions, video and music is played alongside them. The back of the stage has several raised archways that are constantly playing video, imagery, and propaganda, sometimes simultaneously. The performance bridges mediation and narration into a critique of faulty advertising and governmental propaganda that cause suffering even as they purport success. The performers interact, speak to, and gesture towards their past while lamenting and sometimes celebrating the state of their nation, at times mimicking what is happening on the screens, and at times railing against it.

The title points to the position of the performers. *Granma* is the name of the boat that was built in New York and took revolutionaries to Cuba in the 1950s to fight the Batista dictatorship. The performers all develop their overlapping and interweaving

narratives from the point that the yacht was purchased by a grandparent and used to help redistribute wealth. *Granma* is also the name of a Castro-regime newspaper that charts the course of the revolution from outside of the political sphere; by performing and scrutinizing history through interacting meaningfully with it, history is rewritten to become the performers' own. The blocking of the play emphasizes this, enmeshing the performers with the media. The stage is dominated by a large platform that brings the actors to an even height with the projection. All the performers play the trombone throughout the play, and where they are when playing affects how isolated or immersed they appear. When playing up alongside the projections, they appear to be in concert with their digital ancestors, but when they step down into the more unlocalized space the divide is significant (see figure 25). One performer narrates a story of war-time preparation that his grandfather underwent in Cuba while the other actors put themselves in front of the projection, joining in the field work.[43] A jarring juxtaposition of events, it serves to pull history forward, questioning the choices made and the resultant country that is currently in a state of flux. The performers become anchors under which we navigate media, and the history of its impact in a national narrative.

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[43] See <https://vimeo.com/375394463> from 1:02:00-1:10:00 for a depiction of this scene.

Figure 25: Granma. Trombones from Havana, *Rimini Protokoll.*[44] *A high-energy dance and music number is underscored by video of a protest during the Revolution.*

In this case, the frame and the environmental unconscious come together through dissolution and disavowal in DMT, taking a familiar architecture and covertly forcing the audience to come to terms with how they inhabit space, the spaces they inhabit, and how that inhabitance affects identity and presence. Further, it shows how DMT can question the global and generally neo-liberal nature of media production – that which is national or territorial in scope is also affected by a global market and neoliberal power structures. Even the titular boat is itself an invading body from the United States, repurposed by locals to their own ends. By looking at media and media products as a transcultural property, our interaction goes beyond cultural bounds, creating a sense of deterritorialization through media saturation. The transient and ethereal spaces of the virtual come to the forefront, but rather showing how the physical, visceral body is reflected by immersion in a digitally constituted environment.

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[44] Source: Kaegi, Stefan. "Granma. Trombones from Havana," *Rimini Protokoll*. <https://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/project/granma-posaunen-aus-havanna>. The website also includes more images and a documentary of the production.

4.5 Grounding the Body in Space

Space in DMT functions as a source of tension with regards to how media is produced and interacted with, while simultaneously providing a sense of grounding for the body. In an immersive intermedial environment, body and identity are framed and understood through their relationship to space, and this is a key strength to DMT. It uses the notion of the environment to challenge not only the way in which we inhabit space, but also the reality of the way we interact with distant objects. The body is a key component to this interaction.

The body negotiates the real, physical material of the actor, and also functions "as a paradigm – a conceptual framework – for the understanding of human relationships with the world" (Conroy, 13). In DMT, this way of relating to the world is concretized through how bodies inhabit space on stage. To illustrate, I would look back at Rimini Protokoll's *Call cutta in a box* to closely follow how space and body-as-paradigm in DMT combine to enhance the message or meaning communicated by the play. The performing bodies in this play are so integrated into the space of the performance that without them the performance space itself loses its foothold in making meaning. The cross-cultural communication being represented by the play could be represented in a gallery or a museum – it is ostensibly about the Othering of the call centre agent, bound up by a narrative like many exhibits are. However, by introducing the guiding digital presence of a person, and the direct control of the space the audience inhabits, the play is anchored. It takes on a personal, intimate significance not communicated by the objects or the media itself alone. By dynamically combining object, body, and space, the play becomes "a practice in which societies negotiate around what the body is and means" (Shepard, 1). In this case body is situated as

material connected to media, and as a way of interacting with the world – a world that in this case exists partially in the non-place space of the digital. The digital mediation of this piece removes the frame of the theatre and encourages interaction. The frame of the technology connects the audience as close as possible to the action, the narrative, and the immersive history explored by the play. As the body becomes telepresent and engages in action across/through/between frames, we must consider how that very notion of body is altered by digital space.

By using space to refocus on the body, DMT problematizes and complicates understanding of how our bodies navigate digital spaces and digital culture. The internet is both a wide system of perspectives, but also a self-reinforcing echo chamber. A remarkably touching moment in *Call cutta in a box* is when we see the reaction of the audience being asked to talk about themselves as stories across culture and experience are shared. The process of Othering is transformed into one of sharing when it becomes bi-directional, and many audience members were highly emotionally charged in a positive way by this experience, as evidenced in the documentary Rimini Protokoll released of the production, which includes lengthy footage of audience engagement with the space (Rimini Protokoll, 2013).[45] The play impacts the audience despite the vast distance separating the audience from the performance space, by connecting through these digital means to intimately experience the performance, and the closeness brought on by that connection only strengthens the impact. Similar to *Granma,* the performance plays on transcultural communication and understanding, unpinning Western concepts of what is normal.

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[45] Examples of the emotional interaction between audience and performer is found throughout the documentary feature by Rimini Protokoll found here: <https://vimeo.com/41693479>

Space in DMT vacillates between integrating, blurring, and fracturing as the digital world is brought to bear with the physical. The navigation of space is crucial to an intermediaturgical understanding of the contemporary body as it is increasingly bound by these transitory spaces. As an element of performance, the manipulation of sense of space has incredible power for pushing issues of identity, inhabitance, socialization, globalization, and culture as meaningful themes and ideas with which we must contend. As Barbara Creed states, when confronted with an intermedial body-that-is-not-a-body, "the spectator would be haunted by a sense of the uncanny […] the glamorous other is a phantom, an image without a referent in the real, an exotic chimera, familiar yet strange" (86). Even within a framework of interdependence the physicality of the real, physical body is the most important point of familiar reference. Interacting through an interface, be it a portal to cyberspace or an intermedial framework, removes some of the assurance that the being on the other side of the interface is carbon-real, in real time, somewhere else. While evidence suggests we tend to take things in good faith and interact with representations as live agents, how we navigate and understand space frames that interaction. The integration of the virtual-real and the carbon-real through media saturation and increasingly sophisticated simulation has created a situation where being able to knowingly navigate space requires an understanding of how media controls our perception of it, and ourselves. This has a reciprocal effect on the reflective power space has for understanding the body and identity.

Conclusion

Coming Back to the Ranch

The first example visited in this thesis is perhaps underserved. *Future of Memory,* by Troika Ranch, is about memory and how it is stored and recalled. The first brief analysis of the play created a foundation for introducing the importance of delimiting use of digital media and interaction and integration with digital media in performance, but the play is no less DMT than any of the others explored through the thesis. Now that we have come full circle, looking at the play through a more intentionally intermediaturgical lens offers perhaps a greater understanding of it. When we look back at the example, the inclusion of media adds another dimension to what the play is saying.[46] It involves a complex interaction with digital media, both in term of recording live on stage, and in the way the action of the stage flows together with and against what is played back. The body of the performer, both in the dance and in the projection, is fractured and doubled through the media. In a non-trivial way, it combines notions of memory, recollection, and the emotional attachment to the past, and places it directly onto the body through dance and projection, emphasizing the physicality of memory. Media warps the sense of space and time of the play, temporally separating and combining the live and media elements of the performance and blurring the boundary between the two as a physical dialogue is combined with the verbal exposition of the recorded characters. And finally, identity and presence are questioned through the production – who we are and how we build a sense of community is

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[46] To see how the media and performers closely interact, look to <https://vimeo.com/119578722> 0:30:00-0:40:00

put at odds with how our memory impacts our present lived experience. This becomes doubly important when we consider the multiple meanings of memory. Memory is stored and recalled, however trustworthy or impermanent it may be, but memory is also a key feature to the recording and production of digital signals. It is likewise stored and recalled by machines to facilitate human action and growth.

When the play was first produced in 2003 social media was beginning to diversify and increase its role in social interaction. At a scale that had never been seen, people could store, share, and recall their own memories with loved ones and, notably, strangers. The theatre has been a site of sharing stories for millennia, but the sharing it offers functions differently. Despite the seeming perfection of digital reproduction, the mechanisms hiding behind digital media and the platforms that host them are subject to just as many fractures, stutters, and interruptions as our own memories. By dynamically combining these themes, Troika Ranch asks us not only to ponder the state of our memory and how it affects our sense of self and the community we build, but also to consider the places outside of our bodies where our memory is stored and shared, and how they play just as much of a role. The media elements in the play cannot be properly understood on their own and ignoring them as simple gimmicks in favour of only looking at the narrative content results in a shallower reading. Instead, we can find more robust value from the play if we view it as a vehicle through which we navigate the complexity of a contemporary environment and imagination.

Many of the artists and art groups that appear in this thesis are considered inscrutable by critics and audiences: they are auteurs, they use unconventional performers and have unconventional educations. However, the work they produce is not impossible to

recreate – there are rules and strategies that govern their work like any other practice, and the skillset is not alien to typical theatre creators. This thesis set out to make a case for a genre of theatre performance and to illustrate the value of an intermediaturgical approach that would increase access to the creation and criticism of performances following a similar framework. Through the body, identity, and space, artists have used DMT to open up dialogues about the human condition in the digital age, our engagement with the digital world, and how it has impacted our view of ourselves, our interactions with others, and the environments we inhabit. Where it appears to lead is that the integration of digital and media technology, as well as the saturation of that technology on and off the stage, has allowed for a greater freedom of movement, communication, and extension of the self for those who use it. The cost comes in the form of being under the impression of constant surveillance, a loss of control of personal privacy, and an unobtainable image that is constantly shown and manipulated by forces well beyond the average person's control.

Where does the body sit in all of this? As a central agent in meaning making, the body has always occupied a dominant position in the theatre. It is shaped and helps to shape a critical and emotional perception of who we are and how we interact with the world. In DMT this is no less true, however what a body is, what it looks like, and the implications of its position on stage are complicated. The body is no longer merely the corporeal, carbon-real flesh and blood actor. It can be diverse, pluralistic, and fragmented. Its liveness and presence are at best questioned, if not outright challenged, and by doing so creators ask their audiences to consider themselves. In a world that is increasingly integrated, engaged, infested, or augmented with digital technology and a media reality that overshadows every exchange, how much of this have you taken into your body, and how

has it changed you? How has your own sense of individual identity been guided by media influence, and how does the machine catering to your wants and needs drive your perception of yourself? DMT does not really propose answers on a grand scale to any of these questions but pursues them using the very tools it is criticizing. The theatre allows us to feel and think across the liminal boundary of the stage, creating space for interrogating, experimenting, and delving into what our bodies are and how we inhabit the world with them.

Contemporary identity is fractured more than ever through interaction on and across digital space. A notion of presence must expand to include at the very least the concept of co-presence and telepresence, and how we understand these greatly shapes how we understand ourselves. Our sense of self is both up-ended and solidified through how we interact with each other in digital spaces. Issues of whom is present and when in any given interaction give way to an understanding of the self that is at once multiple and fractured, spatially and temporally. And because our understanding of self is framed through media platforms and impacted by media saturation, the shaping effect of media on identity cannot be underscored enough.

DMT often foregrounds both identity and a sense of presence by playing with how they are expressed, showcasing how one person can be many people simultaneously, and ultimately how it all boils down to one pluralistic being. It proposes that we are cyborg in nature: integrated, infested, and interfaced with the media around us to the extent that it changes how we understand ourselves, our bodies, and our communities. Media controls and at times restricts a traditional sense of community while offering the illusion of a more universal one. DMT uses the architecture of online and social media technology to break

down these illusions. It does this not necessarily to demonize the impact of media on identity, but rather more fully place accountability back onto the audience to seize their own sense of presence and identity for themselves.

Media saturation has also fractured our understanding of space, how we navigate it, and the types of spaces we find ourselves inhabiting. Digital and media platform spaces can be deceptively complex and occupy a lot of social space – they are becoming or have already become an inevitable element of our society. The value we attach to space, how we turn spaces into places, determines how we understand our navigation of them. This is complicated with the seemingly-transient nature of many contemporary spaces, and the layered effect digital space can have. Whether we are *here,* in the physical, material moment, or *there,* as a temporally or proximally distant presence, is foregrounded as crucial to our understanding of space, despite the easily disrupted the distinction between the two.

DMT takes space and embraces disjuncture, allowing for the fragmented space of the digital world to leak onto the stage, allowing performers to cross boundaries between real and virtual, and never allowing a discrete notion of a singular frame to settle. The frame of the theatre and the frames inherent in media merge and jostle as narratives are told that allow for traditional conventions of time, present, and history to collide. It comments on and problematizes how our understanding of the world and our ability to navigate these emergent digital spaces while foregrounding the incredible potential for media to allow us to access and tear down old regimes of historical and spatial gatekeeping. Space in theatre like this is simultaneously critical of how we use non-place spaces and welcoming of these spaces are a potential site for reconfiguring how we perceive the world.

The three organizing principles of DMT allow for a look at theatre that treats media as more than a novelty and makes space for emerging technology that the theatre has historically shown a record of adoption that will no doubt continue. The economy created by media growth, diversification, and saturation shows no signs of stopping, access to this media is at an all-time high, and so it will remain a rich source for the creation of more theatre that deals with, problematizes, embraces, and challenges the ways in which we navigate our spaces, understand our selves, and perceive our bodies. As the field of practice and criticism is clarified and made more accessible for those who want to create using the principles described in this essay, we will only see more diverse perspectives on how and what the impact of media (good and bad) is on our lives.

What Next?

There are next steps to this research. Demonstrating the effectiveness of a genre and framework is a foundational step towards a larger undertaking – making this research usable and accessible to emerging, practicing artists and students with passions about intermedial performance. Intermediaturgy focuses on human navigation of the world through media, which is not strictly connected to format or technological function. Centralizing interaction puts it in a prime position to be able to adapt to changing art styles, and the technology and media that influences them. The pedagogical applications of this framework require a much deeper dive, as well as a compilation of a much larger body of performance. This thesis is not meant to be exhaustive, neither is it a case study, however looking at the genre as a viable tool for emerging artists would benefit from a more thorough exploration of what can fit into this style of performance. Further, wider integration with the field would solidify intermediaturgy as a more widely used practice for the creation or criticism of DMT. While some of the artists in this thesis already use a form of intermediaturgy in their composition, the method is not widespread and not present in mass market criticism, which again limits the accessibility of the style and the ability of scholars to talk about it. Intermediality in theatre and performance is still at odds with itself through a difficult relationship to nomenclature, and while this thesis does not solve all of the issues, a less check-box mindset when engaging with intermedial art would aid in the clarification of the field.

Seeing how this framework fits with emergent technology will also demonstrate its effectiveness – the claim being made is that by focusing on our navigation of the world through the art, intermediaturgy and DMT used in concert will make more impactful

theatre. However, it remains to be seen what the next revolution will look like. Prominent intermedial scholars have predicted many advances in media and digital technology, but the way we interact with them has not always held up, and indeed accounts for a lot of the problematization of key concepts within this document. The theory remains crucial to understanding the mechanics at work, but it loses some cohesion as social, cultural, and technological boundaries are pushed. How does McLuhan's hot and cold media fare against social media? Benjamin's aura of the authenticity already occupies a contentious position, as does Wagner's original corporeality; given that procedural programming, learning systems, and neural networks are creating entire new worlds from within a pre-programmed base, how does our understanding of originality maintain itself? As society increasingly blurs the boundaries between online and off, our understanding of media theory needs to accommodate change. Conventional dramaturgy and mediaturgy do not sit well with interacting and interrelated media and living elements on stage. However, intermediaturgy offers an alternate path: focusing on the human (or posthuman) process of perception and navigation allows for the emphasis to always be placed on the positionality of the audience instead of the technology or style of performance.

Despite being an object that is increasingly created and consumed by the masses, media has a shaping power. The impact of this shaping is continuous and happens both overtly and insidiously. DMT reveals the mechanisms imperative to media and digital technology, opening them to scrutiny, delving into how they shape us and how our perceptions are guided by our use of them. It does this through fracturing, doubling, overstimulating, and destabilizing the environment of the stage, forcing us to contend with

how we manage to belong inside these spaces outside the stage and making us aware of our complicit engagement with them from within.

The ontology of live and mediated that comes up throughout this thesis is still a troubled one, and in terms of theatre and performance it is a quagmire that is difficult to avoid. Theatre is a live event and the dialogic nature of the medium is one of its strengths, so it will always have a difficult time reconciling the intrusion or integration of new and foreign mechanisms. However, theatre has also always been a site of assimilation, integration, creation, and transformation, taking in what these new techniques, ideas, and components offer and reflecting back something significant about the human condition. The world we live in increasingly destabilizes traditional modes of interaction and is continuously coming up with new novel ways within which we can interact. It should come as no surprise, then, that the artists most committed to using new emergent technology in theatre and performance can be some of the harshest critics of contemporary modes of engagement. Theatre is itself a form of media and as a result has its own shaping power. By co-opting and adapting the very tools of the media to criticize it, DMT becomes a genre of performance that allows for a nuanced, in-depth, and indicting critique of media, its benefits, and the hold it has on us that is as emotionally, cerebrally, and physically impactful as theatre for any other purpose.

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Appendix I: Links to Productions

This appendix constitutes a full list of productions studied, followed by links to video and imagery highlighted in the thesis itself. The productions are listed alphabetically, while the links are ordered as they are found in the body of the document, denoted by page number.

List of Productions

4.48 Psychosis. By Kay Voges, Director, Jan Brandt, Designer, Sarah Kane, Playwright. Dortmund, 2014. 01/11/2019 <www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=7jfF7G72_LY>

4th Skin. By Mihaela Kavdanska. University of Art and Industrial Design, Linz, 2013

Alladeen. By Builders Association and motiroti. London, 2003

ANXIETY. Theatre Yes, Edmonton, 2016

Blue Heat. By John Jesurun. Intar Hispanic American Arts Centre, New York, 1991

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Einstein on the Beach. By Robert Wilson, Director. Philip Glass, Composer. France, 1976

Electric Haiku. Cathy Weis, Performer, Steve Hamilton, Sound design. Dance Theatre Workshop, December 2002, New York. 03/15/2020 <http://www.cathyweis.org/works/works/electric-haiku/>

Eye/Body. Carolee Schneemann, Performer. New York, 1963, *MOMA,* 01/11/2019 <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/portfolios/200121?locale=en>

Firefall. By John Jesurun, Dance Theatre Workshop, New York, 2009

Future of Memory. By Troika Ranch. Dawn Stoppiello, Director. The Duke on 42nd Street, New York City, 2003. 01/11/2019 <troikaranch.org/portfolio-item/future-of-memory/>

Granma. Trombones for Havana. By Rimini Protokoll. Berlin, 2019. 01/11/2019 <https://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/project/granma-posaunen-aus-havanna>

Hamlet 360: Thy Father's Spirit. Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, 2019. 01/11/2019 <https://www.wgbh.org/hamlet360>

House/Lights. By Wooster Group, Elizabeth LeCompte, Filmmaker, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1999. *Kanopy,* 01/11/2019 <https://kanopy.com/video/houselights>

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Kamp. By Hotel Modern. 2005. *YouTube*, 01/11/2019 <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCf7v_8CteDG1tldogXpWdkA>

LEO. By Gregg Parks and Daniel Briere. *Odyscene,* 2011. 01/11/2019 <https://odyscene.com/programmation/leo/>

Les Cenci: A Story of Artaud. Gopala Davies, Director. Grahamstown, 2016

Needles and Opium. By Robert Lepage, CanStage, Toronto, 2013

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The Body in Question(s)². Brian Webb Dance Company and Van Grimde Corps Secrets. Edmonton, 2016

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