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### **SUBJECTIVITY<>CULTURE<>COMMUNICATIONS<>INTERMEDIA: A MEDITATION ON THE “IMPURE INTERACTIONS” OF PERFORMANCE AND THE “IN-BETWEEN” SPACE OF INTIMACY IN A WIRED WORLD**

This “meditation” pursues four objectives. The first is to provide an introduction to a variety of psychological interpretations of the concept of intimacy in terms of its motivations, characteristics, and functions within the larger understanding of the construction, maintenance, and expansion of the “self” in *relationship* and *interaction*. The second objective is to attempt to locate these psychological observations on intimacy within broader socio-anthropological frameworks, in order to consider if and how they are manifest in cultural and ideological developments. The third objective is to overlay these initial findings with multiple theories of communications and media influence on individuals and communities, as they relate to the reformation of and potential for intimacy in contemporary mediatised societies. The pursuit here is of a composite “logic” of resonance, interconnection, and generalized causality within these overlapping evolutionary spheres (psychology, sociology, communications). The fourth objective is to elucidate (as opposed to “define”) the elusive concept of intermedia as it is understood, analyzed, and enacted by contemporary practitioners and theorists, with a particular emphasis on the role of intimacy in terms of intention, design, and experience. Finally, the emerging theoretical insights generated are tentatively applied to a performance by the intermedial, site-specific performance troupe Bluemouth Inc. Presents. In the process of these inquiries, I hope to establish intermedia—and, specifically, intermedial *intimacy*—as the recognizable (though not necessarily inevitable) offspring of the previously explored personal, cultural, and ideological developments.

*Cette « méditation » poursuit quatre objectifs. Le premier : présenter diverses interprétations du concept d'intimité tel qu'il est entendu dans le domaine de la psychologie (motivations, caractéristiques et fonctions) et les placer dans le cadre plus large de la construction, de l'entretien et de l'expansion du « soi » dans le contexte d'une relation et d'une interaction. Le second objectif : inscrire ces observations sur l'intimité dans un cadre socio-anthropologique plus vaste pour voir si on les retrouve dans des développements culturels et idéologiques. Le*

troisième objectif : superposer à ces premières constatations quelques théories de la communication ayant trait à l'influence des médias sur l'individu et la société en rapport avec la réforme de l'intimité et son potentiel dans des sociétés contemporaines médiatisées. Cet objectif est celui d'une « logique » composite de la résonance, de l'interconnexion et de la causalité généralisée au sein même des sphères évolutives qui se chevauchent (psychologie, sociologie, communication). Le quatrième objectif est de clarifier (plutôt que « définir ») le concept insaisissable d'intermédia tel que l'entendent, l'analysent et le mettent en œuvre des praticiens et théoriciens contemporains. Une importance toute particulière est accordée au rôle de l'intimité en ce qui a trait à l'intention, à la conception et à l'expérience. Et enfin, l'auteur tentera de mettre en pratique les théories en émergence en se servant de l'exemple d'une représentation intermédia localisée de la compagnie Bluemouth Inc. Au fil de son enquête, l'auteur souhaite montrer que l'intermédia – et plus précisément, l'intimité intermédia – est le produit reconnaissable (mais pas nécessairement inévitable) d'événements personnels, culturels et idéologiques explorés auparavant.



### **preamble**

*Whenever possible, we attempt to create intimacy with the audience by sharing the performance space with them.*  
(Bluemouth 17)

In three recent issues of *Canadian Theatre Review* (CTR Nos. 126, 127, and 129), I have explored, from a variety of separate but related perspectives, the process and product of Bluemouth Inc. Presents, a site-specific intermedia performance troupe located in Toronto and New York.<sup>1</sup> My engagement with this company takes multiple forms, personal and professional,<sup>2</sup> yet the troupe remains—happily—a fertile enigma for me, one that both evokes and provokes emerging understandings of intention, strategy, and possibility in performance.

To a large degree, the inspiration for this current body of writing lies squarely in my experience of Bluemouth's pieces—in particular, their 2003 three-part production *Something About a River* (begun in 2002), their 2005 reimaging of *American Standard* (originally performed in 2001), and their 2006 remount of *Lenz* (first performed in 2002). In the CTR article that focuses on the second of these three productions (“The Razor’s Edge”), I

attempted to identify the visceral quality and impact of the show:

I have several images from Bluemouth Inc. Presents' 2005 staging of the performance piece *American Standard* deeply engrained in my memory, any one of which would do Bert O. States<sup>3</sup> proud. They range from subtle and seductive through overwhelming (in multiple senses of that term). The most insistent, however, returns me vividly to the moment when Stephen O'Connell literally rolled up Lucy Simic like a sack of rags and forcefully jammed her into the tiny space beneath the chair I was sitting on. This moment existed within a broader theatrical narrative—abstract, alinear, composite, and elusive, certainly, but also characterized by intention and an investment in conventions of accessibility. But the numerous strands of Simic's hair that remained under one of the legs of my chair were concrete, consequential, and disinterested in the sustained fiction of theatricality. That moment, for me, was what *American Standard* was about. (23)

I have come to understand this moment as perhaps one of the most intimate I have ever experienced in a theatrical context. Further—and problematically—I have also come to understand this immediate, unmediated confrontation with the performers' bodies as a constitutive element within Bluemouth's often overtly *intermedial* strategies, specifically in the tensions, both overt and implicit, between the gravitational attractions of theatricality and performativity that it makes manifest.

The CTR issue quoted from above, one of the most ambitious and crowded to appear in some time, is a collection of articles on site-specific theatre edited by Andrew Houston and Laura Nanni. Perhaps most distinctive in this distinctive issue was the entry by Bluemouth. Entitled "Please Dress Warmly and Wear Warm Shoes," the piece was a thoroughly and *explicitly* collaborative project for the four-member company.<sup>4</sup> Each individual in the troupe took on a particular aspect of site-specific work to consider within the article; once the original sections had been completed, these were circulated among the other members, all of whom were free to write into and through the original author's contribution. Each member adopted a characteristic font, and these different typefaces were carried through to the publication of the article. The result approaches a sort of conceptual hypertext, with each shift in font (there are *many*) potentially drawing the reader to make connections across and throughout the remainder of the article, as the individual voices of the company members emerge as some-

how both separate yet irresolvably intertwined. It is an article that unflinchingly yields new insights with every encounter.

Particularly intriguing—and significant for this discussion—is the number of times the word “intimacy” appears in the article (although, as my experience of *American Standard* suggests, this came less as a surprise than a confirmation). However, in the context of their effort to articulate some of the principles of their practice—a brave, generous, and treacherous errand, to be sure—the obviousness and the elusiveness of the term unavoidably pressed multiple questions into articulation. What does intimacy in intermedia performance mean? What does it consist of? In what ways might it be manifested? What might it facilitate or accomplish? Is such a worthy and laudable objective even possible?<sup>5</sup>

It is perhaps most accurate to suggest that this article is about Bluemouth only indirectly, via inspiration and evocation. For this meditation has several sequential objectives that emerge out of—and, ultimately, lead back into—theatrical considerations by way of diverse and extended but, I hope, rewarding interdisciplinary excursions. My itinerary of objectives follows four main areas of inquiry:

*Subjectivity*: The first objective is to provide an introduction to a variety of psychological interpretations of the concept of intimacy in terms of its motivations, characteristics, and functions within the larger understanding of the construction, maintenance, and expansion of the “self” in *relationship and interaction*.

*Culture*: The second objective is to attempt to locate these psychological observations on intimacy within broader socio-anthropological frameworks, in order to consider if and how they are manifest in cultural and ideological developments.

*Communications*: The third objective is to overlay these initial findings with multiple theories of communications and media influence on individuals and communities, as they relate to the reformation of and potential for intimacy in contemporary mediatized societies. The pursuit here is of a composite “logic” of resonance, interconnection, and generalized causality within these overlapping evolutionary spheres (psychology, sociology, communications).

*Intermedia*: The fourth objective is to elucidate (as opposed to “define”) the elusive concept of intermedia as it is understood, analyzed, and enacted by contemporary practitioners and theorists, with a particular emphasis on the role of intimacy in terms of intention, design, and experience. In the

process, I hope to establish intermedia—and, specifically, intermedial *intimacy*—as the recognizable (if not necessarily inevitable) offspring of the previously explored personal, cultural, and ideological developments.

Clearly, each of these objectives demands far more attention than I can offer it in the context of this already lengthy overview, and I am well aware of the yawning chasms that lie on either side of my wanderings through these relatively unfamiliar territories. Through a brief re-acquaintance with Bluemouth, my final steps on this amble begin to explore the potential application of this theoretical matrix. Within the context of this discussion, however, it must, of necessity, remain largely that—potential: an abstract but, I believe, evocative map for future ambling.

## Subjectivity

### i. *looking for intimacy*

Closeness and intimacy may mean different things, have different bases, and take different forms depending on the constructions of self and social reality that inform relationship experience in different cultural worlds.

(Adams, Anderson, and Adonu 333)

What is intimacy? What makes a moment, a gesture, an interaction, a relationship intimate? As the above quotation suggests, “intimacy” exhibits a high degree of flexibility and ongoing recon-textualization. The available literature on the topic is extensive and diverse, ranging from religious tracts and self-help volumes through dense statistical reports. Between these extremes, the dance of psychology, sociology, and anthropology reveals disciplinary tensions at key sites of meaning and terminology. Nowhere is this more conspicuous than in the competing understandings of “self,” without which, it would seem, no definition of intimacy is possible.

The regularity with which uses such as “true self,” “real self,” and “private self” appear, to differing degrees, across the multiple streams of psychological material (social, health, motivational, developmental, educational, organizational, experimental, etc.) is, from a humanities perspective, both unnerving and, ultimately, deceiving. Certainly, within the contemporary writing on intimacy, conceptions of self gravitate towards the concept as functional and negotiable, if not entirely a construction. Nonetheless, the relatively common investment in the categorization and stability of

“self-hood” can result in strongly normative descriptions. For instance, Geraldine K. Piorkowski’s *Too Close for Comfort: Exploring the Risks of Intimacy* (1994) proceeds from a conception of personality that posits an “innermost” or “Private Self,” around which a secondary “Social Self” and tertiary “Work Self” are wound, onion-like, in a manner reminiscent of Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt*. Established in infancy, the Private Self—home to our “most personal longings, deepest feelings, and most tender vulnerabilities”—is progressively masked for protection through the subsequent layering of selective, stereotype-based filtering via the Social Self and logical, function-based utility via the Work Self (11-14).

Most to the point, however, while the Private Self, which Piorkowski also calls the “Intimate” Self, ideally remains available for modification throughout an individual’s life, “the contents of this early level become walled off from awareness and later experience, only to be jolted into existence by the stirrings of intimacy” (12). A decade after Piorkowski’s contribution, the central relationship between intimacy and the identification, realization, and development of an individual’s “true self” demonstrates notable durability:

[I]ntimacy requires [. . .] willingness and ability to disclose the true self (one’s thoughts, feelings, wishes, fears) and to be a [*sic*] responsive and accepting of the partner’s true self [. . .]. In addition to these essential abilities [. . .] intimacy also requires the ability to feel comfortable with an autonomous self (an appropriate balance between autonomy and intimacy) [. . .]. (Collins and Feeney 173)

A wide range of available theories of intimacy demonstrate similar investment in the relative autonomy of self: “optimal distinctiveness theory [suggests that] identity may be threatened if distinctions between self and other become unclear,” while “object relations theory argues that the self should be able to differentiate its own perceptions, ideas, and feelings from those of the other [. . .]” (Mashek and Sherman 348).

Perhaps not surprisingly, much of the available research originates in the United States of America, which has historically demonstrated an enduring (even passionate) preoccupation with intimacy conceptually, behaviourally, and ideologically. For some researchers, it is precisely the seeming ill-fit between general conceptions of intimacy and perceived American tendencies towards individualism that inspires inquiry:

[I]ndividualism shapes many Americans' understanding of the self, particularly those from European-American backgrounds. [...] Consequently, social-personality psychology theories assume a self that is autonomous, independent from others, unique, and fundamentally separate from others, [...] termed the *independent self-construal*.<sup>6</sup> [...] Behavior, goals, or relationships that threaten the self or do not express the "real" self (defined as independent and separate from other influences) are viewed as inauthentic and lacking in power to provide persistence or happiness [...]." (Cross and Gore 230)

Intriguingly, however, recent studies on the "cultural grounding" of intimacy run counter to this perception and contend that while "independent constructions of self may indeed render the pursuit of closeness and intimacy problematic [...], a cultural perspective suggests that the prominent concern with closeness and intimacy is ultimately grounded in (rather than at odds with) independent constructions of self" (Adams, Anderson, and Adonu 331).

However, the sturdy, centralized self of much North American thinking about intimacy has been under assault for some time, if only in the sense that its self-definition, not merely its behaviour, is increasingly understood as *relational*: "In interdependence theory, the relations between individuals are as real and meaningful as the individuals themselves" (Rusbult, *et al.* 138). And, as Ickes, Hutchison, and Mashek assert, "[t]o put it simply, true relationships demand intersubjectivity" (358). However, these last authors point out, precedents for intersubjectivity include *egoistical intersubjectivity*, in which mode an individual tends to regard the other "as a mental representation—as a personality type, a social-category member, or a role-occupant," as contrasted with *radical intersubjectivity*, during which "we no longer relate merely to our image or mental construction of each other, but instead experience each other's subjectivity more directly through our intersubjective exchange" (359). Extending these ideas through the psychological concepts of individuation and deindividuation first proposed by P.G. Zimbardo in 1969, Ickes, Hutchison, and Mashek propose the psychological constructs of *subjective* and *intersubjective social cognition*:

[S]ubjective social cognition is the product of remembered, imagined, or anticipated social interaction rather than real, ongoing social interaction. [...] [I]ntersubjective social

cognition [...] enables us to apprehend the other's subjectivity as it aligns with and "blends into" our own. It also enables us to appreciate others as being capable of greater self-determination, of being able to transcend their ascribed identities, roles and attributes to think and act in novel and unexpected ways. (361)

Lest the spectre of "blend[ing]" intersubjectivity should appear overly self-threatening, however, a model further extending this work has been proposed that seems at once both more "radical" (relatively speaking) and more familiar in its commodified underpinnings. The "self-expansion model" of Aron, Mashek, and Aron (echoing corporate growth through acquisition) "postulates that in a close relationship each person includes in the self, to some extent, the other's resources, perspectives, and identities" (27). Resources here refer to

material goods, knowledge (conceptual, informational, procedural), and social assets that can facilitate the achievement of goals [...] [F]rom a motivational point of view, the main benefit of including other in the self would be the resources aspect; the perspectives and identities aspects may follow as generally unconscious side effects, a restructuring of the cognitive system. (27-28)

This brief survey is, of course, neither exhaustive nor rigorously representative. Yet what fascinates throughout this range of current efforts to define the operations of self-hood in intimate contexts are the increasingly *acquisitional* strategies proposed as means of establishing, maintaining, protecting, and *expanding* self-perceptions of autonomy. The basic principle that intimacy is, first and foremost, about one's self is, thus, thoroughly and consistently reiterated.

## ii. *risking exposure*

In research stemming from [social-penetration] theory, intimacy is measured by the breadth and depth of self-disclosure. (Piorkowski 11)

Beyond the diverse realm of methodology, however, there is surprising consistency in the literature in terms of the basic criteria for intimacy. As Karen J. Prager observes in *The Psychology of Intimacy*, "All conceptions of intimate interactions [...] seem to center on the notion that intimate behavior consists of sharing that

which is personal” (20-21). “Self-disclosure” appears in virtually all the descriptions of intimacy encountered in the research for this article, and it seems difficult to underestimate its significance. Lynn Jamieson has noted the popular preoccupation with “disclosing intimacy,” which she describes as “an intimacy of the self rather than an intimacy of the body” (1). Within multiple definitions, self-disclosure is repeatedly presented as either the precursor or the necessary complement to two other basic operations, detailed below by Prager and Roberts:

[A]n intimate interaction is distinguished from other kinds of interactions by three necessary and sufficient conditions: self-revealing behavior, positive involvement with the other, and shared understandings. Self-revealing behaviors are those that reveal personal, private aspects of the self to another, or invite another into a zone of privacy. [. . .] [A]n involved partner devotes full attention to the encounter [. . .]. In an intimate interaction, both partners experience a sense of knowing or understanding some aspect of the other’s inner experience—from private thoughts, feelings, or beliefs, to characteristic rhythms, habits, or routines [. . .]. (45)

This triad of self-disclosure, positive response, and mutual understanding echoes across diverse orientations on intimacy,<sup>7</sup> in a sense providing the grounds upon which the multiple understandings of personality and identity are tested and complicated. However, Prager’s work is also particularly useful in her differentiation between “intimate interactions” and “intimate relationships”:

Intimate interactions and intimate relationships [. . .] each refer to a different and clearly distinguishable notion of *space* and *time*. Interactions refer to dyadic behavior that exists within a clearly designated space-and-time framework. [. . .] Relationships, however, exist in a much broader, more abstract space-and-time framework. [. . .] They continue in the absence of any observable behavior between partners. [. . .] [C]haracteristics of the immediate context (time of day, nature of occasion, physical surroundings) may strongly affect a particular interaction but have minimal effect on a relationship [. . .]. [O]nly a fraction of the interactions in an intimate relationship is intimate [. . .]. [I]ntimate interactions clearly do not always occur in relationships. [. . .] [I]ntimate disclosures may occur in interactions between strangers precisely “because of the unlikelihood of a further relationship and the attendant opportun-

ities for betrayal” (Wynne and Wynne 385, italics in original). (Prager 19, italics in original)

This distinction is particularly significant in that it complicates general perceptions of the relationship between intimacy and passion. According to Vohs and Baumeister, “The standard view holds that long-term romantic relationships make a transition from passionate love to compassionate love, and the transition is essentially a shift from passion to intimacy as the main foundation” (191). However, the separation of intimate *relationships* from intimate *interactions* enables more complex and variable understandings of intimacy and problematizes the traditional separation of passionate and intimate experience.

While self-disclosure is the prerequisite catalyst, it is, perhaps, the last of the three basic criteria—mutual *understanding* between the partners in an intimate interaction—that would seem the most difficult to verify, measure, or even quantify. It is also, according to much of the literature, the point at which the “loop” of intimacy is most likely to fail. The odds are improved if each partner strives for what Prager and Roberts term

[f]ull involvement of the organismic self [which] means that the person’s moment-to-moment attention is not distracted but is instead fully focused upon self, partner, and interaction [...] [This] permits spontaneity and a lack of defensiveness at the same time that it promotes an unfiltered, accurate understanding of the partner. (50)

Intimate attention, in a sense, generates a “space” of safety, support, and permission to both disclose and to experiment in the act of that disclosure, due to increased confidence that one will be both seen and understood.

## Culture

### i. *self-serve society*...

The Victorian era—the height of print culture—was a time of “secrets.” [...] Our own age, in contrast, is fascinated by exposure. Indeed, the *act* of exposure itself now seems to excite us more than the content of the secrets exposed. (Meyerowitz 311, italics in original)

The socio-anthropological take on this wrestling with selfhood and intimacy is, again, from a humanities perspective, more famil-

iar in its modes of analysis (and, possibly, in its inconclusiveness). Jamieson's *Intimacy: Personal Relationships in Modern Societies* (1998) provides a truncated but instructive overview of key influences on, and transition in attitude about, intimacy between the "Pre-modern/pre-industrial" period through to the "Postmodern" period within "Euro-North American" populations.<sup>8</sup> Within this somewhat vague jurisdiction, her survey perceives a clear evolutionary increase in *individualism* and an interrelated growth in the demand for/influence of individual *choice* as personal expectation, commercial strategy, social reality, biological determinant, and ideological base (15-42). What quickly becomes apparent is that the tendency to see North American individualism as hypothetically at odds with general conceptions of intimacy equally underpins much socio-anthropological discussion, as well.

Related literature from both American and European scholars, including (not surprisingly) that to which Jamieson refers, is decidedly pessimistic about ever-increasing individualism and its impact on the possibilities of intimacy. The term "fabric" (as in "tearing," "shredding," and "unraveling") is frequently called upon. Zygmunt Bauman's comments are familiar in their association between the decreasing interest in and capability of personal interaction and the lure of consumer distractions:

Unable to cope with the challenges and problems arising from their mutual relations, men and women turn to marketable goods, services and expert counsel; they need factory[-]produced tools to imbue their bodies with socially meaningful 'personalities' [...] or simply factory-produced noise (literal and metaphorical) to 'suspend' social time and eliminate the need to negotiate social relations. (164)

Narrowing the focus, Andrew Cherlin directly identifies the challenge of increasing individualism to traditional family structures:

Since the mid-1960s, the quest for self-fulfilment and intimacy has taken an even more individualistic tone; increasingly what counts is one's own emotional satisfaction, even if it clashes with the needs of spouses and children and even if it leads to the break-up of a marriage. (38)

Noting individualism's self-consuming assault on both "natural" (procreation) and "cultural" (marriage) phenomena, British anthropologist Marilyn Strathern asserts that "the individual vanishes not just from a surfeit of individuality. It vanishes when it

no longer seems relevant to talk about its environment and thus [...] about 'its relationship' to society" (150).

Ironically, for many of these analysts, a misguided and literally "self"-defeating desire for/pursuit of intimacy is inextricably woven into this runaway individualism. In a consistently evolving argument that spans three decades, Richard Sennett has explored the consequences and implications of what he sees as the constant erosion of the distinctions between public and private life in twentieth- and twenty-first-century capitalist societies, exemplified in an indefinite and sprawling conception of the self increasingly drawn to self-exposure. Wary of "the project of the self," Sennett describes "the intimate society" that is utterly preoccupied with personal relationships and that apparently cannot delve too deeply into the intimate depths of the individual psyche: "social relationships of all kinds are real, believable, and authentic the closer they approach the inner psychological concerns of each person" (*Fall* 259). Corralled into a highly circumscribed self-absorption that is largely disconnected from concepts of collectivity, accumulated accomplishment, or past experience, the "ideal self" of contemporary capitalism experiences intimacy as an intense, short-term consumable.<sup>9</sup>

## ii. *pursuit of purity*

[...] the reflexive project of self [...] (Giddens, *Modernity* 244)

It should be noted that the "the project of the self," a concept thoroughly explored by numerous sociologists,<sup>10</sup> is not uniformly understood as a site of trepidation. Prominent among writers who identify turn-of-the-millennium western individualism as potentially fertile soil for both identity and intimacy is the proficient Anthony Giddens. His thirty-some books span and intertwine his related expertise in economics and political science,<sup>11</sup> and in his most immediately relevant offerings, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) and *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992), Giddens effectively (if implicitly) marks a transition into a postmodern understanding of identity. In the process, he remodels the "project of the self" as the "reflexive project of self" and, more specifically, "the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives [...] by means of which self-identity is reflexively understood, both by the individual concerned and by others" (*Modernity* 243-44). The resulting "trajectory of the self" represents individual continuity between the past and an anticipated future by means of the demanding task of maintaining and

constantly “reworking” one’s inevitably “fragile” self-narratives “against the backdrop of shifting experiences of day-to-day life and the fragmenting tendencies of modern institutions” (185-186).

The myriad implications of this and related hypotheses are rather less provocative in 2008 than when they first emerged. While there is neither the space nor the requirement here for a thorough survey of contemporary interpretations within the humanities of the impact of postmodernity on subjectivity, Terry Eagleton’s revisionist musings on *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (regardless of one’s assessment of his argument) give a clear indication of the distance that was being and has been traveled.

The freedom of the classical liberal subject was always curbed, in theory at least, by its respect for the autonomy of others. Without such respect it would risk collapse, since others would then not respect its autonomy either. But if there are no autonomous others out there, then the freedom of the subject, in fantasy at least, comes bursting through the juridico-political frame which once contained it. This, however, is something of a Pyrrhic victory, since there is also no longer any unified subject in here to whom the liberty in question might be attached. [...] All the subject would seem to be free of is itself. (87)

In particular, Eagleton’s argument (published only four years after *The Transformation of Intimacy*), in its harnessing of the dissolution of the unified self to complex and contradictory economic forces and desires, would seem to emerge directly out of the intersection of psychological and sociological determinants explored above.

Nonetheless, foremost among the possibilities engendered by Giddens’s contributions, for the purposes of the current argument, is his proposal of the “pure relationship.” Jamieson provides a concise gloss of the multiple conditions Giddens traces on the road to this concept:

globalization, disembeddedness, risk, dominance of experts and abstract systems, reflexivity. The pace of social change is such that traditions are more profoundly swept away than ever before [. . .]. The revolutions in communication technology and transport penetrate every part of the globe, promoting both the homogenization of culture and a sense of choice, reducing cultures to alternative lifestyles disembedded from their time and place. (39)<sup>12</sup>

While multiple commentators find in these conditions a degree of self-absorption-via-self-exposure so all-consuming as to all but eliminate the possibility of relational intimacy, Giddens looks to the same and identifies the potential for unprecedented personal discovery and creation by means of intense intimacy in the context of the *pure relationship*.

“A pure relationship,” Giddens contends, “is one in which external criteria have become dissolved: the relationship exists solely for whatever rewards that relationship can deliver. In the context of the pure relationship, trust can be mobilised only by a process of mutual disclosure” (*Modernity* 6). Intimacy, then, becomes the currency of late modernity (or, arguably, dawning postmodernity), the site of social exchange in a culture of hyper self-awareness, unlimited choice, unrestrained mobility, and ongoing self-authorship: “[A pure relationship] refers to a situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake [. . .] and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfaction for each individual to stay within it” (*Transformation of Intimacy* 58).

With Giddens’s proposals, arguably, the very concept of intimacy undergoes a fundamental shift in the march to the turn-of-the-millennium. For, when interpreted through the terminology adapted from Prager’s psychological model, Giddens’s argument would seem to describe the transition from durable, long-term intimate *relationships* to focused, intense, and self-defining intimate *interaction*. No longer a condition or state that provides unbroken contextualization, a constant undercurrent operative even in the absence of detectable activity, the pure relationship emerges, in effect, as the transient, constructed, perpetually and consciously agreed upon site of intimate *interactivity*.

## Communications

### i. *machine dreams*

The ultimate lesson of virtual reality is the virtualization of the very true reality. By the mirage of “virtual reality,” the “true” reality itself is posited as a semblance of itself, as a pure symbolic construct. (Žižek 22)

In the 20/20 hindsight of retrospection, Anthony Giddens’s speculations can be recognized as part selective observation, part creative analysis, and part utopian prediction. Without losing a basic optimism in the potential for individuals and relationships to survive and even thrive in contemporary capitalistic societies, his

subsequent works<sup>13</sup> promise far fewer idealized visions of future sexual equality and freedom from discrimination.<sup>14</sup> However, the extremity of the “pure relationship” as a *practical* model of intimacy by no means rules out its *theoretical* utility as a bridge to a more specific orientation on the nature of intimacy in turn-of-the-millennium culture. It is surprising to see the relatively modest level of direct attention technology—in particular, media technology—receives in much of the general literature considered above. The preoccupation with unmediated human exchange in the study of relational psychology regularly seems to bypass the dense and complex impact of mediated exchange on self-construction and self-representation. While sociological and anthropological research is far more sensitive to media presence in social dynamics, the technologies of mediation are regularly analyzed as one of myriad influences of comparable significance at work within the larger machinations of international capitalism and globalization. Giddens’s “pure relationship,” by contrast—so thoroughly expressive of virtually unlimited individual choice and mobility and a prioritizing of fully-engaged intimate *interactions* over the maintenance of anything less than completely, mutually satisfying intimate *relationships*—seems prophetic of, if not predetermined by, a conception of culture far more deeply immersed within and defined by its machine dreams.

This relative diminishment (or under-representation) of the impact of media technologies is all the more curious given that the writings of theorists such as Walter Benjamin, Marshall McLuhan, Jean Baudrillard, and Paul Virilio have become standard staples of much undergraduate arts education, a clear indication of the perceived centrality of media theory in the construction, analysis, transmission, and application of both information and knowledge. For instance, the legacy of Benjamin’s still startling “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936) cannot be overestimated. Its assessment of “authenticity” as *both* fundamental *and* thoroughly conventional, and its ambivalent acknowledgment of the loss of the “aura” of originality, identified emerging technology’s foundational social impact and largely established the criteria for western media analysis to this day: “[T]he adjustment of reality to the masses and the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception” (735).

Marshall McLuhan shared Benjamin’s awareness of the inextricable relationship between technological, cultural, and perceptual development; his reaction to this reality, however, was distinctly less ambivalent. As has been widely discussed, many of the ideas emerging from McLuhan’s early writing in the 1960s have

become household catch-phrases—“the medium is the message” and “global village”—with the result that they simultaneously carry the presumed verification and authority of habit *and* undergo the continuous reappropriation reserved for proverbs, slogans, and popular jokes. McLuhan has certainly had his critics (many of them), but he has also had, and has, an equal number of informed appreciators who regularly note the continually resurgent relevance of his ideas. For instance, Paul Levinson, in his 1999 book *Digital McLuhan*, is only one of many Internet theorists who have suggested that McLuhan’s early concept of the global village accurately, if indirectly, predicted the operation and significance of the world wide web.<sup>15</sup> According to Andrew Murphie and John Potts, “For McLuhan, media are technologies that extend human sense perceptions. In proposing the ‘medium is the message’, McLuhan argues that the cultural significance of media lies not in their content, but in the way they alter our perception of the world” (13).<sup>16</sup>

Baudrillard’s contribution of the concept of “simulacra” extends this analysis of media and perception, steering abruptly from McLuhan’s qualified optimism into a vision of near apocalyptic pessimism. According to Baudrillard, the unchecked and exponentially proliferating imagery of late twentieth-century media culture has effectively superseded “reality,” not merely robbing originals of their “aura” but, in effect, supplanting the function of originality. Media mediates other media, representations represent other representations, simulations simulate other simulations, until all that remains is “simulacra,” without origin and thus outside conventional structures of time and space, carrying society forward into consumption at ever increasing velocities: “It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle” (12-13).

If Paul Virilio is seen as rounding out this dizzyingly brief dash from the mid-twentieth century to the turn-of-the-millennium, it is difficult to miss the increasingly intense and darkly prophetic nature of the perspectives considered. Virilio’s explicitly titled 1995 essay “Speed and Information: Cyberspace Alarm!” effectively captures his anxiety about the pace and pervasiveness of technological change—which, he argues (along with Baudrillard, McLuhan, and Benjamin), is systematically and unilaterally altering human perception of time and space. The result, he contends, is “[a] fundamental loss of orientation [...]. A duplication of sensible reality, into reality and virtuality, is in the making. [...] A total loss

of the bearings of the individual looms large. To exist, is to exist *in situ*, here and now, *hic et nunc*. This is precisely what is being threatened by cyberspace and instantaneous, globalized information flows” (24). Virilio anticipates the surrender of localized time systems to “global time,” which, in its instantaneity, in turn supercedes “real space” (25). Dislocated from phenomenological perceptual indices, the common citizen is portrayed as being without either strategy or defences in the face of both big government and big business and their promotion of these destabilizing technological advances (26).

These are, admittedly, little more than selective snapshots of much more complex systems of thought. However, they share a persistent common assertion that media technology is not merely *one* of the factors contributing to the pace, direction, and nature of late twentieth-century cultural development, but *the* factor. Radically altering the individual’s “interface” with reality, continually reshaping human perception, new media technologies are inextricably interrelated with what is understood as not merely desirable and imaginable, but as *possible*. It is difficult not to recognize intriguing parallels between these perspectives and those sociological interpretations of late twentieth-century cultural development considered above. One of the first and perhaps most practical observations is that while much of both the psychological and sociological material utilizes indistinct demographic and/or geographic parameters, the primary commonality across virtually all of the studies referenced is the access to and immersion in new media technologies. Jamieson’s “Euro-North America” is, in fact, not a geographical or ethnic designation; rather, the terms of reference of all the analyses offered demonstrate that “Euro-North America” describes the populations of advanced, technologically privileged societies governed via capitalistic democracy. Multiple implications follow from this observation. Whereas sociological commentators have identified a steadily increasing tendency towards distraction and consumption, media theorists have identified the substitution of singular, distant originality with immediate, individual ownership. While sociologists have anticipated the implosion of individuality, resulting in utter disconnection from others and from the environment, media analysts have predicted a deepening sense of individual isolation and disorientation due to the triumph of simulacra over “reality” and the radical de- and reconstruction of conventional understandings of time and space. And as Giddens’s concept of the “pure relationship” both tantalized and provoked through its combination of sophistication and

overly-selective analysis, McLuhan's equally controversial, visionary, and utopian "global village" was rejuvenated with the introduction of the Internet.

Yet while it is tempting to align Giddens's influence with McLuhan's, to do so would be to spend this "currency" prematurely. For a connecting aspect of all of the statements on media technology influence noted above (albeit, to varying degrees) is that they all give voice to what Thorstein Veblen, as early as the 1920s, termed "technological determinism." As Murphie and Potts explain,

Technological determinism tends to consider technology as an independent factor, with its own properties, its own course of development, and its own consequences. Technological change is treated as autonomous: removed from social pressures, it follows a logic or imperative of its own. (12)

By contrast, Giddens's refusal to surrender personal choice as a central aspect of intimacy in the face of cultural determinism pushes us deeper into media culture to discover even more fruitful correspondence.

## ii. *idolizing*

The spectacle is *capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image. (Debord 24)

No doubt one of the most widely read and referenced works on the evolution of perception in twentieth-century media culture is Philip Auslander's *Liveness* (1999). Arguing against any sustainable ontological distinctions between theatre and recorded or transmitted technologies such as television and film, Auslander instead posits an analysis based on the concept of "cultural economy" (10): "Initially, mediatized events were modeled on live ones. The subsequent cultural dominance of mediatization has had the ironic result that live events now frequently are modeled on the very mediatized representations that once took the self-same live events as their models" (10-11). Auslander asserts that contemporary mediatized perception *presumes* mediation, with the result that live events are inevitably perceived through the matrix of expectations and conventions associated with media technology (30-31).

Auslander's dependence on relatively large-scale live events as his case studies—rock concerts, sports events, Broadway-style musicals—initially seems to limit his analysis to situations of this

scale.<sup>17</sup> However, his model of a “cultural economy” in ongoing negotiation and competition yields unexpected benefits. In his discussion of the early days of television, he notes that “[d]escriptions of drama on television from this period emphasize that television’s immediacy and *intimacy* make the experience of televised drama entirely comparable to that of drama in the theatre”<sup>18</sup> (17, emphasis added). Auslander then cites the work of Steven Connor to assert that

the use of giant video screens at rock concerts provides a means of creating in a large-scale event the effect of “intimacy and immediacy” associated with smaller live events. [...] Ironically, intimacy and immediacy are precisely the qualities attributed to television that enabled it to displace live performance. In the case of such large-scale events, live performance survives as television. (32)

Auslander’s observations on, in effect, “large-scale intimacy” align him with contemporaneous UK mass audience research, in particular that of Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst. In *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*, Abercrombie and Longhurst provide an overview of dominant interpretations or “paradigms” of mass audience activity, including what they designate as “Behavioural” (in which the spectator is understood as a blank slate or empty container, passively receiving media as both form and content) and “Incorporation/ Resistance” (involving the polar possibilities of the “Dominant Text” and the “Dominant Audience,” with some point on the continuum between these opposites occurring in any given audience) (3-37). The researchers offer a third alternative to these familiar structures, however, one that intersects with Auslander’s observations on mediated intimacy—the “Spectacle/Performance” paradigm.

The “spectacle” aspect of the paradigm draws heavily upon the work of Guy Debord, whose revolutionary 1994 work *The Society of the Spectacle* effectively locates Baudrillard’s preoccupation with simulacra squarely within the system of economic imperatives: “The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that was once directly lived has become mere representation” (Debord 12). “The spectacle,” Debord contends, “corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life” (29). Abercrombie and Longhurst draw connections between the “spectacular” nature of contemporary culture and what they term “the aestheticization of

everyday life,” to which they turn to Mike Featherstone for criteria: 1) the loss of distinctions between “high” and “low” art forms; 2) the ability to locate art anywhere, at any time; 3) the ability to transform any aspect of life into art; and 4) the overwhelming proliferation of images in day-to-day culture (Abercrombie and Longhurst 86-87).<sup>19</sup>

The “performance” aspect of Abercrombie and Longhurst’s third paradigm is particularly significant in seeking the intersection of mass media acculturation and issues of intimacy, however. For, paired with spectacle—and bridged to it by means of the aestheticization of daily life—is the concept of “narcissism.” The authors catalogue the generally recognized psychological characteristics of narcissism, but caution that “[f]or our purposes [. . .] narcissism should be seen more as a cultural condition, diffused widely, rather than a personality disorder” (92). What they emphasize is “the difficulty the narcissist experiences in distinguishing the boundaries of the self, in separating him- or herself from others. The narcissistic self is constructed and maintained only in the reflections received from others” (90). Intriguingly, the authors turn to Sennett’s *The Fall of Public Man* for his definition in support of their own: the self in modern society is “boundaryless,” exhibiting “a self-absorption which prevents one from understanding what belongs within the domain of the self and self-gratification and what belongs outside it” (Sennett, qtd. in Abercrombie and Longhurst 91).<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, Abercrombie and Longhurst propose, both spectacle and narcissism

are effectively the consequences of the diffusion of performance out of its originally relatively confined settings. More of the events of everyday life are performances for which there is an audience [while] more people see themselves as performers being watched by others; narcissism is the treatment of the self as spectacle. (96)

Based in mass audience research paradigms and methodologies, Abercrombie and Longhurst are largely restricted to dynamics of consumption—primarily visual consumption. However, I would further contend that mediatized narcissism promotes an understanding of the self as not only performing but as *performative*—as “acting” in multiple senses of the term, including the idea of acting *upon*, doing work, effecting change. Ultimately, I would propose, mediatized narcissism is not only the treatment of the self as spectacle. It is also—and more significantly—the treatment of *spectacle* as the *self*.

### iii. *loving the machine*

The Internet can become not only a medium of information transfer and transmission, but rather it can become a transducer affecting physical action. [. . .] The cyborg system would have a 'Fractal Flesh'—awareness and action would be extruded to bodies and bits of bodies in a vast network of interactive entities, augmented by agents and avatars on the Internet. (Stelarc 394)

It is, ultimately, when one steps past the parameters of traditional consumer contexts—theatre, television, film—that one encounters the *very* quickly moving surface of contemporary media culture. It is not a coincidence that for Baudrillard, Virilio, and Žižek the primary site of anxiety is *virtuality*—or that it required the development of the Internet for McLuhan's fantasies to become the new "reality." Indeed, even Benjamin, as John McGrath has noted, "makes the surprising assertion that individuals have a right to self-reproduction: 'modern man's legitimate claim to being reproduced'" (166). What is this, if not the "right" to a virtual existence? In each case noted above, however (with the exception of McLuhan), a preoccupation with information in the form of images and visual representation tends to leave the body disoriented and dislocated—or, simply, leave the body behind, altogether. The traditional *space* of the body is invariably identified as changed by these new modes of perception. However, apart from spectres of the *end* of space, its implosion or annihilation, apocalyptic interpretations based on visual representation and simulation are largely at a loss to suggest where the body *goes*, what it *does*, or what it *becomes*.

By contrast, Petran Kockelkoren suggests that bodily disorientation is a normal symptom of a continuous process of physical adaptation to new technologies. Drawing on the writings of Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, and Ihde, Kockelkoren notes that the body is not "lost" or "forgotten" in these moments; rather, the process of adaptation is expressly sensory: "the senses are sensitive to historical fluctuations. They are constantly in motion because they are the points of anchorage of cultural re-education" (16). He cites the "whole battery of train sicknesses" that were reported at the beginning of rail travel, only to disappear from medical discourse after a few decades: "The orientation from a moving train challenges the culturally established, previous habits of viewing. People had to appropriate a new, technologically mediated sensory regime. At first they became decentred, then they learnt to recentre themselves through the simultaneous embodiment of the train" (17).

Further, Kockelkoren asserts, “Such stabilization processes are not once off, but keep on recurring as new technologies appear.”

It is fascinating, in this light, to compare two descriptions of sensory “decentring” separated by a century of technological change. The first was penned by the French writer Victor Hugo in the late 1800s. The second is found in Murphie and Potts *Culture & Technology* (2003) and offers an interpretation of contemporary visual culture as it is described in Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulations*:

The flowers by the side of the road are no longer flowers but flecks, or rather streaks, of red or white; there are no longer any points, everything becomes a streak; the grainfields are great shocks of yellow hair; fields of alfalfa, long green tresses; the towns the steeples, and the trees perform a crazy mingling dance on the horizon; from time to time, a shadow, a shape, a spectre appears and disappears with lightning speed behind the window: it’s a railway guard. (qtd. in Kockelkoren 16-17)

This is what Baudrillard means by “the precession of simulacra”: the representation of the real comes before the real, so that it becomes the real. Simulations no longer refer to real objects, people, facts and societies. They increasingly refer only to each other, moving faster and faster. Think of advertising. Think of the video clip. In this maelstrom of simulation the real disappears. No meanings, just media-produced simulations. No coherent society—just a whirl of signs through a now inconsequential ground of bodies. The Internet. (16)

The passages are strikingly similar in their desperate attempts to articulate unchecked acceleration, in their rapid accumulation of transitory representations, in their resort to elemental imagery (“lightning,” “maelstrom”) to describe massive, impersonal (but decidedly *not* “natural”) forces, and in their final, abrupt clinging to a distinct formal marker of radical change (“a railway guard,” “The Internet”)—once unknown, momentarily foreign, and from that point on permanently enmeshed in experience.

It is easier for some than for others to remember, however, that the drastic experience of decentring that can be brought on by technological change is most profoundly experienced by those in the centre at the time of its advent. For those already “off balance” in the dominant material and ideological conditions of a given moment in society, profound re-orientation can, in fact, be experi-

enced as an opportunity for positive change. As Donna Haraway has asserted, the deep destabilization that is threatened by cyborg culture's brazen disregard for impermeable biological, ontological, philosophical, social, and political distinctions may be experienced by some as social and personal entropy and disintegration; for others, however, it holds the key to unprecedented empowerment through self-authorship. As she proposes in her surprisingly early (1985) essay, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs,"

It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine. [. . .] Insofar as we know ourselves in both formal discourse (e.g., biology) and in daily practice (e.g., the homework economy in the integrated circuit), we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras. [. . .] There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic. (97)

What Haraway calls for is more than the "embodiment of technology" (17) to which Kockelkoren refers. Rather, it is, in a sense, an ongoing, reciprocal, multi-interface *intimacy* with technology that Haraway describes, a "pure relationship" (i.e., *interaction*) between the biological and the technological that is based in unconditional self-disclosure, a complete and positive openness to engagement, and a "continuous loop" of successful intellectual, emotional, and physiological information exchange. The distinction proposed by Jamieson between "an intimacy of the self" and an "intimacy of the body" is no longer tenable in this context, as Haraway instead envisions unprecedented levels of interactivity based on the rejection of such dualisms, categorizations, and hierarchy, asserting instead a celebration of plurality and individuality. A major consequence of this shift, according to the biotechnologist Ollivier Dyens, is that "[w]e are not witnessing the end of great ideological stories but their infinite proliferation, and to such a point that formerly unwavering representations like time, space, life, and death are also mutating and multiplying" (35). Ultimately, Dyens asserts, "[b]ecause of technology, the world has become a series of exclusive and personal realms."

#### **iv. going with the flow**

Nothing is at all reported fully [. . .]. Yet the flow of hurried items establishes a sense of the world: of surprising and miscellaneous events coming in, tumbling over each other from all sides. (Williams 118-119)

Haraway's and Dyen's contributions are, indeed, *manifestos*, and many individuals residing in turn-of-the-millennium mediatized cultures have neither the inclination nor the stomach to live—or seek intimacy—at such a feverish pitch. However, this does not alter the fact that citizens of mediatized cultures do, indeed, love their machines—in no small part because, increasingly, their machines love them. Unlike the “pure relationship” proposed by Haraway or Dyens, however, it is, apparently, for most individuals a far less clear and open relationship, characterized less by the full involvement of the “organismic self” than by multiple, overlapping, intersecting, interrupting, and perpetually reconfiguring interactions or, more accurately, *flows* of information and experience. As noted, human perception is in a constant state of adaptation—“decentering” and “recentering”—in its relationship to advancing media technologies. However, as Karen Ross and Virginia Nightingale have observed, new media increasingly “anticipates” its interface with human perception and its need to accommodate human bodies in its operation. Citing the work of contemporary theorists such as Jonathan Crary, Benedict Anderson, and Richard Butsch,<sup>21</sup> the authors point out that “bodies are presupposed by the media” (Ross and Nightingale 19) and that “media technologies engage audiences because their design interfaces with, and amplifies, sensory dimensions of the human body. The ‘body-sensitivity’ of media illustrates the radical reconceptualization of cultural production, and the role of audiences in it” (34).

At this point in their argument, Ross and Nightingale refer to the work of Raymond Williams, the first commentator on “*flow technology*”; what Williams observed, the authors point out, is that “commercialization of the media and its *flow technology* dramatically lessened the importance attributed to any one text, and privileged the continuous supply of cultural material over the quality of cultural work” (34). Beyond issues of mass information *transmission*, they contend, the transition to flow technology, in its treatment of texts as “interchangeable and interruptible,” generates myriad points at which individuals—and individual human bodies—interface with media systems in increasingly active and, I would add, *intimate* ways. The implications, Ross and Nightingale suggest, are both ominous and encouraging:

Today, the digitalization, computerization and mobilization of telephony generates almost daily press speculation that the mobile phone is fragmenting the computer—miniaturizing, mobilizing and fragmenting its interactive capacity across a diverse array of new digital media that bind people

into the consumerist capitalism of contemporary democracy. [...] Making media more mobile, extending the range of media we engage with in the course of doing other things, weaves human bodies into new audience phenomena [...]. Connectivity and networking put a different, and more active, spin on discussion about what audiences *do*, and this in turn challenges us to reconsider both the foundational audience activities—viewing, listening and reading—and the ways the social and cultural meaning of these activities has changed over the years. (39-40)

If we pair Ross and Nightingale's *flow*-induced ambivalence with the narcissism at the core of Abercrombie and Longhurst's "Spectacle/Performance" paradigm, it becomes apparent just how thoroughly the concept of "audience" must be reinterpreted. The extent of perpetual fragmentation and reintegration of media technology that Ross and Nightingale reference, above, goes well beyond issues of audience choices and activities in terms of information and entertainment; it does not merely generate "unprecedented opportunities for engaging more actively." In a cultural context where individuals understand "the self as spectacle," the concept of "engaging" is superseded by that of "self-performance"—or, perhaps more accurately, merely "performance," in which individuals understand the act of engagement, the process of performance—the spectacle—as self. In the process, this "spectacle-self" effectively surrenders the ability—perhaps even the desire—to be defined, maintained, and protected as "autonomous" with any sort of continuity or stability in the interchanges and interruptions of mediatised culture. Indeed, as John McGrath contends, even self-*ownership* is a constant issue of ambiguity, anxiety, and ongoing negotiation:

In contemporary society our 'legitimate claim to being reproduced' is no longer sternly denied by an industrial capital insisting upon our passive consumption of mass images. Instead, an unreliable, although exploitative, image machine multiplies our bodies in digital data streams—across the border from our consciousness or even our knowledge, but reappearing shockingly, reassuringly, suggestively, disruptively in our lives. [...] And as we learn to move within and also love this surveillance space, our responses to its problems, its challenges, are no longer yes/no, good/bad, crime prevention/Big Brother, but a subtle and unending array of detours, disruptions, exaggerations and alliances: counter-surveillances. (McGrath 195)

Surveillance and counter-surveillance, interruption and disruption, ambiguity and ambivalence, empowerment and exploitation—what is the nature of this “new kind of space” to which McGrath refers? How do its qualities and characteristics reshape and reconfigure the psychological and sociological conceptions of the self—the fully postmodern (or post-postmodern) “spectacle-self”—and what, ultimately, are its consequences for the nature or possibility of intimacy should that interaction (commonly, if not inevitably) fall short of the “pure relationship” of fully “organismic” cyborg love?

## Intermedia

### i. *playing with our selves*

Intermedia is [. . .] a formal category of exchange. (Spielmann 133)

[I]ntermedia is not performance, but performative action. (Busse 264)

Intermedia has reached its sell-by date as soon as it has developed a normative structure of its own. (Bertram 271)

“The problem of self,” Philip Auslander contends in “Just Be Yourself: Logocentrism and Différance in Performance Theory,” “is, of course, central to performance theory” (29-30). Indeed, Derrida’s deconstruction of unified subjectivity in *Writing and Difference*—written in 1967 and translated into English in 1978—utilized, in part, theatrical contextualization to argue the constructedness of subjectivity via its dependence on language.<sup>22</sup> As Auslander notes, “Theorists as diverse as Stanislavsky, Brecht and Grotowski all implicitly designate the actor’s self as the *logos* of performance; all assume that the actor’s self precedes and grounds her performance and that it is the presence of this self in performance that provides the audience with access to human truths.” However, he continues, “An examination of acting theory through the lens of deconstruction reveals that the self is not an autonomous foundation for acting, but is produced by the performance it supposedly grounds” (30). Derrida’s contribution, Elinor Fuchs observed in 1985, related to his proposal that

there is no primordial or self-same present that is not already

infiltrated by the trace—an opening of the “inside” of the moment to the “outside” of the interval. ‘That the present in general is not primal, but rather, reconstituted, that it is not the absolute, wholly living form which constitutes experience, that there is no purity of the living present’ is the theme running through every textual exegesis Derrida has made. (165)

Influenced, in part, by this assertion, is what Fuchs describes as a “theatre of Absence” that utilizes a “new textuality [that] disperses the center, displaces the Subject, destabilizes meaning” (165). The resulting performances are “neither a reenactment of the logocentric dilemma, as in traditional theatre, nor a rebellion against it (which ends up recapitulating it anyway), but[,] one might say, an effort at strategic containment” (171).

Clearly, these issues of subjectivity’s encounter with the spatial and temporal complexities of representation, so pervasive in post-modern modes of performance, have never demonstrated such intense manifestation as in current intermedial practice. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Auslander ends his discussion of the “problem of self” in the above-cited essay by casting his attention on the Wooster Group—which, he proposes, holds the key to undoing the logocentric foundation of acting. In effect, as the Wooster Group has virtually become synonymous with intermedia performance, Auslander suggests that turning to intermediality offers a (perhaps *the*) next step in the discussion of performance’s other “selves.” However, in a defining transition, “containment,” strategic or otherwise, is likely not to be found among such performances’ motivations or intentions.

As suggested at the beginning of this article, intermedia is the logical site of artistic practice to bring our questions about performance and intimacy in mediatized culture, as it is the matrix in which all these concerns are directly and most thoroughly interconnected. Intermedia is, as we are (“we” as citizens in western, technologically-immersed societies governed via capitalistic democracy), a child of mediatized culture. Like us, it is attempting to come to terms with contemporary conceptions of “self-hood,” and, like us, it is contemplating the nature and possibility of intimacy in present-day realities with a precisely similar combination of knowledge/ignorance/experience of history. And, perhaps most significantly, like us, intermedia is many different things. Simultaneously.

In translating Christopher Balme’s German writing on intermediality, Peter Boenisch reports (at least) “three quite different understandings of that term”:

- the transposition of a subject matter or the segment of a text from one medium into another, or
- a specific form of intertextuality, or
- the re-creation of aesthetic conventions of one particular medium within a different medium. (35)

However, as the brief quotations at the head of this section suggest, for many intermedia artists the impetus behind their practice is less theoretical than personal and ideological, and the resort to intermedia is more closely related to the meanings that the term attempts to elude than those it attempts to capture. Intermedia, wrote Hannah Higgins, effectively coining the term for current usage, is an “unstable descriptive term [...] a function, allowing for almost limitless artistic formations and experiences” (qtd. in Busse 265).<sup>23</sup> According to Peter Frank,

[Intermedia] comes in the form of conceptual art, performance art, video art, new dance, graphically-notated music and music involving theatrical activity, a new theater based on extra-theatrical sources, visual poetry, phonetic poetry, poetry that maintains words but ignores syntax, and all the areas of adventure and experiment lying in, among, and between these. These forms, for their part, lie between painting, sculpture, graphic art, traditional sonic music, typical verse, ordinary dance, normal theater, and whatever else we are used to. [...] [W]e need not get *un-*used to the old segregated forms to come to the new; the fusing of the arts into intermedia only augments our old ways of experiencing phenomena, it does not supersede them. (31, italics in original)

There is much here to work with, but of primary interest for my purpose is Frank’s rear-guard but determined defence of more traditional artistic categorizations. Similarly, across diverse understandings of intermedia one finds a relatively common relationship to history that is now familiarly associated with theories of postmodernism. Intermedial work is not ignorant of the past—indeed, many performances conspicuously and copiously reference historical events, figures, art forms, and ideas—but its relationship is multiple, selective, and interpretive, often combining satire with reverence and historical “accuracy” with unbridled creation. Unlike the modern avant-garde movement, intermedia seldom pins itself beneath strident or consistent relationships with

tradition (even relationships of arbitrary deconstruction); its stance is seldom “critical” in the conventional understanding of this term, which implies a stability of critical position and perspective. Rather, to use a term from Frank’s comments, and which appears regularly in the literature, intermedia tends to operate *between* traditional categories, positions, and practices (thus the investment in the retention of existing art forms).

In similar fashion, Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt define intermediality as “a powerful and potentially radical force, which operates in-between performer and audience; in-between theatre, performance and other media; and in-between realities [. . .] In addition, intermediality is positioned in-between several *conceptual frameworks* and *artistic/philosophical movements*” (12). The effects of intermediality, they contend, include “new modes of representation; new dramaturgical strategies; new ways of structuring and staging words, images and sounds; new ways of positioning bodies in time and space; new ways of creating temporal and spatial interrelations” (11). Yet, according to Frank and other practitioners, it would seem that this “new[ness],” as the product of a clear-eyed evasiveness and agility in reference to existing categories and practices, is less linear or determinedly progressive in nature than reflexive, gregarious, manipulative, exploratory, and adaptive. Specifically, this “*space of the in-between*” (Chapple and Kattenbelt 12) can situate history and memory on even terms and in constant exchange. Writing of theorist/practitioner Gregory Ulmer, Murphie and Potts report that

Ulmer invents a new genre that he calls ‘mystory’, which ‘takes into account the new discursive and conceptual ecology interrelating orality, literacy, and videocy’. [. . .] Gone are prescriptive formulas that any member of a culture is supposed to follow [. . .]. Instead we have ‘chorography’—a transitory method that always seeks the ‘impossible possibility’ [. . .] that lies between genres, between conflicting notions of nation and self, between imagination and given knowledge, between choreography and geography [. . .]. He treats memory as a reservoir for creative invention [. . .]. As he puts it, “‘teletheory’ allows us to want to ‘learn how to remember’ [. . .] in a different way.” (93-94)

Fittingly, then, while intermedia is regularly called a “space,” the qualities of that space are directly described in terms of constant movement, exchange—*flow*—rather than volume or density:

‘Intermedia’ thus presents itself in multiple ways, as [. . .] a medial space for trans-disciplinary work with potentially all media. [. . .] Very generally defined, intermedia can be conceived of as product of exchange or production of the exchange between different, meaning-generating systems in time and space. [. . .] To put it bluntly: intermedia is not performance, but performative action.” (Busse 264)

At the same time, however, Busse contends, “Intermedia means media criticism” (265), and Yvonne Spielman asserts that the primary mode of intermedia performance is self-reflection (130). But the critical stance of much intermedia performance is actually less “stance” than “dance,” in which the stated goal is that media become engaged, lived, embodied, and naturalized. Rather than Brechtian alienation, intermedia often attempts to enact the symbiosis of body and machine, locating each within the lived context of contemporary experience. As Hanno Hardt suggests,

Intermedia as a creative environment [. . .] promotes the accessibility of ideas by making use of a banal familiarity with technologies of communication. The latter remain identifiable structures of a modern existence to ease participation in the social and political discourse with their constant presence in the life of a contemporary society. (236)

The space of intermedia, then, is thoroughly performative, established through a physical force of intention enacted as a claim “in-between” established, conventional uses and understandings of space, time, and attention. It is a multiple, fragmentary, simultaneous space of interruption, dislocation, ambiguity; yet, for citizens of mediatized culture it is likely *not* a space of disorientation or ambivalence. Rather, perhaps, it is a space of “mystery.” It is, perhaps, a space of intimacy.

## ii. *intimedia*

*Whenever possible, we attempt to create intimacy with the audience by sharing the performance space with them.*  
(Bluemouth 17)

What, then, *can* this mean? What can it mean to suggest that inter-media is, perhaps, a space of intimacy—is, perhaps, *the* space of intimacy in a wired world?

Intimacy as a *relationship* is apparently a time machine, heavily loaded with the frustrations of the past and expectations for the future. It is a primary process of self-definition and maintenance, a pull and push, attraction and withdrawal. It is an engagement with an other in which the components and boundaries of subjectivity are configured and demarcated via regular and regulated intersubjective negotiation. Performance that seeks an intimate *relationship* with its audience thus must confront its spectators' individual and composite histories of experience with performance. Will *this* performance—this new site of utter potential—make up for, or merely add to, past disappointments? Will it prove *too* vital, *too* present, *too* intrusive, and drive the spectators into withdrawal, distraction, distance? Or will it further enrich and expand the spectators' relationship to the presenting organization, allowing that relationship to mature (even “mellow”) to increased levels of familiarity, comfort, and “compassion” (Vohs and Baumeister)?

Certainly, such a relationship, so thoroughly dependent on its position in a continuity—a tradition—of such relationships, on the reassurance of stable frames of convention and mutually negotiated, fixed contracts of engagement, resembles much theatrical practice in contemporary western contexts. It is primarily a conceptual and extended relationship, providing a self-understanding of enduring cultural positioning (as a “theatre-goer”). It is one which structures its points of engagement with explicit respect and accommodation for carefully managed “social-penetration” (Piorkowski); the “zone of privacy” (Prager and Roberts) that the spectator is invited into is determinedly public, a communally accepted and relied-upon conceit. “Self-disclosure” is minimized within socially acceptable parameters designed for optimum maintenance of a “real” or “true” self (Collins and Feeney), strategically tested, validated, and tempered through vicarious identification with adversity. It is “an intimacy of the self, rather than an intimacy of the body” (Jamieson), of distanced albeit potentially empathetic contemplation predicated on the assurance that “only a fraction of the interactions in an intimate relationship is intimate” (Prager). It is an intimacy in which the options of “egoistical” projection (Icke, Hutchison, and Mashek) and distracted withdrawal are, in fact, structurally anticipated and installed within its most common thematics and proxemics. It is an intimacy where economic streaming and thematic internal selec-

tion (a version of cultural Darwinism) ensure that “the other’s inner experience—from private thoughts, feelings, or beliefs, to characteristic rhythms, habits, and routines” (Prager and Roberts)—will hold minimal potential for surprise or disruption. This is not to suggest that there are not many challenging theatrical companies, nor that even the most traditional of organizations do not at times mount transgressive work. Rather, my point is that the basic underpinnings of an intimate relationship with a regular audience that is confident about what it is purchasing in terms of content, form, spectator engagement, and production values—confident, in a sense, about what is and will be *understood*—comprise, collectively, a *theatrical* construct (in the theoretical sense of “theatrical”<sup>24</sup>). It is an intimacy informed by investments in lucidity, consistency, and comprehension. And in this, it is clearly not the intimacy of intermedia.

Conversely, a *performative* intimacy must perhaps need be an *interaction*, with a “different and clearly distinguishable notion of *space* and *time*” (Prager), as compared to intimate relationships. A theoretically performative intimacy is one in which the basic criteria identified across multiple definitions of intimacy—a willingness to self-disclose; full, positive, and mutual attention; openness to physical contact and connection; shared understanding—is valued and pursued *outside* the context of extended aesthetic, corporate, or emotional contracts. It is an intimacy predicated on the devaluation—even rejection—of fictional, thematic, and organizational predictability and familiarity. It is an intimacy not of mutual familiarity, but rather one in which “intimate disclosures may occur in interactions between strangers precisely ‘because of the unlikelihood of a further relationship and the attendant opportunities for betrayal’” (since the concept of “betrayal” implies fixed terms and agreements). It is an intimacy where the paradoxical tension between the desire for connection and the anxiety that attends the construct of an “autonomous self” (Collins and Feeney) is addressed less through strategies of withdrawal or “self-expansion” (Aron, Mashek, and Aron) than through a prioritizing of individual mobility and an emphasis on adaptation—decentering and recentring (Kockelkoren)—in perpetual experiential motion. Within such a moving field or network of intimate interaction, “egoistical” and acquisitional orientations to constantly transforming performers (and spectators) are far more difficult to sustain, while disengagement is often structurally impeded and resisted. Given that performative information is often discontinuous, fragmentary, and simultaneous in nature, the potential for

*understanding* lies less in a common comprehension of a specific site of destabilization than in the recognition of destabilization, itself, *as a site* of commonality. What is shared, then, is a state rather than a location, a mode of inquiry rather than a set of “beliefs”—a space rather than a place. It is, thus, an intimacy of “exchange,” an intersection of “performative action” (Busse), the intense convergence of *flows* (Williams).

It is not necessary to restrict all “performative action” to an expression of mediatized culture to recognize the overlap of concepts and terminology. Undeniably, however, intermedia performance is the most explicit instance of this overlap, the site at which the depth and extent to which mediatization and performativity collide and converge, reconfigure and define one another is both most clear and most complex. For the intermedia artist and the intermedia spectator, alike, embody and enact this intersection of mediatization and performativity, radically altering the concept of intimacy in the process.

The much-lamented progression to increasingly distracted and supplemented individualism that I have traced through the sociological literature identifies traditional understandings of intimacy as a primary casualty of twentieth-century/turn-of-the-millennium cultural evolution. When contextualized within the parallel observations of technological determinism, this individualism is superimposed with a fundamental “loss of orientation” (Virilio) caused by the transformation of space and time that accompanies the transition to virtuality. Thus, the sociological perception of voluntary individual efforts “to ‘suspend’ social time and eliminate the need to negotiate social relations” (Bauman) is reinterpreted as the inevitable and unavoidable outcome of the triumph of the new “reality” of simulacra (Baudrillard). Similarly, the escapism of “factory[-]produced tools” and “factory-produced noise” is understood as an all-consuming transformation of individuality by means of the “embodiment of technology” (Kockelkoren) that alters “our perception of the world” (McLuhan). Countering these correspondingly pessimistic assessments, the utopian prospect of a “pure relationship” (Giddens), liberated through late modern mobility and unlimited choice, finds its counterpart in the electronic “global village,” a model of instant, international intimacy unbridled by physicality and transcendent of cultural, social, and ideological distinctions.

Within the “privileged” contexts (a tricky, ironic descriptor, to be sure) of “Euro-North America,” the pervasiveness of mediatization thus becomes both the fore and the ground of contemporary

experience, and all forms of performance, in effect, participate in its operations. Within a culture of simulacra, in which “the *act* of exposure itself now seems to excite us more than the content of the secrets exposed” (Meyerowitz), intimacy becomes first imbricated with, and then inextricable from, spectacle. Emerging from the distributed “broadband” intimacy of early television and evolving into the “large-scale” intimacy (Auslander) of mediated stadium events, the hunger for simulated immediacy drives an accelerating conflation of performance and spectator, a powerful identification of self-as-spectacle (Abercrombie and Longhurst) and spectacle-as-self. The sociological “boundaryless” self (Sennett) is thus seen as the product of technologies that inspire, facilitate, encourage, and reward its powerful narcissism. In the process, traditional understandings of “performance” seem to follow the same trajectory and suffer the same fate as “individualism” (Strathern), as both concepts become ubiquitous to the point of disappearance.

Further complicating this scenario, however, is the deeper understanding and experience of mediatization that is *interactivity*. Pushed to its extreme expressions in the physiological fluidity of cyborg culture and biotechnological visions of seamless integration, intimacy becomes an experience of machine love, an individual interaction with technology in which autonomy is happily surrendered and reinstated through a transcendence of tradition and its investments in universality, dualities, and categorization (Haraway). In the process, “the world [becomes] a series of exclusive and personal realms” (Dyens), networked rather than “boundaryless,” simultaneous and interactive, rather than common or communal. A short step back from this extreme, however, interactivity is experienced as a site of constant, unpredictable, addictive, and insatiable change. Characterized by incessant flow (as opposed to travel, which implies a destination), interactivity is a zone of interruption, transition, ambiguity, and transformation. Within this form of interactivity, intimacy—shy of the “pure relationship” of cyborg culture—is fragmented yet intense, momentary yet vivid, volatile yet visceral. A confusion (in part intentional, in part inescapable, wholly enthusiastic) between interpersonal and inter-technological sensuality, “media technologies engage audiences because their design interfaces with, and amplifies, sensory dimensions of the human body” (Ross and Nightingale), simultaneously intoxicating (numbing) and exhilarating (sensitizing) their subject/objects.

This, predominantly, inevitably, is the site and “self” of intermedia. The “space” into which an intermedia performance invites

its audience, then, is a complex, multifarious, contradictory, and ambiguous one. Yet, as noted, intermedia is also a space of action, of motion—of *response*. The space of intermedia is an “in-between” space (Chapple and Kattenbelt)—a space of interruption and disruption rather than continuity and validation, of historical curiosity rather than historical accuracy or critique. Guided (but not defined) by the capabilities (and limitations) of its explicit and conspicuous technologies, which are both foregrounded and rendered familiar in the same gesture, intermedia enacts, mimics, scrutinizes, and celebrates mediatization. In the process, it emulates, speculates upon, and attempts to transform the processes of perception, memory, communication, and experience. It promotes self-authorship at the same time that it exhibits the contemporary forces (primarily technological) that establish and enforce the parameters of what *can* be said and done. Intermedia is an affront, a carnival, and an evasive action—all positionings defined by agility of response rather than predetermined routes, by movement rather than location.

In this sense, intermedia is a space where intimate *relationships*, which rely on continuity, consistency, duration, and communicative clarity and confidence, are virtually impossible (pun intended). Conversely, however, intermedia is a space where intimate *interaction*, with its insistence on momentary intensity and “organismic” attention, is virtually unavoidable. The intermedia spectator (or, at least, all but the most naïve intermedia spectator) anticipates the heightened self-disclosure of increased visibility, perhaps even interactivity, and attends precisely because this positive openness to interaction is a shared expectation. Mutual understanding is not generated through the *portrayal* of shared cultural attitudes and beliefs (which reinforce “timeless” and “universal” values), but rather through the *performance* of shared perceptual frames and dynamics (which posit ambiguity and de-/reorientation as the “constants” of contemporary existence). Intermedia intimacy is also a time machine—but memory, rather than a burden, hurdle, or source of habitual defences, is offered as “data,” the irreducible amalgam of “reality” and simulacra, raw material for reimagining “mystory” (Murphie and Potts). Both “broadband” and “large-scale” intimacy are exposed as carefully constructed assurances of the unity and centrality of the spectacle/self. In the process, both the spectacle *and* the self are demystified; their power is not discounted, but rather rendered “technical,” an operation of culture and, thereby, of mediatization.

### *post-amble*

In the 2003 Bluemouth production *Death By Water* (the second part of *Something About a River*), I was ushered, along with the other members of the audience on the evening that I attended, through the falling snow in Toronto's Trinity Bellwoods Park to a small, makeshift shelter. One side of the structure was transparent; the other three were covered by white projection surfaces. Instructed to put on a set of headphones, I experienced, with alarming intimacy, the expressions and exertions of two miked performers (O'Connell and Simic) who performed a vigorous outdoor dance/struggle, at times right outside the shelter, but often at considerable distance. The performers, at multiple removes from the audience, invaded my personal space through the immediate and inescapable—because mediated—sound of their voices, their breathing, and the force of their powerfully connecting bodies. As visual images of expansive landscapes played on the projection screens, this visceral human expression, intertwined with Richard Windeyer's subtle, evocative soundscape, constructed multiple interrelated yet incongruent perceptual registers, each somehow both completed and irresolvably complicated by the others.<sup>25</sup> The intimate performance space that I shared with Bluemouth that night was thus "site-specific" in multiple mediated ways, as the common physical location of the park grounds was interrupted, fragmented, folded, and multiplied within the intensely personal site of my decentering.

The intimacy of intermedia, ultimately, is neither the "true" relationship of the traditional theatrical contract nor the "pure" relationship of McLuhan's global village or Haraway's cyborg culture. Rather, in its decidedly *impure* interactions, the intimacy of intermedia offers something "in-between," something altogether "other"—and in the process performs an utterly contemporary conception of "self." ❁

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The trajectory of those articles is identified at the beginning of the third in the series:

In CTR 126, I began a series of three linked articles that consider aspects of the relationship between theatricality and performativity in the work of the Toronto/New York intermedia performance ensemble, Bluemouth Inc. The first article explored the impact of the unanticipated relocation of the company's 2005 recreation of *American Standard* from Pat's Barber Shop on Toronto's D'Arcy Street to the cavernous

rehearsal space of Zero Gravity Circus in the same city's industrial East End. The second article (in CTR 127) profiled Bluemouth Inc.'s 2005 reimagining of the performance *Lenz* in the evocative (indeed, provocative) Ye Olde Carleton Arms Hotel in New York City and, in particular, that production's complex negotiation between mediation and madness. The third essay focuses specifically on Bluemouth Inc.'s soundscape artist, Richard Windeyer, and queries the relationship between his sound installation work and his contributions to the company's collective, site-specific productions.

- <sup>2</sup> My activities with Bluemouth range from co-editing two of their published performance texts (*Lenz*, with the company and Catherine Graham, for CTR 127; and *What the Thunder Said*, with the company and Karen Zaintz, for *Reluctant Texts from Exuberant Performance* [see Barton, Corbett, Schreyer and Zaintz]), through lengthy conversations and emails on creative process. I am currently (2008) in development/rehearsal as dramaturge to the company on a new interactive performance piece based on dance marathons.
- <sup>3</sup> Bert O. States is one of the most significant proponents of a *phenomenological* analysis of theatre. See *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*.
- <sup>4</sup> Bluemouth Inc. Presents is Simic, O'Connell, Sabrina Reeves, and Richard Windeyer.
- <sup>5</sup> My entry in CTR 126 focused on Bluemouth, Inc.'s 2005 remount of *American Standard*, a performance piece originally conceived to be staged in a small barbershop in Toronto. When the adjoining residents in the building discovered the company's plans, the alerted landlord refused permission to use the space, resulting in a scramble to identify an alternative location. Ultimately staged in a local circus troupe's rehearsal space in the city's East End industrial district, the show utilized a minimal, "Dogville" style description of the barbershop layout, recreated symbolically in the open warehouse. The transition was unpredictably radical and fascinating across a span of perceptual registers. For this spectator, the production brought to the foreground an operative tension that I have experienced to varying degrees in all the Bluemouth, Inc. events I have attended—between, on the one hand, a relatively accessible, sustained, and phenomenological theatricality and, on the other, a far more volatile, interactive, and intermedial performativity. See Barton, "The Razor's Edge." See also Barton, "Through a *Lenz* Darkly" for an continuation of this argument.
- <sup>6</sup> See Markus and Kitayama for original use of this concept.
- <sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Collins and Feeney 163; and Vohs and Baumeister 190.
- <sup>8</sup> The geographic and/or cultural reach of Jamieson's study is indistinct; as noted, there are repeated references to "Euro-North American" populations (and given the nature of the available social-psychological research, this is an imprecision that I have adopted

temporarily from her study). Clearly, however, references such as “in the 1950s” in Jamieson’s study imply American, or at least North American, conditions. Including references to and occasional perspectives from Australia, New Zealand, and England, the Euro-North America in question would seem both more and less inclusive than initially anticipated; certainly it is predominantly, if not exclusively, English-language speaking.

<sup>9</sup> Sennett’s contribution is extensive and significant. See Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, *Corrosion of Character*, *Respect in a World of Inequality*, and *The Culture of the New Capitalism*.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Beck; and Lash and Urry.

<sup>11</sup> Giddens is the former director of the London School of Economics and Political Science, the author of *Where Now for New Labour?*, and a highly relied upon advisor to Tony Blair.

<sup>12</sup> See also Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* and *Modernity and Self-Identity*.

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, *The Third Way* and *Runaway World*.

<sup>14</sup> Giddens originally suggested that, ultimately disentangled from the practicalities and conventions of procreation, sexuality would become “plastic” and open to individualistic reinvention. This in turn would produce “a revolution of female autonomy,” resulting in greater equality between men and women, and foster “the flourishing of homosexuality” (qtd. in Jamieson 38).

<sup>15</sup> For an excellent collection of essays reconsidering McLuhan’s ideas and impact, see Strate and Wachtel.

<sup>16</sup> See McLuhan, *Understanding Media* 16.

<sup>17</sup> “More intimate live performances may not be mediatized in the same way or to the same effect. Inasmuch as mediatization is the cultural context in which live performances are now inevitably situated, however, its influence nevertheless pervades even these smaller-scaled events” (Auslander 32).

<sup>18</sup> Auslander notes that in a 1949 article in *Theatre Arts*, Mary Hunter [. . .] observes that “the audience experience in relation to the performer is similar in television to the performer-audience relationship in the theatre: the audience is in direct contact with the performer at the moment of his ‘performance.’ You see him when he does it” (46).

<sup>19</sup> See also Featherstone 66-67.

<sup>20</sup> See also Sennett, *Fall* 8.

<sup>21</sup> Crary investigates the evolution of visual culture; Anderson addresses print culture; Butsch explores the changing activities of audiences at popular entertainments in the US over the past century. See Crary; Anderson; and Butsch.

<sup>22</sup> See Derrida’s now legendary interpretation of Artaud’s aesthetics and dramaturgy, “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation.”

<sup>23</sup> See also Higgins.

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, Davis; Féral; and Weber.

<sup>25</sup> See Barton, "Still Ringing" for a more detailed analysis of this performance and, in particular, the contribution of sound artist Richard Windeyer.

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