THEATRE AND THE MATERIALITIES OF COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is situated within the field of media studies, with a particular focus on the "materialities of communication." The concept of "materialities" is oriented to the underlying conditions that allow communication to take place: the places, carriers and modes of communication that serve to shape and even alter meaning. My dissertation asks how this "material turn" can usefully be applied to and help develop the study of theatre.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters. In Chapter 1, I undertake a critical review of the theoretical literature regarding materialities and its applications to media theory. In Chapter 2, I begin to explore the implications of the material turn for theatre. Scholarly interest in the relation of media and theatre has largely been focused on the use of media and technology within theatrical practice. I argue that theatre cannot be conceived of separately from the prevailing communicational possibilities of a given era, even if we accept the capacity for artistic intervention within these parameters. I integrate theoretical standpoints on the reproducibility, iterability and liveness of theatrical presence into a broad discussion of media and communication and thereby demonstrate a more fundamental relationship between theatricality and mediality.

In Chapter 3, I extend my discussion of a "materialities of theatre" to the subject of translatability. Translation has long functioned as a metaphor for media as well as for theatrical representation. Discourses of the translatability between media forms have recently been revived by digital technologies that present translation as a model of universalization: the search for the perfect language into which all forms of knowledge can converge. Theatre works to converge media forms as a point of intersecting bodies,

texts, voices and technologies, yet also remains persistently aware of the economy of shifting linguistic exchanges that renders total translation an impossible pursuit. I thus develop a study of the materialities of theatre that can attend to this disjunction in translation theory by addressing theatre as a point of medial convergence as well as a site of linguistic difference.

In Chapter 4, I elaborate upon these standpoints by discussing circulation as a theoretical concept that, on the one hand, complements the study of materialities of communication and, on the other hand, seeks to overcome the abovementioned disjunction of translation theory. Concentrating on the case of Montréal as a site of heightened linguistic interaction, I investigate theatre as a medial system that works to absorb, interrupt and rediffuse the linguistic materialities of this city.

RÉSUMÉ

La présente dissertation se situe dans le champ des études sur les médias et s'articule autour de « la matérialité de la communication ». Le concept de « matérialité » s'oriente vers les conditions sous-jacentes qui permettent à la communication d'avoir lieu : les lieux, les carrières et les modes de communication qui servent à former, voire transformer la signification. Ma dissertation soulève la question de ce « tournant matériel » et comment il peut s'appliquer à l'étude du théâtre et en aider le développement.

La dissertation comporte quatre chapitres. Dans le premier chapitre, j'examine de manière critique la littérature théorique portant sur la matérialité et ses applications sur la théorie des médias de communication. Dans le deuxième chapitre, j'explore ce que le tournant matériel implique pour le théâtre. L'intérêt académique à l'égard de la relation entre la médialité et la représentation théâtrale est principalement fondé sur l'utilisation des médias de communication et de la technologie dans la pratique théâtrale. Je soutiens la thèse selon laquelle le théâtre ne peut être pensé séparément des possibilités communicationnelles prédominantes dans une époque donnée, et cela même si nous envisageons la capacité de l'intervention artistique à l'intérieur de ces paramètres. Je traite des points de vue de la reproductivité, l'itérabilité et la performance « live » dans une discussion élargie de la médialité et de la communication. Partant, je démontre une relation plus fondamentale entre la théâtralité et la médialité.

Dans le troisième chapitre, je joins à la discussion sur la « matérialité du théâtre » celle de la traductibilité. Les médias de communication et la représentation théâtrale ont longtemps perçu la traduction comme métaphore. Les technologies numériques,

présentant la traduction en tant que modèle d'universalisation, soit la recherche du langage parfait dans lequel toutes les connaissances convergent, ont ravivé les discours sur la traductibilité des formes médiales. Le théâtre élabore la convergence des formes de médias de communication en un point où s'entrecroisent corps, textes, voix et technologies, mais il reste continuellement à l'affût de l'économie des échanges linguistiques, laquelle rend la traduction totale impossible. Je développe ainsi une étude de la matérialité du théâtre qui tient compte de cette disjonction dans la théorie de la traduction en considérant le théâtre comme un point de convergence médiale et un lieu de différence linguistique.

Dans le dernier chapitre, j'examine ces points de vue en discutant de la circulation en tant que concept théorique qui, d'une part, vient compléter l'étude de la matérialité de la communication, et d'autre part, qui cherche à surmonter la disjonction de la théorie de la traduction évoquée ci-dessus. Ayant choisi Montréal comme terrain d'étude où les interactions linguistiques sont multiples, j'explore le théâtre en tant que système médial qui s'efforce d'absorber, d'interrompre et de rediffuser continuellement la matérialité linguistique de cette ville.

THEATRE AND THE MATERIALITIES OF COMMUNICATION

Michael Darroch

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Theatre is a locus of cultural expression that unites the realms of artistic creation and medial processes. With this in mind, I set out to explore the possibility of bringing theatre into a concrete discussion of media and communication. My question at the onset is: To what extent can the study of media accommodate the study of theatre? Certainly, the increasing role of technologies, both in theatrical practice and in disseminating information about theatrical activity, has enhanced the theatre's capacity for storing and transmitting cultural knowledge. The use of technologies on the stage, however, is an insufficient point on which to base an investigation of theatre *as* medium. Those studies that do take interest in the relation of theatre to media are generally concerned with straightforward questions about such "intermedial" *uses* of new media on the stage.

Moreover, the vast majority of theoretical perspectives of theatre issue from the tradition of hermeneutics and take, as their core investigations, the interpretation of literary content or the identification of performance value. From these points of departure, which inform both the typical newspaper theatre review and certain academic departments, the theatrical event is analysed for all its singularity. A text or performance is seen to be singular because of the unique intent of its creators and because of the ephemeral experience of spectators.

I take a different perspective. My dissertation is situated within the field of theoretical interest in the *materialities of communication.* At the root of a concern for "materialities" are the underlying conditions in a given era that allow communication to take place: the places, carriers and modes of communication that serve to shape and even

alter meaning. I am interested in how the theatre is composed of, and also contributes to, these phenomena of communication.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters. In Chapter 1, I undertake a critical review of the theoretical literature regarding materialities and its applications to media theory. This *material turn* has found its most pronounced influence among scholars of the so-called "German School," including, among others, Friedrich A. Kittler, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Norbert Bolz, Bernard Siegert, and Georg Christoph Tholen. Their work has fostered a renewal of media theory currently taking place across the social sciences and humanities. In the first half of the chapter, I outline the origins of this theoretical slant in French poststructuralism, paying special attention to the work of Friedrich Kittler. Kittler is consistent in his presupposition that media determine our situation. In this way, his work is exemplary of "media discourse analysis," an extension of the poststructuralist thought of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, while adhering to its own distinctive theoretical and historical vantage points. Throughout this dissertation, I will return to Kittler's positions time and again. In the second half of this chapter, I outline initial applications of these German media-theoretical orientations to theories of medial convergence, such as today's "hypermedia" and computing technologies.

In Chapter 2, I begin to explore the implications of the material turn for questions of theatre and performance. Here, I argue that theatre cannot be conceived of separately from prevailing communicational possibilities, even if we accept the capacity for artistic intervention within these parameters. I seek to locate a variety of theoretical standpoints on the reproducibility, iterability and liveness of theatrical presence within a broader discussion of media and communication. I thereby establish a more fundamental relationship between theatricality and mediality. This chapter hinges on a number of key

thinkers. In the first half of the chapter, I investigate the ontology of theatre by turning to theses on technological reproducibility (Walter Benjamin) and "mediatized liveness" (Philip Auslander). In order to take this discussion a step further, I return to the reflections of Jacques Derrida on iterability and repetition, as exemplified in his analysis of Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*. Finally, I explore body-centred modes communication as materialities of communication, especially in the work of Paul Zumthor and Bertolt Brecht.

The second half of Chapter 2 is oriented more specifically to technological materialities of theatre and performance. Here, I review intriguing propositions for the origins of Western theatre in the Greek phonetic alphabet. I then examine the overall place of theatre in the work of Friedrich Kittler, especially in his history of optical media. Finally, I turn to Kittler and Norbert Bolz's analysis of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or "total work of art," as an interface of optic and acoustic medial streams. As a whole, then, Chapter 2 presents an initial outline of what a "materialities of theatre" could look like.

In Chapter 3, I extend my discussion of a "materialities of theatre" to the subject of *translatability*. Translation has long functioned as a metaphor for media as well as for theatrical performance. Discourses of the translatability between media forms have recently been revived by digital technologies that present translation as a model of universalisation. The potential of "translating" all information into binary code is portrayed as the search for the perfect language, a universal medium in which all forms of knowledge can converge. This provides an interesting point of comparison for theories of theatre. Theatre also works as a point of medial intersection, converging bodies, texts, voices and technologies. Yet theatre arts also remain persistently attuned to the economy

of shifting linguistic exchanges that renders total translation an impossible pursuit—in Derrida's words, "the necessary and impossible" task of translation. Here, I take a lead from the work of Georg Christoph Tholen to develop a comparative analysis of the metaphors of translation for media and theatre alike. I also turn to theoretical standpoints of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin as an alternative for understanding linguistic diversity as materialities. I thus seek to develop a study of the materialities of theatre that can attend to this disjunction in translation theory by addressing theatre as a point of medial convergence as well as a site of linguistic difference. In the second half of this chapter, I turn to three illustrative case studies of theatremaking in the work of François Girard, Larry Tremblay and Marie Brassard.

These three case studies of theatre from Montréal are not arbitrarily chosen, for they anticipate my further discussion in Chapter 4. In this final chapter, I extend my discussion to theories of *circulation*. Throughout Western history, theatre has had a close relationship with the circulation of ideas and identities, inscriptions and values. As a theoretical concept, circulation complements the study of materialities of communication by seeking to overcome the abovementioned disjunction of translation theory. In the first half of this chapter, I engage with recent calls to study circulation in cultural theory and, in particular, to locate circulation within the concrete spaces of cities. I argue that theatre presents a unique cross-section of institutional frameworks, cultural practices, and technologies of communication within city culture. Concentrating on Montréal as an urban site of heightened interlingual interaction, I investigate theatre as a medial system that works in many capacities to absorb, interrupt and rediffuse the circulation of languages in this city.

In closing this preface, I would like to acknowledge that my work on Montréal as a "culture of circulation" derives in large measure from my collaboration with the *Culture of Cities* project (2000-2006), an interdisciplinary research program supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. By drawing together scholars spanning the social sciences and humanities, and through its focus on the cities of Montréal, Dublin, Toronto and Berlin, this project has been extraordinarily informative for my work on the theatre's involvement in the spoken character of Montréal.

In fact, this aspect of my work started well before I commenced my doctoral studies. Having spent many years in Montréal, I have become fascinated by the specificity of city culture in which shifting between languages is commonplace. In many ways, my doctoral project reaches back to my first experiences in Montréal, well over a decade ago. As a second-language learner of French and German during these first years, I became acutely aware of the pervasiveness of multilingualism in the everyday routes and routines that constitute Montréal. My doctoral project is thus unambiguously rooted in my own experiences of the negotiation between languages as an ever-present aspect of communication in this city. My study of the materialities of theatre is informed by these many experiences.

1 MATERIALITIES

1.1 The Material Turn in Media Theory

In this first section, I lay out what I will call the "material turn" in media theory, a turn most notable in contemporary German media theory. I explore the relationship of contemporary German media theory to French poststructuralism, as well as its political stance and transdisciplinary orientations. Although "German media theory" can be used to refer to several distinct strands of current theorizing in Germany, from Habermasian "communicative action" to Luhmannian "systems theory," my interest resides in contemporary thinkers who concentrate on the "materialities of communication," that is, on the medial conditions under which communication can take place. The materialities approach is clearly informed by central tenets of poststructuralism, but also elaborates on poststructuralism in important ways. Central to both programmes is the decentring of the subject, which has displaced the core exercise of interpretative hermeneutics; by the same token, the decentring of the subject distances the materialities approach from Marxist emancipatory claims about the potentials of media. An evaluation of the political potential of this contemporary German media theory must necessarily take into consideration this theory's relationship to poststructuralism. I finally investigate German media theory's transdisciplinarity and its potential for further analysis by interrogating discourses of convergence and translation in our current situation of a "digital age." To start this discussion, let me summarise my positions in a broad three-point thesis: 1) The contemporary German media theorists examined here have elaborated poststructuralist investigations by extending Foucauldian discourse analysis, Derridean deconstruction,

and Lacanian psychoanalysis to include all medial and material conditions that determine knowledge and communication. 2) Oriented to the posthermeneutic theoretical reference points of the "materialities of communication," contemporary German media theory positions its social and political criticism between the traditional *Geisteswissenschaften* (transcendental hermeneutics and analytical philosophy) and the emancipatory claims of established left politics (Benjamin, Brecht, Enzensberger as well as the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School). 3) These two points, in turn, demonstrate this theory's transborder origins in French poststructuralism and transdisciplinary nature in philosophy, technology, and the cultural sciences, gesturing to its current vitality and potential for increased international reception in considering the conditions and possibilities of today's medial systems.

Foremost among the thinkers associated with contemporary German media theory, Friedrich A. Kittler represents the clearest link to all of the connections delineated above. Kittler was one of the earliest German media theoreticians to elaborate on French poststructuralism (in conjunction with Peter Szondi, Manfred Frank, Norbert Bolz, Jochen Hörisch, and others) in the 1970s and 1980s, when German poststructuralists remained on the margins of the German academe. Taking a consistent stance that "media determine our situation,"[1] Kittler has not adhered to a leftist intellectual view of the emancipatory power of media.[2] For Kittler, Bolz and others, the revolutionary posturing of the post-1968 generation, perhaps best represented in terms of media by

[1] See Friedrich Kittler, *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter* (Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose, 1986a). English Translation: *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Translation by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), here page xxxix. (In citations of all subsequent translations published in English, the original language publication date will be given, followed by the English publication date in brackets.)

[2] Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, "Silicon Sociology, or, Two King's on Hegel's Throne? Kittler, Luhmann and the Posthuman Merger of German Media Theory," *The Yale Journal of Criticism,* Volume 13, Number 2, (2000): 402-403.

Enzensberger's 1970 essay *Constituents of a Media Theory*,[3] was too preoccupied with changing the world to grasp that perhaps the genuine political action or revolution lay rather in interpreting our media-historic situation. To this end, Foucauldian discourse analysis was a preferable template with which to work than a radical call-to-arms.[4] At the same time, "interpretation" and "revolution" are misleading terms, for these theorists adopt, to borrow a label from David Wellbery,[5] a *posthermeneutic* position clearly opposed to the conviction that texts (and thus utterances or recordings of any medial nature) emanate from or project the *Geist* or inner spirit of the individual subject, a point driven home by Kittler's frequent references to "so-called human beings" (*dem sogenannten Menschen*)[6]; nor do they abide by a teleological perspective of the course of medial developments which revolution might suggest. This anti- or posthermeneutic stance is perhaps most urgently announced in the title of an anthology of poststructuralist positions that Kittler edited in 1980, *Austreibung des Geistes aus den Geisteswissenschaften* (The Explulsion of the Spirit [Geist] from the Human [Geistes-] Sciences).[7] Kittler's subsequent work pursues these interests by examining transitions in the "materialities of communication." He contends that a shift took place between what he labels the "discourse networks," or perhaps more precisely, the notation systems (*Aufschreibesysteme*) of the "Age of Goethe" around 1800 and of (what we could call) the

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[3] Hans Magnus Ensenzberger, *Baukausten zu einer Theorie der Medien: Kritische Diskurse der Pressefreiheit*, Peter Glotz, ed., (Munich: Reinhard Fischer, 1997): 97-132. English translation: *The Consciousness Industry: On Literature, Politics and the Media*, Michael Roloff, ed., (New York: Seabury Press, 1974): 95-128.

[4] See Robert C. Holub, *Crossing Borders: Reception Theory, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992): 47.

[5] David Wellbery, "Foreword," in Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, Translation by Michael Metteer with Chris Cullens, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990): vii-xxxiii. Original German: Friedrich Kittler, *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900*, 4th Edition (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1985/2003).

[6] "Once the technological differentiation of optics, acoustics, and writing exploded Gutenberg's writing monopoly around 1880, the fabrication of so-called Man became possible." Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 16.

[7] Friedrich Kittler, ed., *Austreibung des Geistes aus den Geisteswissenschaften: Programme des Poststrukuralismus* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1980).

"Age of Edison" around 1900, with the advent of new technologies of recording, storage and transmission. The trajectory of Kittlerian media theory from the 1970s to today is therefore exemplary of the extension and elaboration of poststructuralism into German media-scientific theorising. And even if Kittler's work, like that of others around him, might have been dismissed in its early days, it has both spawned and influenced a wide variety of new work that, next to his own, comprises the scope of contemporary German media theory. In order to take the burgeoning breadth of German media theory into consideration in this dissertation, I refer to Kittler's work as a *roten Faden*, a "guiding theme" that threads this chapter.

Kittler's primary work, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (1985; English translation 1990), and its corollary, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1986; English translation 1999), unfurl a series of considerations that distinctly encompass key thrusts of Foucauldian discourse analysis, Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Further works by, among others, media theorist Bernhard Siegert and philosopher Norbert Bolz follow in this direction. More recent contributions by authors such as Joseph Vogl, Claus Pias, and others associated with Bauhaus-University's *Archive for Media History* in Weimar, pursue this programme of *media discourse analysis*. In the following section, entitled *Media Theory after Poststructuralism*, I begin by outlining general aspects of French poststructuralist thought that are central to contemporary German media theory. With these established, it will be possible to discern points of divergence between the two movements.

1.1.1 Media Theory after Poststructuralism

Contemporary German media theory has elaborated upon French poststructuralism while adhering to its own set of historical and theoretical orientations. Although poststructuralism emphasises the indeterminacy of knowledge, we must begin with several overarching statements about its major tenets. Poststructuralism challenges the philosophical foundations of the social sciences, especially their positivist and hermeneutic traditions, aiming not to erect structural models of existence and meaning, nor to reconstruct the specific emancipatory promises of the Marxist tradition, but rather to deconstruct any illusion of universality. One strong implication of this line of reasoning is to call into question the (false) promises of emancipation and thus the philosophy of the subject. It is important at this stage to consider the implications of poststructuralist thought for media, with an eye to the particular reception of poststructuralism in Germany and the resulting range of contemporary media theories that have emerged there. German *Medienwissenschaft* can be seen to extend a paradigm sequence in French theory that largely started with Saussurian linguistics and culminated in poststructuralist theories. It will be useful to briefly trace this progression.

Ferdinand de Saussure began this progression by articulating the position that language consists of a dichotomy between a formal system of differential speech elements (*langue*) and their application in individual speech acts (*parole*). *Langue* is thus a finite body of linguistic rules that authorizes an infinite number of speech performances. De Saussure conceived the linguistic *sign* as composed of the *signified*, an underlying concept or meaning, and the *signifier*, a sound-image. His assertion that "the bond

between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary"[8] implies, more significantly, that signifier and signified each stand in an arbitrary relationship to the sign itself. For de Saussure, what defines a word as such is its relation to other words in the system: "in language there are only differences without positive terms."[9] De Saussure's theory that language is a system of signs whose meanings are merely the effect of differential articulations resurfaced in the structuralist orientations of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lévi-Strauss described the human mind as comprised of a series of matrices that allow universal (primarily binary or reciprocal) structures to emerge. In the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, structural linguistics is blended with cybernetics to achieve an even further reduction of language into differentiality. In Lacan, the structures of the unconscious are not simply organised around language (its power arising from a sense of the openness or play of meanings that takes place between signified and signifier), but also bear resemblance to mediatic processes such as storage and transmission. It is primarily in Kittler's work that Lacanian psychoanalysis is retooled as a media theory of the unconscious: "psychoanalysis in the media age."[10] In this vein, Lacan's tripartite analysis of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic is unpacked in Kittler in direct relation to the technological developments of gramophone, film and typewriter toward the end of the 19th century.

Key proponents of poststructuralist leanings reject the reductivist methodology of structuralism. Derridean deconstruction accepts the Saussurian dichotomy of signified and signifier, but rejects the notion of the unifying sign, seeing disorder and variability

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[8] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, Translation by Wade Baskin, Charles Bally and Albert Sechehay, eds., (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959): 67.
[9] Ibid., 120.
[10] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 56. See also the chapter "Strukturen—Diskurse—Medien" in Norbert Bolz, *Philosophie nach Ihrem Ende* (Munich: Boer, 1992): 142-155.

rather than order and stable meanings in texts, as in grammaticality. Language ceaselessly postpones meaning, as an endless chain of the play of difference and deferral (*différance*). There are no determinate meanings, no transcendental signifieds, and for this reason there can be no stable self-identities. Derrida deconstructs the logocentrism inherent in western sciences and humanities. He argues that every fixed idea excludes another way of thinking, revealing and emphasising the arbitrary relationship between signified and signifier. The relativist implications of this strategy reverse the priority of speaking (in traditional linguistics) over writing: *grammatology* disrupts the logocentric reference point of speech and phonology, displacing them to writing and textuality—an a priori of textual *traces*. The centrality of the exteriorised text in Derrida's thought is contingent upon the decentring of the subject as the crux of philosophical investigation.

Foucault undertook a comprehensive study of the relays and circuits of discursive practices. The scope of Foucauldian discourse analysis lies not in the capacity of utterances to reveal truth or meaning, but rather in the circumstances of archival systems in which utterances are formulated, given meaning, and classified. In this analysis, the subject is not the source or initiating condition for discourse, but its historical effect. In archaeologically reconstituting the interrelation of conditions in discursive and epistemic systems, Foucault attempts to draw out the processes by which these systems determine the knowledge of the subject and simultaneously formulate what this subject is. Foucault thus links the production of discourses to different mechanisms and institutions of power. He introduces the idea of the dispositive, a constellation or interwoven net of heterogeneous elements (discourses, institutions, laws, teachings)—everything that is said or not said at a given time. The dispositive is comprised of the play of changing or varied

positions and functions between these elements, which can produce effects (on discourses and institutions) that were not strategically conceived.

Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz succinctly summarise the theoretical trajectory from Saussure to poststructuralism in the introduction to their translation of Kittler's *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*: "Step 1: We recognize that we are spoken by language. Step 2: We understand that language is not some nebulous entity but appears in the shape of historically limited discursive practices." That contemporary German media theory has taken its cue from these various perspectives, but with its own slant, leads to "Step 3: We finally perceive that these practices depend on media. In short structuralism begot discourse analysis, and discourse analysis begot media theory."[11]

Within the German-speaking realm, we can delineate several general orientations to media that have emerged after poststructuralism. First, in line with Foucauldian discourse analysis, *media stand in direct relation to knowledge*: media always place the 'knowledge' that they store, modify, and transmit under conditions that they themselves create and shape. This implies that media technologies themselves draw the boundaries between the utterable and unutterable, the visible and invisible, between order and chaos, information and noise. Discourse analysis thus examines the institutions central to collecting and circulating information, or in other words, the archival processes that contribute to the organisation of information as knowledge and to the production of orders of knowledge. This scrutiny focuses on the poetologies, or the forms of re-presenting knowledge—its *Inszenierung* or *mise-en-scène*—the specificity of which is

[11] Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz, "Translators' Introduction: Friedrich Kittler and Media Discourse Analysis," in Kittler, 1986a[1999]: xx.

always subject to medial conditions.[12] Extending Foucault, then, a *media discourse analysis* examines knowledge (reproduced in discursive forms that are not limited to the variable forms of speech, but also include all cultural productions and artefacts) as the medial *effect* of the interaction of technologies, institutions and poetologies.

Second, *media are not merely abstract carriers of external meaning, but have concrete material determinations*. Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer, Kittler, Siegert, and the *Archiv für Mediengeschichte* are central to this analysis of the "materialities of communication," emphasising that the historically specific, technical and medial constitution of signs allows their signifieds to emerge in the first place. In this vein, steered in part by Derridean grammatology, this form of study is interested in the medial and material traces of cultural transformations. This reverses the hermeneutic paradigm, which had echoed Saussure's concept of the linguistic *sign* where "the (material) signifier and the (spiritual) signified are inseparably related, although the function of the signifier lies exclusively in its offering access to the signified."[13] However, in placing the human being as the central subject of knowledge, traditional philosophy and the social sciences have disregarded their own medial condition in writing and print. In this way, as Kittler and Siegert would argue via Derrida and Foucault, rather than first philosophising about media, we must begin by comprehending the very media that make philosophic discourses possible: Nietzsche's philosophy is contingent upon his typewriter.[14] As we will see, an analysis of the "materialities of communication" must therefore go beyond the discursive forms at

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[12] For a discussion of poetologies, see Joseph Vogl, *Kalkül und Leidenschaft: Poetik des ökonomischen Menschen*, (Zurich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2004): 13-14.

[13] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, "A Farewell to Interpretation," in *Materialities of Communication*, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, eds, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994): 397.

[14] See Martin Stingelin, "Comments on a Ball: Nietzsche's Play on the Typewriter," in ibid., 70-82; and Friedrich Kittler, "The Mechanized Philosopher," in *Looking After Nietzsche*, Laurence A. Rickels, ed., (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990): 195-207.

the heart of Foucauldian discourse analysis, and must extend Derrida's focus on textuality, to include non-discursive or sub-medial forms of transmission: everything from paper and canvases to video tapes and circuit boards.

We can delineate a third direction that is closely related to the second: *media do not merely communicate 'events' of knowledge, but simultaneously communicate themselves as medial events*. The concept of event crosses several lines of poststructural thought. For Lyotard, reality cannot be ascertained in structural regularities, but rather must be seen as events, or unpredictable happenings. The medial event might be construed as the empty zone between discursive elements (for instance, sentences or words). That is, every additional connection in a chain of heterogeneous discursive elements represents a break, an *event* in the linguistic continuum, marking the virtuality (or the contingent character) of the moment. The event is measured against the availability and stochastic nature of "rule systems," in the case of speech, something like Wittgenstein's "language games." In the broader context of media discourse analysis, "rule systems" can be construed as "discourse networks," the technological possibilities and structures of a given epoch. Thus, the capacity of the rule systems or discourse networks available at a given moment is implicitly transmitted, as the materiality of the event. The notion of event furthers, for example, Foucault's differentiation of what is sayable and what is unsayable (what rules might be drawn upon at a given moment), and of Derrida's prioritisation of writing, where textual events trace out the deferral of signifiers.[15]

[15] For an excellent discussion of the referential shift in theoretical perspectives wrought by the semiological rupture in the 19th century, see Michael Wetzer, "Verweisungen. Der semiologische Bruch im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Arsenale der Seele: Literatur- und Medienanalyse seit 1870*, Friedrich A. Kittler and Georg Christoph Tholen, eds., (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1989): 71-95. For general comments on the relation

As Sibylle Krämer sums up, "media do not merely transmit messages; rather they unfurl an effectivity that moulds the modalities of our thought, perception, experience, memory and communication."[16] These general tendencies outline the framework of what I would like to term as a *material turn*, expanding the linguistic focus that pervades French poststructuralism into German media theory. Derrida's pronouncement "il n'y a pas de hors-texte" becomes: "il n'y a pas de hors-média."[17]

1.1.2 The Material Turn

In their anthology *Materialität der Kommunikation* (1988) and the modified English version (published in 1994), Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer announce a programme of examining the "materialities of communication."[18] Their enterprise is proposed as a "scene of multidirectionality,"[19] a model of communication "envisaged less as an exchange of meanings, of ideas about . . . , and more as performance propelled into movement by variously materialized signifiers."[20] Thus, they wish to question whether it is possible "to look at signifiers in isolation" with an interest "not in their meaning but in their 'materiality.'" Two crucial points emerge: first, "materiality cannot simply replace meaning" and, second, "signifiers, in their latent materiality as source and support, will

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of media theory to poststructuralism, see Claus Pias, "Poststrukturalistische Medientheorien," *Theorien der Medien*, Stefan Weber, ed., (Konstanz: UVK/UTB, 2002): 277-293.

[16] Sibylle Krämer, "Was haben die Medien, der Computer und die Realität miteinander zu tun?" *Medien, Computer, Realität*, Sibylle Krämer, ed., (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1998c): 14; my translation.

[17] Winthrop-Young and Wutz, xx.

[18] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, *Materialities of Communication* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

[19] K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, "The Materiality of Communication," in Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer, 1994: 3.

[20] Ibid., 6.

produce meanings as their effects."[21] In his introductory remarks, Pfeiffer notes that the underpinnings of this programme are developed within a keen awareness of poststructuralism, but he points out a key difference in conceptual approach. Derridean deconstruction and the materialities approach converge in a project of revealing *différance*, the ceaseless deferral of meanings resulting from the insurmountable dichotomy of signifier/signified; yet the materialities approach broadens the scope of analysis, deviating from the linguistic turn implicated in grammatology and discourse analysis:

> To hold, as Derrida did in *Grammatology*, that signifier and signified cannot be isolated against each other, would constitute a minimal claim of the program. The deconstructionist project uncovered implications of the minimal claim, pursuing the infinite play of meanings as traces without ultimate origin and control. The present enterprise takes another direction. It is concerned with potentials and pressures of stylization residing in techniques, technologies, materials, procedures, and 'media.'[22]

Gumbrecht equally stresses this broadening as a key point of divergence from deconstruction, noting that, while the *exteriority of language* is implicated in Derrida's early writings, Derrida nevertheless pays "astonishingly little attention" to "the logocentric exclusion of exteriority [...] in understanding the absence of the human body as a topic within the humanities." Furthermore, where deconstruction has been adopted (in American literary departments, largely adhering to the New Historicism) as a "modality of literary interpretation," with an underlying "assumption of a basic heterogeneity characterizing the texts to be interpreted," the materialities approach focuses to a greater degree on the exteriority—the materiality—of medial events. Both programmes converge in a "radical scepticism concerning the hermeneutic premise of an 'always already given' meaning," but deconstructive practice has largely been undertaken

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

with a focus on "discursive phenomena in Foucault's sense rather on the 'exteriority' in Derrida's early work."[23]

For Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer, then, thematizing a programme of the "materialities of communication" means reorienting the central concern of the traditional humanities from "interpretation" to "meaning constitution," that is, to an enquiry into the "non-meaning of constituted presuppositions, the place, the carriers, and the modalities of the emergence of meaning."[24] This basis of investigation pays greater attention to the material conditions under which 'something like communication' can take place, the notions of *exteriority* and *materiality* encompassing everything from the body to the physical characteristics of signifiers. Pfeiffer describes this enterprise not as a "search for the reality of the material or the materiality of the real," but for the "underlying constraints whose technological, material, procedural, and performative potentials have been all too easily swallowed up by interpretational habits."[25]

It may be useful to weigh the "materialities of communication" approach against Ernst Cassirer's view of technology (or technics) as a particular world-making endeavour of human expressive behaviour, which ultimately derives from the notion of universal spirit. In his 1930 essay, "Form und Technik" (Form and Technics),[26] Ernst Cassirer puts forward a theory of technology as an extension to his *Theory of Symbolic Forms*: technics emerges as a multilayered symbolic form in its own right. Here, he draws a parallel between the function of language and the function of technology: words and tools equally seize hold of reality by giving it shape (*Formgebung*). Language constructs

[23] Gumbrecht, 1994: 393-395.
[24] Ibid., 411, note 15.
[25] Pfeiffer, 1994: 12.
[26] Ernst Cassirer, "Form und Technik," in *Symbol, Technik, Sprache: Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1927-1933*, Ernst Wolfgang Orth and John Michael Krois, eds., in collaboration with Josef M. Werle, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1985): 39-91; unpublished in English.

communicative reality by means of linguistic-theoretical thought-forms; technology constructs material reality in the medium of "effective action" (*Wirken*):

> All spiritual mastery of reality is bound to this double act of "grasping" (*Fassen*): the conceptual *grasp* (*Begreifen*) of reality in linguistic-theoretical thought (*Denken*) and its material grasp (*Erfassen*) through the medium of effective action (*Wirken*); to, that is, the conceptual as well as the technical process of giving-form to something (*Formgebung*).[27]

For Cassirer, knowledge of the self is correlative to a sense of external reality, a relationship that is explicitly bound up with the technical sphere.[28] Thus, the essence of humanity lies in the activity of creative form-giving, in embodying itself in parallel forms: thought-forms (*Denken* or *Denkarten*) conveyed by language and semiotics; and material forms in the sphere of effective action, that is, by cultivating and transforming matter into tools, artefacts, etc. The development of technical form-giving activities corresponds to Cassirer's three-stage progression of sense-functions: from the concrete sign function of expression (*Ausdruck*), through the intuitive function of representation (*Darstellung*), including language, to the abstract function of signification or conception (*Bedeutung*). Thus, by the same token, there is a corresponding movement in technics from an initial mimetic phase (rooted in myth and ritual), through an extending phase (where Cassirer's draws on Ernst Kapp's insight of the tool as an externalization of bodily organs),[29] to a purely abstract phase of technologies that transcend "the organic limits of the human being-in-the-world." According to Robert E. Innis, this

> progressive 'dematerialization' of the sign charted in Cassirer's semiotic phenomenology, its abandonment of intuitive supports, is matched, Cassirer thinks, by a progressive dematerialization of the body and its extensions in technics. [...] [Technics] actively projects, indeed, inscribes, a pattern of intelligibility upon the world, giving rise to 'stamped forms' of every sort, from chipped stone to the 'automatic' processes of modern computing systems.[30]

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[27] Ibid., 52. English translation cited from Robert E. Innis, "Cassirer's Soft Edge," *The Semiotic Review of Books*, Volume 10, Number 1 (1999): <http://www.univie.ac.at/Wissenschaftstheorie/srb/srb/cassirer.html> [Accessed 12 January 2006].
[28] Ibid., 71.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Innis, 1999.

Cassirer's semiotic theory, enhanced through the analysis of technical forms, includes all modes of mediation. His take on technics "is the domain of an Hegelian 'objective spirit' [...] The 'materialization' of mind in signs and other exosomatic organs—both 'hard' and 'soft'—is a veritable 'realization' or 'embodiment' of mind, the 'inside' seeing itself 'outside' and the 'outside' defining and constituting what is 'inside' (Goethe)." Ultimately, in Cassirer's eyes, linguistic signs and material tools, or media in general, exemplify a universal spiritual need for mediation.[31]

In contrast, Friedrich Kittler's work exemplifies the material turn. Grounded in poststructural thought (as I will describe in greater detail in section 1.4.), his work encompasses—according to David Wellbery—three 'presuppositions' that broadly define the materialities approach and contest the notion of universal spirit: *exteriority*, *mediality*, and *corporeality*. The presupposition of exteriority posits that language is a domain recalcitrant to internalization. Following a Foucauldian lead, Kittler looks to "delineate the apparatuses of power, storage, transmission, training, reproduction, and so forth that make up the conditions of factual discursive occurrences."[32] *Aufschreibesysteme* (inscription or notation systems; discourse networks) are observable in their contingent facticity and exteriority, through their exterior character of a technology; they are discernable at "a level of material deployment that is prior to questions of meaning" and thus "set the framework within which something like 'meaning,' indeed, something like 'man,' become possible at all." As Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer discuss as well,[33] the presupposition of exteriority rests in part on the Derridean premise that "writing (or

[31] Ibid.
[32] Wellbery, 1990: xii.
[33] See Pfeiffer, 1994: 6 and Gumbrecht, 1994: 392-396.

arche-writing)" is the "condition of possibility of metaphysical conceptuality."[34] To this, Kittler adjoins the correlate tenet of Lacanian thought, that our "existence is a function of our relation to the signifier"—that our unconscious functions much like a machine. What I designate here as the turn to the materialities of communication embraces these two poststructural perspectives, and emerges concretely in Kittler's analysis not merely in the exteriority of writing, nor simply in our relation to a representation or signifier, but as Wellbery says, "at the level of historically specific technologies—scriptural and otherwise—that in their various arrangements organize information processing."[35]

Wellbery's second assertion, the presupposition of mediality, underlines the general condition of Kittler's domain of enquiry:

> The decisive methodological step undertaken by Kittler is to generalize the concept of medium, to apply it to all domains of cultural exchange. Whatever the historical field we are dealing with, in Kittler's view, we are dealing with media as determined by the technological possibilities of the epoch in question. Mediality is the general condition within which, under specific circumstances, something like "poetry" or "literature" can take shape.[36]

Literature, from this point of view, is a medium, among many, with material restrictions: a materially-constituted means for processing, storing and transmitting data. Consequently, the character of literature "will change historically according to the material and technical resources at its disposal" and to "the alternative media with which it competes." In this way, the material turn has brought the mechanisms of poststructural criticism into the present: "the materialities of communication" approach is able to consider technologies (such as, in Kittler's case, the typewriter, which fundamentally altered the way we write) that constitute the historical a priori of our own time. In line with the notion that media do not merely transmit external messages, but are implicated in

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[34] Wellbery, 1990: xii.
[35] Ibid., xii-xiii.
[36] Ibid., xiii.

determining and shaping these messages (McLuhan's general thesis that "the medium is the message")—that is, that 'something like literature' is medially instantiated—then the meaning of any message is necessarily the result of a selection, a process of rarefaction. For alongside the information it carries, any material channel will potentially produce general "noise" (such as the familiar static and hisses of analog records and aerial radio and television). As Siegert says, "noise and wrangling on all channels: that was the situation to begin with. Language was a pipeline that constantly was clogged with the ambiguities of rhetoric" while "philosophers were its plumbers."[37] In the advent of new media, the significance of any message has become recognisable as the effect of differentiating between sense and non-sense, meaning and non-meaning, information and noise—a differentiation or, more accurately, a process of *différance*, that has moved beyond the purview of philosophical hermeneutic interpretation.[38]

Finally, Wellbery's presupposition of corporeality (to which I refer further in section 2.1.) implicates the body—and not the universal human subject which is susceptible to internalizing meaning—as "the site upon which the various technologies of our culture inscribe themselves, the connecting link to which and from which our medial means of processing, storage, and transmission run." Corporeality in this sense emerges in the work of Foucault (the body as a historical condition in systems of punishment and discourses of sexuality) and Lacan (subject formation at the intersection of body and signifier). As Wellbery points out, rather than simply eliminating the subject, poststructural thought has replaced the concept of subject with the concept of body, "a

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[37] See Bernhard Siegert, *Relais: Geschicke der Literatur als Epoche der Post 1751-1913*. (Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose, 1993). English Translation: *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System*, English translation by Kevin Rapp, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), here page 1.
[38] Wellbery, 1990: xiv.

transformation which disperses (bodies are multiple), complexifies (bodies are layered systems) and historicizes (bodies are finite and contingent products) subjectivity."[39]

1.1.3 *The* Material *Order of Things*: Kittler, Siegert, Bolz

The turn to the "materialities of communication" through the presuppositions of exteriority, mediality, and corporeality is the overarching principle with which contemporary German media theory has expanded the scope of poststructural thought. In this section, I illustrate this turn through the work of Kittler, Siegert, and Bolz.

Friedrich Kittler's work is exemplary of the strong influence of poststructuralism on German thinkers. Unlike Manfred Frank (who in monographs such as *Was ist Neostrukturalismus?* (1984)[40] has sought to integrate poststructuralism into the German realm by emphasising its derivations from idealism and then proposing a rapprochement with hermeneutic criticism), Kittler hardly addresses the tenets of poststructuralism directly in any of his works. Rather, he seeks to illustrate its practical application. Kittler's central work has been variably labelled "posthermeneutic criticism,"[41] "media theory after poststructuralism,"[42] and latterly "media discourse analysis."[43] Wellbery accurately pinpoints the place of poststructuralist thought in Kittler's work with a view to his magnum opus, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*. "Kittler's book," he writes, "is not about post-structuralism, does not take post-structuralism as its theme. Rather, it presupposes post-structuralist thought, makes that thought the operating system, the

[39] Ibid., xiv-xv.
[40] Manfred Frank, *Was ist Neostrukturalismus*, (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1984).
[41] Wellbery, 1990: vii-xxxiii.
[42] John Johnston, "Friedrich Kittler: Media Theory After Poststructuralism," in Friedrich Kittler, *Literature, Media, Information Systems*, John Johnston, ed. (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1997): 1-26.
[43] Winthrop-Young and Wutz, 1999: xi-xxxviii.

hardware, with which it sets out to accomplish its own research program. In *Discourse Networks*, post-structuralism becomes a working vocabulary, a set of instruments productive of knowledge."[44] These metaphors are carefully chosen to elucidate Kittler's application of poststructuralist thought; indeed, the order of Wellbery's metaphors (operating system, hardware, set of instruments, working vocabulary) seems to imply a rewinding of the medial developments that Kittler sets out to describe: from the digital media of today enshrined in computer operating systems, through the technical and mechanical hardware and instruments of 1900 and throughout the 20th century, to the language and writing systems examined as the prime medium of discursive practices in the Age of Goethe around 1800.

Furthermore, these metaphors portray a systematic tactic in Kittler's writing, for the structure and style of *Discourse Networks* and equally of *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* do not dodge the fact of their own mediality. Each book is, so to speak, "programmed" through a series of "relays," that is, while tracing historical developments mostly chronologically, they encourage a circuitous reading rather than a linear interpretation, urging the reader to consider the various sections as bits (in whatever sense) of a larger system. The structure of *Discourse Networks*, divided as such into two distinct time periods, thus gestures to the first of the three points made earlier: the knowledge that the book stores and transmits applies to the very network of material conditions to which the book is itself medially linked. In these traits, we see that Foucault figures prominently at the macro-level of Kittler's study.

Discourse Networks pursues a Foucauldian paradigm even more explicitly than in Kittler's subsequent work. In *Discourse Networks*, Kittler demonstrates that a

[44] Wellbery, 1990: iix.

transformation between two distinct perspectives on language, two separate systems of writing, occurred in the transition from the classical to the modern ages. During the Age of Goethe around 1800, a timeframe generally associated with classicism, romanticism and idealism, language is viewed as a conduit for the voice of the inner spirit. By 1900, with the advent of the new technological age, this antiquated system is replaced with a new system, in which the written word itself is valorised over the individual human beings who formerly appeared to employ the word for self-expression. The individual intellect thus becomes merely the conduit through which the word is recorded. Language falls from its privileged (literary) pedestal, and can only be valorised as one medium among others. We might then define discourse networks as designating "the network of technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store, and process relevant data."[45] Thus, in line with Foucault, Kittler is not interested in an ideological critique of any one discourse or subdiscourse, and remains indifferent to conflicts or controversies that take place during these eras. Rather, he demarcates the underlying consistencies or dispositions (dispositives) of medial processes that shape the conditions of possibility for any utterance at all. Accordingly, there is no interpretative criticism of individual works or of authorial intent in Kittlerian analysis; he is concerned neither with assessing texts for their biases or accuracies, nor with evaluating them on the basis of right or wrong.

However, part of Kittler's aim in *Discourse Networks* is to demonstrate its own divergence from Foucauldian discourse analysis:

> In order to describe such systems as systems, that is, to describe them from the outside and not merely from a position of interpretive immanence, Foucault developed discourse analysis as a reconstruction of the rules by which the actual discourses of an epoch would have to have been

[45] Kittler, 1985[1990]: 369.

> organized in order not to be excluded as was, for example, insanity. His concept of the archive—synonymous with the library in Foucault's research methods, if not in his theory—designates a historical a priori of written sentences. Hence discourse-analytic studies had trouble only with periods whose data-processing methods destroyed the alphabetic storage and transmission monopoly, that old European basis of power. Foucault's historical research did not progress much beyond 1850.[46]

Kittlerian theory extends Foucauldian discourse analysis to all branches of *Medienwissenschaft*, but he views Foucault's archaeological premise (in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*) of identifying discursive practices in writings systems and textual archives as simply not going far enough: Foucault concluded his analysis without taking into account that the Gutenberg Era was also ending, that the technology of writing itself was a monopolised communications medium.[47] Kittler summarises early in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* that "all his [Foucault's] analyses end immediately before that point in time at which other media penetrated the library's stacks. Discourse analysis cannot be applied to sound archives or towers of film rolls,"[48] a clear critique that is also signalled in the afterword of *Discourse Networks*: "Archaeologists of the present must also take into account data storage, transmission, and calculation in technological media."[49]

We might posit that a dialectical relationship pervades the "materialities" of *Discourse Networks*; that is, in the dual senses of its "subject matter" and its "material form" in the written word and printed page, the book's *matter* is to document the course of the transformation that its own material form underwent. By pursuing a Foucauldian agenda to demonstrate that, once the materialities of language were recognised, the

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Winthrop-Young, 2000: 394. Further: "[...] since it is Kittler's goal not only to extend French discourse analysis into a post-Gutenbergian present but also to ground it in the materialities of communication, his analyses of discourse networks also serve to explain the baffling change of Foucauldian epistemes by relating them either to the dissemination of new technologies or to changes in the ways in which already existing technologies are implemented," ibid., 401.
[48] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 5.
[49] Kittler, 1985[1990]: 369.

individual human being recedes into oblivion, *Discourse Networks* equally confronts the individual reader, not as the subject to whom the book is addressed, but rather as a mere node in the vast network of social beings who are interlinked by language and writing. *Discourse Networks* posits its own structure neither as necessarily unbiased, nor presumptuously as representative of some current "Discourse Network 2000."

Pervading Kittler's *Discourse Networks* and leading him to his second most important volume, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, are the central concepts of media storage and transmission. In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Kittler explicates the historic shift around 1900, when "the technological differentiation of optics, acoustics, and writing exploded Gutenberg's writing monopoly"[50]: sound recording and film broke open the "storage monopoly of literature," while the typewriter standardized texts, putting an end to the traces of individual handwriting. With the invention of the three new technologies, "the dream of a real visible and audible world arising from words has come to an end."[51] As Kittler so exhaustively details in *Discourse Networks* and his many articles, the status of literature—as a product of the monopoly of the Gutenberg Galaxy—was effectively the result of alphabetised readers hallucinating visual and acoustic imagery: "Aided by compulsory education and new alphabetization techniques, the book became both film and record around 1800—not as a media-technological reality, but in the imaginary of readers' souls."[52] In this discourse network, "all data flows, provided they really were streams of data, had to pass through the bottleneck of the signifier. Analphabetic monopoly, grammatology."[53] For Kittler, the differentiation between these

[50] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 16.
[51] Ibid., 14.
[52] Ibid., 9.
[53] Ibid., 4.

principal data flows at the turn of the 20th century implies necessarily expanding the scope of grammatological study: "Whereas (according to Derrida) it is characteristic of so-called Man and his consciousness to hear himself speak and see himself write, media dissolve such feedback loops." Like physical handicaps (Edison's half-deafness), media "isolate and thematize sensory data streams. The phonograph does not hear as do ears that have been trained immediately to filter voices, words, and sounds out of noise; it registers acoustic events as such."[54] This amounts to the central thesis of *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*: "The historical synchronicity of cinema, phonography and typewriting separated optical, acoustic, and written data flows, thereby rendering them autonomous."[55] In this regard, Kittler posits Lacan's "methodological distinction" among the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic as "the theory (or merely a historical effect) of that differentiation":

> Only the typewriter provides writings as a selection from the finite and arranged stock of its keyboard. It literally embodies what Lacan illustrated using the antiquated letter box. In contrast to the flow of handwriting, we now have discrete elements separated by spaces. Thus, the symbolic has the status of block letters. Film was the first to store those mobile doubles that humans, unlike other primates, were able to (mis)perceive as their own body. Thus, the imaginary has the status of cinema. And only the phonograph can record all the noise produced by the larynx prior to any semiotic order and linguistic meaning. To experience pleasure, Freud's patients no longer have to desire what philosophers consider good. Rather, they are free to babble. Thus the real—especially in the talking cure known as psychoanalysis—has the status of phonography.[56]

For Kittler it is thus no coincidence that Freudian psychoanalysis emerged concurrently with Edisonian technologies of recording and transmission, a relationship also evident for Benjamin.[57] Moreover, Kittler ties the development of the typewriter to the emergence of structuralism.[58]

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[54] Ibid., 22-23.
[55] Ibid., 14.
[56] Ibid., 15-16.
[57] Benjamin draws attention to this relationship in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, Translation by Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken, 1968): 235-236: "The film has enriched our field of perception with methods which can be illustrated by those of Freudian theory.

The historical conditions surrounding new technologies of storage and transmission are themes that equally engage Bernhard Siegert and Norbert Bolz. Perhaps most in line with Kittlerian analysis is the work of Bernhard Siegert. In *Relays: Literature as the Epoch of the Postal System 1751-1913* (1993; English translation 1999), Siegert undertakes an examination of literature as an a priori of the postal principles of dispatching, relaying and receiving. Siegert's study is a clear offshoot of Foucauldian/Kittlerian media discourse analysis: a media archaeology of postal transmission. The book's general thesis is posed in chapter six as a question: "what was the postal principle that allowed the letter's transformation into literature to make its appearance?"[59] Like Kittler, Siegert draws on a variety of seemingly unconnected sources in German literature—Christian Gellert, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Gottfried Keller, Franz Kafka; their interconnectedness lies not in the texts themselves, but in the fact that "something like literature" evolved in tandem with changes in postal technology.

Siegert thus investigates postal networks for the medial and material conditions under which a concept of literature first emerged. Like *Discourse Networks*, the book is divided between two principal eras. The first, again, is the Age of Goethe that broadly correlates to Foucault's modern episteme (around 1800); the second could be called the Age of the World Postal Union, corresponding to Foucault's postmodern episteme (around 1900). Within these epochs, *Relays* is framed around two principal media events. For Siegert, the importance of the "age of Goethe" lies in 1806 when Goethe, as a

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[...] The *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* [...] isolated and made analyzable things which had heretofore floated along unnoticed in the broad spectrum of perception. For the entire spectrum of optical, and now also acoustical, perception the film has brought about a similar deepening of apperception. It is only an obverse of this fact that behavior items shown in a movie can be analyzed much more precisely and from more points of view than those presented on paintings or on the stage."

[58] Winthrop-Young and Wutz, 1999: xx.

[59] Siegert, 1993[1999]: 53.

prestigious member of the court, was granted an exemption to postal privileges, an exemption that applied to his friends and associates as well:

> Everyone was what Goethe was above all—an individual—and because of this, the postal system, which was organized around the author Goethe as the center of attraction, established the general pattern for individual letter writing around 1800.[60]

Letter writing and posting became valorised through "Goethe's postal empire":

> Everyone who wrote letters was at the same time writing to a Goethe *en miniature* within, to a Self, postage free. [...] In Goethe's postal empire, letters passed at once through a route of transmission and a route of feedback. [...] In a system that posted The Author, all letters unerringly arrived at a universal address: the Inner Person.[61]

A postal system based on the Author Goethe implicated all letter writing as simultaneously addressed to an Internal Author, "every letter writer was assigned an authorship *en miniature*."[62]

The second central media event was the introduction of the "penny post" in 1839 as the first pricing system based on prepaid mass delivery. This event signals for Siegert a major transformation in postal logic: "the closing of the postal system as a system," ushering in a new system whereby the Individual was no longer the grounds for posting; these grounds were provided rather by "the laws of a postal economy," a "media rationality" that was "dictated by the economy of the medium itself." This transition represents an ontological shift: by introducing standardised prepayment, the penny post inaugurated a system of paying the dept for the transmission of letters (*signifiers*) prior to their arrival and, indeed, independent of their existence or meaning: "Signifiers no longer followed the rationality of meaning and its comprehension, but instead the rationality of a

[60] Ibid, 68.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., 69.

medium that subjected them to a standard that always preceded the possibility of meaning."[63]

Central to Siegert's thesis on the underlying medial conditions of postal transmission is the notion of interception: "In its positive sense, *epoché* means nothing but interception. Every delay of the dispatch as a necessary interruption of the transmission process for the purposes of sending is a type of interception." Literature is viewed as the epoch of the postal system because it resides in the same logic of conveyance. "That a letter always can also not arrive—can be intercepted, purloined—is nothing less than the condition allowing it always to reach its destination. [...] Literature, as an art of human beings, is a gift of interception, which operates on the basis of feedback loops between human senses and the postal materiality of data processing known as the alphabet."[64]

In his latest work, *Passage des Digitalen: Zeichenpraktiken der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaften 1500-1900* (The Digital Passage: Symbolic Practices in the Sciences of Modernity 1500-1900; as yet unpublished in English),[65] Siegert undertakes a survey of mathematical inscription as a history of analysis. For Siegert, mathematics represents the quintessential paradigm of the shift to modernity, where the German *Zeichenpraktiken* encompasses a praxis of symbols or characters as well as "practices of drawing." *Passage des Digitalen* is not a study of the future of digital media or their "possible disappearance in the real," but an enquiry into the "figure of the beginning" [Figur des Anfangen] of the appearance of electric (electromagnetic, electronic) media: on the one hand, their

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[63] Ibid., 108-109.
[64] Ibid., 11-12.
[65] Bernhard Siegert, *Passage des Digitalen: Zeichenpraktiken der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaften 1500-1900* (Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose, 2003).

historical beginning, on the other hand an origin-less beginning, a beginning that is permanently deferred away from any one moment of origin.[66] In one of the clearest examples of the extensions of poststructuralism into German media theory, it is Siegert's stated intention to combine Foucauldian media archaeology with Derridean historical grammatology. In order to analyse mathematics as a praxis of symbols, a "deconstruction of the mathematical notion of symbol is required":

> From the perspective of a historical grammatology, symbol practices [Zeichenpraktiken] are not grounded in the linguistic concept of alphabetical writing that serves to record a spoken language. The symbol practices contemplated here are thoroughly related to that domain of the *graphé*, which reaches beyond the concept of language.[67]

Subsumed under the concept of *dia*grammatical writing are all the forms of writing that can be differentiated from phonetic writing: "lists, tables, cartographic coordinate systems, mathematical notation systems as well as graphs of self-inscribing events—self-inscribing radio waves, projectiles, oscillation events—to the digital registrar of impulses in electronic storage cells."[68] But in order to trace out the historical beginning of electric media,

> historical grammatology requires an archaeology of the media that grounds the analysis of signifier structures within the materialities of communication, within the network of instruments, agents and media without which historical grammatology would remain an enterprise of the philosophy of history. Conversely, the archaeology of the media would remain a positivistic collecting of historical facts if it was not taken up by the question of its relationship with the destiny of writing that no longer stems from a Logos nor the logic of representation.[69]

In this undertaking, Siegert thus situates *mathematics* explicitly as cultural praxis, a paradigm *par excellence* of discourse and the ultimate core of any media archaeology.

For Norbert Bolz, storage has been the ur-function of all media since the beginning of human civilisation. The possibility of storage rests on the presupposition of

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[66] Ibid, 13.
[67] Ibid.; my translation.
[68] Ibid., 13-14; my translation.
[69] Ibid., 14; my translation.

exteriority, its notational prerequisite: noting down information in a form exterior to the memory but accessible for later recall. The possibility of transmission emerges later, reaching a pinnacle in the Gutenberg age of the printing press and book technologies, and extending to today's mass communication technologies. As with Kittler, Bolz sees a caesura in the development of media, between older media capable of storage and transmission, and what he designates as the *neue Medien* capable of calculation. In his first two books, *Theorie der neuen Medien* (1990; Theory of New Media) and *Am Ende der Gutenberg-Galaxis* (1993; At the End of the Gutenberg Galaxy),[70] Bolz relies on a fairly strict reading of McLuhan to pronounce the end of the book era, the Gutenberg Galaxy. Like Kittler, Bolz views the new technical media, such as telegraph, radio, television, etc. as shattering the monopoly of the book medium. The end of Gutenberg's monopoly brings forth a reformatting of human beings and their relation to the world. In breaking with physical characteristics of print and the book, the new media implicate a fundamental shift in storage capacities and decoding algorithms that now lie outside the realm of human senses. In the final chapter of *Am Ende der Gutenberg-Galaxis* and in his third book *Das kontrollierte Chaos*,[71] Bolz turns his attention to the development of hypermedia. The shift from the linearity of the print medium to the multidimensionality of new technical media breaks open the pattern of sequentiality and hierarchical information processing, which has given rise to the power relations in western culture and accordingly dominated western epistemology. Here, like Kittler and Siegert, Bolz

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[70] Norbert Bolz, *Theorie der neuen Medien* (Munich: Raben, 1990); *Am Ende der Gutenberg-Galaxis: Die neuen Kommunikationsverhältnisse* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993). One chapter of the *Theorie der neuen Medien*, "Abschied von der Gutenberg-Galaxis" (89-110) has been excerpted in English in *New German Critique*, Number 78 (Fall 1999) as "Farewell to the Gutenberg-Galaxy," Translation by Michelle Mattson, 109-131.

[71] Norbert Bolz, *Das kontrollierte Chaos: vom Humanismus zur Medienwirklichkeit* (Düsseldorf: ECON Verlag, 1994).

implicitly criticises Foucault's discourse analytic limitations as being trapped in the materiality of writing. But in the dawn of today's hypermedia, the linearity of the book medium has become "the bottleneck of human communication"[72]—or as Kittler says, the bottleneck of the signifier. Hypermedia break open this paradigm, liberating a desire for simultaneity and abundance in communicational processes that is analogous to the complexity of human sensory processes.[73]

Bolz draws particularly on Nietzsche's fascination with the synaesthetic experience of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which is seen to anticipate the interface effect of new media; it literally is "the first music that gets on our nerves. Our nerve ends laid bare, we have only to connect them technically with electric wiring to enter the world of the new media."[74] The concept of interface is furthered by Bolz's analysis of Walter Benjamin as the historical witness of the transition from the Gutenberg Galaxy, stemming from the principle of writing in the Baroque, to technologized world of the 19th and 20th centuries. Thus, Benjamin himself is seen as an interface, and his famous analysis of the Arcades is revealed as "early incarnations of virtual environments."[75]

The work of Kittler, Siegert and Bolz lays out the programme of the materialities of communication, reorienting the central concern of the traditional humanities from "interpretation" to "meaning constitution." On the whole, their work remains unfalteringly indifferent to medial displacements across time. Kittler and Bolz do reiterate Walter Benjamin's argument that technological media at the advent of modernism represent a significant rupture or caesura, culminating in the destruction of aura, but

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[72] Bolz, 1993: 205.
[73] See Michael Geisler's comments in "From Building Blocks to Radical Construction: West German Media Theory Since 1984," *New German Critique*, Number 78, (Fall 1999): 91-92.
[74] Bolz, 1990: 44; my translation. See Geisler, 1999: 89. See also section 2.2.3 of this thesis.
[75] Geisler, 1999: 89.

neither of them overtly invests the transformations in media history with explicit promises of emancipation as found prominently in Benjamin and in Enzensberger's Benjamin-inspired counterargument to the Frankfurt School. On this note, David Wellbery goes so far as to claim that "Kittler is an evolutionist in the sense that he attributes no a priori directionality to historical change."[76] In the following section, I situate this posthermeneutic programme within German traditions of social critique.

1.1.4 *Posthermeneutics*: Criticism in an Interpretative *Geist*-town

In what ways can the analyses put forward by the materialities approach be designated as "critical"? How does this criticism diverge from other established forms of social critique in the German tradition? The theorists in question draw on numerous sources that at times derive from divergent political orientations. Taking its cue from French poststructuralism, the cultural criticism of contemporary German media theory rejects the traditional hermeneutics of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. At the same time, German poststructural media theory was an alternative to the revolutionary claims of the emancipatory power of media voiced by Marxist and post-1968 intellectuals, as well as the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. Especially for Kittler and Bolz, who were among the first to appropriate poststructuralism in the German realm, discourse analytic practice—dissecting the specificities of our media-historic time—represented the best oppositional praxis to combat the conservative status quo. As Kittler states in the introduction to

[76] Wellbery, 1990: xxxi-xxxii.

Austreibung des Geistes aus den Geisteswissenschaften, "what counts is the relevance or pertinence in a puzzle, not the significance in a world."[77]

In evaluating the political potential of this spectrum of contemporary media theorists, it is important to recognize that no one of them adopts a particular *ideological* critique of media and technology. In this regard, it is vital to consider the form of *cultural criticism* that the materialities approach has inherited from its poststructural impulse. In the poststructural positions adapted by Kittler, Siegert, Bolz, and others, cultural criticism is different from other forms of cultural critique espoused by the traditional humanities. Contemporary German media theory is self-conscious of its materiality to an extent that was not yet evident in French poststructuralism, that is, that the production of knowledge or meaning is bound to the medial determinations and constraints of its own networks. The criticism employed by contemporary German media theory in its programme of investigating the materialities of communication therefore marks a clear departure from the interpretative slant of the traditional humanities, opening up a domain that might best be described as *posthermeneutics*.

As Pfeiffer notes in his introduction to *Materialities of Communication*, inherent meanings are not to be sought, performance or rituals not confused with "forms of spectacular, aestheticized autodynamics," (for example, dance not understood via "doctrines of its organic essence"), nor literature grasped as a function of interpretation.[78] Gumbrecht equally observes that to study the "materialities of communication" is to bid (as his contribution is entitled) "Farewell to Interpretation."[79] "Different from interpretation as meaning identification," he notes, "the project of analyzing the processes

[77] Kittler, 1980: 10. See Holub, 1992: 47-48.
[78] Pfeiffer, 1994: 6-7.
[79] Gumbrecht, 1994: 389-402.

of meaning constitution literally obliges us to take into account those 'nonspiritual' phenomena that used to be excluded from the thematic field of the humanities."[80] With these proclamations, the Geist or *spirit* of the Geisteswissenschaften is consigned to a ghost-town.

In contrast to Manfred Frank, who has attempted to adapt aspects of poststructuralist thought by locating its precedents within the German hermeneutic tradition, Kittler clearly pursues a posthermeneutic critique of media technologies. Frank, for example, has sought to recover central thrusts of Derridean thought from the romantic hermeneutics of Schleiermacher.[81] However, as David Wellbery points out, there was another imaginable German response to poststructuralism: "a response that actualizes aspects of post-structuralist thought incommensurate with the hermeneutic paradigm." Kittler's *Discourse Networks* "abandons the language game and form of life defined by the hermeneutic canons of justification and enters into domains of inquiry inaccessible to acts of appropriative understanding." Posthermeneutic criticism, as Wellbery so succinctly summarises, "stops making sense"; to borrow a pun from Nietzsche, it tears away the veil of the hermeneutic *Schleier-Macher* (veil-makers).[82]

What, precisely, are the major critical tenets of posthermeneutic media criticism? Posthermeneutic media criticism contests the central assumptions of disciplines generally grouped under the "sciences of the spirit," the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Winthrop-Young and Wutz note that, according to Kittler,

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[80] Ibid., 399.
[81] See e.g. Manfred Frank, *Das individuelle Allgemeine: Textstrukturierung und –interpretation nach Schleiermacher* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1977); and F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik : mit einem Anhang sprachphilosophischer Texte Schleiermachers*, Manfred Frank, ed. (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1977).
[82] Wellbery, 1990: ix.

> "media science" or *Medienwissenschaft* will remain mere "media history" as long as the practitioners of cultural studies "know higher mathematics only from hearsay." Just as the formalist study of literature should be the study of "literalness," the study of media should concern itself primarily with mediality and not resort to the usual suspects—history, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and literary and cultural studies—to explain how and why media do what they do.[83]

Kittler laid out this programme early on, underlining how Foucauldian discourse analysis can be usefully applied in the cultural sciences.[84] He stressed, however, that *Diskursanalyse* should not merely be considered a "philosophical theory," but a "subversion of theory": "a critique of the disciplines subsumed under the 'human sciences.'"[85] Its intent is to challenge the concept of human sciences as hermeneutics, or as the "group of disciplines grounded on the act of interpretation as their core exercise."[86] The insufficiency of the hermeneutic programme lies in the necessarily fragmentary or incomplete capacity to articulate or express "meanings" in spoken or written text—meanings presupposed to be always already given in the interiority of a subject's psyche. The objection put forth by the posthermeneutic materialities approach, building therefore on Derridean notions of the interplay of signifiers and the constant deferral of meanings, is that the hermeneutic paradigm devalues the "material surface" of spoken or written texts as secondary in relation to subjective interiority.[87] Posthermeneutic historiography rejects the Hegelian claim that there is no historical past, that every true and substantial element of history lives in an eternal present. Kittler describes the discourse network of 1800 as a finite period, in which the hermeneutic paradigm came into being and ultimately erodes. For him, the visage etched in the sand at the end of Foucault's *Order of Things* is hermeneutic humanism itself, destined to be washed away by the unrepentant

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[83] Winthrop-Young and Wutz, 1999: xiv.
[84] See Friedrich Kittler and Horst Turk, eds., *Urszenen: Literaturwissenschaft als Diskursanalyse und Diskurskritik* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1977) as well as Kittler, 1980.
[85] Holub, 1992: 66.
[86] Gumbrecht, 1994: 396.
[87] Ibid., 397.

waves of the future; it is a "finite and contingent inscription, written on the background of a granular noise and powerless against time's turbulence."[88]

The presupposition of corporeality to which Wellbery refers has two vital methodological implications for posthermeneutic criticism. First, the concept of individual agency fades out. "Post-hermeneutic criticism replaces the foundational notion of praxis (the materialist version of subjective agency) with that of training." The body is not inherently an agent, and can only become one by undergoing a restriction of its possibilities, by enduring a process of socialisation. Culture, from this stance, becomes a regimen through which bodies pass: bodies are inscribed upon; their possibilities must suffer a reduction of randomness. The second implication is that this sufferance, the body's "essential pathos," is the privileged locus for analysing discourse networks: in the same way that the "materialities of communication" approach attends to the differentiation between information and noise, posthermeneutic criticism addresses the difference between normal behaviour and aberrance—the pathologies that a discourse network produces and that shape the identity of any cultural configuration.[89]

Posthermeneutic criticism consists, then, of "rethink[ing] media with a new and uncompromising degree of scientific rigor, focusing on the intrinsic technological logic,

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[88] Wellbery, 1990: x.

[89] Ibid., xv. This view of pathologies can be juxtaposed to Ernst Cassirer's consideration of speech pathology as a "pathology of the symbolic consciousness": "The process of spiritualization, the process of the world's "symbolization," discloses its value and meaning where it no longer operates free and unhindered, but must struggle and make its way against obstacles. In this sense the pathology of speech and action gives us a standard by which to measure the distance separating the organic world and the world of human culture, the sphere of life and the sphere of objective spirit." Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Volume 3*, Translation by Ralph Manheim, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957): 277.

the changing links between body and medium, the procedures for data processing, rather than evaluat[ing] them from the point of view of their social usage."[90]

1.2 Materialities of Hypermedia and Media Convergence

1.2.1 *Qu'est-ce qu'un internaute?*

The displacement of the human subject in poststructural German media theorising has direct import for considerations of the individual's place within a hypermediated world. Internet technology has ushered in a renewed sense of empowerment for individual media "users," human-machine interfaces that have in turn fostered a theoretic coupling of anthropology and cybernetics.[91] We find ourselves, therefore, confronted with the dilemma of theorising today's *user* both in terms of a displaced authorial subject but equally in terms of the creative, producing subject.

In Kittler's analysis, the notion of 'so-called man' (*der sogenannte Mensch*) as an autonomous, self-determined human subject, a person who can produce meaningful texts and perform responsible acts, is a construction. This construction is the effect of the discourse network 1800 and its historically contingent technology of print.

> A feedback involving changes of reading, writing, and language acquisition practices, in connection with the burgeoning literary, military, and bureaucratic institutions of the modern nation state and the consolidation of the nuclear family, facilitated the transformation of language from a recalcitrant material force into the spiritualized vessel of a transcendental inner voice.[92]

These subjects of the technology of the letter recede into oblivion with post-typographic technologies. Earlier in the century, however, Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin each

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[90] Winthrop-Young and Wutz, 1999: xiv.
[91] See in this regard Stefan Rieger's *Kybernetische Anthropologie: Eine Geschichte der Virtualität* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2003).
[92] Winthrop-Young, 2000: 396.

proposed that new media have the political potential to dissolve boundaries between subject and object, between author/actor and reader/spectator. Benjamin highlights this possibility in the framework of Brecht's use of technology in "epic theatre" both in his "Work of Art" essay and especially in "The Author as Producer."[93] In a similar vein, Norbert Bolz "predicts that the asymmetry and distance between producer and recipients will be electronically liquidated in the hypermedium of the hypertext"[94]:

> Hypertexts are predeconstructive. Here, literary work is recognisable as a collective process. For the first time, technical substitutes are available that allow the old utopia to be implemented: to dispose of the difference between author and reader.[95]

In asking whether subjective agency is entertained anew by theories of digital media, hypertexts and interactivity, our attention is drawn to two intriguing lines of thought: on one hand, internet technologies are by nature not asymmetrical, and do enable multiple users to participate in and contribute to a "collective text." In this sense, it is tempting to view the possibilities of hypertexts as a realisation of Barthes's utopian desire for 'writing' that is liberated from a transcendental Author. On the other hand—as Kittler argues—computers and their interconnectedness facilitated by internet technologies are nonetheless controlled, at the macro-level by the conglomerates of Silicon Valley, at the micro(chip)-level in the embedded "protected modes" that control users and prohibit access to its inner workings.[96]

In the first case, it is Bolz who expresses most clearly the potential for an *écriture* liberated from its authorial tethers:

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[93] Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," *Reflections*, Translation by Edmund Jephcott, (New York: Schocken, 1986): 220-238.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Bolz, 1993: 223; my translation.
[96] See Friedrich A. Kittler, "Protected Mode," *Draculas Vermächtnis: Technische Schriften* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1993) 208-224; English translation in Kittler, 1997: 156-168.

> Computer programmes are indeed texts that read and write texts, without having to assign them an author-subject relationship. This accounts for a central characteristic of hypermedial representation—they are "self-authoring" texts.
> In this way, the question "What is an author?" is resolved in the Docuverse. Where everything that is written is merged into databanks, from where it can be used again by other writers, unauthored texts—that is, authorless texts—originate, which write themselves in the act of reading. [...] There is no original unity in an electronic document. For this reason, hypertexts have a natural affinity to the textual strategy of deconstruction.[97]

Sybille Krämer draws the same conclusion:

> Unlike the conditions of oral or written communication, a type of telematic interaction develops, which hardly counts any more as an authentic expression of personal attitudes and an instance of interpersonal reference. Strictly speaking, we now only go about the computerised net with ideas and no longer with people.[98]

Communicating in the internet is an anonymous affair—users can rely on an array of 'artificial identities.' For Krämer, telematic communication is based on the principle of "a suspension of the paracommunicative dimension of our symbolic action connected to personality and authorship."[99] In this light, any electronic text is instantiated in its possibility of collective authorship/readership. No fixed source provides an origin for writing; moreover, the sequentiality privileged by the book medium has dissolved into the possibility of aleatory, non-linear patterns of reading. Aleatory reading patterns imply the ceaseless possibility of "re-writing" a text—of incessantly deferring its meanings—facilitated by rearranging the manner or order of reading.

We can juxtapose this vision of the liberating effect of hypermedia with the restricted control that a particular user has over the computer interface. In "There is No Software,"[100] Kittler argues that "on an intentionally superficial level, perfect graphic user interfaces, since they dispense with writing itself, hide a whole machine from its users." Furthermore, "on the microscopic level of hardware, so-called protection software has

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[97] Bolz, 1993: 223; my translation.
[98] Krämer, "Das Medium als Spur und als Apparat," in Sibylle Krämer, ed., *Medien, Computer, Realität*, (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1998a): 87.
[99] Ibid., 88.
[100] Friedrich A. Kittler, "Es gibt keine Software," *Draculas Vermächtnis: Technische Schriften* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1993): 225-242; English translation in Kittler, 1997: 147-155.

been implemented in order to prevent 'untrusted programs' or 'untrusted users' from any access to the operating system's kernel input/output channels."[101] Kittler's admonition of the silicon monopoly is reiterated in "Protected Mode": for "one writes—the 'under' says it already—as a subject or underling of the Microsoft Corporation."[102] Software is becoming steeped in ever-increasing user-friendly interfaces, but only "as it more closely approximates the cryptological ideal of the one-way function."[103] Moreover, the technical control of computer and internet standards is but one aspect of monitoring and manipulation. As Wolfgang Coy has demonstrated, the internet is further subject to control mechanisms over accessibility regulations, to prohibitive economic constraints, to legal control in national and international standards, and to political control as a globally operated institution.[104] Thus, as Kittler puns via Mick Jagger, "instead of what he wants, the user always only gets what he needs (according to the industry standard, that is)."[105]

In the articles "Protected Mode" and "There is no Software," Kittler appears to stake out a poignant political critique of capitalist control of the media, where accessibility, rather than possession, is the deciding factor governing user control. But at closer inspection, Kittler is placing emphasis on the level of technical control and proposing instead that the Foucauldian analysis of power systems requires reorientation:

> To begin with, one should attempt to abandon the usual practice of conceiving of power as a function of so-called society, and, conversely, attempt to construct sociology from the chip's architectures.[106]

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[101] Ibid., 151.
[102] Kittler, 1997: 156.
[103] Ibid., 158.
[104] See Wolfgang Coy, "Media Control: Wer kontrolliert das Internet?" *Medien, Computer, Realität*, Sybille Krämer, ed., (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1998): 133-151.
[105] Kittler, 1997: 162.
[106] Ibid.

Access to computerised media is not restricted by burgeoning bureaucratic power structures, but is "now inscribed on silicon chips that regulate access to data and operating levels, hence an up-to-date analysis of power and society has to take into account technically implemented privilege levels."[107]

Thus far, I have described how contemporary German media theory has recontextualised French poststructuralism, and demonstrated its political potential and social criticism in contrast to transcendental hermeneutics and established forms of left politics. In the course of these sections, I have documented the foundations and goals of the domain of *Medienwissenschaft* that is characterised as "materialities of communication." In the following section, I draw upon a variety of recent analyses of the computer as medium to consider the possibilities of the "materialities of communication" approach in the digital age. How is the image of the digital computer conceived as a cultural form? What metaphors have media studies employed thus far to attend to this technological shift? Have we reached sufficient historical distance to apprehend the scope, in Kittlerian terms, of a *Discourse Network 2000*, if one exists at all?

1.2.2 Discourse Network 2000? Computer as Medium

In writing of Kittler's *Discourse Networks* in 1997, John Johnston asks, "Is the present 'situation' still fully recognizable in relation to the 'discourse network of 1900'?" In order to be recognised as such, the previous discourse networks of 1800 and 1900 needed to be set apart and contrasted; their configurations are revealed by the literary texts Kittler examines, texts whose "intelligibility and consequent meaning [...] is always and only

[107] Winthrop-Young, 2000: 393.

possible because its discourse is embedded in and operates as part of a discourse network comprised of other discourses contemporaneous with: pedagogy and philosophy in 1800, psychophysics and psychoanalysis in 1900."[108] At the time, it seemed that the discourse network of our present situation was still obscure, but suspected to lie within the imminent and absolute conversion of all media to digitisation. So prognosticates Kittler at the beginning of *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*:

> The general digitalization of channels and information erases the differences among individual media. Sound and image, voice and text are reduced to surface effects, known to consumers as interface. Sense and the senses turn into eyewash. Their media-produced glamor will survive for an interim as a by-product of strategic programs. Inside the computers themselves everything becomes a number: quantity without image, sound, or voice. And once optical fiber networks turn formerly distinct data flows into a standardized series of digital numbers, any medium can be translated into any other. With numbers, everything goes. Modulation, transformation, synchronization; delay, storage, transposition; scrambling, scanning, mapping—a total media link on a digital base will erase the very concept of medium. Instead of wiring people and technologies, absolute knowledge will run as an endless loop.[109]

But, for the time being (in 1986), "there still are media; there still is entertainment": there remain discrete communicational channels—gramophone, film, typewriter in that study—which necessitate media discourse analysis. Similarly, in the final pages of *Discourse Networks*, Kittler's discourse analysis becomes self-referential, recognising that its own materiality is constrained by the discourse network to which it coupled: "*Discourse Networks 1800/1900* has become part of an information network that describes literature as an information network."[110] In the nearly twenty years that have elapsed since these two books were composed, have we gained enough distance, enough insight to delineate a discourse network of 2000?

We might be a step closer. If one question dominates the "materialities of communication" programme today, it is the perception that toward the end of the 1990s

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[108] Johnston, 1997: 4.
[109] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 1-2.
[110] Kittler, 1985[1990]: 371.

the digital computer shifted from a tool to a medium. The principle behind digitisation has remained the same, while the cultural role of the digital computer has shifted vastly. Yet the concept of the computer as a medium that integrates other data channels has spawned a wide range of definitions and metaphors. Lev Manovich comments that, "as the role of a computer is shifting from being a tool to a universal media machine, we are increasingly 'interfacing' to predominantly cultural data: texts, photographs, films, music, virtual environments. In short, we are no longer interfacing to a computer *but to culture encoded in digital form.*"[111] Manovich sees three essential cultural forms (essentially, three media) that have shaped cultural interfaces: "The first form is cinema. The second form is the printed word. The third form is a general-purpose human-computer interface (HCI)."[112] Sybille Krämer asserts that the computer has become a medium through its integration of communicational channels: "Through the connectivity that is enabled by digitisation, of telecommunication and data processing, a communicational form has emerged that differentiates itself significantly from our trusted situations and patterns of oral and written communication."[113] Norbert Bolz sees the computer as a medium through the possibility of integrated hypermedia—a concept of medial integration that has taken many forms throughout history (e.g., Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or Benjamin's *Passagenarbeit*). "Hypermedia enable humans to process information in a way that feels more 'natural,' by associations, links, nonlinear, contingent access."[114] Nevertheless, for

[111] Lee Manovich, "Das Interface als Kategorie der Mediengeschichte," in *Archiv für Mediengeschichte—Mediale Historiographien*, Joseph Vogl and Lorenz Engell, eds., (Weimar: Universitätsverlag, 2001): 167. English version in "Cinema as a Cultural Interface," <http://www.manovich.net/TEXT/cinema-cultural.html> [accessed 12 January 2006].
[112] Ibid., 168.
[113] Krämer, 1998a: 86; my translation.
[114] Geisler, 1999: 93.

Bolz, the book-form remains a powerful counterbalance to hypermedia, which threaten to overload our sensory data and processing capacities:

> We recoil in an archetypal fear that was suppressed from our collective memory by the hierarchical order and clarity of the printed book: the fear of the magic image and the chaos that hides behind its inscrutable face. This, in turn, conjures up fears of our own obsolescence, exacerbated by the arrival of electronic devices that perform sequential information processing far more efficiently than we could ever hope to.[115]

Wolfgang Coy sees digitisation as a symbolic form that mirrors other cultural forms: "The internet has proven to be a generalising medium that makes numbers, digital strings, out of all basic materials. In this, it resembles money, of which the general exchangeability shapes the basis of the capitalistic movement of goods."[116] However, Jens Schröter has noted that the concept of *intermediality* emerged in the mid-1980s at precisely the moment when Kittler and others were advancing their interest in the "materialities of communication."[117] He draws the conclusion that if it is true, as Sybille Krämer has written, that "newly awakened sensibility and attention within the *Geisteswissenschaften* for the medial phenomenon of written language could only be engendered by the insight of its own impending functional loss,"[118] then perhaps it is also true "that technical-historical media studies [*technikhistorische Medienwissenschaft*] only cropped up in the very moment when specific media technologies were becoming historical."[119] Thus, Schröter points out that Kittler's technological references of gramophone, film, and typewriter had themselves become obsolete as discrete media within a few years (some before, some after) of the book's printing.

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[115] Ibid.
[116] Coy, 1998: 148-149; my translation.
[117] This is largely true in German-speaking countries, although the term "intermedia" was first coined in English in the 1960s by artist Dick Higgins. See Dick Higgins, "Intermedia," *Leonardo*, Volume 34, Number 1 (2001): 49-54.
[118] Krämer, 1998a: 83; my translation.
[119] Jens Schröter, "Intermedialität, Medienspezifik, und die universelle Maschine," *Performativität und Medialität*, Sybille Krämer, ed., (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004): 401; my translation.

In 1992, Bolz, Kittler and Georg Christoph Tholen edited a fourth volume of the series *Literary and Media Analyis since 1870.*[120] Entitled *Computer als Medium* it was intended to be an "archaeology of the present" in which "technical media are all but being absorbed into the universality of computers." The project is in danger of failure, they write, not only because of locked archives and undocumented developments. "Rather, computers are the only technical medium that could not exist without theory. Information science, for reasons of its mathematical efficiency, cannot be a history of the media." Consequently, the contributions in the volume are looking to be "a science of computers that is not computer science. It investigates neither algorithms nor circuitry, but rather the brute fact that the present is made of algorithms and circuitry."[121] Furthering this discussion, Tholen's more recent work, such as *Die Zäsur der Medien* (The Caesura of Media (2002b), considers the shifting variety of such "metaphorological definitions." His analysis of shifting "metaphorisations" signals a Derridean deferral of meanings that underlines convergence within the digital mode and thus also the computer as medium. For Tholen, computers are engaged in discursive practices within various and simultaneously shifting metaphorisations that describe the ends of the programmable machine: "The computer as medium only exists in differing from itself—that is to say, in deferring its 'authentic' meaning in all its interfaces, programmable entities, and user surfaces. The digital medium only exists in its manifold metaphoricity."[122] The assortment of metaphors used to designate the computer as medium emerged in media studies in the decade since Bolz, Kittler and Tholen's anthology was first published.

[120] See Norbert Bolz, Friedrich A. Kittler, and Georg Christoph Tholen, eds., *Computer als Medium* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1992).
[121] Ibid.; my translation.
[122] Georg Christoph Tholen, "Media Metaphorology: Irritations in the Epistemic Field of Media Studies," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Volume 101, Number 3, (2002): 668-669. See also Georg Christoph Tholen, *Die Zäsur der Medien: Kulturphilosophische Konturen* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2002): 19-60.

Nevertheless, the range of metaphors employed to this end, evidenced by Tholen's later considerations on "metaphorology," circumscribe the dilemmas we still face in understanding processes of medial convergence.

1.3 Media Metaphorology: Implications for the Mediality of Theatre

Tholen's *media metaphorology* has important implications for further study from a materialities outlook. For Tholen, the "arbitrariness of metaphors is owed to the many different possible applications of digital media, since the definitions of their use seem looser and more arbitrary than the precisely defined media of storage and transmission." The images and concepts used to describe media tend to fall into three broad categories: "as means of (self-referential) communication, as instrument of information-processing, or as its own message." Thus, Tholen suggests that "an investigation into the place of media also affects the question regarding the relation of concept and metaphor."[123] He examines the many paradigms used to describe media: systems-theoretical and constructivist metaphors of transparency and opacity; the anthropomorphic metaphors of Habermas, McLuhan and Derrick de Kerckhove; instrumental and materialistic metaphors that universalize "the machine as the inhuman that will at least partially replace humans" and, in Kittler's discourse-analytical programme, take "technical codes for bearers of media"[124]; as well as metaphors of imitation, interaction and "theatrality."[125] Each of these approaches, he concludes, "rely on a concept of metaphor that is founded on a fundamental difference, namely the difference between concept and metaphor, which in

[123] Ibid., 660.
[124] Ibid., 664.
[125] Ibid., 666.

turn is based on the metaphoric opposition of authentic and inauthentic meaning."[126] The metaphor of computer as medium is in a way paradigmatic for the tendency of media studies to create metaphorical hierarchies, where the computer risks becoming an unsustainable "metametaphor." "Metaphoricity in the determination of the computer *as medium* shows itself as transferability of (neither authentic or inauthentic) metaphors without which multimedia representation would be mere apparition."[127]

One central concern raised by Tholen's media metaphorology is the claim that digital technologies will enable forms of *absolute translation* heretofore unattainable in the fragmentation of media channels and the discrepancies between human idioms. "It was only the ubiquity of computers in almost every area of society that made it possible to talk about an inclusive 'universal medium' that could integrate all media in one digital code."[128] We will address this issue in contrast to ongoing claims of translation theory in Chapter 3. Of immediate concern to this study, and especially for Chapter 2, are the implications for a media studies of theatre and performance. As Tholen notes, the metaphors of theatre and performance are widespread in media theories: "the heterotopia between real or virtual spaces, such as virtual communities, digital cities, or interactive marketplaces, is addressed by analyses of the media in terms of theatre and performance."[129] In regard to computer technology, "descriptions of the interfaces of human-machine-communication" and "the design of multimedia user interfaces" have turned to the most common metaphors of "dialogue, interaction, role-play, theatrality,

[126] Ibid., 667.
[127] Ibid., 669.
[128] Ibid., 659.
[129] Ibid., 661.

performance."[130] Brenda Laurel's (1991) *Computers as Medium* is perhaps the most obvious of such attempts.[131] In a talk on theatre and media delivered in 2000, Kittler commented that certain "media theoreticians recently propagate the thesis that computers as media, that is, in interaction with their users, are best thought of in terms of the theatre." Users thus retain the status of actors or subjects in control of their interface with computer technology. Both Tholen and Kittler dismiss this point of view. For Kittler,

> All the talk of man-machine-interaction, as initiated by Norbert Wiener's cybernetics, presupposes that users and computers are equal partners. Even the theatre metaphor of computers suffers from determining two actants or subjects who are as free as actors and spectators. In reality, on the contrary, global computer networks are already building here and now a no longer dismissible infrastructure on which our existence or inexistence depend.[132]

Likewise, Tholen argues that "in trying to decide whether artificial agents, softbots, or userbots on the net only improve the filtering of information or whether they can 'replace' the intentionality and identity of the individual, the newest cyborg debates are not dissimilar from earlier literature on the automaton, and share with them certain prophesies of a cybernetic symbiosis of man and machine."[133]

In rejecting a crude metaphoricity of media as theatre, Tholen's analysis gestures towards a more direct situating of theatre and performance, among other artistic forms, within contemporary media studies:

> Even under digital conditions, the interface between humans and media remains accessible only by way of imaginary interfacing. It would be a metaphoric short circuit to talk about a symbiosis of technology and subject, and the same goes for the apocalyptic image of humans losing themselves by removing themselves from themselves with the help of electronic media and prostheses. In the applications of new media, that is to say in the mise-en-scène of simulated surfaces, observations, and points of view, certain epic forms of closed and continuous narration are dispersed and interrupted in the disseminating performance of theater, installation, and dance, because their

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[130] Ibid., 666.
[131] Brenda Laurel, *Computers as Theatre*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Welsely, 1991).
[132] Kittler's talk was given at the symposium "Illusion – Simulation – Virtualität. Theater und die Medienlage im 20. Jahrhundert," 26 July 2000, at the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft der Universität Leipzig. The text is reproduced as Friedrich Kittler, "Illusion versus Simulation. Techniken des Theaters und der Maschinen," *Maschinen, Medien, Performances*, Martina Leeker, ed. (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2001): 718-731, here page 729-730.
[133] Tholen, 2002a: 666.

> theatrality takes place as mediatic exposition of "inauthentic" gestures and utterances. McLuhan's claim that what appears in media is other media can only become readable when the status of this appearing itself turns into the focus of media theory. Media metaphorology directs us to understand them as neither means nor milieu, but as partial framing and skewing of the perceptible and the communicable.[134]

The digital computer has ushered in not only a promise of totalizing medial convergence and reproducibility, but also an increasing fuzziness of the ontological status of the "mediality" of media in the first place. The concept of medium—whether in communications theory, systems theory, or media discourse analysis—always refers to an implicit or hidden schema of transmission, the presupposed significance of an "in-between," a middle or intermediary, a milieu or transmitter. Media, by extension, are both "products and conditions of culture," deferring and altering every given framework of our perception and feeling, as well as thought and knowledge. Thus "media record, transmit and process not only information, but also ideas and ideologies, values and norms."[135]

The subsequent chapters of this dissertation thus seek to ground a media studies of theatre not simply in terms of computer-oriented interfaces, virtual realities or symbiotic man-machine relations. Nor will they only address the by now banal question of the "intermedial" use of new technologies onstage. Rather, in an extension of the discussion of the materialities of communication presented in Chapter 1, I aim first to outline the import of the material turn for theatre and performance as understood in their largely taken-for-granted but historically persistent context of onstage performance (Chapter 2: Medialities). In Chapter 3, I will explore the question of translation as a metaphor for universal communication in the digital age, branching out to contemporary problems of translation for theatre and the metaphors of theatre as translation. In addressing

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[134] Ibid., 669.

[135] Georg Christoph Tholen, "Einleitung," *SchnittStellen: Basler Beiträge zur Medienwissenschaft*, Volume 1, Sigrid Schade, Thomas Sieber, and Georg Christoph Tholen, eds. (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2005): 16.

translation in theatre not only as texts translated from one language to another, and not only as textuality translated onto the stage, we are also faced with the metaphor of translating performances from one context to another. This issue will bring us to a discussion of circulation theory as a corollary of the materialities of communication in Chapter 4. By investigating specific cases of Montréal theatremaking as part of a "culture of circulation," I will attempt to discern the transfigurative processes that allow certain texts, their enactments, and their dissemination to absorb, carry and transform meanings as a system rather than as isolated phenomena.

2. MEDIALITIES

This second chapter explores the implications of the material turn for theatre and performance. The chapter first weighs principal positions on the reproducibility of theatre and performance before reviewing specific propositions for understanding theatre and performance in terms both of *mediality* and *materialities*. Within the humanities, scholars of theatre have been overwhelmingly preoccupied with the theatrical event as a locus of interpretation, that is, with the conditions of its production and reception, with the authorial intent of theatremakers and with the methods and quality of acting and delivery. In short, they are preoccupied with all those components of theatrical practice that enable performances to become semantically charged as symbolic action, thus providing room for varied interpretations of theatrical meaning. However, in challenging the ubiquity of meaning and interpretation within the humanities, as the core of theory and critique, (media) theoreticians of different ilk have begun to rethink theatre and performance in terms of materialities. These thoughts signal the varied conditions under which "something like theatre" emerges in a given society and the possibilities and constraints of theatrical communication within the medial-technical capacities of a given era. At the same time, the "materialities" of theatre and performance, if we understand this to mean the surfaces and spaces of spectacle as they produce and circulate knowledge, necessarily include body-centred modes of communication. In the context of this discussion, I will treat theatre and performance as reiterative and circulatory sites of interaction between communicative practices, technologies, as well as the institutional frameworks in which they unfold. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to consider all of the

implications of the material turn for ever-expanding theatrical metaphors of "performativity" and "virtuality" in the cultural sciences, I wish to focus my argument on the mechanisms and processes of what we might initially call theatrical transmission. Just as the concept of meaning conveyance through writing—"literature," in Kittler's analyses—emerged part and parcel, so to speak, with the intellectual movement of hermeneutics, so too has meaning conveyance through theatrical means been mired in an obsessive campaign to seek the Logos of texts and performances, a tendency that remains all too prevalent today. Theatre cannot, I submit, be conceived of separately from prevailing communicational possibilities, even if we accept the capacity for artistic intervention within these parameters. Similarly, the meanings that are generated and conveyed by the varied forms of theatre—through its textual, audiovisual, structural and institutional shapes—are by no means independent of these forms.

2.1 The Ontology of Theatre: The Question of Reproducibility

The material turn is characterised by a shared interest among researchers in "those phenomena and conditions that contribute to the production of meaning, without being meaning themselves."[136] Above all, these researchers adhere to a "presupposition of exteriority." This presupposition emphasises not simply exterior or externalised formats, equipment, or material substances, but also the edges of forms, the contours of the circulatory matrices within which something like meaning is formed, carried and disseminated. The materialities outlook is thus oriented to understanding media not only

[136] Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004): 8.

as discrete processes, but also as embedded in, and constitutive of, the social conditions of their day. A great deal of research into the materialities of communication has placed emphasis on the conditions of communication as new forms of media emerge and are incorporated into broad social usage, rendering discernible the possibilities and limitations of preceding medial systems. As a result, the materialities programme has tended in large measure to focus on phases of medial supersession or supplantation. Thus, a shared interest in materialities has taught us about the ramifications of the Gutenberg era, about the diffusion of writing systems and, particularly in Kittler's project, about the fracturing of medial streams into optic, acoustic, and typographic technologies and their potential reintegration in the digital.

This tendency raises the question of whether the materialities approach can adequately take stock of theatre and performance as communicational processes for disseminating knowledge, processes which are widely thought to exist independently of and even in resistance to medial-technical conditions. It is thus crucial to review a fundamental dichotomy in the ways in which theatre and performance have been regarded in terms of media and communication. On the one hand, from the conventional perspectives of literary theory, theatre scholarship and performance studies, theatre is principally *symbolic action* and, as such, a *genre of human expression*, continually engaged in aesthetic interventions that challenge media as determining or prescriptive factors in human activities and human awareness. As artistic forms of representation, theatre and performance are conceived in this way as a break from, a collision with or even a breach of the contingencies of medial processes and determinations. Necessarily, in this view, theatre's central characteristic is its *liveness*, the essentiality of presence as the unique self-completion of spectacle. Theatrical presence, in this view, resists

reproduction at every instance and thereby provides space for subversive and political intervention. On the other hand, media theorists are increasingly focused on the extent to which theatre and performance are themselves materialities of communication, intermeshed with prevailing medial and technical possibilities. This perspective challenges the conventional view that the ontology of theatre and performance derives from the impossibility of recording or capturing, reproducing or retransmitting a theatrical message. Quite the contrary, it presupposes that the ontology of theatre resides precisely in its drive for repetition, rehearsal, and reperformance, in tune with prevailing systems of communication and their contingent modes of perception.

2.1.1. The Vanishing Act or Mediatized Liveness?

What are the implications of reproducibility for practices such as theatre and performance? Can theatre be adequately defined as a "mediatic" process of disseminating information? How distinct is theatremaking from the histories and practices of radio, film, television and digital technologies? Since the early stages of cinematography, theatre and film, for example, have been the subject of countless critical juxtapositions. According to Susan Sontag in her essay *Film and Theatre* (1966), theatre and film have been viewed as "distinct and even antithetical arts." The implication of Erwin Panofsky's famous essay "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures" (1934/1947), Sontag asserts, is that "one of the criteria for evaluating a movie is its freedom from the impurities of theatricality."[137]

[137] Susan Sontag, "Film and Theatre," *The Tulane Drama Review*, Volume 11, Number 1 (1966): 24. See Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," *Critique*, Volume 1, Number 3, (1947). Reproduced in Erwin Panofsky, "Three Essays on Syle," Irving Lavin, ed., (Cambridge, MA and London, England: The MIT Press, 1995): 91-125.

"It was soon realized," Panofsky noted, "that the imitation of a theater performance with a set stage, fixed entries and exits, and distinctly literary ambitions is the one thing the film must avoid."[138] Other investigations seek to disentangle the murky boundaries between cinema and theatre, emphasising the degree to which they have mutually influenced each other. A. Nicholas Vardac, in his influential *Stage to Screen: Theatrical Method from Garrick to Griffith* (1949), attempted to discern proto-cinematic tendencies of 18th and 19th-century theatrical practices, forms of popular theatre such as melodrama and pantomime. More recently, Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs have "rejected the view that the history of cinema is one of a steady emancipation from theatrical models." They demonstrate that only around 1910, with the development of longer feature films, did theatrical models for film become viewed as most appropriate: "Far from being a restriction on the development of the cinema, in the 1910s the theatre became a storehouse of devices for the cinema, and has remained so [...]."[139] Early film practitioners such as Eisenstein, Brecht and Cocteau each experimented in both theory and practice with what they felt were fundamental differences and inherent correspondences between film and theatre. It was perhaps in Brecht's thinking that the question of an irrevocable filmic effect on theatre crystallised most clearly. Brecht envisaged (I think with greater shock than others) that theatre would be fundamentally altered—*umfunktioniert*—in an age of cinematic reproducibility, the implications of which are so poignantly interrogated in Walter Benjamin's celebrated essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility" (1936). One aspect of *theatrical* reproducibility, to which I will return, emerges most saliently in Brecht's theorising of the

[138] Panofsky, 1995: 95.
[139] Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 214.

"citability" of gesture, in his concept of *gestus*, and in his aesthetic of *rewriting* as a process of theatrical transfiguration.

Theatre scholars such as Joachim Fiebach oppose a medial definition of theatre, embracing a longstanding definition of "medium" as something that transmits, that is, something that works or acts in a determining way between two poles of production and reception. Such a conception of medium, which clearly resuscitates early encoding/decoding models of communication, cannot account for theatre because, according to Fiebach, theatrical activity resides foremost in the immediacy of the theatrical event: theatre does not *mediate* precisely because it is *im-mediately* received and experienced.[140] From the perspective of live interaction, theatre is thus regarded as intrinsically ephemeral. Theatre, it follows, cannot be mediatic since, in the temporal course of taking place, of having come to pass, it resists duplication—the essence of technical recording, storage or retransmission. In her abovementioned essay, Susan Sontag weighs this perspective by proclaiming that "theatre is never a medium": "one can make a movie 'of' a play," she argues, "but not a play 'of' a movie."[141] Theatre, for Sontag, is a complicated spatiotemporal practice: it "is confined to a logical or *continuous* use of space." By contrast, "cinema, (through editing, that is, through the change of shot—which is the basic unit of film construction) has access to an alogical or *discontinuous* use of space."[142] By Sontag's reasoning, theatre is an "unmediated" art, for "we see what happens on the stage with our own eyes" while "we see on the screen what

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[140] Joachim Fiebach, "Ausstellen des tätigen Darstellerkörpers als Keimzelle von Theater oder Warum Theater kein Medium ist," *Maschinen, Medien, Performances: Theater an der Schnittstelle zu digitalen Welten*, Martina Leeker, ed., (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2001): 493.
[141] Susan Sontag, 1966: 25.
[142] Ibid., 29; original emphasis. Sontag aligns herself here with Panofsky's claim that "stage work is continuous but transitory; film work is discontinuous but permanent." Panofsky, 1995: 118.

the camera sees."[143] In offering a definition of the ontology of performance, Peggy Phelan strikes a similar tone. She asserts that performance constitutes "representation without reproduction." "Performance's only life is in the present," she argues,

> Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction, it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance's being [...] becomes itself through disappearance.[144]

By these measures, theatre and performance are gauged to be in a process of perpetual self-effacement; by definition, they only ever *take place* as *vanishing acts*.

Yet each of these perspectives falls short of specifying why theatre and performance should constitute "unmediated" phenomena. At what stage of human communication, we might ask, did theatre and performance become understood as ephemera, their ontology defined by the promise of their very disappearance? Benjamin's thesis in the "Work of Art" essay interrogates the concept of a work of art's *originality*. Following Benjamin, the originality of a work of art resides in its material existence as a single unit, attesting to the moment and historical conditions of its production: a painting, a woodcarving, a handwritten manuscript, and so on. The technological reproducibility of media (first introduced with photography and film) rendered the originality of a work of art—its *aura*—an obsolete experience. Benjamin carries this argument through to differentiate theatre from film, succinctly encapsulating the ontological difference between "general reproducibility" and "technological reproducibility." "In principle," he wrote,

> a work of art has always been reproducible. Manmade artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and,

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[143] Ibid., 30.
[144] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993): 144.

> finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new.[145]

Theatre, as the "stage play" bound to a presentation "to the public by the actor in person," is characterised by the possibility of its repetition, its imitation, but not its duplication. In film, "the camera that presents the performance of the film actor to the public need not respect the performance as an integral whole." In Benjamin's characterisation of theatre, then, the question of *presence* is pervasive. Susan Sontag's portrayal of theatre as defined by the *continuous use of space* and film by the *discontinuous use of space* is thus clearly in line with Benjamin's thesis. For Benjamin, the spatiotemporal totality of a theatrical presentation is disrupted, transfigured, by cinematic technology, a feature that emerges most clearly in the gaze of the spectator. A film shooting, according to Benjamin,

> presents a process in which it is impossible to assign to a spectator a viewpoint which would exclude from the actual scene such extraneous accessories as camera equipment, lighting machinery, staff assistants, etc.—unless his eye were on a line parallel with the lens. This circumstance, more than any other, renders superficial and insignificant any possible similarity between a scene in the studio and one on the stage. In theater, one is well aware of the place from which the play cannot immediately be detected as illusionary.[146]

Peggy Phelan's stance, I believe, best characterises one of the central tenets of contemporary performance theory: that the liveness of performance retains this last vestige of the auratic in a world dominated by media cultures. "Performance occurs over a time which will not be repeated," she claims: "It can be performed again, but this repetition itself marks it as 'different.' The document of a performance then is only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present."[147] Because every performance is unique, its experience cannot be captured, let alone retained and reproduced.

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[145] Walter Benjamin, 1968: 218.
[146] Ibid., 232-233.
[147] Phelan, 1993: 146.

The question of theatrical reproduction opens up this discussion to the thorny issue of *authenticity*. For Benjamin, "the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity."[148] Benjamin's assertion raises the ontological status of an "original performance," pointing to the impossible subsequent, identical *re-presentation*. Following his argument, every subsequent repetition is but the trace of an original performance. Subsequent performances, adaptations, or translations can only be seen as an original's repercussions through time and space. In his essay on the "Task of the Translator" (1923), Benjamin famously describes the act of translation as "commenting" on the "afterlife" of an original; translating works of art "marks their stage of continued life."[149] He touches on the problem of performance and its traces in his "Work of Art" treatise with the notions of *substantive duration* and the work of art's ensuing historical record, claiming that "the authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced."[150] In a note, Benjamin uses this argument once again to draw the distinction between theatrical reperformance and filmic reproduction: "The poorest provincial staging of *Faust* is superior to a Faust film in that, ideally, it competes with the first performance at Weimar."[151] But can this consideration not be reversed? Might the urgency of *authenticity* itself only have come into relief in the moment of its alleged *loss*?

In his book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Philip Auslander adopts precisely this point of view. Auslander challenges a "reductive binary opposition

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[148] Benjamin, 1968: 220.
[149] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt, Ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968): 71.
[150] Benjamin, 1968: 221
[151] Ibid., 243, note 3.

of the live and the mediatized."[152] His crucial proposition is that "historically, the live is actually an effect of mediatization, not the other way around. It was the development of recording technologies that made it possible to perceive existing representations as 'live.'"[153] Auslander's critique of contemporary Performance Studies is carried out in direct reference to Phelan's claim that performance is "representation without reproduction." For Phelan, reproduction has a distinctly negative connotation, associated with mechanisms of control of reproductive technologies that take place outside of creative intent or strategy. She thus evaluates reproduction as a mechanism that runs counter to performance, as that which impairs or "betrays" the subversive potential of performance. Thus, Phelan's intention is to delineate the political and subversive effects that a performance is able to instigate, a potential that she fears is (or will be) diminished, or even negated, by the possibility of reproducible representations. However, as Wolf-Dieter Ernst counters, the "medial-technical blind spot" of Phelan's argumentation is that she places theatre and performance within a feeble opposition to "the media."[154] According to Phelan, "performance's independence from mass reproduction, technologically, economically and linguistically, is its greatest strength."[155] Auslander seeks to demonstrate how modern technologies of reproduction, especially television and video, sound amplification and recording, and other audiovisual forms of documentation, have had a lasting and determining effect on the contemporary conception of the theatrical and the live. He deconstructs the binary opposition of "the live" and "the

[152] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999): 3.
[153] Ibid., 51.
[154] Wolf-Dieter Ernst, "The Liveness of the Rain: Die Techniken der Betrachtung im zeitgenössischen Theater.," *SchnittStellen*, Georg Christoph Tholen, ed., *Basler Beiträge zur Medienwissenschaft*, Volume 1, (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2005): 364; my translation.
[155] Phelan, 1993: 149.

recorded," and by extension the "reproducible," proposing that the ontology of liveness, defined as representation in conjunction with bodily presence—the corporeality of the presenters and the co-presence of the audience—is contingent on the history of television, especially from the 1940s and 1950s. The electronic medium of television, he argues, first assumed theatrical forms of presentation based on simultaneity, which were thereby interpreted as current and authentic in comparison with the reproducibility of cinematic projections. More important, Auslander delineates the extent to which theatre adopted "mediatized" forms of representation from television. Theatre, he argues, began to compete for the monopoly of publics by presenting spectacles simultaneously in multiple cities and by folding audial and visual technologies of reproduction into the live. "As the mediatized replaces the live within cultural economy," he writes, "the live itself incorporates the mediatized both technologically and epistemologically."[156] As a consequence, Auslander claims, publics first learnt to differentiate between the ideas of "live" and "recorded" through exposure to radio, film and televisual technologies. Hans-Christian von Herrmann expresses a similar standpoint with the thesis "that the rediscovery of a bodily and non-literary theatre takes places in the very moment when there are media that can precisely record this corporeality. With film and gramophone, movement and voice, supposedly rediscovered by this oppositional theatre, become recordable..."[157] The category of liveness is thus little more than the *surface effect* of mediatization through new forms of transmission. Although Auslander accepts that "the relationship between the live and the mediatized is one of competitive opposition at the

[156] Auslander, 1999: 39. See also Wolf-Dieter Ernst, 2005: 364-365.
[157] "Hellauer Gespräche: Theater als Medienästhetik oder Ästhetik mit Medien und Theater?" Discussion with Christopher B. Balme, Harald Begusch, Gabriele Brandstetter, Barbara Büscher, Joachim Fiebach, Thomas Gerwin, Hans Christian von Herrmann, Derrick de Kerckhove, Friedrich Kittler, Frieder Kratochwil, Alexander Roesler, Mike Sandbothe, Walter Siegfried, *Maschinen, Medien, Performances,* Martina Leeker, ed., (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2001): 410-411; my translation.

level of cultural economy," he emphasises instead "the mutual dependence of the live and the mediatized" and thus challenges "the traditional assumption that the live precedes the mediatized."[158]

Wolf-Dieter Ernst questions whether there is a middle ground between Phelan's and Auslander's standpoints. He asks, "Can one describe the intimacy, the particular atmosphere of the theatre *aesthetically* and *media-theoretically*?" According to Auslander, theatrical representation is always already mediatized; for Phelan, performance is threatened by the economy of reproduction and can only be articulated in resistance to it. Phelan views live performance as a "negative figure," a direct withdrawal from spatiotemporal presence by means of active, aesthetic forms of representation. She understands the presence of performance as an *effect* of the subversion of mediatization processes. Auslander, in contrast, exposes the representational structure attributed to the (theatrically) live as a chimaera, itself an *effect* of mediatization.[159] In conclusion, however, Ernst is unable to find this common ground. Ernst accepts Auslander's overall premise, but finds his predilection for easy comparisons between varying types of spectacle problematic; a comparison of body art activities to musicals or closed-circuit video installations to rock concerts can be undertaken at only the most superficial of levels. For Ernst, a distinction between theatrical representation and medial reproduction remains clear: "Theatre was and still is a play with prevailing media technologies, their gimmicks, their effect" but concepts of theatrical representations are nevertheless distinguished from mediatized representations at a basic level. Theatrical representation upholds the prospect of *intimacy*, the search for directness, enabled and influenced by the

[158] Auslander, 1999: 11.
[159] Ernst, 2005: 365-366.

co-presence of spectators.[160] As a result, theatre remains fashioned around a fundamentally different *technique of observation* than other forms of mediatized communication.[161]

Whether a conclusive distinction between performance as disappearance and performance as reproductive is possible or, indeed, even desirable, may not be a result that a focus on the materialities of communication can deliver. Before we become further encumbered by the murkiness of this debate, it is imperative to recall that the task in investigating materialities, as initially outlined by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, lies in the search for "meaning constitution," for the "underlying constraints whose technological, material, procedural and performative potentials have been all too easily swallowed up by interpretational habits."[162] Philip Auslander's thesis is important in this regard, for he exposes the *procedural and performative potentials* of theatre in an era predominated by media technologies. Peggy Phelan's work is also not without significance for a materialities approach, for in pinpointing nonreproduction and co-presence as the central thrust of her approach to performance, she too places emphasis on the *procedural* constraints and possibilities of theatre. Despite their antithetical *medial* characterisation of theatre and performance, Auslander and Phelan share an interest in the *materiality* of theatre and performance as the potential for the production of presence.

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[160] Ibid., 357-358.
[161] Ernst only loosely develops an argument for "techniques of observation" based on the work of Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer on Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, (Boston: MIT Press, 1992).
[162] Gumbrecht, 1994: 411, note 15; Pfeiffer, 1994: 12.

2.1.2 *Déjà vu* or Once Again: (Re-)Productions of Theatrical Presence

"Everything begins with reproduction."
Jacques Derrida, *Freud and the Scene of Writing*

In opposition to the ontological claims of theatrical disappearance and ephemerality stands the argument that theatrical performance resides in the very promise and necessity of its reproducibility. Theatrical performance presumes the possibility, indeed inevitability, of repetition; the reprise is the guarantor of theatre's spatiotemporal extensions. In order to move our thinking closer to a materialities perspective of theatre, we need to disentangle our terminological use of reproduction and reproducibility, on the one hand, as we have seen, in Benjamin's sense of *technological reproduction* and, on the other hand, as *repetition*, a concept which signals the Derridean sense of *iterability*, of incessant alteration.

Let us first recall Derrida's conception of the play of meanings, the infinite chain of signifiers that constantly work to defer meaning across space and time. For Derrida, the repetition of signs in new contexts gives rise to differences that alter, supplement, and simultaneously defer the *presence* of meaning. The notion of *différance* encapsulates this premise by speculating on the dispersal of meaning in a spatial dimension (in the constitution of difference[s]) and simultaneously in a temporal dimension (through constant deferral). Hence, the meaning of a sign is never present in totality, it is never original or full, but is relentlessly subjected to postponement. Repetition, in Derrida, is necessarily a process of modification or transfiguration. Repetition and alteration, then, as mutually contingent effects, are developed in his concept of *iterability*. The terms iteration or iterability, he elaborates, derive from the Latin *iter*, for "again," and also the

Sanskrit *itara*, for "other."[163] The logic of iterability as *again/other* sets up an inexhaustible opposition within reproduction as always already containing the possibility of singularity, if we take singularity to mean the "singular recurrence": the *doing* of something *once again* in an ever-new *context*.

Derrida begins to unwrap the implications of repetition for theatre in his essay on Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" (1967/2001).[164] Working through Artaud's treatise for a "pure theatre," a "theatre without representation," Derrida demonstrates that repetition (playing as well on the French word for rehearsal, *répétition*) is both a necessity and impossibility for the theatre, as it is for thought and signification. If Artaud's impulses were realised, suggests Derrida,

> The stage, certainly, *will no longer represent*, since it will not operate as an addition, as the sensory illustration of a text already written, thought, or lived outside the stage, which the stage would then only repeat but whose fabric it would not constitute. The stage will no longer operate as the repetition of a *present*, will no longer *re*-present a present that would exist elsewhere and prior to it, a present whose plenitude would be older than it, absent from it, and rightfully capable of doing without it: the being-present-to-itself of the absolute Logos, the living present of God.[165]

As Derrida slowly shapes his argument, Artaud's vision is revealed as the search for, or return to, (theatrical) origins/originality. In the Theatre of Cruelty, the stage cannot be a representation, if representation is understood as "the surface of a spectacle displayed for spectators"; nor will Artaud's theatre

> even offer the presentation of a present, if present signifies that which is maintained *in front* of me. Cruel representation must permeate me. And nonrepresentation is, thus, original representation, if representation signifies, also, the unfolding of a volume, a multidimensional milieu, an experience which produces its own space.[166]

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[163] Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," *Margins of Philosophy*, Translation by Alan Bass, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1982): 315. See also Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995): 7.
[164] Jacques Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," *Writing and Difference*, Translation by Alan Bass, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001): 292-316.
[165] Ibid., 299; original emphasis.
[166] Ibid.; original emphasis.

Artaud appears as an aberration in the history of Western (theatrical, metaphysical) thinking, affording Derrida an opportunity to extrapolate on the concept of (theatrical) presence: that which (re-)produces its own space. As Derrida explains, Artaud wished to eradicate all forms of interpretive theatre that sought "to transmit a content, or to deliver a message [...] that would make a discourse's meaning intelligible for its listeners; a message that would not be totally exhausted in the *act and present tense* of the stage." In short, "*Artaud wanted to erase repetition in general,*"[167] repetition as the movement in life that emerges nowhere more clearly than in the theatre:

> The possibility of theater is the obligatory focal point of this thought which reflects tragedy as repetition. The menace of repetition is nowhere else as well organized as in the theater. Nowhere else is one so close to the stage as the origin of repetition [...][168]

The Theatre of Cruelty would restore theatre to its essence as being-only-in-the-present, which as Derrida notes is "how things appear: theatrical representation is finite, and leaves behind it, behind its actual presence, no trace, no object to carry it off." Yet it is at this point that Derrida begins to unveil how Artaud cannot escape the inevitability of theatrical repetition. For despite Artaud's most ardent desires, the "'grammar' of the theater of cruelty [...] will always remain the inaccessible limit of a representation which is not repetition, of a *re*-presentation which is full presence, which does not carry its double within itself as its death, of a present which does not repeat itself, that is, of a present outside time, a nonpresent." Artaud cannot "resign himself to theater as repetition, and cannot renounce theater as nonrepetition."[169] As such, the Theatre of Cruelty is engaged in an interminable pursuit of its own origins, a search for theatrical presence, in the present, without representation. But theatre, Derrida argues, is only ever revealed as

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[167] Ibid., 309-310.
[168] Ibid., 311.
[169] Ibid., 312-315

the moment of an "originary repetition." Western theatre, so to speak, was always already *déjà vu.*

The necessity of repetition and the logic of iterability and supplementarity in trace-structure invite us to consider the question of *presence* with regard to theatre, a question that is of fundamental importance to the concept of the "materialities of communication." Derrida's claim 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"[170] submits a direct challenge to the belief, shared widely among theatre practitioners and theoreticians, that "on the stage it is always now."[171] "The notion of theatrical Presence," writes Elinor Fuchs, has had "two fundamental components: the unique self-completion of the world of the spectacle, and the circle of heightened awareness flowing from actor to spectator and back that sustains the world."[172] But, Fuchs continues, following Derrida, "if no originary principle can be identified, then such a thing as self-same Presence is merely a self-serving illusion."

Ironically, Peggy Phelan draws on Derridean theory to outline her argument and, in so doing, reveals an essential contradiction within her own position. For Derrida, she writes, "the performative enacts the now of writing in the present time." To this end, Phelan underlines the difference between metaphor and metonymy. "Metaphor works to secure a vertical hierarchy of value and is reproductive" whereas "metonymy is additive and associative; it works to secure a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement." In

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[170] Jacques Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," *Writing and Difference*, Translation by Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978): 212.
[171] Thornton Wilder, "Some Thoughts on Playwriting," quoted in Bernard Dukore, *Dramatic Theory and Criticism,* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974): 892 and in Elinor Fuchs, "Presence and the Revenge of Writing: Re-thinking Theatre After Derrida," *Performing Arts Journal*, Volume 9, Number 2/3, 10th Anniversary Issue: The American Theatre Condition, (1985): 165.
[172] Fuchs, 1985: 163.

her definition of performance, "the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of 'presence.' But in the plenitude of its apparent visibility and availability, the performer actually disappears and represents something else—dance, movement, sound, character, 'art.'" In outlining a feminist critique of performance and performance theory, based on the self-portraiture of artist Cindy Sherman, Phelan suggests that "the very effort to make the female body appear involves the addition of something other than 'the body.' That 'addition' becomes the object of the spectator's gaze, in much the way the supplement functions to secure and displace the fixed meaning of the (floating) signifier." Thus, she concludes, "in employing the body metonymically, performance is capable of resisting the reproduction of metaphor," in this case "the metaphor of gender."[173] However, as we have seen with Derrida, it is in these very moments of supplementarity and displacement, on which Phelan draws, that theatrical repetition is inevitable and the constitution of presence is never fully achievable—the converse, in other words, of Phelan's claim that "performance's only life is in the present."

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht evokes these considerations in his treatise on the *Production of Presence* (2004). In outlining the events which led to the position of *interpretation* as the core activity of the humanities, he underlines the historical moments when a decisive shift in human self-reference came to pass. A series of innovations took place, he argues, at the brink of what we commonly call the "Renaissance" and "Early Modernity." First, humankind emerged in this period both as "an outside observer of the world" and as "being seen in this position" of self-reference. This perspective differed from that of the Middle Ages, when humankind was understood as part of and surrounded by a world considered to be the result of God's Creation. A consequent implication of this

[173] Phelan, 1993: 149-151.

perspectivity is that "this human figure in its eccentricity vis-à-vis the world is a purely intellectual, disembodied entity." A human figure in this position can "afford to speak as a purely intellectual entity because the only function to which it is assigned is that of being an observer of the world."[174] This world was a purely material arena, available to the probing intellectual interpretations of the observer. Broadly speaking, this divide between the spiritual and the material qualities of existence is the source of the "subject/object" paradigm on which Western philosophy would henceforth rely. The human body itself became viewed as a material object of interpretation, of intellectual deciphering, an essential shift from medieval thought in which spirit and matter were conceived as inseparable. In early modern thought, the material surface of the world became the target of interpretational penetration, the search for meaning beyond the physical characteristics of things themselves (whence the connotative senses of *depth* and *superficiality* which we commonly equate to significance or the lack thereof). The cosmological shift in thinking about the world and its relations came into relief as the intersection of a horizontal axis ("the world as an assembly of purely material objects, including the human body" in opposition to the disembodied subject/observer) and a vertical axis ("the act of world-interpretation through which the subject penetrates the surface of the world in order to extract knowledge and truth as its underlying meanings").[175]

A foremost example of this shift is implicated in the very concept of transubstantiation, the phenomenon in the sacrament of the Eucharist whereby Christ's body is made "substantially present" in the form of the bread and the wine. "Protestant

[174] Gumbrecht, 2004: 24.
[175] Ibid., 25-28.

theology redefined the presence of Christ's body and blood into an evocation of Christ's body and blood as 'meanings.'" In this transition, the bread and the wine were no longer plausibly taken as the "form" that made the "substantial presence" of Christ's body perceptible—a concept that was completely acceptable to medieval culture—but rather came only to "signify" or "stand for" Christ's body. This transformation in the concept of presence, Gumbrecht claims, is equally evident in a shift in early modern theatre: "the attention of the spectators at theatrical performances switched from the actors' own bodies to the characters that they embodied."[176] In this regard, he draws our attention to the separation of stage and spectators, attributable to the innovation of the curtain in early modern scenography (and I might add such later modifications as the push to prevent spectators from sitting on the stage by the London actor and theatre manager David Garrick).[177] In this way, Gumbrecht resumes, "the actors' bodies became removed (at least in theory) from the spectator's reach."[178] This transformation represents a drastic differentiation from medieval theatrical practice, in which actors and spectators shared space and frequently came into physical contact. In such theatrical settings, where the *co-presence* of presenters and viewers is partially or wholly determined by the potential for mutual physical contact (distinguishable from semiotic determinations of the co-presence of actors and spectators in contemporary theatrical practice),[179] "it was clearly not the

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[176] Ibid., 30.

[177] In 1762, Garrick succeeded in convincing his audiences of this innovation by expanding the size of his Drury Lane theatre and thus, "from 1762 onwards, dramatic action took place without any physical interaction with the public." Sarah Hatchuel, *Shakespeare, From Stage to Screen*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 7.

[178] Gumbrecht, 2004: 30.

[179] See Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Live-Performance und mediatisierte Performance," *Theaterwissenschaftliche Beiträge* (insert in *Theater der Zeit*, Volume 10), (Berlin, 2000): 10-13: "Es ist eben diese Gegenwärtigkeit, seine «liveness», verstanden als leibliche Ko-Präsenz von Akteuren und Zuschauren im selben Raum, die Theater konstituiert und es von allen Formen medialisierter Performance allen Austauschprozessen zum Trotz unterscheidet." See also the related commentary by Wolf-Dieter Ernst, 2005: 359-361.

function of the actors' bodies to produce a complex meaning that the spectators were supposed to inductively decipher."[180] The reorientation of Western theatre towards *meaning-effects* emerged most markedly in French classical theatre, under the unmistakable influence of Descartes. "The actors in Corneille's or Racine's tragedies stood on the stage in a half-circle, reciting often highly abstract texts in the heavy verse form of the alexandrine. No Western theater style either before or afterward was more 'Cartesian' than French classical drama."[181] By this stage, the predominance of the *cogito* in modern Western culture was mirrored in theatrical form. In a prioritisation of the dimension of time over the dimension of space, the stage was now viewed as the *signifying* inner workings of an Author's mind. Theatrical practice no longer conjured up the "substantial presence" of the actors' bodies, but rather generated "meaning effects," in Gumbrecht's words, transmitted by the characters they *em*bodied.

2.1.3 *Acts of Transfer* or *Arts of Transmission*? Reperformance, Recitability, Rewriting

In *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Diana Taylor (2003) attempts to extend the theme of embodied practice within Performance Studies, drawing explicitly on concepts of transmission and storage to rekindle interest in the themes of disappearance and presence. "Is performance that which disappears," she asks, "or that which persists, transmitted through a nonarchival system of transfer [...]?"[182] The serious study of performance, she contends, will grasp performance "as a system of learning, storing, and transmitting

[180] Gumbrecht, 2004: 31.
[181] Ibid., 32-33.
[182] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003): xvii.

knowledge" challenging us to "expand what we understand as 'knowledge.'"[183] She thus draws a distinction between the "archive" and what she terms as the "repertoire." On the one hand, she asserts that "archival memory exists as documents, maps, literary tests, letters, archaeological remains, bones videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change." In other words, archival materials endure and thus exceed the "live." On the other hand, the repertoire "enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge."[184] The archive and the repertoire, for Taylor, invigorate each other in a "constant state of interaction," constituting performances as "vital acts of transfer," a term she borrows from Paul Connerton's monologue *How Societes Remember* (1989).[185] "To study the social formation of memory," Connerton wrote, "is to study those *acts of transfer* that make remembering in common possible." Connerton's objective was

> to isolate and consider in more detail certain acts of transfer that are to be found in both traditional and modern societies. In doing this I wish to lay stress on particular types of repetition [...]. It is to this end that I have singled out, as acts of transfer of crucial importance, commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices. [...] I have seized upon commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices in particular because it is the study of these [...] that leads us to see that images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances."[186]

Resisting the easy assigning of performance to the order of disappearance, and emphasising embodied practices (the "repertoire") as accumulative acts of repetition, are points well taken, and in keeping with the general argument of this chapter. Taylor uses the term repertoire to account for those acts (gestures, orality, movement) usually thought of as non-reproducible knowledge: the repertoire both "keeps and transforms

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[183] Ibid., 16.
[184] Ibid., 19-20.
[185] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[186] Ibid., 39.

choreographies of meaning."[187] This perspective locates body and performance as belonging to, rather than separate from, the materialities of communication, for example, in the sense that meanings can be constructed by the physical constraints of bodily movement. To the extent that bodies are also inscribed upon, performance and inscription are involved in the materially embedded character of cultural expression within arrangements of technologies, bodies, as well as the physical structures that house them.

Nevertheless, in Taylor's work we are faced once again with the dichotomy outlined at the beginning of this chapter: between the possibilities of theatre and performance within the medial constraints of an era or as distinct from, or in intervention of, the (media-technical) possibilities of communication. Her vocabulary, I think, is especially telling of the anxiety of performance studies to resist media-theoretical orientations. Taylor frequently extols the repertoire's capacity for "storage and transmission," terms so familiar to media theory and information science ("the repertoire, like the archive, is mediated. [...] Embodied and performed acts generate, record and transmit knowledge"). At the same time, she wishes to demonstrate how "materials from the archive shape embodied practice in innumerable ways, yet never totally dictate embodiment."[188] Her discussion of embodiment explicitly challenges the status of the archive in Western epistemology, especially the equation of memory and knowledge to forms of writing and other material exteriorisations. Yet from a materialities media-theoretical perspective, as we have seen with Kittler and Bolz, storage and transmission rest precisely on the presupposition of exteriority, a notational prerequisite: a form exterior to memory but available for later recall. While this presupposition is antithetical

[187] Taylor, 2003: 20.
[188] Ibid., 21.

to Taylor's perspective on embodiment, she seems oblivious to the potential theoretical conflict of interest that such a terminological appropriation suggests. Her discussion lacks any direct engagement with the effects of technological media on embodiment and embodied practices, even in her chapter on the televised mediation of the World Trade Center attacks of September 11th, 2001 and her own compulsion to photograph them.[189] Further, her view that *both* "the archive and the repertoire [...] work in tandem with and [...] alongside other systems of transmission—the digital and the visual, to name two"[190] seems to imply that digital and visual technological media lie outside of the "archive" that should subsume them. Ultimately, her constant terminological use of storage and transmission undermines her central goal of establishing how the "repertoire" of embodied practices is connected to, yet capable of resisting, the media-technical constraints of the "archive"—especially in an age dominated by visual and digital technologies.

In the August 2004 edition of *Critical Inquiry*, James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson, and Adrian Johns compiled a series of articles around the theme of "arts of transmission," drawing on Francis Bacon's term *ars tradendi*—more accurately rendered as "arts of tradition" or handing down to posterity.[191] Their focus was to understand

> the ways in which knowledge has been, is, and will be shaped by the transmissive means through which it is developed, organized, and passed on. Those means are technical, both in the restricted modern sense and in the broader, classical sense. That is, they rest not only on devices like the printing press and the internet but on practices: on skills and crafts that must be learned and transmitted from generation to generation.[192]

The articles cover an array of diverse studies on "arts of transmission" as circulatory and

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[189] Ibid., 237-265.
[190] Ibid., 21. In asserting that the archive and the repertoire stand in a non-binary relationship to one another, she even produces the baffling statement that "other systems of transmission—like the digital—complicate any simple binary formulation." Ibid., 22.
[191] James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson, Adrian Johns, eds., "Arts of Transmission: An Introduction," *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 31, Number 1, (2004): 1.
[192] Ibid., 2.

repetitive formations that adhere to Gumbrecht's appeal for reconstructing "those processes through which structures of articulated meaning can at all emerge."[193] In typical form, Kittler contributes a piece on the "history of the university over eight centuries: its primordial scriptural unity, its fall into print fragmentation, and its eventual reunification in digital media"[194]; in an excellent study, John Guillory traces the emergence of memos in the early 20th century as one of the primary carriers of written information. In a contribution central to our issue, Gregory Nagy describes the prealphabetic reperformance of songs in ancient Greece as a practice of cultural memory. The practice of "repeating the recital of poetic works in distant locations [...] made memory into the effective medium"[195]; works could be geographically shifted even before writing came into existence. On the surface, Nagy's analysis of the practice of reperformance as an "art of transmission" would seem to be commensurate with Taylor's invocation of "acts of transfer." The recital of songs as a preservative means, after all, runs counter to the preservative role of specimens that would come with alphabetic culture, Taylor's division of the repertoire and the archive. Yet Taylor and Connerton's usage of "acts of transfer" is intended to revise the description of physical performances or bodily practices as ephemeral or disappearing. In contrast, "arts of transmission," in the sense put forward by Chandler et al, are more than bodily practices. "Arts of transmission" denote the generative matrix that encompasses physically transmissive practices *as well as* technically transmissive devices and systems, serving together to form what we could call materialities of transmission. In a similar vein, Déborah Blocker, in a study of discourses surrounding poetry and the arts in early modern Europe, invokes Chandler et al's notion

[193] Gumbrecht, 1994: 398.
[194] Chandler et al, 2004: 3.
[195] Ibid., 6.

of "arts of transmission" as "actions of transmission." By "actions of transmission," Blocker means

> a *continuum* that stretches from the production of erudite editions or commentaries to the more mundane, and, for the most part, unwritten uses of [...] discourses in non-academic circles, without giving precedence to certain types of actions over others. Indeed, by 'actions of transmission,' I mean *any* identifiable attempt to rephrase, reshape and/or circulate discourses of the type that interest me.[196]

Her purpose is "to locate and describe the shifts that each of these actions produces in the contents and status of the knowledge or know-how being transmitted."[197] In a certain sense, then, acts or actions of transmission have much in common with the concept of discourse networks, the technological possibilities and structures of a given epoch of communication. In this way, Nagy's study delves precisely into the conditions of presence-making and subject-making that we have seen with Gumbrecht, induced by the systemic rules of reenactment in archaic Greek song. These rules guided bodily reperformances, thereby constituting the "re-enacting I" of the subject/performer, that is, as a "function of mimesis in its archaic sense" meaning "primarily to 'reenact' or to 'reproduce' and only secondarily to imitate." For Nagy, then,

> the idea of a reenacting I does two things. It retains the idea of the real presence of a speaking person that is vaguely implicit in the term *autobiographical*. But it recognizes, at the same time, that the self-expression as reflected in the *auto-* of *autobiographical* observes the rules of the medium within which the expression takes place.[198]

The *rules of the medium* of reenactment, available in the age of Greek song, shape both the subject/performer—the reenacting I—and the *event* of performance—the here and now or real presence of the reenacting I. In every reenactment (repetition of the event), the rules of the medium are implicitly retransmitted as the materiality of the event itself.

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[196] Déborah Blocker, "The Hermeneutics of Transmission: Deciphering Discourses on Poetry and the Arts in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800)," *Intermédialités/Intermedialities: Transmettre 5*, (2005): 47.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Gregory Nagy, "Transmission of Archaic Greek Sympotic Songs: From Lesbos to Alexandria," *Critical Inquiry* Volume 31, Number 1, (2004): 27; original emphasis.

As already mentioned in section 2.1.1, Joachim Fiebach makes the case that theatre history has an intrinsic relationship to media history, but insists that the liveness of theatrical performance nevertheless differentiates theatre from other medial processes. Theatre history, he argues, has been influenced by media history in two epochal leaps. The first enduring shift came with the media revolution of the printing press, first in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries spreading to other parts of the world through European colonisation. Since this time, theatrical activity has stood in an intrinsic relationship with the dissemination of print. Only once typographic technologies were widespread did theatre—predominantly in occidental cultures—become by default an extension of pre*written* textualisation (*vor*geschriebene *Textualisierung*). Theatrical textualisation—the written/printed theatrical text—became the base which must be "translated" into theatrical activity.[199]

The second epochal leap for Fiebach corresponds to Kittler's Edisonian trilogy at the end of the 19th century. "Since then," Fiebach states,

> theatre could no longer be conceived without reference to the practical, massive, creative integration of the various audiovisual technological media of film, radio, television, video, today and particularly for the coming years without reference to the Internet and to possibilities of its direct use for theatrically artistic presentations.[200]

Despite these influences, however, Fiebach asserts that the core of theatrical activity originated from oral cultures. Theatre derives principally from the ostentatious *exposition* of oneself as 'one who is acting' (*der/die Tätige*) and, in this *activity* (*Tätigkeit*), exchanges with others. Fiebach calls this exposition of *being acting* (*Tätigsein*) the operations of an *Erzähler-Darsteller* or 'narrator-portrayer.' Narrating, relating stories, is for Fiebach not simply an aural occurrence, but an *audiovisual* act realised by the

[199] Fiebach, 2001: 494-495; my translation.
[200] Ibid., 495; my translation.

physicality of the whole body, the "meaningful" movements of the participants, particularly of the self-exhibiting narrator. Thus he contests McLuhan's depiction of 'oral man' as a being whose communicative senses were predominantly aural; communication in oral societies, Fiebach argues, was as much characterised by the visual, the bodily, as by orality.[201] In this way, Fiebach defines theatre as

> a type of social communication whose specificity is, first, the ostentatious display of audiovisual movements. The body's activities are their primary agency. This can manifest itself in innumerable forms. In oral societies, full-fledged theater occurs when a single body's facial expressions, utterances, gestures, and movements perform story-telling or praise-singing, demarcating and creating a particular space and a specific physical relationship with onlookers; the creative cooperation of several bodies is at the core of more complex theater forms.[202]

The ostentatious display of audiovisual movements is "enriched with technological and medial developments in the most varied societies." Thus, "actively portraying bodies" (*die darstellend-tätigen Körper*) use all technologies that were historically accessible in their live communications with spectating participants in their exhibitions or performances.[203] To my sense, the close associations Fiebach draws between theatre history and media history only serve to *emphasise* the pervasiveness of theatre throughout media history and vice versa. His insistence that theatre is not a medium relies on a narrow encoding/decoding definition of mediality, as well as on the age-old dichotomy of agency vs. structure. Ultimately, Fiebach inadvertently offers us the central relation of body to voice as materialities of communication.

The relations of body and voice are the principal concern of the prolific medievalist Paul Zumthor, one of the contributors to Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer's *Materialities of Communication* (1994). Gumbrecht notes that, at the time of their first

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[201] Ibid., 496.
[202] Joachim Fiebach, "Theatriality: From Oral Traditions to Televised 'Realities,'" *SubStance 98/99*, Volume 31, Number 2/3, (2002): 17.
[203] Fiebach, 2001: 497; my translation.

"materialities" conference, in 1987, Zumthor "had just abandoned the semiotic approach to literature that had made his work famous. Zumthor's attention was then shifting to the development of a phenomenology of the voice and of writing as body-centered modes of communication."[204] Fiebach himself notes that Zumthor, continuing the tradition of Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong (and, we should add, Eric A. Havelock), has written in his many works on the performance of "oral poetry" about the importance of corporeality in conjunction with voice, a "theatrical" attribute of oral poetry.[205] Zumthor's contribution, "Body and Performance," once again draws out the question of *presence* in the anthology's section entitled "Embodiment and the Limits of Signification":

> In the intermediate spaces of the linguistic system the desire to free oneself from its limits and to lose oneself in the wealth of its pure immediacy manifests itself. Perhaps the situation in which the text, intended as oral, naturally finds itself in the collective memory increases the force of this desire. Such a text is not isolated or disconnected from plot references but is destined, like the physical games in which it takes part, for play. Thus it offers, like any play, entertainment that comes from repetition and similarity. Like any play, the oral text becomes art under the spell of an emotional connection that is uncovered by performance and to which all energies of the living work strive to return.[206]

Strongly resembling Gumbrecht's subsequent reflections in *Production of Presence*, Zumthor emphasises here that the point "is not representation or the refusal to represent but presence. Every presence provokes a break with the preceding absence. This break creates a special rhythm in collective duration and in the history of individuals."[207] He elaborates further on the material relation of body to performance:

> The voice is functionally linked to gesture. Like the voice, gesture projects the body into the space of performance, attempts to conquer this and to saturate it with its movement. The spoken word does not exist, like the written, simply in a verbal context. It necessarily belongs in the course of

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[204] Gumbrecht, 2004: 9. In the same year, for example, Zumthor published his article "Chansons médiatisées," in which he considers the effects of reproduction technologies on the liveness of singing. *Études françaises* Volume 22, Number 3, "La Littérature et les medias," (1987): 13-20.
[205] Fiebach, 2001: 497; my translation.
[206] Paul Zumthor, "Body and Performance," in Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer, eds., *Materialities of Communication*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994): 223.
[207] Ibid.

> an existential situation that changes it in some way and whose totality is brought into play by the bodies of the participants.[208]

In reference to medieval poetic recitation, Zumthor claims, "it can be demonstrated [...] that the mimicry of the singers was more important than the singing, because it directed the presentation more precisely and was also easier to command, [determining] the nature of the texts themselves"—a point, I think, that echoes Nagy's description of the rules of reenactment in prealphabetic Greek song. "Along with the voice," Zumthor surmises, "gesture helps to fix the meaning of the text. It might be what makes it possible to begin with."[209]

Within this discussion, Zumthor references Bertolt Brecht's theory of *gestus*: "Brecht coined the term *gestus* in the framework of performative perspectives, in that an actor's bearing, a certain manner of speaking, and a critical attitude bind the speaker to what is said."[210] Of all the key concepts connected to Brecht's theatrical theory and practice, the concept of *gestus*, I believe, conveys more than any other his profound association of theatricality with materiality—here not in a strictly Marxist sense but rather in terms of the thingness, the *raw materials*, that ultimately facilitate (theatrical) communication. Carl Weber summarises the central thrust of *gestus* as indicating

> the 'ensemble' of all physical behavior the actor displays when showing us a 'character' on stage by way of his/her social interactions. It is an ensemble of the body and its movements and gestures, the face and its mimetic expressions, the voice and its sounds and inflections, speech with its patterns and rhythms, costume, makeup, props, and whatever else the actor employs to achieve the complete image of the role he/she is performing.[211]

Frederic Jameson notes, "*gestus* clearly involves a whole process, in which a specfic act—indeed, a particular event, situated in time and space, and affiliated with specific

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[208] Ibid., 224-225.
[209] Ibid., 226.
[210] Ibid., 225.
[211] Carl Weber, "Brecht's Concept of *Gestus* and the American Performance Tradition," *Brecht Sourcebook*, Carol Martin and Henry Bial, eds., (London and New York: Routledge, 2000): 43.

concrete individuals—is then somehow identified and renamed, associated with a larger and more abstract *type* of action in general, and transformed into something *exemplary*."[212] Every individual social event, according to Brecht, has a *basic gestus* [*Grundgestus*], a core, underlying "stance."[213] This stance is often a fundamental tension or contradiction—thus Galileo is the "prophet of a new age of scientific truth" who simultaneously "considers how he can swindle some money out of the Republic by offering her the telescope as his own invention."[214] This aspect of *gestus* clearly reflects Brecht's intention to "penetrate," to reach beyond the "surface meanings" to find a core meaning of social behaviour. But within Brecht's dialectics, *gestus* also encapsulates all those material means by which a *Haltung*, the critical "attitude" or "stance," can be conveyed. As a category or concept, then, *gestus* itself does not "represent" or "contain" meanings; it is rather the combination of all the material media, bodily or otherwise, through which meanings are *vorgestellt*, the German word for "introduced" but which literally signals "placed before." It is in this particular sense of Brechtian *gestus* that we reflect again on Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer's initial call, harking back to their first conference on "materialities of communication," to identify "all those phenomena and conditions that contribute to the production of meaning, without being meaning themselves."[215]

By transforming a common thing into something exemplary, *gestus* is above all *citational*; as Walter Benjamin argues, the achievement of epic theatre is its "making gestures citable." The basis of citability, Benjamin notes, is *interruption*, "one of the

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[212] Frederic Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso, 1998): 103.
[213] "Jedes Einzelgeschehnis hat einen Grundgestus" (*Every individual happening has its Grundgestus*). Bertolt Brecht, "Kleines Organon für das Theater, §66," *Gessamelte Werke* 16 (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1967): 693.
[214] Ibid., §63, 692. Translation in John Willett, *Brecht on Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964): 199.
[215] Gumbrecht, 2004: 8.

fundamental procedures through which form is given."[216] This concept of form, centred on interruption and hence on citability, is not based on models of creativity, construction or even expressivity, but on "*separation*, by which an intentional, teleological movement—call it a 'plot'—is arrested, dislocated and reconfigured." Samuel Weber underlines the import of separation, for "whatever is cited, is cited simultaneously as the possibility of its being re-cited, moved elsewhere, transformed."[217] *Gestus* as *recitability* thus recalls our discussion of repetition and iterability, in the Derridean sense,[218] and the possibilities of *theatrical reproducibility*. Recitability, then, implies circulation, the constant movement and transfiguration of information that is present in the theatre, for a citable gesture is only a potentiality, an open-ended process, but never realities perfectly reconstituted on the stage. For this reason, Brecht's drive constantly to *rewrite* existent texts can itself be seen as recitability, subsumed in the overarching premise of theatrical *gestus*. Despite accusations of plagiarism, all existing texts, from the classics to the present-day—including Brecht's own texts and text fragments, which Heiner Müller once likened to the "building material of quarries"[219]—were for Brecht the raw materials out of which new scenarios could be mined.

To explicate interruption, Benjamin draws an example that implies a "frozen frame" in cinematography, that is, an *arresting* of the action at the crux of its decisive gesture: a mother poised to hurtle a bronze bust at her daughter, the father about to open

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[216] Walter Benjamin, "Was ist episches Theater?" First Version. *Gesammelte Schriften*, Volume 2, Number 2, Rolf Tiedemann, ed, (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp: 1980): 536. Translation in Samuel Weber, *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004): 45.
[217] Samuel Weber, 2004: 45-46.
[218] In challenging Austin's theory of speech acts, Derrida asks, "Is not what Austin excludes as anomalous, exceptional, 'non-serious,' that is, *citation*, (on the stage, in a poem, or in a soliloquy), the determined modification of a general citationality—or rather, a general iterability—without which there would not even be a 'successful' performative?" Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," 325.
[219] Heiner Müller, *Werke 3: Die Stücke 1,* Frank Hörnigk, ed. (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2000): 166.

the window to call for the police, when a stranger appears at the doorway and is confronted, startled, by this scene.[220] Interruption thus has the pictorial effect of making a gesture stand out from the surface of theatrical performance; it places the scene in relief. Citable gestures, on their own, are thus reminiscent of the so-called *tableaux vivants* from the turn of the 20th century. Set as a longer sequence of disjointed moments, they more readily call to mind the composition of silent film, short bursts of action punctuated by explanatory intertitles. Brecht himself recognised that the "gestic way of acting owes a great deal to silent film, elements of it were incorporated back into the art of acting."[221] Benjamin is more figurative: "Like the pictures in a film, epic theater moves in spurts."[222] In the materiality of pictorial spurts, in the logic of interval and delay, Brechtian *gestus* encapsulates the influence of early film technologies on theatrical possibility. Citability and interruption are the structuring devices for this new staging. As Samuel Weber sums up: "Interruption, as Benjamin elaborates the term, involves the disruption of a temporal process or progression, associated with narrative-based drama, by spatial factors associated with theater as medium and, above all, with the stage."[223] For this reason, in Brecht's theatre, the orchestra pit formerly separating actors and spectators has been filled in. "The stage is still raised, but it no longer rises from an unfathomable depth; it has become a dais," concludes Benjamin. Theatre is now that space, that staging ground, where time is temporarily arrested in the form of a framed, citable, gesture. Brecht and

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[220] Walter Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre," *Illuminations*, Translation by Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken, 1968), 150-151. See also the commentary by Carl Weber, 2000: 44. Zohn translates the German *zitieren* as "to quote," *zitierbar* as "quotable." I agree with Samuel Weber's rendering of *zitierbar* as "citable," for "*zitieren* still carries with it etymological resonances from its Latin root, *citare*, to set in movement." See Samuel Weber's discussion, 2004: 44-45.

[221] Bertolt Brecht, "Das deutsche Theater der zwanziger Jahre," *Gesammelte Werke* 15 (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1967): 238; my translation.

[222] Benjamin, 1968: 153.

[223] Samuel Weber, 2004: 44.

Benjamin clearly understood the citability of gestures, the technics of this theatre, to derive from photographic and filmic montage. They also did not fail to notice correspondences of theatre with the materialities of print technologies: for while "the spectator is required to take a stance that corresponds to the comparable way a reader turns the pages of a book"—as Brecht wrote in 1931 regarding his production of *Mann ist Mann*[224]—"an actor," for Benjamin, "must be able to space his gestures the way a typesetter produces spaced type."[225]

The discussion in chapter 2.1 has led us through questions of reproducibility, recitability and the production of presence in theatre and performance. In the following sections, it will be our task to reflect further on theatre as an art of transmission by extending the discussion thus far into specific technics and techniques of theatre and theatremaking.

2.2 Theatricality and Mediality

In art our constant concern is
the organisation of raw material.
Constructivism has forced the artist
to become both artist and engineer.
—Vsevelod Meyerhold, 1922[226]

I wish to set straight that Linus Torvalds
[the inventor of Linux] *is not a businessman,*
but an engineer, a programmer.
The engineer as artist is something
you've completely forgotten.
—Friedrich Kittler to Derrick de Kerkhove, 1999[227]

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[224] Bertolt Brecht, "Anmerkungen zum Lustspiel 'Mann ist Mann,'" *Gesammelte Werke* 17 (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1967): 981; my translation.
[225] Benjamin, 1968: 151.
[226] Vsevelod Meyerhold, "The Actor of the Future and Biomechanics," report of Meyerhold's lecture, Moscow Conservatoire, 12 June 1922, in *Ermitazh*, No. 6 (Moscow: 1922); cited in Edward Braun, *Meyerhold on Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1969): 198-199.
[227] Friedrich Kittler, in "Hellauer Gespräche: Theater als Medienästhetik oder Ästhetik mit Medien und Theater?" Round Table discussion in *Maschinen, Medien, Performances,* Martina Leeker, ed., (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2001): 416; my translation.

In the first half of this chapter, we touched only briefly on theoretical connections between theatre and media. From theatre architecture to scenography, props, costuming, sound effects, visual projection, and digital technologies, a vast range of media and technologies have always been indispensable to theatrical undertakings.[228] However, a number of propositions that fall within the framework of the materialities of communication point to a more fundamental relationship between theatricality and mediality than simply the employment of media and technology within theatrical practice. In the second half of this chapter, I will explore particular implications of the material turn for understanding theatre in relation to prevailing medial systems. Contributions from Derrick de Kerkhove, Jesper Svenbro, Jennifer Wise, Hans-Christiann von Herrmann, Friedrich Kittler, and Norbert Bolz will serve as points of departure for our further investigations and applications in chapters 3 and 4.

2.2.1 Theatre as Alphabetic Information-Processing

The ancient theatrical venues of Greece and Rome may well have been the first mass media. That the Dionysian festival could convene such a mass public is startling to contemporary eyes and ears, considering the quality of acoustics required in order for the pre-microphonic human voice to carry throughout these ancient sites. Certainly, the players' voices were amplified by the funnel form of the masks they wore as well as the

[228] See, for example, Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture*, (Ithaca and Lond: Cornell University Press, 1989) and Christopher Baugh, *Theatre, Performance and Technology: The Development of Scenography in the Twentieth Century* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

resonating effect of the wooden wall or *skene*.[229] But, as Jochen Hörisch remarks, the simplest media-technical explanations for the invention of the Chorus in Greek dramas has often been neglected: "namely that a collective voice is much more easily understood than that of a single person."[230]

According to a number of scholars, however, the performance culture of Ancient Greece was characterised by an even more significant technological development. Greek theatre was not simply an event derived from religious ritual and social entertainment. Rather, theatre developed as a technology of change in direct association with the technology of the phonetic alphabet. If the phonetic alphabet originated circa 800 BC, it is no coincidence that the traditions of Greek tragedy emerged some 200 years later.[231] Attic theatre therefore developed in direct relation to the phonetic alphabet as an externalisation of thought, a linearisation and sequentialisation of symbolic information, amplifying the mental processes required for literacy and extending these to the as yet non-literate members of Athens. In this process, Derrick de Kerckhove argues, "the Greek stage projected the prototypes of Western man as models for the acquisition of private consciousness." In the shift from oral to literate society, "drama was [...] borne out of the various physical techniques of memory evolved for the oral epic but which were broken loose and rearranged by the phonetic alphabet." Greek theatre "was to the oral epic what

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[229] "[I]t must have been this device which made possible the understandability of the spoken word as soon as it came to the fore in the dramatic performances of the City Dionysia. Therefore, it seems that the original purpose of the skene was not to indicate or suggest the place of action, but above all to be a medium for better acoustics." In Benjamin Hunningher, "Acoustics and Acting in the Theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereus, *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlands Akademie van Wetenschappen, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel 19, Afdeling Letterkunde, Nr. 1-12,* (Amsterdam: 1956): 314; (cited in Hans-Christian von Herrmann, "Das Theater der Polis," *Archiv für Mediengeschichte—Medien der Antike*, Lorenz Engell, Bernhard Siegert, Joseph Vogl, eds., (Weimar: Universitätsverlag, 2003: 29-30, note 22).

[230] Jochen Hörisch, *Eine Geschichte der Medien: Von der Oblate zum Internet* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp: 2004): 41; my translation.

[231] Derrick de Kerckhove, "Eine Mediengeschichte des Theaters. Vom Schrifttheater zum globalen Theater." *Maschinen, Medien, Performances,* Martina Leeker, ed., (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2001): 502.

writing was to speech; it was a revolution of sensory relationships pertaining to the major modes of transmitting and exchanging information on a personal and a social level."[232]

For de Kerckhove, then, theatre is by definition a "media aesthetics of the alphabet."[233] Theatre was and remains above all a process of externalisation, an extension of consciousness into the space of spectacle. For this reason, theatre is constructed both from texts and as a text, both from the process of writing and as the process of writing. Ancient theatre fragmented oral stories into the smaller units suitable for the stage, removing the processes of storage and memorisation from the mind of epic storytellers and depositing these, as segmented texts, into the theatre. At the same time, ancient theatre accelerated the processes of literacy or alphabetisation[234] in that the mental structures for this process were *internalised* by spectators. Thus, theatre is both a projection of cognition onto the stage and a re-assimilation of these processes, both externalisation and internalisation. Alphabetisation and drama functioned as reciprocal systems of storage and transmission.

Furthermore, with the development of the alphabet, the nature of mimetic practices (ascribed by Plato to epic poetry) underwent a shift from ancient customs of enactment and re-enactment to new, coded, spatially and visually-oriented conventions of mimesis: a spatial shift facilitated by the new visual paradigm. Theatrical performances introduced

> a new bias in the relationships between body and mind. As the public was exposed to highly involved actions based on common knowledge and yet prevented from responding physically by

[232] Derrick de Kerckhove, "A Theory of Greek Tragedy," *Sub-Stance* 29 (1981): 23-25. See also de Kerckhove, "Theatre as Information-Processing," *Modern Drama*, Volume 25, Number 1, (1982): 143-153.
[233] Derrick de Kerckhove, "Hellauer Gespräche: Theater als Medienästhetik oder Ästhetik mit Medien und Theater?" Round Table discussion in *Maschinen, Medien, Performances,* Martina Leeker, ed., (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2001): 415; my translation.
[234] The German *Alphabetisierung* or French *alphabétisation* more clearly associate the process of becoming literate with the alphabet.

> the seating arrangement and the distance between the orchestra and itself, the need to control and convert physical impulses into mental ones must have arisen.[235]

For de Kerckhove, this new process of intellectualisation and bodily control, introduced by the spectacle of tragedy in tandem with the codification of the alphabet, is symbolised nowhere more clearly than in the figure of Aeschylus's Prometheus. Tied and bound to his rock, Prometheus mirrors the spectators, bound to their seats, who like their tragic hero must contemplate the matter at hand cognitively, that is, responding only by speech and thought to the environmental stimulations offered within the Dionysian theatre.

The spatial shift of theatre, facilitated by the alphabetisation of Western culture, led in turn to a *theoretisation* of human experience. Culture became spectacle when experience was no longer simply "lived" but rather "observed."[236] As de Kerckhove remarks, we must first recall that the root of the word *theatre*—and for that matter its etymological companion *theory*—indicate sites of seeing, viewing or contemplating. The Greek *theatron* is both the place "to see" and the place "from where one can see." In this regard, theatre is, as Roland Barthes has commented, "a *dioptric* art;" it is "precisely that practice which calculates the place of things *as they are observed*: if I set the spectacle here, the spectator will see this; if I put it elsewhere, he will not, and I can avail myself of this masking effect and play on the illusion it provides."[237] Further, the Greek word for "the spectacular," *thea-mai*, shares the same roots as *thea-tron*.[238] In language reminiscent of McLuhan, de Kerckhove argues that "the major shift effected by the combination of theatre and the alphabet was to play down the audio-tactile involvement and promote a new sensorial synthesis under the governing of the eye." This sensorial synthesis was

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[235] De Kerckhove, 1981: 25.
[236] De Kerckhove, 2001: 502-503.
[237] Barthes, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein," *Image – Music – Text*, Translation by Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana Press, 1977): 69-70.
[238] De Kerckhove, 2001: 504.

visual, its effect a reorganisation of spatiality. Physical space had previously been experienced immediately, through participatory action and oral speech. Under the spectator's new gaze, physical space coincided with the theoretical space of a "container for programmed experience," an empty stage for spectacle. Greek theatre was above all *information-processing*: a stage of visual and semantic exteriorisation and synthesis, the projection or extension of the eye for "centralized and sustained visual aiming."[239]

When the forms of ritual enactment of early Greek mythology, passed down in the epic tradition, went through this process of dramatisation as a result of the alphabet and the beginnings of literacy, performance was recharacterised as *detached spectacle*.[240] The role of the actors was to project a detached, homogenous image of the human body, an intra-subjective representation moving freely within the confined space of the stage which a preliterate public could convert into a personalised version of itself moving freely within the city-sphere of Athens. Moreover, the actors, in memorizing and pronouncing a text that was invisible to the spectators, *took its place*. "They transposed [the text] into a kind of 'vocal writing.' They did not read it, but rather produced a vocal copy of it."[241] Actors themselves did not "possess knowledge" to be transmitted on the stage; rather, the written word and the actor were interchangeable parts of the theatrical structure.[242] To this extent, "the stage could be said to have absorbed the signifying, alienating practice of writing, for the semiology of phoneticism was transferred from the letters of the alphabet

[239] De Kerckhove, 1981: 26-28.
[240] Hans-Christian von Herrmann, 2003: 28.
[241] Jesper Svenbro, "The Inner Voice: On the Invention of Silent Reading," *Phrasikleia: An Anthroppology of Reading in Ancient Greece*, Translation by Janet Lloyd, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993): 169.
[242] Ibid., 178.

to the bodies of the performers."[243] The embodiment of the alphabet in the actor is nowhere so evident as in Kallias's mid-fifth century play *Grammatike Theoria*, known as the *ABC Show* but literally a "looking at" (*theoria*) the parts of language: a chorus of twenty-four women corresponding to the twenty-four letters of the Ionian alphabet. The Prologue lists these bodily and alphabetical "characters": "Alpha, beta, gamma, delta, ei..." and so on.[244] Thus, the *ABC Show* not only "makes visible what is normally concealed in the theater—that is, writing," but also "announces [...] that the alphabet will be *seen* in the theater, not just heard."[245]

By the same token, spectators were not expected to intervene in the stage action; nor did they read the text that determined this action. Bound to their seats, spectators consequently underwent training as silent readers: just as a silent reader was "'listening' to a writing"—written words that now seemed "to speak to him" within his consciousness—a "spectator in the theatre [...] 'listen[ed]' to the vocal writing of the actors."[246] In line with Derrida, these theses challenge the logocentric bias of Western history and philosophy by equating the detached visual framework of theatrical spectacle to the technological development of the alphabet and to the spread of literacy. As Jesper Svenbro proposes, "if mental space may be externalized in alphabetical space, writing may also be externalized—in theatrical space."[247] Writing in Greek antiquity thus had an effect on theatrical presence that recalls Auslander's thesis of "liveness" as constituted by

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[243] Jennifer Wise, *Dionysus Writes: The Invention of Theatre in Ancient Greece*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998): 64.
[244] See Svenbro, 1993: 183-186 and especially Wise's (1998) chapter "The ABCs of Acting," 15-68.
[245] Svenbro, 1993: 186; original emphasis.
[246] Ibid., 171.
[247] Ibid., 182.

modern recording technologies.[248] Specifically, these arguments suggest that theatre required new cognitive strategies by training spectators to process information in a sequentially and visually centralised manner. A public thus trained was a public primed for literacy. The Greek stage was a preliterate inscriptive form *on* consciousness through its focused arrangements of visual imagery, speaking bodies, and alphabetic information.

We can summarise several broad foci of these arguments that adhere to our interest in the materialities of communication: 1) *exteriorisation* (the material-theatrical sign system as an externalized form of information-processing); 2) *mediality* (theatre as a distinct system of communicative exchange in accordance with technological alphabetisation); and 3) *corporeality* (the orchestration of the public's sensory stimulations while simultaneously separating these sensorial responses from stage action and repressing the public from immediate participation). In these respects, Derrick de Kerchkove (1981, 1982, 2001), Jesper Svenbro (1988/1993), Jennifer Wise (1998) and Hans-Christian von Herrmann (2003) all view Greek theatre in terms that recall Kittler's *Aufschreibesysteme*: as a "network of technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store, and process relevant data."[249] In these models, theatre is one, if not *the*, central inscriptive system of the discourse network of antiquity, underpinned by the technology of the alphabet. Consequently, theatre is a medium with its own material (alphabetic and bodily) restrictions for processing, storing and retransmitting data; within its contingent exteriority it was a primary channel for carrying information. Moreover, "by influencing the circuitry and distribution of sensorial inputs and their conversion into

[248] See Wise, 1998: 198: "That writing had the power to manifest a truth which a situational presence obscures is an idea that goes very much against the grain of one of the central myths of modern performance theory."
[249] Kittler, 1985[1990]: 369.

cognitive activities, theatre significantly influenced the *production of meaning*" in the first place.[250]

Between Greek antiquity and Early Modernity, text and textualisation overtook the power of the theatrical performance. "It was only when phonetic literacy reached a certain level of saturation, thanks to the invention of print technologies, that the theatrical hold on psychological patterns began to relax."[251] By the onset of French classicism, as we have seen with Gumbrecht (2004), theatrical texts have become more important than their performance. "In the prefaces to the plays by Corneille, Racine and Molière, these authors clearly express their angst that a performance of their plays could tarnish their literary quality."[252] The centrality of theatrical performance was gradually deposited into textual forms, and disseminated through replicable print formats.

For Kittler, of course, the monopolisation of writing systems culminated in the Poetic spirit (*Geist*) of the discourse network of 1800. The story of Goethe's *Faust* is ushered in by a "Prelude in the Theatre," a banter between Director, Poet, and Comedian. So the Director:

> Ich weiß, wie man den *Geist* des Volks versöhnt;
> Doch so verlegen bin ich nie gewesen:
> Zwar sind sie an das Beste nicht gewöhnt,
> Allein sie haben schrecklich viel gelesen.
>
> The people's *spirit* I know how to appease,
> Yet never have I felt so clear a dread:
> For, unaccustomed to the best as they may be,
> It's quite appalling just how much they've read. (43-46)[253]

Only more and more readable words could placate the ravenous *Geist* of such an anonymous reading (spectating) public (*Volk*). Kittler alludes to Goethe's prelude by

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[250] De Kerckhove, 2001: 504; my translation.
[251] De Kerckhove, 1982: 150.
[252] De Kerckhove, 2001: 509; my translation.
[253] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: Erster Teil*, 29. Heft, (Husum: Hamburger Lesehefte Verlag, 2005): 6, lines 43-46; my translation, my emphasis.

unpacking his own analysis of the discourse network 1800 as the "Scholar's Tragedy," an analytical *prelude in the theatre.* It is at once a preface to his own study and a postscript to the erudition of the Republic of Scholar's, by now "an obsolete discourse network."[254] (Goethe only supplemented *Faust I* with the prelude during the third phase of the play's composition, between 1797 and 1801.) By the same token, Kittler's prelude is also a postscript to theatre's configuration as the extensions of alphabetisation. For, once "alphabetization had become ingrained" and books had become "material for understanding and fantasy,"[255] the theatre as the extension of alphabetic literacy had also necessarily reached its conclusion:

> Alphabetization could hardly accomplish a more elegant translation of Gutenbergiana into phantasmagoria. The writer of an old book becomes an inner voice; the frontispiece becomes an inner image; the list of characters becomes a scene; and the chronicle's old medium becomes a time-series of sounds and sights—it is sound film avant la lettre.[256]

When a "list of characters" magically takes shape as a "scene" in the inner world of readers, the physical stage was but a remnant of displaced discourse networks. And yet "new media do not make old media obsolete; they assign them other places in the system."[257] What position, then, was theatre assigned with the inauguration of sound and film technologies circa 1900?

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[254] Kittler, 1985[1990]: 4.
[255] Ibid., 116.
[256] Ibid., 117.
[257] Friedrich Kittler, "The History of Communication Media," *Ctheory*, URL, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, eds., <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=45/> [published 30 July 1996; consulted 20 July 2006].

2.2.2 Theatrical Optics in Kittler's Media Materialism

Throughout Kittler's work, references to performing arts are only sparsely inserted into his broader programme of media materialism. Clearly, performance understood as an intentional act conducted by autonomous, self-determined human subjects is incommensurate with Kittler's privileging of "the material structures of technology over the meanings of these structures and the messages they circulate."[258] Thus, while Kittler draws substantially on McLuhan's overall interest in media as channels that introduce changes into general human relations, he nevertheless radically departs from McLuhan's human-centred media theory. "McLuhan, who was a literary scholar by trade, understood more about perception than electronics and, for this reason, tried to think about technologies as stemming from bodies and not vice versa."[259] For this reason, Kittler can agree with Derrick de Kerckhove's McLuhan-inspired standpoint that Greek theatre—like all literature—could not have developed without the emergence of the phonetic alphabet. But for Kittler, Attic theatre is not an extension of human consciousness; on the contrary, Attic theatre's reliance on alphabetisation only establishes "the absolute, almost materialistic precedence of technology before art."[260] "Arts," he discloses, "entertain only symbolic relations to the sensory fields they presuppose. Media, by contrast, correlate in the real itself to the materiality they deal with."[261] Nevertheless, and generally

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[258] Nicholas Gane, "Radical Post-humanism: Friedrich Kittler and the Primacy of Technology," *Theory, Culture & Society* Volume 22, Number 3 (2005): 25.
[259] Friedrich Kittler, *Optische Medien* (Berlin: Merve, 2002): 22; my translation.
[260] Kittler, "Hellauer Gespräche: Theater als Medienästhetik oder Ästhetik mit Medien und Theater?" *Maschinen, Medien, Performances,* Martina Leeker, ed., (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2001): 416; my translation.
[261] See Friedrich Kittler, "Weltatem: Über Wagners Medientechnologie," *Diskursanalysen 1: Medien*, Friedrich Kittler, Manfred Schneider, Samuel Weber, eds., (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1987): 94-107. English Translation: "World-Breath: On Wagner's Media Technology," *Opera Through Other Eyes*, David

commensurate with the theses from the previous two sections, "the data processing of a given society can also be reconstructed by analyzing its artistic media."[262] While Kittler points occasionally to theatre's "parasitical dependence on the print monopoly"[263] of writing systems, he more often delineates the role of theatre, and especially Wagnerian music-dramas, in linking humans to optical and acoustic data streams. "In the founding days of media technology, everything centred on links between flesh and machine."[264] Kittler's comments on theatre and opera, then, rotate around their function as predecessors to sound and especially film technologies. In the following, I will briefly outline this train of thought.

From antiquity through the Middle Ages, performances only ever took place in sunlit, open air venues.[265] By the Baroque period, however, new permanent and enclosed theatrical venues required some form of artificial lighting. Kittler traces the need for new lighting schemes to the technologies of the *camera obscura* and *laterna magica*, the predecessor of the slide projector (first described by the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher in 1671) and to the early *Guckkasten* or peepshows that soon followed.[266] Only in the Baroque did "stages become peepshows, as we still know them today and from which, due either to craftsmen's skill or the financing framework of theatre technics, we spectators are confronted by more or less successful illusions."[267] In the *Guckkastenbühne* (peepshow stage), a perspective which previously had only been achieved with the

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J. Levin, ed., Friedrich Kittler and David J. Levin, trans., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), here page 215.

[262] Friedrich Kittler, "A Discourse on Discourse," *Stanford Literature Review* Volume 3, Number 1 (1986): 159.

[263] Kittler, 2002: 12.

[264] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 74.

[265] Kittler, 2002: 101, 108; see also Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 120-121.

[266] See also Ulrike Haß, "Netzhautbild und Bühnenform. Zur Medialität der barocken Bühne," *Maschinen, Medien, Performances*, Martina Leeker, ed., (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2001): 526-541.

[267] Kittler, 2002: 107; my translation.

"*laterna magica* could finally be staged dramatically, which meant unminiatured."[268] Curtains were now painted to extend the perspective constructed in the space of the stage and were even interchangeable during a performance. Similarly, by changing costumes on the open stage, actors transformed themselves into various characters. "Thus, they were almost testing how many effects, transformations and conjuring tricks the spectators could be expected to take without interrupting the illusion."[269] This theatre stage had become a "counter-reformation image technology" in which everything could be manipulated and simulated, except for the source of light: a spectacle that took place indoors, and at night, required for the first time an artificial light source. The only available lighting technologies in the mid-17th century were wax candles and torches, which had several significant side effects: first, they discharged more heat than light; second, they emitted an incredible amount of smoke and stench, inducing a state of intoxication which only served to heighten the sense of illusion. Unlike costumes and curtains, however, these lighting technologies were not interchangeable during a performance. "The dramatic, but fully forgotten result of this limitation was the fact that none of the famous dramas of Corneille or Racine tally more than three thousand alexandrines. Hermeneutic literary scholarship has found the most beautiful reasons for this, entirely immanent in the texts, but all in vain, for this aesthetic constraint stemmed directly from a technical constraint: the duration of combustion of wax candles."[270] Gas lighting, introduced in the 19th century, eliminated these drawbacks, but presented its own theoretical dilemma: that the stage could now be lit in its entirety eliminated the need for other forms of lighting, such as the traditional decorative candelabra over spectator

[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid, 107-108; my translation.
[270] Ibid., 109; my translation.

seating. A darkened auditorium had several implications, not least the reduced visibility of nobility and other theatregoers who privileged being seen at the theatre over seeing the spectacle themselves. More important for the stage performance, actors could no longer witness spectators' reactions and adjust their performance in what had previously been a type of "optic feedback loop."[271]

In Kittler's analyses, optic innovations implemented in theatre and optic theories that explained theatrical perspective, up to and through the 18th and 19th centuries, antedated the development of film technologies. Nietzsche, for example,

> produced a film theory before its time under the pretext of describing both *The Birth of Tragedy* in ancient Greece and its German rebirth in the mass spectacles of Wagner. In Nietzsche, the theater performances that were produced in the shadeless midday sun of an Attic setting were transformed into the hallucinations of inebriated or visionary spectators, whose optic nerves quite unconsciously process white-and-black film negatives into black-and-white film positives.[272]

Lighting and darkening mechanisms for the stage and auditorium had protofilmic attributes that served to train the spectators in a new filmic gaze. In the 1830s the British mathematician Charles Babbage and physicist Michael Faraday used the technology of limelight to illuminate the stage for a new ballet, placing rotatable, coloured glass filters in front of each lamp. Ballet dancers in white tights could thereby be "projected" into variously coloured costumes without having to change themselves. It was the first time a theatre production was based on the principle of spotlight projection.[273] In the last quarter of the 19th century, techniques of total illumination and darkness, and spotlight technology were fundamental to Wagner's production aesthetics in his renowned Bayreuth *Festspielhaus*:

> Wagner did what no dramaturg before him had dared to do (simply because certain spectators insisted on the feudal privilege of being as visible as the actors themselves): during opening night, he began *The Ring of the Nibelung* in total darkness, before gradually turning on the (as yet novel)

[271] Ibid., 234.
[272] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 120.
[273] Kittler, 2002: 234-235; my translation.

> gaslights. Not even the presence of an emperor, Wilhelm I, prevented Wagner from reducing his audience to an invisible mass sociology and the bodies of actors (such as the Rhine maidens) to visual hallucinations or afterimages against the background of darkness.[274]

Wagner's new foundation in Bayreuth "veritably executed the transition from traditional art to media technology."[275] With the darkness and hallucinatory imagery of the *Festspielhaus*, Wagner anticipated the experience of the theatre house. For Kittler, "the cut separating theater arts and media technologies could not be delineated more precisely."[276]

In *Gramphone, Film, Typewriter*, Kittler's reflections on the progression of traditional theatre arts to cinematography emerges in his citing of Hugo Münsterberg's early essay on film technologies, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916). Münsterberg's neologism *psychotechnology* "relays psychology and media technology under the pretext that each psychic apparatus is also a technological one, and vice versa." In Münsterberg, film, with its underlying materialities of cutting and montage, its close-ups and flashbacks, is constantly juxtaposed against the real-time and spatial limitations of theatrical performance.

> Traditional arts such as theater, which Münsterberg (following Vachel Lindsay) continuously cites as a counterexample, must presuppose an always-already functioning perception without playing with their mechanisms. They are subject to the conditions of an external reality that they imitate: "Space, time, causality." On the other hand, Münsterberg's demonstration that the new medium [film] is completely independent aesthetically and need not imitate theater suggests that it assembles reality from psychological mechanisms.[277]

Münsterberg offers the example of a close-up of a hand on a revolver as the distinguishing feature between film and theatre:

> On the stage [a close-up of a hand] is impossible; there nothing can fade away. That dramatic hand must remain, after all, only the ten thousandth part of the space of the whole stage; it must remain a little detail. The whole body of the hero and the other men and the whole room and every indifferent chair and table in it must go on obtruding themselves on our senses. What we do not

[274] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 121.
[275] Kittler, 2002: 237; my translation.
[276] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 121.
[277] Ibid., 161.

> attend cannot be suddenly removed from the stage. Every change which is needed must be secured by our own mind. In our consciousness the attended hand must grow and the surrounding room must blur. But the stage cannot help us. The art of theater has there its limits. [...] *The close-up has objectified in our world of perception our mental act of attention and by it has furnished art with a means which far transcends the power of any theater stage.*[278]

In this analysis, film technology has had an irrevocable effect on the experience of theatre arts. For readers, who had once been forced to hallucinate voice and image from the silent lines of writing, film expelled the soul of classical literature. Similarly, spectators at the theatre no longer had to manipulate the spatial optics of the stage in the confines of their mind. The spatial logic of the filmic close-up translates as well to the temporal logic of flashbacks. "Whereas each of the temporal arts, in 'the most trivial case,' presupposes the storage of past events, 'the theater can do no more than suggest to our memory this looking backward'—namely, with words, for which 'our own material of memory ideas' must 'supply the picture[s].'"[279]

Nevertheless, before the recombination of acoustic and optic data streams came to pass in sound film, silent film—which as "purely silent film hardly ever existed"—still required an element of live performance: "Wherever media were unable to connect, human interfaces filled the niche."[280] The piano accompanists in these early movie houses also acted as "film explainers," narrators interposed between cinema screen and audience seating. Their task was to talk the audience through the film, using a pointer to direct their eyes to significant details and thereby anchoring otherwise ambiguous images on the screen. Film explainers had to anticipate likely misperceptions of the as yet untrained filmgoing audience, drawing on their prior knowledge as readers and theatregoers. Thus,

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[278] Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, reprinted as *The Film: A Psychological Study*, Richard Griffith, ed., (New York: Dover Publications, 1970): 37-38; original emphasis; cited in Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 162.
[279] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 163.
[280] Ibid., 171.

through live performance they not only introduced a *vocal* data stream into early cinema, but also reinforced the spectatorial transferral from the conventionally theatrical to the new filmic ways of observing.[281] Yet as Kittler notes, a group of literati—disgruntled by the "dismal background piano clinking" that was "drowned out by the voice of the narrator commenting on the action in a broad Saxon" dialect—came to voice their contempt for the tendency of the emergent art form of silent film to "imitate the word- or stage-centered theatrical drama or the ways in which novels use narrative language instead of probing the new and infinite possibilities inherent in moving pictures."[282] Theatre and film were expected to remain separate channels among media arts: "Literature as word art, theater as theater, film as the filmic and radio as the radiophonic: all these catchwords of the 1920s were defensive measures against the approaching media links."[283] The possible recombination of film and phonograph in sound film even appeared to Münsterberg as a threat to their aesthetic distinctions:

> A photoplay cannot gain but only lose if its visual purity is destroyed. If we see and hear at the same time, we do indeed come nearer to the real theatre, but this is desirable only if it is our goal to imitate the stage. Yet if that were the goal, even the best imitation would remain far inferior to an actual theatre performance. As soon as we have clearly understood that the photoplay is an art in itself, the conversation of the spoken word is as disturbing as colour would be on the clothing of a marble statue.[284]

Unlike its successor, the "purely visual" but silent photoplay, the "real theatre" with its live speaking bodies and limited time-space was recognised as an *already* existent media link of *vocal* and optic data streams. But in Münsterberg's time the human voice had already been displaced by the totality of the acoustic field exposed by the new technology of the gramophone. "The acoustic field as such, with its senseless noises and disembodied

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[281] Arne Sjögren, *New Media, Narrative and Perception*: Unpublished MA dissertation, (London: University of Arts, 2002): 27.
[282] Kurt Pinthus, ed., *Kinobuch*, (Zurich: Die Arche, 1963): 9-10; cited in Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 171-172.
[283] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 172.
[284] Münsterberg, 1970: 87-88; see ibid.

voices, had no place in drama."[285] Silent film reinforced the technological gap between the new acoustics and optics. And yet their recombination had indeed already been anticipated by the performing arts before the advent of sound reproduction. "For in the revolutionary darkness of [Wagner's] *Festspielhaus*—to which all the darknesses of our cinemas date back—the medium of music-drama began to play with and upon the public's nerves."[286]

2.2.3 Wagner's Interface: Optics Meet Acoustics in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*

> Theatre has naturally not been a media aesthetic only since Richard Wagner completed his beautiful deeds in Dresden and later in Bayreuth. Theatre has been a media aesthetic ever since European science asked itself in the 17th century what light is and what sound is, and found a few mathematical answers to these questions. A media aesthetic is the fundamental element of all theatrical interactions. What is meant here by interaction will be clearer when I translate interaction, with Norbert Wiener, as "reciprocal effect" (*Wechselwirkung*). Theatrical interaction then means that media history—and thus also theatre history—stands in interaction with the history of science, is even a part of the history of science, and media thereby build the interfaces that science constructs for our senses. One should thus be clear that a construct such as Bayreuth, in its optical- and acoustic-scientific sophistication, did not simply fall from the sky.[287]

Dick Higgins, in a 1981 commentary on his pioneering essay "Intermedia" (1965), distinguishes intermedia from "mixed media." Mixed media are "works executed in more than one medium, such as oil color and guache." Opera, for Higgins, also constitutes mixed media, because "the music, the libretto, and the mise-en-scène are quite separate: at no time is the operagoer in doubt as to whether he is seeing the mise-en-scène, the stage spectacle, hearing the music, etc." Intermedia, by contrast, produce meaning in a process of fusion. In intermedia "the visual element (painting) is fused conceptually with

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[285] Kittler, 1987[1994]: 217.
[286] Ibid., 216.
[287] Friedrich Kittler, "Theater als Medienästhetik, exemplifiziert am Fall Richard Wagner," *Maschinen, Medien, Performances*, Martina Leeker, ed. (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2001): 562; my translation.

the words."[288] In this regard, I immediately call to mind the emblematically constructed paintings of René Magritte. They are not simply created of separate media or forms, but rather engender a conceptual fusion between word and image. In distinction to opera, following Higgins, the theatrical "happenings" of the 1950s and 1960s, dance theatre, and performance art also constitute theatrical forms of intermedia. Friedrich Kittler, however, views opera, especially of the latter half of the 19th century, as the first truly intermedial theatrical form. For Kittler, as for Norbert Bolz, it was in Wagner's aesthetic of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art, that the previously separate data streams of optics and acoustics were fundamentally re-fused. Today's notion of "multimedia," writes Bolz, "is the continuation of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* with electronic tools."[289]

By granting a place of priority to "mediality" within the humanities, K. Ludwig Pfeiffer remarks, we must also recognise the difficulty or impossibility of ever fully distinguishing single media streams, of apparent or real forms of *monomediality*. Instead, we must focus on the *intermediality*, what he calls the "historically concise forms of multidimensional medialisation" or "artistically appellative qualities."[290] The conventional artistic genre of opera is "intermedial" in that it engages a complex "interplay of medially appellative qualities (word, song, spectacle, mise-en-scène)."[291] For Kittler, this interplay takes place in Wagner's music-dramas as the "physiologically medial effect of the opera on the senses, on people's eyes and ears."[292] Wagner's music-dramas can be defined as "theatre that drew technical consequences from the recognition

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[288] Dick Higgins, "Intermedia," *Leonardo* Vol. 34, No. 1 (2001): 52.
[289] Norbert Bolz, *Das kontrollierte Chaos*, (Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1994): 279; my translation.
[290] K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, "Phänomenalisierung und Sinnsuggestion: Peformative Intermedialität und die Oper," *Performativität und Medialität*, Sybille Krämer, ed. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2004): 328; my translation.
[291] Ibid., 338; my translation.
[292] Kittler, "Theater als Medienästhetik," 2001a: 563; my translation.

of its own mediality."[293] Traditional drama had decayed into "closet drama"—the German *Lesedrama* more explicitly depicts the relation between reading (*lesen*) and drama. Music in opera had equally decayed into the piano score. Within the field of sound, "the opera was based upon a separation between verbal and acoustic data, recitatives and arias, which in the final analysis may have simply duplicated the division of labor between libretto and score, between text supplier and composer."[294] In contrast, music-dramas can be understood in medial terms "as the abolishment of the book, of the *Lesedrama*, and the abolishment of the piano."[295] Faced with the revelations from the new acoustic field

> classical drama was little more than an exchange of verbal information between people who, it goes without saying, could talk and listen. [...] When for dramatic reasons the perfect transparency of this verbal and optical data-stream was muddied, two and only two forms of interference came into play: on the one hand, misleading words, especially names; on the other, masks. But even then, the meaning of words spoken and heard still did not disappear amid the roar of the real.[296]

In the *Ring of the Nibelung*, voices and libretti retreated behind the overwhelming power of optical and acoustic effects. Kittler sees their retreat represented nowhere more clearly than in the character of Alberich, the great engineer, whose magic cap allows him to disappear into the sunken orchestra and become the first disembodied voice of performing arts.[297] At the same time, the power emanating from the invisible orchestra not only served to amplify singing voices at pivotal moments, emphasising that "the physiology of voice is only a small part of acoustics in general."[298] It also drowned out the piano music of traditional opera; for "in contrast to a large orchestra, pianos did not have at their

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[293] Friedrich Kittler, "Illusion versus Simulation. Techniken des Theaters und der Maschinen," *Maschinen, Medien, Peformances*, Martina Leeker, ed. (Berlin: Alexander Verlag: 2001): 719; my translation.
[294] Kittler, 1987[1994]: 217-218.
[295] Kittler, 2001a: 563; my translation.
[296] Kittler, 1987[1994]: 217.
[297] See Kittler, 1987[1994]: 216, 232 and Kittler, 2001a: 564.
[298] Kittler, 1987[1994]: 229.

command variable timbres and tones, which also remain variable after their tuning phase."[299]

> Wagner's technical program can only be reconstructed in contrast to the tradition of drama and opera. Two art genres with different sensory fields could not simply be glued together. In order to reach the materially adequate structure of modern mass media, music-drama had to intervene in the materiality of data-streams themselves. In contrast with drama, the figures' interactions needed to be motivated by acoustic events. In contrast with opera, the acoustic events, whether vocal or instrumental, needed to be motivated by dramatic interaction. These are two reasons why Wagner's texts are not simply opera libretti and why his scores include so many stage directions.[300]

Wagner implemented a fundamental transposition in performing arts, replacing the human face and the human voice as practiced by traditional drama and opera with "the noise of the orchestra in acoustics and the elementary conditions of visibility in optics."[301]

K. Ludwig Pfeiffer suggests that operatic singing already possessed intermedial qualities:

> The intermedial core of opera exists in the close relationship between and the simultaneously radical separation of speaking and singing voices. [...] Song is *per se* intermedial because in it the medium of the voice takes a qualitative leap into another medial quality. While the rhetoric of speaking places the voice in the service of meaning that it [the voice] also makes attractive, the singular dynamic of the singing voice catapults its material (not: its medium), language, beyond any orders of meaning to begin with.[302]

However, in Wagner—consistent with advances both in acoustics and voice physiology of the 19th century—the all-pervasiveness of sound takes the place of verbal meaning altogether. In Kittler's primary example, the reciprocal motivation of acoustic events and figures' interactions could occur in only one phenomenon that marks *both* the libretto text and the musical score: *breathing*. "The materiality of musico-dramatic data-streams is based upon the intensity of life in the diaphragm, lung, throat, and mouth. That is why singing is the last and most important metamorphosis of breathing."[303] Voices and

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[299] Kittler, "Illusion versus Simulation," 2001b: 720.
[300] Kittler, 1987[1994]: 218.
[301] Kittler, 2001a: 566.
[302] Pfeiffer, 2004: 339; my translation.
[303] Kittler, 1987[1994]: 219.

instruments were recognised for their identical underlying respiratory technics: "breathing becomes their common root. [...] Thus wind and breathing, natural sound and the human voice become indistinguishable."[304] Simultaneously, this "total world of hearing" was unequivocally bound to visibility, or rather the invisibility of Alberich and other Wagnerian characters. As a "sound room that no longer needed the old-fashioned visibility of the bodies of actors" it allowed "for parallel connections with the new (namely, technical) visibility of film." Wagner had already made use of the *laterna magica* image projection in the 1876 première of the *Ring of the Nibelung*, enabling spectators to "hallucinate the nine Walkyries ride—on the backs of their horses, i.e. on the sounds of the orchestra." For Norbert Bolz, this represents a refunctioning of the platonic hollow: "in absolute darkness the projected slides assume hallucinatory pithiness; in the space of absolute silence music is made into intoxication. And cinema is nothing but the technical implementation of this reversed platonic hollow—the screen is the extension of the retina."[305] Thus the experience at the *Festspielhaus* predicted the technological re-fusing of sound and film technologies:

> Music-drama is a machine that works on three levels or in three data fields: first, verbal information; second, the invisible Bayreuth orchestra; third, the scenic visuality with its tracking shots and spotlights *avant la lettre*. The text is fed into the throat of a singer, the output of this throat is fed into an amplifier named orchestra, the output of this orchestra is fed into a light show, and the whole thing, finally, is fed into the nervous system of the audience.[306]

As Bolz remarks, the "Gesamtkunstwerk is meant to achieve everything that McLuhan had called the *interplay of senses*: continual translation work between senses and media—the optical should be intensified as hearing, the tone an opening to a new visuality. The

[304] Ibid., 226-227.
[305] Bolz, 1990: 50.
[306] Kittler, 1987[1994]: 232-233.

Gesamtkunstwerk is thus an *interface* between the 'world as radio play' and the 'world as spectacle,' enhanced by intoxicated senses, and formed in the hallucinations of dream."[307]

2.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have covered a wide range of topics on theatre and performance that fall within the framework of the materialities of communication. Having started with 20th-century reflections on the effects of film technologies on stage arts, from Panofsky and Benjamin to Sontag and Fiebach, we progressed to questions of disappearance and repetition, of presence and liveness, in view of new media of communication. We also retraced the roots of Western theatre in its relation to the phonetic alphabet of Ancient Greece. With Kittler's analysis of Wagner in the late 19th century, we are confronted with a view of stage art as it bids farewell to these roots and announces the era of sound and film technologies.

Indeed, there is no question that throughout the 20th century theatre and performance have faced a series of ontological crises—precisely the matter of debate on liveness between Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander. To a large extent, the most prominent Western theatrical thinkers of the 20th century can all be read against the backdrop of medial transformations. The rising influence of scenography is perhaps the most evident realm of 20th-century Western theatremaking to engage with the material side of theatre and performance. Scenographers such as Gordon Craig, Adolphe Appia, Caspar Neher and Josef Svoboda each understood, albeit from radically different perspectives, the theatrical stage to be a "machine" for performance. In this way, they all

[307] Bolz, 1990: 33.

undertook to analyse the inner mechanics and material reality of places of performance by engaging "with the actuality of the wood and fabric of metal" with which they worked.[308] The aesthetic of theatre as a machine was clearly central to Italian Futurist theatre under the influence of practitioners such as Enrico Prampolini, who also embraced a "new 'universal synthesis' or *Gesamtkunstwerk*" which "he characterized as being pure, lyrical, introspective, and multi-expressive."[309] Broadly speaking, writers such as Bertolt Brecht and Samuel Beckett embraced the written word while accepting its displacement from the centre of sociocultural activity by radiophonic and filmic technologies, and attempted to incorporate these into their theatrical designs. Others, as we have seen with Antonin Artaud, rejected the written word outright with his entreaty for a theatre devoid of language. In the latter half of the 20th century, artists such as Laurie Anderson, Pina Bausch, Marie Brassard, Robert Lepage, Heiner Müller, and Robert Wilson have grappled with the onstage possibilities presented by proliferating audial and visual technologies.

Nevertheless, analyses of the employment of new technologies as intermedial forms of theatrical practice seem insufficient, on their own, to explain the relationship of theatre to media. As we have seen especially in the second half of Chapter 2, a fundamental relationship between theatricality and mediality resides in the materialities that underlie them. Thus, throughout theatrical history, alphabetical, textual, optic and acoustic technologies have each exerted influence on the emergence and shape of theatrical forms.

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[308] Baugh, 2005: 46-47. Cf. especially his three chapters on "The Scene as Machine," 46-93.
[309] Günter Handler Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre 1909-1944*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998): 443.

3. TRANSLATION

The previous chapter addressed a wide range of topics from which the contours of a "materialities of theatre" began to emerge. Questions of liveness and reproducibility, repetition and iterability, gesture and recitability, orality and textuality, optics and acoustics, will all play a part in our further investigations in chapters 3 and 4.

In the music-dramas of Wagner, the human voice was displaced by the all-pervasiveness of sound. Indeed, if we continue with Kittler's analysis of gramophone, the human voice was reduced to one set of wavelengths in the spectrum of recordable frequencies. The recombination of acoustics and optics in Wagner was sound film *avant la lettre*. In his many writings, however, Kittler makes little substantial commentary on theatre and performance subsequent to Wagnerian music-dramas.[310] According to his technological a priori within the materialities approach to communication, theatre has been displaced from any significant position in the continuum of media channels: first by sound film and later with the extended possibilities of digital reintegration. From a different perspective, however, new technologies have not simply relegated theatre to a lesser status, but rather have continually reconfigured the possibilities of theatre and performance. Indeed, it was arguably the advent of sound film in the 1930s that began to familiarise audiences with the sounds of recorded music and dialogue, providing technologies of sound amplification that would only later be (re)introduced to theatre. The immensely popular large-scale musical theatre of the latter quarter of the 20th century

[310] Although Kittler's inclusion of his 1985 article "Autobahnen" in a 1988 tribute anthology to Heiner Müller does indicate an otherwise unarticulated interest in contemporary theatre. See Heiner Müller, *Explosion of a Memory. Heiner Müller DDR. Ein Arbeitsbuch*, Wolfgang Storch, ed., (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1988): 147-151, first published in *Kulturrevolution*, Number 5, (Bochum: 1985): 42-44.

is largely a result of the compound effects—the "intermediality"—of lighting control, sound reproduction and computer operating interfaces. It is thus no coincidence that the "rebirth" of musical theatre as *Gesamtkunstwerk* coincided with the development of the personal computer.[311] In the last decades, digitisation itself has led to a wide range of multimedial performance methods through the capacity for technical control over multiple image projections, live-camera and filmic sequences, as well as simultaneous sound amplification and manipulation.[312] Technologies of transmission, storage and calculation not only open up new avenues of theatremaking, they also serve to reconfigure forms of performance and reperformance. At the same time, as we have seen with Auslander's discussion of liveness and reproducibility, they have refocused our understanding of presence and disappearance as the core of theatrical communication.

In this way, Chapter 2 has demonstrated that while new technologies of reproduction do shift the contours of theatre and performance, an analysis of the materialities of theatre that relies uniquely on a technological a priori can perhaps tell only part of the story. In placing the emphasis on the material relation of voice to body, for example, Paul Zumthor has demonstrated that considerations of gesture and citationality remain valid within today's era of technological convergence. It is pertinent to ask, then: In what relationship do language, voice, and technical sound reproduction stand to corporeality within the acoustic field of contemporary theatre? What are the implications of digitisation for this relationship?

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[311] See Baugh, 2005: 204-205.

[312] See for example Peter M. Boenisch, "coMEDIA electrONica: Performing Intermediality in Contemporary Theatre," *Theatre Research International*, Volume 28, Number 1, 2003: 34-45; Caroline Weber, "Theater und Medialität. Präsens/z: Körper-Inszenierungen." *Konfigurationen: Zwischen Kunst und Medien*. Sigrid Schade, Georg Christoph Tholen, eds., (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1999): 146-159.

These varied themes bring us to the matter of Chapter 3. With discourses of digitisation, we are confronted with a new paradigm of total translation that nevertheless stands in contrast to the difficulty of overcoming discrepancies between language systems and their vocalisation on stage. The discourses of digitisation present translation as a model of universalization, the search for the "perfect language" into which all forms of knowledge can converge. Yet theatre arts remain persistently aware of the economy of shifting linguistic exchanges—the "impossibility and necessity" of translation (Derrida)—in both local and global constellations. Among contemporary media, then, theatre remains at an intriguing crossroads. On the one hand, theatre underscores the convergence of media forms and their intersection with live bodies and voices. On the other hand, theatre's drive for repetition challenges the very possibility of ultimate convergence and unqualified duplication. Convergence in theatre is, itself, both necessary and impossible.

The theoretical questions raised by translation thus present a particularly revealing challenge to materialities theory. A theory of materialities that can address this divergent "metaphorology" (Tholen) of translation needs to be specified to account for the circulation of meanings in overlapping and intersecting linguistic and cultural contexts. A study of the materialities of theatre must attend not only to questions of orality and textuality, but also to the movement between languages that informs both of these. Section 3.1 will delve into questions and metaphors of translatability in the digital age. Section 3.1.1 highlights translation as *transposition* from the perspective of Kittler's approach to materialities, drawing on the transition from the discourse network of 1800 to the discourse network of 1900. Section 3.1.2 carries these concerns into a discussion of machine translation and universal language, drawing on the positions of McLuhan and

Derrida to situate translation between equivalency and constant deferral. Section 3.1.3 offers a possible alternative to these positions by drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of linguistic variability. To address issues of theatrical translation and hybridisation, especially in relation to orality, we can best turn to theatremaking in multilingual settings. For this reason, in section 3.2, I will draw on selected cases of theatre from the multilingual city of Montréal to develop a "metaphorology of theatrical translation." These case studies provide pertinent considerations of translation in regards to both the incongruity of languages and the convergence of media technologies. They will also guide us in our considerations of circulation in urban sites in chapter 4.

3.1 Media as Translators

3.1.1 Translatability and Transposition

Considerations of translation figure prominently in Kittler's analysis of the transition from the discourse network of 1800 to the discourse network of 1900. In the discourse network of 1800, "the output of poets [...] constituted a *distribution of discourses,*" providing "discourse with a maximum number of addressees," but "a simple precondition had to be met before authors could become 'spiritual economists': there had to be a general equivalent for the texts they would spin out."[313] This "general equivalent" (or universal characteristic) was provided by the technology of the letter, "reformed alphabetization": "It was the signified, the element that first had been subtracted from letters or signifiers and then had taken a superordinate position."[314] For the scholars of

[313] Kittler, 1985[1990]: 70.
[314] Ibid., 71.

1800, to base a discourse on signifieds meant "to make it translatable." Kittler returns to his favourite example in Goethe, for whom the primacy of *Gehalt*—content or substance—over the effects of signifiers ensured "the translatability of all discourses, even the most sacred and formal." Faust's written *act* of translating the biblical "Word" as "Act" was, according to Kittler, the inauguration of the discourse network 1800, which would become known as German Classicism under the rubric of hermeneutic investigation. In translating "In the Beginning was the Word," Faust successively replaces "word" with "mind" and "force" before settling on "act." In this moment, "translation becomes hermeneutics"[315]:

> But in the speeches that comment on [Faust's] writing, the transcription is not described as a rhetorical procedure. The paraphrases are no longer understood as drawn from a treasury of tropes and figures; they are assigned the inverse function of denoting the true and authentic meaning of a word. This word turns out to be the word *word*. It is not one word or signified among others; it is the word as signifier submitted to the primacy of the signified. By means of rhetorical variation, Faust undertakes a semantic quest for the transcendental signified.[316]

This sequence of reiterated crossings-out (~~word,~~ ~~mind,~~ ~~force,~~ act) is not a free play of signifiers, submitted to a Saussurian "logic of substitution"; rather, it distinguishes "hermeneutical translation from rhetorical paraphrase" because "the logic of signifieds [is] a fantasy according to which one irreplaceable signified replaces all replaceable signifiers."[317]

Thus, in 1800, the new writing "still embraced the myth of Babel" in its quest to reunite the multiplicity of all circulating discourses. "The 'one mold' or style unified syntactically; the primacy of the signified unified semantically; and this was accomplished pragmatically by the receiver to which all translations from 1800 on were sent: humanity, the reader, and 'general world trade.'" In this discourse network, the

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[315] Ibid., 9.
[316] Ibid., 11.
[317] Ibid., 12.

classical Poet was the unifying node, for "general translatability is not achieved by any technical procedure; it simply comes into being via the ear of the Poet."[318] In order to reach the "maximum number of addressees," the quest for the transcendental signified or general equivalent was achieved in the transition from deciphering phonetic symbolisation to *reading for meaning*. In the language channel of writing, "signifieds secure the translatability of writing and orality [...] [when] reading becomes the equivalent of speaking."[319]

The discourse network of 1900 shattered the unification of the senses; language became "merely a channel" and translation necessarily became understood to mean *transposition*. In the spirit of McLuhan's "hybrid energy," Kittler claims:

> To transfer messages from one medium to another always involves reshaping them to conform to new standards and materials. In a discourse network that requires an "awareness of the abysses which divide the one order of sense experience from the other," transposition necessarily takes the place of translation.[320]

In the discourse network of technological media, "a medium is a medium is a medium," and "therefore it cannot be translated."[321] In 1800, authors had only to *transcribe* their dreams and hallucinations; "the existence of untranslatable elements in the signifiers of any language was not denied, but it was discounted."[322] In 1900 "signifiers coexist spatially as denumerable elements"; an "economy of the scarcity of signs replaced universal trade."[323] Kittler finds the most pertinent example of the transposition of media in the new science of Freud, published in 1900: *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

> *The Interpretation of Dreams* conducts the analysis of signs solely according to the place values of discrete elements. It does not establish the status of *a* symbol in the classical sense—in other words, a transcendental signified, which previously absorbed all words, above all the word *word*.

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[318] Ibid., 74.
[319] Ibid., 75.
[320] Ibid., 265.
[321] Ibid., 265.
[322] Ibid., 71.
[323] Ibid., 266.

> In its place there are now separate subsystems of signifiers, in which the parts of the rebus must be tentatively placed until they fit in a subsystem. [...] Therefore every manipulation of letters and words is allowed within the framework of a determined language. Dreams, "impossible as a rule to translate into a foreign language," traverse all the associative domains of a given language. The transposition of media is thus an exact correlate of untranslatability.[324]

In Kittler, then, the metaphor of "translation" generally corresponds to a notion of equivalency. In the discourse network of 1900, characterised by the untranslatability of distinct media channels, the realisation arose that "the transposition of media is always a manipulation and must leave gaps between one embodiment and another."[325]

However, these essential foci of (un)translatability in Kittler's *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900*, the distinction between medial translation and transposition in the shift from 1800 to 1900, are nearly undermined by his now questionable prescience in the introduction to *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* that, with digitisation, "any medium can be translated into any other." For even in 2006, "there are still media; there is still entertainment."[326] If there is a distinguishable discourse network of 2000, it is not yet clear (to me) that digitisation is indeed its central organising principle. Has "the general digitization of channels and information erase[d] the differences among individual media" that in 1900 precluded absolute translation? Can we accurately claim that "sound and image, voice and text" have been "reduced to surface effects"?[327]

3.1.2 Universal Language and Machine Translation

The digital computer entered the stage with the promise of resolving the discrete differences between media of the discourse network 1900. "With the new media," wrote

[324] Ibid., 274.
[325] Ibid., 267.
[326] Kittler, 1986a[1999]: 2.
[327] Ibid, 1.

McLuhan in *Understanding Media*, "it is also possible to store and to translate everything."[328] The computer offered this possibility:

> Language as the technology of human extension, whose powers of separation we know so well, may have been the "Tower of Babel" by which men sought to scale the highest heavens. Today computers hold out the promise of a means of instant translation of any code or language into any other code or language. The computer promises by technology a Pentecostal condition of universal understanding and unity.[329]

For McLuhan, the possibility of universal understanding via technology could be seen as an extension of consciousness, since

> 'the common sense' was for many centuries held to be the peculiar human power of translating one kind of experience of one sense into all the senses, and presenting the result continuously as a unified image to the mind. In fact, this image of a unified ratio among the senses was long held to be the mark of our *ratio*nality, and may in the computer age easily become so again. [...] Having extended or translated our central nervous system into the electromagnetic technology, it is but a further stage to transfer our consciousness to the computer world as well.[330]

McLuhan's strong Catholic convictions emerge in these considerations. The Pentecost represents that moment when the segregation of languages is overcome. After receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, as described in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the Apostles descended into the streets and spoke. Upon speaking, everyone could hear the word of God in his or her native tongue. For McLuhan, as David J. Gunkel has written, the digital computer promised "to become the technological equivalent of this miracle" by overcoming the "Babelian confusion through real-time, interlingual translations" and by re-establishing "universal understanding between human agents despite differences in their means of communication."[331]

However, McLuhan equally claimed that "all media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into *new forms*."[332] Unlike Kittler, McLuhan's thought

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[328] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964): 65.
[329] Ibid,. 83-84.
[330] Ibid., 67; original emphasis.
[331] David. J. Gunkel, "Lingua ex machina: Computer-Mediated Communication and the Tower of Babel" *Configurations*, Volume 7, Number 1 (1999): 66-67.
[332] McLuhan, 1964: 64; my emphasis.

vacillates between two understandings of the term translation: 1) as a levelling process (one of convergence leading to universality and unity) and 2) as a process of *transformation* (one of conversion through various medial conditions). In the latter regard, translation is not viewed as an inherent process of convergence or synthesis, but rather (and similar to Kittler's *transposition* in 1900) as a process of transformation and even renewal. For McLuhan, interaction among medial forms can lead to transformation as hybridisation:

> What I am saying is that media as extensions of our senses institute new ratios, not only among our private senses, but among themselves, when they interact among themselves. Radio changed the form of the news story as much as it altered the film image in the talkies. TV caused drastic changes in radio programming, and in the form of the *thing* or documentary novel.[333]

The concepts of transposition and hybridity thus point to translation as the process by which meanings (information) are propelled into circulation, skirting across older or emergent medial forms as their material carriers. In considering the implications of this position, we must not neglect several initial points outlined in Chapter 1, that media neither have concrete material determinations nor act as abstract carriers of information. We must keep in mind that knowledge is not independent of the media that transfer it, and that during transfer information can be altered, transformed or even distorted. Translation, in this case, is seen not as a synthesising, unifying force, gesturing to the possibility of an ultimate convergence of all communication, but as a continual process of transposition that leads to new, hybrid medial forms. All information is subjected to this transposition as it passes from one state to another.

McLuhan's thoughts on translation in his chapters "Media as Translators" and "Hybrid Energy" disclose a longstanding debate underscoring, on the one hand, the utopia that media forms will (re)converge into a universal form and, on the other hand, the brute

[333] Ibid., 61.

fact that transfer always involves alteration. In today's environment, this debate is linked to computer technologies and digitisation, hypermedia and interactivity in a variety of forms, and to a series of contingent discourses. We are still faced with an ancient model of linguistic universals, the search for unity or perfect language (today, via computer technology). Conversely, we are aware of the recurrent failure of this search and the persistence of dialogism, an acceptance of the economy of shifting meanings, recognisable foremost in the circulation of linguistic exchanges—ultimately, the impossibility of total translation in both local and global contexts. Thus, while media streams are folded into another in the increasing convergence of the digital age, a distinction is still being redrawn between the metaphors of translation as embodying the possibility of *universality* and as representing perpetual *transposition* and *circulation.*

To address the question of translation as a transfiguring medial process, let us once again consider the theoretical standpoints of Jacques Derrida. For Derrida, translation is the ultimate metaphor for the constant play and deferral of signifiers and the impossibility of stable meanings. Any attempt to translate always opens up the continuum of this play, as translation always highlights the impossibility of equivalency and always points to the instability of a given formulation in language. Derrida's take on the story of the "Tower of Babel" most emphatically draws out his critique of logocentrism, calling into question the possibility of an original text or a common origin to all languages. In this sense, his reading of the Babel narrative stands diametrically opposed to McLuhan's suggestion that linguistic variability can be resolved in a "Pentecostal condition of universal understanding or unity" made possible by computing technologies, and to Kittler's similar claim that through digital code "any medium can be translated into any other." The incompletion of the Tower of Babel, for Derrida, does not relate the

fragmentation of an original, essential totality, but is in and of itself the irreducible condition of a multiplicity of idioms, a fundamental condition of communication that resists any attempt at totality:

> The "tower of Babel" does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompletion, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architectonics.[334]

In this perspective, "linguistic variation is not a mere empirical problem to be overcome by some perfect translation or by returning to a universal idiom, but a fundamental heterological variation within languages that renders translation an interminable task that is both necessary and impossible."[335] Consequently, for Derrida, the impossibility of the search for universal truth in transcendental philosophy is most clearly discernible in the impossible attempt to translate, with fidelity, those very philosophical pursuits into other languages. As Gunkel notes, Derrida's essay *Les Tours de Babel* (1985) is "an essay about translation that was written for translation, but that nevertheless resists translation."[336] Translation celebrates *différance* in the very dichotomy between its impossibility and its necessity.

Gunkel shows how computer technology has not only been viewed as a means of achieving a universal language, but has largely been predicated on the very notion that a universal language was achievable. "Universal language [...] is not a project to which the computer has been applied; rather, it constitutes the very genetic structure and fundamental program of the technology itself."[337] The concept of a "universal machine," reaching back to the 17th century philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, was

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[334] Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," *Difference in Translation*, Joseph F. Graham, ed., (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1985): 165.
[335] Gunkel, 1999: 74.
[336] Ibid., 73.
[337] Ibid., 64.

accompanied from day one with the hope of providing the means to universal communication because, as Gunkel notes, "not only does its fundamental power reside in its ability to manipulate linguistic tokens, but its very substance has been in-formed by the Babelian dream of linguistic universality."[338] In fact, the concept of developing a universal or general translation system precedes the advent of computer technology by some three hundred years. In a 1679 missive to the Duke of Hannover, Leibniz summarised the relationship of a "universal symbolism" and a "calculus of reasoning" that would later be the inspiration for Norbert Wiener's science of cybernetics.[339] This letter outlined Leibniz's invention of an artificial language based on philosophical reasoning:

> For my invention uses reason in its entirety and is, in addition, a judge of controversies, an interpreter of notions, a balance of probabilities, a compass which will guide us over the ocean of experiences, an inventory of all things, a table of thoughts, a microscope for scrutinizing present things, a telescope for predicting distant things, a general calculus, an innocent magic, a non-chimerical Kabal, a script which all will read in their own language; and even a language which one will be able to learn in a few weeks, and which will soon be accepted amidst the world.[340]

The *characteristica universalis* that Leibniz details would overcome the arbitrariness of natural languages precisely because it was based on rational calculus; it would establish a mode of universal writing which could surmount the Babelian *confusio linguarum.*[341] However, other 17th century undertakings also recognised that some intervening factor would always be required to carry out the promise of universality. In 1663, Athanasius Kircher wrote his *Polygraphia nova et universalis ex combinatorial arte detecta.* In this polygraphy (a universally accessible code into which and from which any natural language could be translated), Kircher maintained that "anyone, even someone who

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[338] Ibid., 64-65.
[339] Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1948): 12.
[340] Cited in Umberto Eco, *The Search for The Perfect Language*, Translation by James Fentress, (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1995): xii.
[341] Gunkel, 1999: 64.

knows nothing other than his own vernacular, will be able to correspond and exchange letters with anybody else, of whatever their nationality."[342] This translation protocol was not a universal language as such, but a procedure for universal communication, a medium of overcoming the gap between languages.[343]

The contemporary field of *computer-operated* or *machine translation* (MT) protocols largely functions on the same principle of linguistic universals.[344] In 1949, the same year of his publication of *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* with Claude Shannon, Warren Weaver outlined a utopia of linguistic universality in a memorandum that would become the "stimulus for MT research in the United States."[345] He did not expect to retrieve a mystical origin of languages per se, but rather to resolve their unending diversity by locating the substructure on which the multiplicity of human idioms is built:

> Think, by analogy, of individuals living in a series of tall closed towers, all erected over a common foundation. When they try to communicate with one another, they shout back and forth, each from his own closed tower. It is difficult to make the sound penetrate even the nearest towers, and communication proceeds very poorly indeed. But, when an individual goes down his tower, he finds himself in a great open basement, common to all the towers. Here he establishes easy and useful communication with the persons who have also descended from their towers. Thus may it be true that the way to translate [...] is not to attempt the direct route, shouting from tower to tower. Perhaps the way is to descend, from each language, down to the common base of human communication—the real but as yet undiscovered universal language.[346]

Weaver's "common base of human communication" is essentially the universal grammar that became, with Noam Chomsky, the leading paradigm for analytical and computational linguistics. Weaver sees not the one Tower of Babel, an original or protolanguage that

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[342] Eco, 1995: 197.
[343] Gunkel, 1999: 68-69.
[344] John Hutchins, *Machine Translation: Past, Present, Future*, (New York: Wiley, 1986); John Hutchins, "Machine Translation over Fifty Years," *Histoire, Epistemologie, Langage*, Tome XXII, fasc. 1 (2001): 7-31.
[345] Hutchins, 2001: 2.
[346] Warren Weaver, "Translation," in *Machine Translation of Languages*, William N. Locke and A. Donald Booth, ed., (Cambridge, MA: Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1955): 23.

was disrupted and splintered, but a plethora of towers built upon an "as yet undiscovered" set of common linguistic rules.

In reference to the future of computer technologies and machine translation, Gunkel draws out two essential complications to these assumptions. First, following a broadly Derridean perspective, the traditional view of the Babel narrative espoused by Western metaphysics—that linguistic diversity is derived from an original unity and is thus necessarily directed towards a final reintegration—is flawed from the outset. Confirmation for this flaw is provided by the endless attempts at machine translation that have constantly stumbled on a seemingly insurmountable degree of ambiguity between natural languages. Second, even if the model of a universal substrate to all languages is accepted, a fundamental paradox is revealed. On the one hand, general machine translation is achievable only if some kind of universal characteristic transcending all linguistic variation does exist. If this universal character were discovered, then translation would become a superfluous activity, as it would be far more efficient to use such a universal character directly. On the other hand, if general machine translation is impossible precisely because there is no universal characteristic, then translation is ultimately necessary as the only means to negotiate linguistic diversity. "Ironically, universal MT is possible only if it is ultimately superfluous, and necessary only if it is fundamentally impossible."[347] Once again, we are faced with Derrida's "necessary and impossible task of translation, its necessity *as* impossibility."[348]

[347] Gunkel, 1999: 75.
[348] Derrida, 1985: 171.

3.1.3 Translation as Hybridity in Bakhtin

As a constructive point of contrast to the theories of translation we have seen thus far, let us turn briefly to the thought of Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. Several attempts have been made to find points of commonality between Bakhtinian thought and the poststructuralist school, without attempting to repackage Bakhtin strictly as an early poststructuralist.[349] Bakhtin left us with many terms for linguistic variation—polyphony, heteroglossia, double-voicedness, indirect speech, dialogism (which, taken together, almost seem to present a Derridean chain of signifiers around this central theme of his writings). If we juxtapose Bakhtin to Derrida, it is important to recall that each of these theorists began with a critique of the Saussurian paradigm of signified and signifier as two separate realms of signification. However, where Derrida assumes the primacy of writing over speaking—and clearly that all speech is itself a form of writing—Bakhtin proposes a theory of "utterance" in reference to a continuum in which speaking and writing form a complex whole. As Michael Holquist emphasises, this does not mean that Bakhtin asserts "the privilege of speaking over writing as in the logocentric tradition crowned by Husserl and Saussure. It is rather to conceive utterance, which has otherwise been thought to have two discrete forms, spoken and written, as a complex whole (not necessarily a unity) comprising both these activities."[350] In his essay *The Problem of*

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[349] See Juliet Flower MacCannell, "The Temporality of Textuality: Bakhtin and Derrida," *MLN*, Volume 100, Number 5 (1985): 968-988; Michael Holquist, "The Surd Heard: Bakhtin and Derrida," *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies*, Gary Saul Morson, ed., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986): 137-156; Dragan Kujundžić, *The Returns of History: Russian Nietzscheans After Modernity*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997): 37-71; see also Mathew Roberts, "Poetics Hermeneutics Dialogics: Bakhtin and Paul de Man," *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*, Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, eds., (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1989): 115-134.

[350] Holquist, 1986: 146.

Speech Genres (1952-53), for example, Bakhtin distinguishes between two levels of discourse which he designates as "speech genres": a primary or simple genre, deriving from spontaneous, daily and "lived" exchange; and a secondary complex genre encompassing different types of text within various fields of activity, such as science, art, law, politics, economics, and so forth.[351] For Bakhtin, discourses of the primary genre on the everyday plane nourish discourses of the secondary genre, which is a higher order set apart from everyday exchange. This secondary genre is able to absorb utterances from the primary genre, the social discourse of everyday life, and by so doing produces a more complex form of discourse. Within the framework of this new form of discourse, the original utterances can be *transformed* into new and different significations.

Bakhtin's notion of the *dialogic* is developed in his analysis of characteristics interstitial between languages, ideologies, identities and genres. Dialogism, writes Holquist, "argues that all meaning is relative in the sense that it comes about only as a result of the relation between two bodies occupying *simultaneous but different space*, where bodies may be thought of as ranging from the immediacy of our physical bodies, to political bodies and to bodies of ideas in general (ideologies)."[352] In his study on Rabelais (1965/1984), Bakhtin describes the state of interaction he has in mind with the concept of dialogism:

> It can be said of belles lettres, and especially of the modern novel, that they were born on the boundaries of two languages. Literary and linguistic life was concentrated on these confines. An intense interorientation, interaction, and mutual clarification of languages took place during that period.[353]

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[351] Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, Translation by Vern W. McGee, Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, eds., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).
[352] Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1990): 20-21.
[353] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, Translation by Hélène Iswolsky, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984): 465.

"Interorientation" extends the concepts of dialogism by suggesting that all meaning is contingent, limited, context-bound and thus is conditioned by material circumstances. However, because more than one voice, identity, position or discourse is articulated at any one given time, meaning is constantly negotiable, constantly in a state of flux.

Holquist's emphasis on "simultaneous but different space" also points to another Bakhtinian concept fundamental to these analyses: the *chronotope* or time-space. The chronotope exemplifies a symbolic form that belongs, on the one hand, to a particular socio-historical context or experience, but on the other hand is continually renewed and transformed. Bakhtin focuses his study on the form of novel, which he views as an especially privileged locus for grasping the *heteroglossia* of an epoch, that is, the "multiform speech genres and modes of discourse found in the everyday lifeworld."[354] Dialogism, interorientation, chronotope and heteroglossia all relate to Bakhtin's sense of *hybridisation*:

> Every novel, taken as the totality of all the languages and consciousness of language embodied in it, is a *hybrid*. But [...] it is an intentional and conscious hybrid, one artistically organized, and not an opaque mechanistic mixture of languages (more precisely, a mixture of the brute elements of language). *The artistic image of a language*—such is the aim that novelistic hybridiation sets for itself.[355]

The novel is thus conceived as endlessly interacting utterances, continuously supporting and reinforcing heteroglossia.

With these key concepts in mind, we can begin to conceive of a theory of translation in Bakhtin's sense. Bakhtin thus views the boundaries between national languages as only one extreme on the continuum of utterance. At the other end of this continuum, explains Caryl Emerson, "translation processes [are] required for one social

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[354] Michael Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000): 60.
[355] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Translastion by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Michael Holquist, ed., (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981): 366.

group to understand another in the same city, for children to understand parents in the same family, for one day to understand the next," stratifications of language that "do not exclude but intersect with one another."[356] For Bakhtin, "every language embodies its own specific worldview, its own system of values"; because "every speaking subject [...] speaks somewhat of a foreign language to everyone else," "every speaking subject has more than one native language at his disposal."[357] Nevertheless, the concept of "speaking subject" in Bakhtin should not be hastily confused with the transcendental *inner voice* central to traditional Western philosophy. Rather, the Bakhtinian utterance—spoken or written—is an articulation or enunciation that joins together "my ability to address others and their ability to address me."[358] In every utterance, "addressivity" is the central structuring element; spoken or written, utterances are fundamentally structured as dialogue between self and other. Thus, "to understand another person at any given moment, then, is to come to terms with meaning on the boundary between one's own and another's language: to translate."[359] Although Bakhtin never specifically designates these considerations as a theory of translation, and his commentaries on theatre and drama are sparse at best, his understanding of utterance as *both convergence and hybridisation* presents a valuable counterpoint to the equivalency/transposition disjunction of translation theory as addressed in the preceding sections.

In section 3.1, I have outlined ongoing debates on the possibilities and problems of translation today. As we have seen with Kittler and McLuhan, with Derrida and Gunkel, and finally with Bakhtin, translation is framed by divergent understandings of

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[356] Caryl Emerson, "Translating Bakhtin: Does His Theory of Discourse Contain a Theory of Translation?" *University of Ottawa Quarterly*, Volume 53, Number, 1 (1983): 23-24.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Holquist, 1986: 146.
[359] Emerson, 1983: 23-24.

universalisation and equivalency, transposition and transformation, convergence and hybridisation. In section 3.2, by returning to Georg Christoph Tholen's concept of media metaphorology, we will begin to explore the possibilities that theatre offers as a way of navigating these distinctive considerations of translation.

3.2 Metaphorology of Theatrical Translation

Tholen notes that "it was only the ubiquity of computers in almost every area of society that made it possible to talk about an inclusive 'universal medium' that could integrate all media in one digital code."[360] In Tholen's various writings, this "talking about" is revealed to be metaphorical in and of itself. The claim that the computer as universal machine *translates* all media into sequences of binary decisions is yet another metaphor: "In a media-theoretical respect, what is significant about this *translation* is precisely the relational association of substitutive operations," the ever-repeating paradigm of 0/1 codification. But in effect, a "medial gap" still exists between the processor as a *device* and its symbolically structured programming languages. Programming languages are only representations of the processor, not the processor itself. In these processes of translation, the so-called "universal" medium reveals itself to be constituted of transitions, transformations, and distortions.[361]

In the anthologies that Tholen has co-edited with Sigrid Schade (*Konfigurationen*, 1999) as well as Thomas Sieber (*SchnittStellen*, 2005), media studies or

[360] Tholen, 2002a: 659.
[361] Georg Christoph Tholen, "Überschneidungen. Konturen einer Theorie der Medialität," *Konfigurationen. Zwischen Medien und Kunst*, Sigrid Schade and Georg Christoph Tholen, eds. (Munich, Wilhelm Fink: 1999): 21-22; my translation.

Medienwissenschaft is posed a cultural science that should bridge (or at least inhabit a position between) media and arts. Thus, for Tholen, digital media (following their own logic of transition) do not simply absorb or abolish individual medial forms or their respective modes of narration. Rather, old and new media—literature and photography, television and video art, film and theatre—exist in a state of continual and mutual *interference* and *overlaying* (*Überlagerung*).[362] This interference between, or superposition of, various media unfolds as intermedial intersections within individual media, a perspective that also resonates with McLuhan's "hybrid energy." The respective modes of narration of old and new media in competition with one another are revealed when their "edges of visibility and readability become citable." For Tholen, this means that the particular form of individual media, their discernible mode of representation—"the pictorial, the photographic, the literary, the filmic, the theatrical and other configurations of *scopic desire* [*skopisches Begehren*]"—become either "raw material for newer medial forms or [...] a return to the obstinate art of the particular medium" in question.[363] In other words, the dissolution of individual media made possible by the digital mode is explored experimentally not only within the "separate presentational forms (literature, photography, film, theatre, music, and so forth) but also in multimedial, hybrid notations and montage techniques."[364] Aware of its own metaphorical character, Tholen proposes the term "hybrid performance" to describe the mixed forms and the interstices between individual media.[365] "Hybrid or intermedial interstices are more and

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[362] Ibid., 16.
[363] Ibid., 31. Tholen borrows the term "scopic desire" (*skopisches Begehren*) from Gisela Ecker, "Neugier und Gefahr. Skopisches Begehren am Schnittpunkt von Literatur und Photographie," *Konfigurationen. Zwischen Medien und Kunst*, Sigrid Schade and Georg Christoph Tholen, eds. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1999): 377-387.
[364] Ibid., 31.
[365] See Chapter 5.3, "Hybride Performanz – Ein Ausblick" in Tholen, 2002b: 197-203.

different than the indisputably increasing convergence of media, owing to the digital integration of previously separated media in a single medial composite."[366] Tholen notes that Bakhtin's concept of hybridity is valuable for developing a "framework for a media aesthetic" in which "mixtures of codes become the axiom of a new symbolic form of expression." In this respect "the theatricality of the post-dramatic theatre and performative, border-crossing arts can be designated as hybrid and intermedial."[367]

Translation is a self-reflexive process that continually wavers between the notions of equivalency and transformation. In the following sections, I will first outline positions on the translatability of theatre before exploring three theatrical endeavours that draw out, complicate and challenge these varying perspectives on medial translation and transposition. François Girard's dual productions of *Novecento*, Larry Tremblay's *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi* and Marie Brassard's three works *Jimmy, créature de rêve*, *La Noirceur* and *Peepshow* will serve as our points of departure.

3.2.1 Theatre Translation as Medial Convergence

Despite prominent analyses since the 1980s that challenge conventional views of translation, (perhaps initiated by Antoine Berman's analysis of the emergence of translation theory in Romantic Germany [*L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, 1984]),[368] translation has, throughout the 20th century, continued to be theorised as a hermeneutic process. Recalling Kittler's discussion of the discourse network 1800, translation as hermeneutics

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[366] Tholen, 2002b: 197-198.
[367] Ibid., 199.
[368] Antoine Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger*, (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1984); English translation: *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, Translation by S. Heyvaert, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

is oriented to identifying the "signifieds" of texts to which the signifiers of language(s) merely provide a direct route of access—thus enabling "the translatability of all discourses." In the 20th-century, it was perhaps George Steiner's *After Babel* (1975) that has foremost presented translation as "the hermeneutic motion."[369] In commenting on theatre and translation, Hélène Beauchamp and Ric Knowles suggest that

> Translation is, of course, most often and common-sensically understood as the process of reproducing, as "accurately" as possible, the meaning of an "utterance" inscribed or spoken in a "source" language—English, French, Cree or Cantonese—in another "target" language, for the benefit of non-speakers of the first.[370]

Barbara Godard has further noted that a "common understanding of translation" remains a "process of copying that results in an isomorphic text in a second language." She continues:

> Indeed, the semantic field of the term 'translation,' which stems from the Latin *translatare*, or metaphor, foregrounding its hermeneutic activity, highlights the focus on the identity of meaning in two texts in that it primarily connotes the circulation of translinguistic contexts conceived as separate from the language in which they have been expressed, language being understood as a pure translative medium. Such a poetics of transparency or equivalency maintains that a message may be transferred from one language into another so that the meaning of the message is preserved and there is an identity of content on the two texts.[371]

Godard remarks that the perceived isomorphism of translated texts relies on this "transparency," that is, the "invisibility" that a translation offers by dehistoricising and decontextualising the text from any original tokens of situatedness. By detaching a text from its foundation in specific events, the individual as "author" or "translator" disappears behind a belief in a transcendental signified, a supposed "unitary and recoverable" meaning of the text.[372]

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[369] George Steiner, "The Hermeneutic Motion," *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975): 296-303.
[370] Hélène Beauchamp and Ric Knowles, "Theatre and Translation," *Canadian Theatre Review*, Number 102 (2000): 3.
[371] Barbara Godard, "(Re)Appropriation as Translation," *Canadian Theatre Review*, Number 64 (1990): 22.
[372] Ibid., 22-23.

Theatrical translation has predominantly been studied in this vein, as the shifting of dramatic texts between language systems and the difficulties this movement causes for the work of the translator. Simultaneously, theatre—loosely understood as the transfer of dramatic text to oral performance—is itself frequently cast as a metaphor of translation.[373] Joachim Fiebach, as we saw in section 2.1.3, has noted how typographic technologies became the base, the prewritten textualisation, which must be "translated" into theatrical activity. Antoine Vitez, former director of the Théâtre National de Chaillot in Paris, succinctly captures this double connotation in expressing his "duty to translate."[374] Vitez understood the contradiction of translation both as the yearning for universality and as perpetual deferral and variability. "All the texts of humanity constitute one single great text written in infinitely different languages,"[375] he is quoted as saying. In the same interview, he states (recalling Derrida) that "it is impossible to translate, but intolerable not to translate."[376] For theatremakers like Vitez, stagecraft, the *mise-en-scène*, was tantamount to translation and vice versa. For the theatre theoretician Hans Sahl, translating meant "staging a play in another language."[377] Vitez claimed that "one can stage plays without end, just as one can translate without end. And it is exactly because it is impossible to translate that I maintain: the production of a play is a translation."[378] Vitez argues elsewhere that translation is analogous to stagecraft itself through the very impossibility of transposing all potential meanings:

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[373] See Barbara Godard, "Between Performative and Performance: Translation and Theatre in the Canadian/Quebec Context," *Modern Drama*, Volume 43, Number 3 (2000): 327-358.
[374] "The Duty to Translate: An Interview with Antoine Vitez," *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, Patrice Pavis, ed., (London and New York: Routledge, 1996): 121-130.
[375] Ibid., 124.
[376] Ibid., 122.
[377] Quoted in Godard, 2000: 327.
[378] Vitez, 1996: 126-127.

> Très souvent, il faut dire aux acteurs de ne pas chercher à exprimer la totalité du sens ou la totalité de l'imitation d'un personnage supposé, mais de signifier simplement par quelques traits qu'il y a une différence entre le personnage et son modèle : signifier la forme plutôt que le contenu. On signale le décalage, et le décalage dégage l'effet. Effet d'étrangeté, ou d'*estrangement* (c'est le néologisme que j'ai inventé), comme le demande Brecht.[379]

Translation, like a *mise-en-scène*, has the task of teasing out certain, selected meanings and interpreting these according to the time and place of their reproduction. Vitez's sense that a performance, like a textual translation, should signal the *décalage*, the gap between the model and its (re)enactment, recalls the notion of *transposition* between media as put forward by Kittler: that "the transposition of media is always a manipulation and must leave gaps between one embodiment and another."[380]

Hélène Beauchamp and Ric Knowles summarise the metaphorology of theatrical translation:

> [...] theatre, perhaps more than any other form of communication, has long been analyzed and understood as a process of translation and mistranslation. The most traditional approaches to the study of drama and theatre have considered the collaborative art of actor, director and designer to be one of "translating" a dramatic text in order to bring it to life on the stage, communicating the "playwright's meanings" more or less "accurately" to audiences in the theatre. But it can equally be true, from the other side, that the production and publication of "dramatic literature," which most often comes in the wake of a play's first theatrical production, is itself an art of translating the various performed languages of the stage—spoken language, of course, but also the languages of gesture, movement, light, colour, shape and sound—for the benefit of the solitary reader for whom the source text—the performance text—was not originally intended.[381]

As Beauchamp and Knowles point out, an easy understanding of performance as derived from a textual base neglects further aspects of the institutionalisation of contemporary theatre and dramatic publication. For while it may have been true in classicist France that theatrical texts took precedence over any performance, today most theatrical texts only

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[379] Émile Copfermann and Antoine Vitez, eds., *De Chaillot à Chaillot*, collection L'Échapée belle, (Paris: Hachette, 1981): 57.

[380] Kittler, 1985[1990]: 267. In another sense, it also recalls Benjamin's proposition in his famous essay *The Task of the Translator* (1923) that translations reflect the *afterlife* of texts—a temporal, dialectic gap between original composition and its interlingual copies. For Benjamin, translation takes place only at the intersection of languages, (an act that he poignantly compares with the function of an arcade, thus foreshadowing his future *Arcades Project*). Nevertheless, in Benjamin's understanding, this intersection of languages affords us, however briefly, a glimpse of the Adamic *Ursprache*, a "pure" (*reine*), universal, or originary language.

[381] Beauchamp and Knowles, 2000: 4.

reach a reading market after a successful performance run. "Original" performances, then, are generally only a projection of scraps of texts written and re-written, interlaced and interjected with directorial annotations. Dramatic texts prepared for publication are, in contrast, a residual, the result of the interplay of initial typescripts and jottings with staging and experimentation, each influencing the other until a first run is finally staged. Yet in this perspective, the hermeneutic premise remains substantial:

> Even in the theatre, however, each audience member in search of meaning, must necessarily *decode* the various languages of the stage, functioning as a translator of a range of complex and inter-discursive semiotic codes into the realm of his or her own personal, cultural, gendered and lived "vocabulary."[382]

What can be gleaned from these reciprocal metaphors of translation as *mise-en-scène* and *mise-en-scène* as translation? Underlying these metaphors is the concept of *transposition* as we have seen it in our previous discussions. Here, translation is posed constantly as a striving for, but the impossibility of ever achieving, *fidelity* between texts and between performances, as well as in the shift between static text to staged performance. However, in acknowledging that equivalence is unattainable, translation also describes the murky, hybrid *zones of correspondence*—what is sometimes referred to as the "approximating character of translation"[383]—between the unstable connotations of words in differing language systems that are highlighted in the shifts between texts and their enactments. Significantly, I think, these metaphorological considerations recall Jesper Svenbro's proposition that, at the theatre's emergence in ancient Athens, texts were "transposed [...] into a kind of 'vocal writing.'"[384] Thus, Western theatre, from these beginnings in Ancient Greece, has always been a metaphor or a translation, both a transposition and a

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[382] Ibid.
[383] For example, see Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, Translation by S. Heyvaert, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992): 6.
[384] Svenbro, 1993: 169.

hybridisation of medial forms (alphabet and sounds, text and speech). Through the medium of theatre, alphabet and text stand in a state of constant interplay with pronunciation and speaking.

It is my argument that these transpositional and hybrid aspects of theatre, subsumed under the broad designation of translation, come into particular relief in sites where language systems are in constant conflict, contact and confluence. As one such site, Montréal offers us numerous revealing examples to which I will turn in both Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Theatre in Montréal has continually interrogated the (im)possibilities of translation. As a converging point between textuality and orality, where live audiences are convened, theatre arguably has greater access to the multilingualism of the city than other forms of cultural expression. However, this fact of a "live" audience's co-presence does not signal ephemerality or disappearance, in Peggy Phelan's sense. Quite the contrary, the iterability of theatre in and as translation is hooked up to the repetitiveness of switching between languages in the city's everyday. The possibility of translation is the promise of repetition. While on a vastly smaller scale than a full discourse network—such as the one of reading and writing in 1800 where "writing about learning to read and write constituted a large feedback loop"[385]—I would like to suggest that theatre in Montréal operates today as a miniature feedback loop, externalising and commenting on everyday multilingual speech acts within today's pervasive discourses of globalisation. This externalisation is similar to the "vocal writing" that Svenbro proposes, but might also be understood as "vocalised translation." In this sense, we can conceive of translation as textuality, in Derridean terms, where speaking (between) many languages is one among many forms of

[385] Kittler, 1985[1990]: 53.

text. This function occurs not only in overt acts of translation, but also in "hybridised" forms of theatrical language that pepper Montréal's theatrical landscape.

François Girard's dual productions of *Novecento* provide an intriguing starting point for case study analysis.[386] The play tells the story of a musical prodigy, Novecento, a jazz pianist who was born and lived his entire life on an ocean liner crisscrossing the Atlantic. A monologue written by Alessandro Baricco (1994), *Novecento* was the first stage adaptation undertaken by Girard, a filmmaker by trade. First produced in French at Montréal's *Théâtre de Quat'sous* in 2001, this production was subsequently invited to participate in English at the Edinburgh International Festival. Girard's original French production, with Pierre Lebeau in the lead role, was thus remounted in English starring Tom McCamus. These versions were resuscitated in 2003, in alternate weeks, at Montréal's *Usine C*.

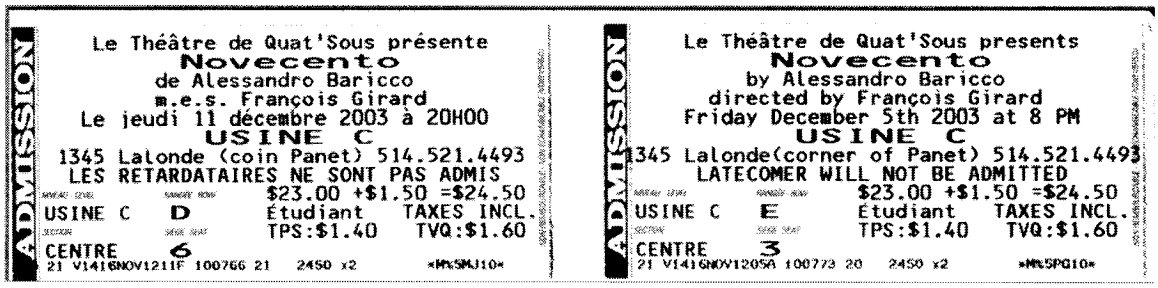

Figure 1. The Dual Productions of *Novecento* in 2003. Collection of the author.

Novecento strikingly circumscribes our discussion on translation as a balance of equivalence and transposition. The dual productions were each translated from the Italian. The published French translation by Françoise Brun was adapted to include Québécois

[386] I would like to acknowledge the aid of François Girard and his office, and especially Michael Golding and Tom McCamus whose friendly discussions proved to be fruitful for my analysis.

particularisms. The English translation was a commissioned version by Michael Golding, a California-based actor and translator.

As a convenient, if inadvertent, allegory for our discussion *Novecento* is, of course, Italian for 1900. Novecento, whose story is told by Tim Tooney, a fellow crewman and musician, is so named for the year of his birth: of 1900. However, these productions offer us a glimpse of theatrical possibilities in the current situation; they are a composite of the filmic and sound technologies outlined in Kittler's discourse network of 1900, along with the persistent interference or hybridisation of linguistic differences. What is equivalent about these versions is clearly everything except texts and actors. Venue, décor, lighting, costuming, sound design, and stage directions—all these aspects of the productions were identical: in the case of venue, set design, and costumes, the same materials; in the case of lighting and sound, the same digitised scores. Do the French and English versions differ in any tangible sense? Do these dual versions simply offer interpretational-critical access to Baricco's original manuscript? As the French staging preceded the English staging, the question of translation as iterability is vital. *Novecento* is an *Überlagerung*, in Tholen's sense, of technical forms and staging techniques, but also an overlaying of language: English superimposed on French; both superimposed on Italian. It is in this moment that I see the theatre begin to take shape as a multilingual processor, not unlike de Kerckhove's characterisation of theatre as a "container for programmed experience." Actor McCamus was "plugged into" the lead role that had already been staged in French. The English text in hand, and with only shaky French, McCamus attended the French rehearsals, following the text in concert with the lighting and sound arrangements. Once in costume, McCamus initially spoke the text on set before working out a detailed performance. Thus the Lebeau/McCamus transposition

clearly highlights a *décalage*, as Antoine Vitez would say. But this transposition is also presented, in the material traces of the performance runs, as constituting a single production. *Usine C*'s 2003/2004 calendar of events listed the spectacle as a single item:

> *Novecento* est de retour à Montréal, dans
> les deux langues. [...]
> 3 au 7 décembre
> (avec Tom McCamus en version anglaise)
> 9 au 13 décembre
> (avec Pierre Lebeau en version française)[387]

Above all, *Novecento*'s translations seem to demonstrate this play's "technical reproducibility." With pre-recorded lighting schemes and sound design, and a minimalist set design and costuming, *Novecento* could in theory be transposed into any language, plugging new monologists into the already strictly worked out staging. For even if, as McCamus noted, his uncertain French would not allow him to "imitate Pierre Lebeau," the cineaste Girard's "directions were very specific."[388]

Baricco, an essayist, musicologist, television host, as well as writer, likely understood his composition to be more about music than language. The text, according to Richard Ouzanian, was "less of a script than a score—divided into distinct movements and written with a musical sensitivity to language."[389] Nevertheless, Girard ignored the original monologue's call for interludes of recorded music. Instead, Nancy Tobin's soundscape consists of background noises, the incessant hum of ship engines and dripping water, which occasionally transforms into an echoing single piano note. Recalling Kittler's analysis of Wagner, where orchestral sound engulfed the human voice, the pre-recorded score of *Novecento* occasionally overtakes the voice of

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[387] *Usine C : Programmation 03-04*, (Montréal: Usine C, Centre de creation et de diffusion pluridisciplinaire, 2003-2004): 3.
[388] Hervé Guay, "Le Même role pour Pierre et Tom," *Le Devoir* Magazine, 29 November to 5 December 2003: 3.
[389] Richard Ouzanian, "Novecento a unique and compelling work of art." *Toronto Star*, Ontario Edition, 15 April 2002, C03.

Lebeau/McCamus. If *breathing* provided a moment of hybridisation in Wagner, bonding musical and linguistic modes, the English and French versions of *Novecento* merge into a single performance in these moments of voicelessness. The actors in Novecento can be translated because the essential character of Novecento is only a *voice* with no *language*—having grown up in a transatlantic liner without a nation, after all, Novecento is a character without "national" identity or language. Thus, at the end, when the narrator finds Novecento prepared to go down with the ship now slated for destruction, he recalls Novecento as nothing but a disembodied voice. And only in the ensuing silence is this voice grafted back onto the actor/narrator:

> In that ship, engulfed in darkness, my last memory of him is a voice, solitary, gentle, speaking/
> /
> /
> /
> /
> /
> *(The actor transforms himself into Novecento)*
> /
> /
> /
> /[390]

These silent placeholders in the text of *Novecento* indicate the technical standard that allow any language to be replaced by any language, as long as there is a voice and an actor to "translate" it to the stage.

3.2.2 Dialogism and Keeping in Touch

Whereas a paradigm of linguistic interchangeability is presented in *Novecento*, the confusion and conflict of languages weigh into Larry Tremblay's 1995 play *The*

[390] Alessandro Baricco, *Novecento: a monologue*, Translation by Michael Golding (2001). Unpublished.

Dragonfly of Chicoutimi.[391] In contrast to other creations which combine languages, *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi* layers English words over French syntax: the play portrays a francophone man who has lost the ability to express himself in his mother tongue, but relates his melancholy life story in a proficient, but hesitant, French-inflected English. In *Dragonfly*, Gaston Talbot, a francophone man in his fifties, born in the northern Québec town of Chicoutimi, recounts how a dream reawakens his ability to speak after a traumatic childhood experience plunged him into silence for some forty years. However, when he finally regains his speech, he is speaking in English. Having decided to share his story, Gaston, whose motto is "to keep in touch," cannot prevent himself from pretending and lying: he claims in the opening line of his story that he "travels a lot," that he is a worldly, successful man, only to revoke this affirmation shortly thereafter and admit that he has never left Chicoutimi in his life. Gaston seems to hide his identity behind the mask of a foreign language, only gradually revealing the circumstances that have led to this predicament. Alone on stage, Gaston recounts the dream that led him to recover his speech facility, a dream during which he ultimately transforms into a dragonfly and devours his mother, unveiling the event of his youth that provoked his mutism: the death—of which he is either the cause or merely the witness—of his friend Pierre Gagnon-Connally while the two boys played Cowboys and Indians on the bank of the *rivière aux Roches*.

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[391] Larry Tremblay, *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi*, (Montréal: Éditions Les Herbes rouges, 1995/2005). Part of the following considerations stem from my collaborative work with Jean-François Morissette: "La Polyphonie mise en scène à Montréal et à Toronto," in Larry Tremblay, *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi*, (Montréal: Éditions Les Herbes rouges: 2005): 160-202; first drafted in English as "*The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi*: Staging Polyphony in Montréal and Toronto," *City Ciphers: Montréal, Toronto and the Problem of Comparison*, Johanne Sloan, ed., (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press): forthcoming. I am indebted to Jean-François Morissette and Johanne Sloan for our many discussions on these themes. I am equally indebted to Larry Tremblay for his support and assistance, and for the generous loan of his manuscripts.

Like *Novecento*, *Dragonfly*'s monologue form resembles a narrative poem. Yet this monologue nevertheless sustains a dialogic structure between French and English, and thus brings us to the question of the linguistic materiality that makes this play possible. I have argued elsewhere, with Jean-François Morissette, that *Dragonfly* represents a particular state of interaction between French and English that is unique to the urban character of Montréal.[392] Some of this discussion will be pertinent to my considerations of circulation in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2). Here, I would like to pursue *Dragonfly*'s seeming occupation of a space *between* languages. Paul Lefebvre's *Afterword* describes the play's linguistic form:

> This play was written in English. Actually, it was written in French, but using English words. Must one have the name Larry Tremblay, a name that contains the two languages, in order to create such a text, as if *Larry* has found words for *Tremblay's* silence? Does he have to have been born in the Saguenay region of Québec? That might have speeded up the birth of such a text. But it seems that sooner or later, an equivalent text would have been written in an equivalent place, Athens maybe, or Düsseldorf, or who knows where else. And of course, to translate the text into Greek or German, one wouldn't have to put it into Greek or German words. One would have to put the English words over the Greek or German language; the same would be true for the Lettish, the Bengali, or the Dutch language...[393]

Certainly, *Dragonfly* cannot be translated in any traditional sense, as Lefebvre notes. Lefebvre operates here with concepts of translation as equivalency and transposition that we have already reviewed. To rewrite a work calls to mind the import of *recitability* that we have seen with Benjamin and Brecht. To rewrite a work in another language is itself an act of Brechtian *gestus* (Brecht is supposed to have insisted that his protégés translate Shakespeare into German). Rewriting as translation is an attempt to traverse cultural distance to another place, another community in space and time. Lefebvre's description is in accordance with the disjunction of equivalence and transposition, that is, with the

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[392] See Ibid.

[393] Paul Lefebvre, "To Keep in Touch," in Larry Tremblay, *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi*, (Montréal: Éditions Les Herbes Rouges, 1995): 65.

impossibility of translating the totality of meaning that any one text may signal or suggest. Yet his extrapolation that a translation of this play would consist solely in putting the English words over another language is flawed. Such a translation is naturally conceivable, but its success would still be based on the equivalency of context, on the equivalent weight and use of the English language with respect to the dominant tongue of this other place—an idea also raised by Lefebvre's suggestion that "sooner or later an equivalent text would have been written in an equivalent place"—another context in which English threatens to dominate the local idiom. Lefebvre's understanding of the play and his consideration of its translation are based on power relations between the national languages in question. Ultimately, he fails to consider the obvious iteration of this text in an English-speaking environment. How would one overlay this French play of English words onto an English syntax and sustain any remnants of meaning?

In an analysis of *Dragonfly*'s linguistic characteristics, Robert Dion refers to the play as an "extreme case of *hétérolinguisme*":

> Il ne s'agit donc pas, ici, de s'attacher à telle œuvre « bilingue » ou « multilingue », mais à un exemple qui, dans les limites imposées par le *marché* québécois (différent, par exemple, du marché acadien, où les possibilités d'hybridation linguistique sont plus riches à cause du bilinguisme réel des auteurs et de la population), suggère la cohabitation des langues par divers moyens, la représentation ainsi créée produisant ce que Rainier Grutman appelle un *hétérolinguisme* [...], c'est-à-dire l'inscription de différences au sein de la représentation des idiomes écrits ou parlés, que ce soit à l'intérieur d'une narration ou d'une séquence dialoguée.[394]

Following this vein of thought, *Dragonfly*'s dialogic form is exemplary of Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, which encompasses not only the processes by which large or even national language systems converge, but also the natural shifting between discursive strata within local contexts of language use. The dialogic nature of its aesthetic form

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[394] Robert Dion, "*The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi* : Un cas extrême d'hétérolinguisme?" *Le Québec et l'ailleurs : Aperçus culturels et littéraires*, Robert Dion, dir., Études Francophones de Bayreuth / Bayreuther Frankophonie Studien, Band 5, János Riesz and Véronique Porra, eds., (Bremen: Palabres Editions, 2002): 126.

renders this play a continual passage between French and English—translative action that occurs on one level in Québec's social and national discourses, but perhaps more importantly in the Montréal streets where these languages converge in the everyday. The interlingual materiality of *Dragonfly* stems not from any portrayal of Chicoutimi, but rather from the multilingual sphere of Montréal. From this standpoint, if we are to follow Lefebvre's discussion of "equivalent places," Athens and Düsseldorf must give way to cities such as Brussels or Hong Kong. Bakhtin's notion of speech genres is illuminating in this regard.[395] For Bakhtin, discourses of the "primary genre" constitute the seed that nourishes discourses of the "secondary genre." Complex discourses, such as, for example, the discourse of dramatic poetics, draw utterances from discourses of everyday life and absorb them; these transform the utterances of the primary genre, which, in the frame of another text, express and signify something different. In this sense, a dramatic work seeks to move the public, to grasp the spectators in such a way that their daily preoccupations are suspended, leading them to see an experienced reality in another form.

In a performance of *Dragonfly*, the spectator is subject to a discourse uttered by the protagonist in a language other than his mother tongue: the text addresses no single language group. In Montréal, this particular encounter between French and English refers to a recognisable daily event, for many perhaps even a banal occurrence. This encounter may not necessarily be experienced as a communal social tension, but rather played out on an individual plane for francophones as much for anglophones and speakers of other languages. The surprise experienced when one thinks occasionally in the language of others is a strange effect, an estrangement effect towards oneself. In short, the Montréal audience witnesses a familiar, lived reality, but presented in a different, radical form.

[395] Bakhtin, 1986: 60-102.

Gaston's narrative revolves around duality and frontier, and functions in response to a fear of singularity and confinement. His desire and ultimate failure to escape thus contradict his very first claim to "travel a lot." By constantly shifting and deferring the "truth" in his tale, Gaston embarks on a quest for the transcendental signified: for his mother/tongue, for an originary language that would explain his hybrid predicament. In this sense, Gaston attempts to break loose from the bounds of his language, first, by obliterating the oppression of English embodied in Pierre; second, by symbolically devouring his mother (tongue) and flying away. But as he is drawn back to crash into the *rivières aux Roches*, we are led to wonder whether he can ever escape these binds. It is a reflection of the spatial and identitary confines that language imposes on a speaker: as a monolingual francophone, Gaston seems tethered to his location in regional Québec where his desire to express himself freely—to communicate essentially, that is, to "keep in touch"—can never be fulfilled. Instead, his actions lead him first to aphasia, and second to a "corrupted" form of language imposed upon him, a personal idiom in which his English vocabulary works clumsily over the underlying French grammatical structure.

But is this grammatical structure the "signified" which he seeks? For rather than settling with this underlying structure, Gaston is obsessed with the movement of signifiers. To "travel a lot" and to "keep in touch" can thus be construed as a manifest desire for the facility, and no longer the fear, of shifting fluently between languages:

> I told you that I travel a lot
> I told you that just to make me more interesting
> that's not true
> it's common sense that people who travel
> are more interesting than people
> who stay all their life in the same little spot (18)

Once again, Montréal emerges as the focus of *Dragonfly*'s contemplation: a site where "travelling" between languages is a commonplace event. Exchanging languages and

changing spaces are inherently related through the mutual aspect of motion. Trapped irrevocably within this movement, Gaston wants above all to avoid exclusion, "to be in not to be out" (12):

> It's a question of fitting
> I just want to fit with the scenery
> the world is a bunch of problems
> everyone knows that
> if we share the same vision
> we can handle the world
> if we feel the same thing all together
> we create a magic moment (12)

He recognizes that speaking one language or another is an ordinary, everyday event, and yet he remains threatened by the shift:

> however what I want to express
> is that the mere fact to dream in English
> which after all is something more or less ordinary
> even if as for me at that moment of my life
> I was a French speaking person
> was felt as a dramatic change (19)

Experiencing language in terms of fitting "with the scenery" and as a "dramatic change" relate the overt theatricality of speaking in the different districts of Montréal.

Dragonfly is by no means the first theatrical creation to stem from Montréal's precondition of linguistic interaction. Sherry Simon has written about forms of cultural translation in Montréal and related practices in literature:

> To live with the contamination of languages is to feel at home in those sometimes painful areas where translation and writing overlap. In the shadowing of one language by another, in the ghostly presence of one behind the other, there is a widening of the frame of reference. No one vocabulary will suffice, no one channel can access the multiple planes of expression. Just as visual and plastic arts today abandon the single frame, the written word expands its reach.[396]

Simon considers texts that have been engendered by the traffic of language in urban sites as "translation without an original." This term "stands for a range of writing practices that fall somewhere between writing and translation, practices that use the gap between

[396] Sherry Simon, "Hybrid Montreal: The Shadows of Language," *Sites*, Volume 5, Number 2 (2001): 321.

languages as a space of creativity. Rather than acting exclusively as mediators, writers/translators create hybrid literary texts that are informed by a double culture. Their texts become a crossroads of sensibilities."[397] The expression of this conflict is only available to readers/spectators in the form of Gaston's dream, which he struggles to recount even as he constantly uses the mask of language to lie and to interrupt the linearity of his tale. The expressive form of the play can thus be reduced neither to a version of cultural fusion, nor merely to the incongruous sediments of two cultural realities. *Dragonfly* articulates the (im)possible call to translate by externalising the transposition of linguistic forms as "vocalised translation." The play draws "on the gap between languages as the space of creativity" (Simon) or, as Vitez says, the "décalage" that "signale l'effet."

But what does a play like *Dragonfly* signal for the relation of dialogism to aspects of theatrical materialities that we have seen in Chapter 2? Gaston's drive to keep in touch is an impulse to "make sense" of more than the syntactic hybrid he speaks. At the same time, words in Gaston's mouth appear as objects of interlingual manipulation, as if he is carrying this *confusio linguarum* around with him. (In an early manuscript, Tremblay had the as yet unnamed character "walking around with a French-English dictionary.") Unlike in the discourse network of 1800, the language that Gaston can speak is no channel for soulful recollections or divulgences. He comes to this recognition at the end of the play:

> And years and years later
> the dream came
> that funny dream I described to you
> I told you
> that I had this dream in English
> and to quote myself
> I felt that as a dramatic change
> as an alert signal

[397] Ibid.

something like an angel
coming down to the earth of my consciousness
to show me the way
bullshit
total and pure bullshit
why am I a liar like this
why am I so ridiculous
so pitiful
do I deserve
this ugly face you see
this awful voice you hear
do I (52-53)

Only now are all the images of his nightmare revealed as material word-objects, swimming around in his mouth as discrete elements:

The night I had
that dream in English
my mouth was a hole of shit
I mean
full of words like
chocolate cake beloved son
son of a bitch popsicle sticks
your lips taste wild cherries
a dragonfly fixed on a wall by a pin
when the sunlight reached
my dirty sheets my eyes filled with sweat
my mouth was still spitting
all those fucking words
like rotten seeds
everywhere in the room
I was not
as they said
aphasic
anymore
I was speaking in English. (53)

Here, Gaston is revealed as the historical condition produced by a system of linguistic confluence; he is the product of the discourse of translational possibilities, at once its speaker and its victim. He is at once an example of and a thorn in the logic of universality or equivalency. The closing lines of *Dragonfly* recall the discourse network of 1900, when "signifiers co-exist spatially as denumerable elements."[398] But at the same time, the overlaying of language, which comes to a focal point in Gaston's dream, confounds this

[398] Kittler, 1985[1990]: 266.

distribution of signifiers. For what can *translation* be if words and syntax of differing language systems are condensed into the same linguistic segments? In "Freud and the Scene of Writing," Derrida comments on this materiality of language and the possibility of translation:

> If we consider first verbal expression, as it is circumscribed in the dream, we observe that its sonority, the materiality of the expression, does not disappear before the signified, or at least cannot be traversed and transgressed as it is in conscious speech. It acts as such, with the efficacy Artaud assigned it on the stage of cruelty. The materiality of a word cannot be translated or carried over into another language. Materiality is precisely that which translation relinquishes. To relinquish materiality: such is the driving force of translation. And when that materiality is reinstated, translation becomes poetry.[399]

If "materiality is that which translation relinquishes," then in the midst of translative action "meaning" is detached from the "sonority" of word, language detached from voice. *Dragonfly* does not yet take place "once that materiality is reinstated." It is, rather, caught in the act of translation. Derrida continues:

> In this sense, since the materiality of the signifier constitutes the idiom of every dream scene, dreams are untranslatable: "Indeed, dreams are so closely related to linguistic expression that Ferenczi has truly remarked that every tongue has its own dream-language. It is impossible as a rule to translate a dream into a foreign language, and this is especially true, I fancy, of a book such as the present one" (IV, 99, n. 1). What is valid for a specific national language is a fortiori valid for a private grammar.[400]

As we have already seen Kittler remark in regard to the same Freudian quotation, "*The Interpretation of Dreams* conducts the analysis of signs solely according to the place values of discrete elements." These form

> separate subsystems of signifiers, in which parts of the rebus must be tentatively placed until they fit in a subsystem. *Rebus* is the instrumental case of *res*: things can be used like words and words like things. Interpretation has everything to learn from "the linguistic tricks of children, who sometimes actually treat words as though they were objects, and moreover invent new languages and artificial syntactic forms."[401]

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[399] Derrida, "Freud and the Scene of Writing," *Writing and Difference*, Translation by Alan Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976): 210.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Kittler, 1985[1990]: 274.

In "interpreting" his dream, Gaston, "a child / with an adult body" (19), wields such an "invented language" that enacts such an "artificial syntactic form." In the final equation, Gaston is left only with "words" seemingly separated from the "awful voice you hear."

Gaston's drive to "keep in touch," expressed in the opening lines and throughout the play, is paradigmatic for the multimedial character of theatre. "Keeping in touch" not only suggests bridging languages to each other, but also calls to mind the theatre's capacity to converge media, to "play on our senses":

> What a nice expression
> TO KEEP IN TOUCH
> I like it I love it
> I appreciate it so much
> really what I'm looking for in life
> is to keep in touch (11)

For McLuhan, the motto "to keep in touch" describes the convergence of senses and languages in a universal medium. It further relates our desire to reach out and touch the objects of the world, exposing, according to Gumbrecht, the material surfaces of the world as the target of interpretational penetration. So for McLuhan:

> Our very word "grasp" or "apprehension" points to the process of getting at one thing through another, of handling and sensing many facets at a time through more than one sense at a time. It begins to be evident that "touch" is not skin but the interplay of the senses, and "keeping in touch" or "getting in touch" is a matter of a fruitful meeting of the senses, of sight translated into sound and sound into movement, and taste into smell.[402]

And so, we are returned to Norbert Bolz's assessment of the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* as multimedial convergence: "continual translation work between senses and media—the optical should be intensified as hearing, the tone an opening to a new visuality."[403]

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[402] McLuhan, 1964: 67.
[403] Bolz, 1990: 33.

3.2.3 *La Voix humaine*: Technology and the Extensions of Voice

Despite J. L. Austin's claim that a performative speech act must be distinguished from the "parasitical" use of language on the stage,[404] the *materialities of voice and speech* have continuously resurfaced in the relation of theatre history to media history. The thesis that Greek theatre originated as an extension of the alphabet manifestly situates human speech as materiality—its inscription and its enactment—at the onset of Western theatre. The history of technology in theatre generally points to innovations in lighting and optic media. But sound and sound technologies have also clearly had a significant influence on theatre and performance: from the masks of Ancient Greek actors that distorted and amplified the human voice to the mechanically produced sound effects of the 18th and 19th centuries, such as thunder-sheets and thunder-runs, rain boxes and wind machines. Even the most radical 20th-century treatises on theatre—from Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty to Wilson's Theatre of Images—are predicated on the need to *remove* language from the theatrical environment. Artaud's paradox, which Derrida elicits, is his necessity of *writing down* the need to dispense with language. While the presence of the human voice may have been displaced by or even subsumed within early experiments in sound amplification and reproduction during live performance, radio theatre served to entrench its disembodiment as a core theatrical materiality. From Brecht's onstage radio experiments in his early *Lehrstücke*, to Cocteau's telephone in *La Voix humaine*, to

[404] "A performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance—a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not seriously, but in many ways parasitic upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the etiolations of language. All this we are excluding from consideration. Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstances." J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1976): 21-22.

Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, technologies of transmitting and recording the voice have been featured in theatrical scenarios as much as they have extended the realm of the material voice for the production of space and the production of presence.

Thus, the idea of theatre as an intermedial art form initially placed the emphasis on visual, but largely nonverbal technologies. After Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, numerous concepts for a "total theatre" in early 20th century movements as different as Futurism, Bauhaus and Dadaism emphasised reducing the importance of the spoken word, or even removing the human voice altogether, from the performance experience. Enrico Prampolini's 1920s Futurist agenda called for a "polydimensional scenospace," a stage composed of vertical, oblique and multidimensional elements set in motion electromechanically.[405] Prampolini's conception shares resonances with Walter Gropius's vision of a Synthetic Total Theatre, an unrealised project designed for Erwin Piscator in 1926 to coordinate complex arrangements of projections and light sequences. Other Bauhaus figures such as Oskar Schlemmer and László Moholy-Nagy also experimented in light and projected images. In these endeavours, "there was a consistent desire to rid the theatre of domination by dramatic literature and to consider the actor as just one among many of the potential ingredients within the overall plasticity of the theatrical event."[406] As technologies of projection and amplification took the stage, speech, voice—and, by default, language—seemed to recede to the background. This is the scene of Samuel Beckett's short play *Not I* (1972). The text of *Not I* is carried in short spurts by an anonymous voice:

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[405] Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*, trans. Gloria Custance, (Cambridge, MA and London, England: MIT Press, 2003): 144-145.
[406] Baugh, 2005: 123.

> ...when suddenly...gradually...she realiz—...what?...the buzzing?...yes...all dead still but for the buzzing...when suddenly she realized...words were—...what?...who?...no!...she!...[*pause and movement 2*]...realized...words were coming...imagine!...words were coming...a voice she did not recognize...at first...so long since it had sounded...then finally had to admit...could be none other...than her own...certain vowel sounds...she had never heard...
> [...]
> ...not catching the half of it...not the quarter...no idea...what she was saying!...till she began trying to...delude herself...it was not hers at all...not her voice at all...and no doubt would have...vital she should...was on the point...after long efforts...when suddenly she felt...gradually she felt...her lips moving...imagine!...her lips moving!...as of course till then she had not...and not alone the lips...the cheeks...the jaws...the whole face...all those—...what?...the tongue?...yes...the tongue in the mouth...all those contortions without which...no speech possible...[407]

In fact, this voice occupies a figure that is nothing but a Mouth. Beckett's stage directions are succinct:

> *Stage in darkness but for Mouth, upstage audience right, about 8 feet above stage level, faintly lit from close-up and below, rest of face in shadow. Invisible Microphone.*
> *Auditor, downstage left, tall standing figure, sex undeterminable, enveloped from head to foot in loose black djellaba, with hood, fully faintly lit, standing on invisible podium about 4 feet high shown by attitude alone to be facing diagonally across stage intent on Mouth, dead still throughout but for four brief movements where indicated. [...] As house lights down Mouth's voice unintelligible behind curtain. House lights out. Voice continues unintelligible behind curtain, 10 seconds. With rise of curtain ad-libbing from text as required leading when curtain fully up and attention sufficient into:*
>
> MOUTH [...][408]

When the curtain is finally dropped, the Mouth's mutterings continue unintelligibly in the background for 10 more seconds and only cease when the house lights are raised. This sequence is "a treatment of stage and actor as a communications system in the message-technical sense of Claude E. Shannon, that is, as an interstitial space battling against forgetting, noise or entropy."[409] In Beckett's scenario, the relation of language to voice as the organising principle of theatre has come to an end: it is merely the theatre's software, composed of interchangeable, denumerable elements. The podium, as such, has simply become a processor for the "fading in and out of a foreign, disembodied voice that

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[407] Samuel Beckett, "Not I," *The Grove Centenary Edition: Volume III, Dramatic Works*, Paul Auster, ed., (New York: Grove Press, 2006): 408-409.
[408] Ibid., 405.
[409] Hans Christian von Hermann, "Stimmbildung. Zum Verhältnis von Theater- und Mediengeschichte," *MLN*, Volume 120 (2005): 622; my translation.

emerges from a permanent sough or background hissing."[410] Moreover, the muttering Mouth is shocked by the discovery of its own nearly ridiculous anatomical hardware: lips, cheeks, jaws, tongue. In this way, we are faced with the "end of theatrical history" that is announced by Kittler's analysis of Wagner. The recombination of optics and acoustics that drowns out the human voice seems to stand diametrically opposite the emergence of Western theatre in Ancient Greece. The origin of Attic theatre as an enactment of the phonetic alphabet was, quite in contrast, the articulation of rational, soulful speech—Aristotle's distinction between life and the lifeless in his treatise *On the Soul*. This is the distinction between meaningful sounds and meaningless noise.

Throughout the 20th century, analogue and digital sound reproduction has clearly also influenced theatre and performance. But as Christopher Baugh notes, although new "technologies of stage lighting had made a steady progress from the beginning of the century, those technologies associated with sound and sound reproduction did not have significant effects within theatre and performance until after the Second World War."[411] One reason for this discrepancy is related to the questions of liveness and reproducibility already raised in Chapter 2. While lighting and other visual technologies were perceived as "real" and thus part of the experience of the "live," early technologies of electronic, analogue sound reproduction (in distinction to mechanically generated sound effects that generally lay outside the spectator's view) only produced *imitations*. To a public's ear not yet accustomed to new techniques of listening, these new sound technologies seemed distinctly artificial. However, with the recent work of Marie Brassard, advances in digital speech and voice manipulation may today be reinstating the centrality of "live" voice in

[410] Ibid.; my translation.
[411] Baugh, 2005: 203.

contemporary stage theatre, extending once again the possibilities of voice and/as technology in theatre.

With the advent of digital storage and transmission systems, the problems of distortion and noise that had been encountered with the conversion processes of analogue sound were diminished. Digital sound opened up new avenues to the theatrical experience. In three solo performances created through her Infrarouge Théâtre—*Jimmy, créature de rêve* (2001), *La Noirceur* (2003) and *Peepshow* (2005)—Brassard has innovated with digital sound and altered voice technologies "as a natural extension of the human body"[412] to explore the fractious subjectivities of urban life. Through speech manipulation, the human body is revealed as a site of inscription, coupling vocality with variable identities, weaving between genders and age groups. Unlike *Novecento*, where the character was split across two actors' bodies and the languages associated with them, and unlike *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi* where linguistic variability was condensed into a single figure, the single body in Marie Brassard's work is the site of multiple voices, multiple identities.

In *Jimmy, créature de rêve*, Brassard experimented with Yamaha SPX processor technology stemming from the 1980s. These early processors, which used relatively low digital sampling rates, were generally intended for musical compositions. When applied to the human voice, the sound reproduced by the Yamaha SPX produces an especially "artificial" sound quality. For the productions of *La Noirceur* and *Peepshow*, Brassard collaborated with sound artist Alexander MacSween, experimenting with more sophisticated equipment such as the Eventide Eclipse event processor for sound

[412] From *Peepshow*'s description on the website of Toronto's Harbourfront World Stage Festival (2005): http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/worldstage/media/pshow.php [accessed 24 April 2006].

modulation and transformation and the TC Helicon Voice One, especially intended for "reshaping" human voices. For Brassard, in accordance with McLuhan, working with sound technology live "makes you feel like your bodily capabilities are being enhanced. It's as if you're becoming a kind of cyborg character because you have your human, fleshy capabilities, but suddenly, you also have this machine that adds capacities to your body."[413]

Figure 2. Marie Brassard in *Jimmy, créature de rêve.* © Marie Brassard and Simon Guilbault.

We can note a progression in Brassard's work from *Jimmy* through *Peepshow*. In *Jimmy*, relying on early Yamaha technology, Brassard mutated into only a handful of characters. In *La Noirceur* and to an even greater degree in *Peepshow*, Brassard rotates through a whole cast of characters. These transformations are extensions of identities through "disembodied" voices: "By using sound machines, I can have the body of a small woman and play a big man, or an older lady, or a little kid. And I think it's very troubling when an audience sees that—when the voices don't relate to the body."[414] In *Peepshow*,

[413] Interview with Paul Halferty, (Saturday, 17 December 2005): 3.
[414] Ibid., 3-4.

Brassard and MacSween made "greater use of the human voice used as a sound." In addition, portions of the background musical score "have been created with voice as a raw material [...] being transformed live, in real time."[415]

The manipulative process of Brassard's voice is itself *translation* in the sense of *transposition*, from one medial state to another. It is interesting to compare this process with the work of multimedia artist and theoretician David Tomas. Tomas's photodigital art entails a constant interplay between mechanical-chemical photography, digital scanning and re-scanning, and manual graphic drawing. It is in every sense the multiple, hybrid process of overlaying that Tholen has put forward. Brassard's performance work could similarly be described as an overlaying of live voice and what we could call "phonodigital" technology. In Tomas's creations, "the digital manipulation" of images "does not add elements or modify forms" but rather "is an activity of highlighting that renders visible, in the final form, that which risks being lost in the transfer."[416] Similarly, Brassard's simulated voices create a feedback loop with her "real" voice. The transmission-modulation of her voice through digital technology is highlighted in unexpected, intermittent moments when we, as spectator-hearers, catch a "glimpse" of her natural voice protruding through the amplified digital manipulation. Like Glenn Gould's notorious humming that *intervenes* in the background of his piano recordings, we cannot necessarily discern what precisely emanates from Brassard's vocal apparatus. We know what words were uttered only *by association* with the digital recreation, which we perceive in these moments as occurring in the briefest time delay from the "original." In

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[415] Marie Brassard, "Entrevue pour le magazine du CECN: Centre des Écritures Contemporaines et Numériques," English version, (Mons, Belgium: CECN, 2005): 3.

[416] Michèle Thériault, "Transduction of Knowledge, Psychasthenia of Media," *Duction*, Michèle Thériault and David Tomas with the collaboration of Lucie Chevalier, Brian Holmes, and Emmelyne Pornillos, (Montréal: Éditions Carapace, 2001): 69.

this way, voice alteration in the theatre conjures up the etymology of *audience* from the Latine *audire*, "to hear." As in de Kerckhove's analysis of Greek theatre, this audience undergoes training in the sense of "sustained visual-aiming," but this *visual-aiming* takes place in strict accordance with *sustained acoustic perception*. With the projection technology of the *laterna magica*, the theatre stage was transformed into a type of peepshow itself. In Marie Brassard's *Peepshow*, the stage is transformed into a sonorous environment reinforced by stunning visual projections, textured lighting sequences and set design. In Brassard, optics and acoustics are reorganised in a live performance that is *par excellence* audiovisual.

The microphone, left a distinctly visible element of Brassard's costume, is the central object of this audiovisual overlaying. It is, as Philip Auslander might argue, a visible "incursion of the mediatized into the live."[417] Yet Brassard and MacSween reject the use of pre-recorded sound sequences; the digital manipulation takes place in real time, as the performance unfolds. As she notes, they rely on omni-directional microphones which can lead to accidents, such as feedback noise, on stage. The accidental, in this regard, recalls Michèle Thériault's suggestion that Tomas's *translational activity* between medial forms always entails an element of *error*. In any medial transposition, even in analogue to digital conversion, there is distortion, noise, or loss. Tomas makes this loss into an aspect of his reflection. "Since each drawing is produced in terms of a photographic condition of existence, the draughtsman is always conscious of a potential loss of information that must be compensated for through displacement and augmentation."[418]

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[417] Auslander, 1999: 158.
[418] Thériault and Tomas, 2001: 16.

In *Jimmy*, we spectator-hearers are startled into recognising our position in this sonic circuit. As a *Verfremdungseffekt* along Brechtian lines, Brassard's microphone all of a sudden cuts out:

> *As Jimmy talks, he gets abruptly interrupted. It seems like the microphone went off. Very discreetly, the actress checks the connections; waits a little, tries again.*
>
> *It does not work. She waits a little. The tension grows. It starts to feel like those embarrassing moments in some dreams where you find yourself on stage, not knowing the part, as people watch you, waiting for the play to begin. The actress finally stands up and apologizes to the audience.*
>
> I'm really sorry... I am afraid we are having a technical problem...
>
> *Standing awkwardly outside the beam of light, the actress waits and after a moment she addresses the technician.*
>
> Richard... *(or whoever...)*, what's going on? Do you think we can fix this?
>
> *The technician improvises an answer...*
>
> I can't find the problem. I get the signal here but...Wait a minute.
>
> *The actress waits again. Without any protection, she seems to be such a fragile figure: Very embarrassing moment for everyone. The tension rises as the inner self of the actress collapses.*
>
> I'm really sorry... In a normal show, I would improvise something and just go on, but here...
>
> Without this voice I cannot do anything...
>
> **Jimmy**
>
> *(As all comes back to normal)*
>
> "Without this voice I cannot do anything..."
>
> That's what she said!!![419]

The microphonic dropout marks an *interruption* in the circuit, breaking the audience's sustained acoustic action and recalling Benjamin's sense of *gestus* as interruptive and citational. We are starkly reminded, in line with Paul Zumthor's thesis on the interrelation of voice, body and performance, that the raw materiality of voice is coupled with the gestic action made possible by Brassard's vocal prosthesis. What we spectator-hearers have known all along, that the microphone is filtering her voice, is suddenly driven home by its very loss.

Brassard's sound theatre once again raises the questions of *authenticity* and *artificiality*, which, in our discussion of translation, have direct import for the notions of

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[419] Marie Brassard, *Jimmy, créature de rêve*, Script, English version, (Montréal: Infrarouge Théâtre, 2001): 20-21.

equivalence or fidelity and transposition. Jonathan Sterne, in his work on the cultural origins of sound reproduction, echoes Philip Auslander's overall standpoint: "The possibility of sound reproduction reorients the practices of sound production; insofar as it is a possibility at all, reproduction precedes originality. Nowhere is this more clear than in our anachronistic use of the word *live* to describe performances that are not reproduced."[420] Sterne unravels the social genesis of sound fidelity to show that "the idea of 'better' sound reproduction was itself a changing standard over time."[421] Thus, he disturbs conventional understandings of "mediation" to show, for example using an early depiction of how radio technology works, that "the medium does not mediate the relation between singer and listener, original and copy. It *is* the nature of their connection. Without the medium, there would be no connection, no copy, but also no original, or at least no original in the same form. The performance is for the medium itself. The singer sings to the microphone, *to the network*, not to the woman listening at the other end."[422] Sterne's point is that "any medium of sound reproduction is an apparatus, a network" in the sense of "a whole set of relations, practices, people, and technologies."[423] In this way, "both copy and original are products of the process of reproducibility."[424] In early examples of sound reproduction technologies, "the goal of reproducing live events was not reproducing reality but producing a particular kind of listening experience."[425] In the case of Brassard, these considerations come to the fore: after all, voice *manipulation* is by no means *reproduction*. Unlike overdubbing in film or television, we *know*—because we

[420] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003/2005): 221.
[421] Ibid., 223.
[422] Ibid., 226; original emphasis.
[423] Ibid., 225.
[424] Ibid., 241.
[425] Ibid., 246.

see her on stage—that these distorted "copies" of Brassard's voice remain at some level "authentic" or *fidèle*. Thus, by purposely forgoing auditory realism in terms of some "perfect fidelity," technological voice alteration produces a new kind of "live" stage presence. And in an era of burgeoning speech recognition systems and automated voice assistants—such as Bell Canada's infamous *Emily*—altered voice may indeed resonate with the audience's listening experience.

So how does language fit into all this technology? Does the shifting between languages that we have seen in our other examples of stage work have any place left within the spectrum of possibilities of sound manipulation? Does Samuel Beckett's dire image of a muttering Mouth—more a sputtering theatre machine really—leave any space for Samuel Beckett, the theatre translator *par excellence*? Indeed, Brassard presents her works in multiple languages, depending on the audience and location. Is this choice of language simply the software of Brassard's performance, carried by a voice that, regardless, is manipulated by unvarying technology from one performance to another? Witnessing Brassard perform in English, we are subtly aware of an overlaying of languages by the presence of a slight French accent. Her performances, in French and English do contain mixed segments of these languages. The English version of *Jimmy*, for example, ends with a repetitive overlapping of English and French:

> Mitchell, are you dead?
> *Mitchell est-ce que tu es mort?*
>
> Where did the dream go when I was gone out of sight?
> *Où le rêve est-il allé quant je suis parti?*
>
> Did you die in that dream?
> *Est-ce que tu es mort dans ce rêve?*[426]

[426] Brassard, 2001: 24.

My feeling is that Brassard's work does participate in the theatre's capacity as a "container" for processing Montréal's linguistic experience—only in Montréal, for example, are versions in both French and English offered (most recently, in April and May 2006, at *Usine C*). Yet what strikes me as key is that these two aspects of Brassard's work, her relative ease in shifting languages and the alteration of her voice into different identities, remain largely distinct. Despite advances in sound manipulation and reproduction, and in speech recognition and generation, in our current situation there is still no viable possibility of vocalised machine translation that could accommodate stage performance.

3.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed translation as a fundamental principle that must be addressed in a study of the materialities and medialities of theatre. Following Kittler's understanding of translation and his discussion of digitisation, can we indeed claim that sounds, images, voices and texts have been rendered surface effects? Translation has long functioned as a metaphor for media as for theatrical performance. My point, in developing a "metaphorology of theatrical translation," was to situate theatre *between* the increasing effects of digitisation and the recognition of enduring linguistic diversity. With this in mind, I asked: In what relationship do language, voice and technical sound reproduction stand to corporeality within the acoustic field of contemporary theatre? Derrida's reflections on the necessary but impossible task of translation are key to this debate, and serve to elaborate upon his concepts of repetition and iterability, which we heard in Chapter 2. It has thus been my argument that a study of the materialities of

theatre can attend to this disjunction in translation theory by addressing theatre as a point of medial convergence as well as a site of linguistic difference. On the one hand, theatre works to converge media forms as a point of intersecting bodies, texts, voices and technologies. On the other hand, theatre remains persistently aware of the economy of shifting linguistic exchanges that renders total translation an impossible pursuit.

As I have already indicated, my choice of three cases from Montréal is not arbitrary. Multilingual settings such as Montréal can offer particular and peculiar cases of theatremaking in which languages themselves take shape as materialities of city culture. While translation in these instances may inevitably raise questions of interpretation, it also reaches beyond the act of reading for meaning; in this sense, translating itself can be an integral and revealing process of posthermeneutic theorising. In his work on translation in Romantic Germany, Antoine Berman touches on this aspect of translation:

> In the field of translation, the limits of hermeneutical theory—from Schleiermacher to Steiner—seem to be the following: to dissolve the specificity of translating by making it into a special case of the interpretive process, to be unable, as a theory of consciousness, to approach the unconscious dimension in which linguistic processes—and hence, translation—are played out.[427]

Translation here is not simply the process by which signifiers provide access to signifieds from a hermeneutical-critical standpoint, but also necessarily engages with the *linguistic materiality* of the writing systems that underpin any interpretation. Thus, François Girard's *Novecento* allowed us to reflect on the equivalency of productions independent of meaning, where voice and language were rendered separate medial streams. With Tremblay's *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi*, we were able to consider Gaston's hybrid linguistic construct in terms of Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia. At the same time, we were able to reflect on Derrida's proposition that the process of translation suspends meaning from the palpable sonority of language. Finally, Brassard's sound theatre

[427] Berman, 1992: 223, note 46.

rounded out this discussion by introducing digitised sound technology as an extension of voice. Here, again, we were faced with the separation of sound and voice from meaning and language. In Chapter 4, we will deal more directly with the theatre's role in transfiguring and circulating the sounds of linguistic diversity in Montréal.

4. CIRCULATION

In the previous chapter, we investigated metaphors of translation in their application to materialities theory and the mediality of theatre. And yet, as convincing as these intersections may be, we are left with a nagging suspicion of the potentialities of translation theory. As the analysis of sound theatre has revealed, Marie Brassard's work is translative in several metaphorical senses: both in the sense that she operates in multiple languages and in the variety of medial transpositions and overlayings that she employs. Although, intuitively, these two aspects may be related, simply creating a tenuous link between these metaphorical levels leaves unanswered questions. Perhaps these misgivings lie in our instinct that any description of theatre arts as translation is simply *more* metaphorical than actually translating the languages employed in theatrical works. Ultimately, we face the dilemma that overlaying medial forms, as in Brassard's sound theatre, do not on their own (or at least do not yet) facilitate the translation of linguistic interaction—as the "real-time, interlingual translations"[428] that McLuhan envisaged in the digital computer. Moreover, despite our broadest understandings of translation as displacement and transposition, it is easy to fall back upon metaphors of translation as either one- or two-way traffic. In this final chapter, my aim is to elaborate an alternative way of discussing these questions by turning to theoretical propositions for *circulation*. Circulation theory usefully complements the materialities outlook of media and communication. Continuing with my example of Montréal introduced in Chapter 3, I wish to pursue the idea that the movement of languages in this city is absorbed and

[428] Gunkel, 1999: 66.

suspended—continually *made recitable*—by the theatre of this city. This chapter is therefore oriented to several aspects of circulation and materialities theory. I will first introduce recent calls for moving away from translation and towards a theory of circulation (section 4.1.1). Section 4.1.2 develops approaches to theatre as circulation, using the example of Robert Lepage's play *Circulation* (1984). In the subsections of section 4.2, I first develop an analysis of the materialities of urban speaking, drawing on multiple examples but with specific focus on the soundscape of Montréal (4.2.1). In section 4.2.2, I return to the example of *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi* to develop a chronotopic account of theatrical displacement. In the final section, 4.2.3, I experiment with Siegert's notion of "postal logic" to tease out the circulatory and repetitive interconnection of theatricality and linguistic interaction in Montréal.

4.1 Circulation Theory

4.1.1 From Translation to Circulation

As we saw in Chapter 3, translation occupies an important theoretical space in studies central to the materialities of communication programme, such as Kittler's *Aufschreibesysteme*. Translation is also a fundamental concern for the study of theatre. Nonetheless, translation studies are confronted by the recurring theoretical disjunction between the search for equivalency and the incommensurability of meanings. In recognition of this dilemma, increasing concern for circulation as a primary form of cultural expression has made its way into lines of social study that complement the materialities approach. As Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar and Elizabeth A. Povinelli have written, "translation—the (im)possibility of meaningful commensuration—has long been

circulation's double, its enabling twin. And translation and circulation have long been seen as both the value and price of a truly democratic public sphere."[429]

According to Gaonkar and Povinelli, "it is no longer viable to think of circulation as simply a movement of people, commodities, ideas, and images from one place to another."[430] They develop Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma's assertion that "circulation is a cultural process with its own forms of abstraction, evaluation, and constraint, which are created by the interactions between specific types of circulating forms and the interpretive communities built around them."[431] Lee and LiPuma argue for delineating "cultures of circulation" within what they call "structured circulations." Cultures of circulation, they emphasise,

> are created and animated by the cultural forms that circulate through them, including—critically—the abstract nature of the forms that underwrite and propel the process of circulation itself. The circulation of such forms—whether the novels and newspapers of the imagined community or the equity-based derivatives and currency swaps of the modern market—always presupposes the existence of their respective interpretive communities, with their own forms of interpretation and evaluation. These interpretive communities determine lines of interpretation, found institutions, and set boundaries based principally on their own internal dynamics.[432]

These theories of circulation are intent on coordinating the three broad categories of social formations in "modern social imaginaries" in the West—the public sphere, the citizen state or nation, and the market.[433] Recognising the role of circulation as the common and central cultural form of modern social imaginaries, and not simply as a phenomenon of movement or cultural flows, represents another major turn in social

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[429] Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "Technologies of Public Forms: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition," *Public Culture*, Volume 15, Number 3 (2003): 392.
[430] Ibid., 391.
[431] Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma, "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity," *Public Culture*, Volume 14, Number 1 (2002): 192.
[432] Lee and LiPuma, 2002: 192.
[433] See Charles Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," *Public Culture*, Volume 14, Number 1 (2002): 91-124.

theory. To a large extent, this turn is driven by the contemporary need to understand emerging patterns of globalisation. As Lee and LiPuma note,

> whereas an earlier generation of scholarship saw meaning and interpretation as the key problems for social and cultural analysis, the category of *culture* now seems to be playing catch-up to the economic processes that go beyond it. Economics owes its present appeal partly to the sense that it, as a discipline, has grasped that it is dynamics of circulation that are driving globalization—and thereby challenging traditional notions of language, culture, and nation.[434]

Particularly worthy of attention is Gaonkar and Povinelli's recognition that, "in a given culture of circulation, it is more important to track the proliferating copresence of varied textual/cultural forms in all their mobility and mutability than to attempt a delineation of their fragile autonomy and specificity."[435] In this way, their theory of circulation accommodates Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer's call for mapping the materialities of communication, that is, for delineating "underlying constraints whose technological, material, procedural, and performative potentials have been all too easily swallowed up by interpretational habits" founded upon the tradition of hermeneutics.[436] The ensuing studies concerned with "technologies of public persuasion" that are given in *Public Culture 15:3* (2003) offer case examples of how such an "*ethnography of forms* [...] can be carried out only within a set of circulatory fields populated by myriad forms, sometimes hierarchically arranged and laminated but mostly undulating as an ensemble, as a melange, going about their daily reproductive labor of mediating psychosocial praxis."[437] Their approach thus invites us to consider not only the *object* and its meaning or interpretation, but also the generative matrix in which this thing comes to be, comprised of the circulation of people, ideas, media, technology, and currency. This bifocal lens, which as Gaonkar and Povinelli point out is "method as much as theory,"

[434] Lee and LiPuma, 2002: 191.
[435] Gaonkar and Povinelli, 2003: 391.
[436] Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer, 1994: 12.
[437] Gaonkar and Povinelli, 2003: 391-392.

demands attentiveness to the "edges of forms as they circulate" in order to delineate the motivating forces behind the object's movement across social space as well as the cultural contexts and tendencies that become attached to this object, exposing and transfiguring its meanings as it moves.[438]

Their call for delineating the "edges of forms" is inspired first and foremost by what they note to be a "yawning disjunction between translation as a political and economic project and translation as an exemplar of theories of meaning. The aporia at the intersection of these two projects provides the opening for a revitalized approach to form-sensitive analysis of global public culture."[439] Gaonkar and Povinelli note the innumerable socially informed studies dealing with conditions of possibility for translation, in its various forms and sites, as well as the many studies that underline the political nature of translation. In such studies, researchers have investigated translation as a social, political, philosophical and religious pursuit, providing a "necessary backdrop to any study of the production and circulation of texts and text-analogues as social figurations."[440] As an example, they refer to Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* and the uproar it incited. The range of readings of this text in various cultural public spheres and the ensuing controversies surrounding its many translations into other languages highlight the complexity of translation as a "complex, multifaceted signal phenomenon," where translation signals "the interior content of aesthetic form and message," "the exterior political and social commitment to the circulation of this form and message," and the "cultural logic of the circulatory matrix itself."[441]

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[438] Ibid., 392.
[439] Ibid., 393.
[440] Ibid., 392.
[441] Ibid., 393.

Nevertheless, these types of studies in traditional theories of translation predictably resort to understanding translation as a system of meaning-value and meaning-exchange. They "arise from and are oriented to the possibility of undistorted movement of linguistic value from one language to another, one genre to another, or one semiotic system to another."[442] Such theories are unambiguously bound up with meaning-value as deriving from the "sign, mark, or trace" and fail to provide sufficient understanding of the "social embeddedness of the sign":

> In other words, no matter the richness of these social studies, theories of translation continually return to the question of how to translate well from one language to another as meaning is born across the chasm of two language codes—or in the Derridean revision, the dilemma of graspability that exists prior to this birth, this voyage. Once we set foot on this tropological terrain of chasms and gaps, we are swept up into the maelstrom of debates about incommensurability, indeterminacy, and undecidability in translation. From Donald Davidson to Jacques Derrida, true real-time translation is an impossibility, a mere normative orientation, a failure—if a productive failure, at that.[443]

Gaonkar and Povinelli underscore the fundamental failure of translation studies to overcome this "yawning disjunction," identified, for example, by Kittler in the shift from the discourse network of 1800 to the discourse network of 1900 and, to a great degree, evident in the contemporary discussions of the conditions and possibilities of computer technology we saw in Chapter 3. "Recourse to meaning as a semantic value disseminating between the original and its translation," they argue, "or entirely lifted off the matrix of the original, does not nearly do justice to the materiality of these cultural forms—let alone their disjunctive circulatory cultures."[444]

In returning to the material conditions of medial processes, to the social-embeddedness of cultural phenomena and the production of their meanings, and in placing the emphasis on form-sensitive analysis of their underlying circulatory matrices,

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[442] Ibid.
[443] Ibid., 393-394.
[444] Ibid., 394.

Gaonkar and Povinelli stake out a theoretical position in which *circulation* and what they call *transfiguration* replace meaning and translation as the foci of cultural study. Transfiguration is broadly defined as "the refunctioning of a text as such for different demanding-sites"[445]; in this way, they are interested in outlining "new techniques for grasping mapping functions rather than meaning—for foregrounding the diagram as a coordinating and figurating machine, the primary components of which are not located in the interplay of signified and signifier but in the functions of indexicality and mimesis (iconicity)."[446] I am reminded in this regard of Bernhard Siegert's project of tracing the diagrammatical writing of mathematics as cultural praxis in *Passage des Digitalen*, an endeavour oriented to grounding "the analysis of signifier structures within the materialities of communication, within the network of instruments, agents and media without which historical grammatology would remain an enterprise of the philosophy of history."[447] Form-sensitive analysis oriented to cultures of circulation and transfiguration represents a project that queries beyond the cultural distance between two languages, genres, or semiotic systems. It seeks to delineate not only the material conditions in which subjects, texts and practices are imbued with meaning in a given culture, but also the

> power-laden and interlocking levels of and contestations between cultures of circulation; the transfigurations they demand on the palpability, intelligibility, and recognizability of texts, events, and practices; and the play of supplementarity that enframes and ruptures the enterprise of public recognition, whatever its object.[448]

The essential direction of this attention to the materialities of communication is to delineate the transfigurative demands of cultures of circulation. As noted, this entails, in Gaonkar and Povinelli's project, searching out "edges of forms as they circulate." Here, I

[445] Ibid., 396.
[446] Ibid., 394-395.
[447] Siegert, 2003: 14.
[448] Gaonkar and Povinelli, 2003: 395.

understand Gaonkar and Povinelli to call for discerning the contours of the generative matrices within which objects and their "meanings" assume particular forms. In the transition from one context to another, the value-bearing character of these objects is revealed to be contingent on the contexts themselves. Rather than accepting these forms as "already always" given meanings—an original context to which their translated Other can be juxtaposed—circulation theory views these meanings as always in transition. Thus, to return once again to Kittler, it is precisely in the *transition* from the discourse network of 1800 to the discourse network of 1900 that the recognition of hermeneutics as a project of meaning-identification first emerged. My argument in the following sections is that the theatre can be a mechanism, an apparatus, for identifying the "edges of forms as they circulate" as well as a framing device, a container, for processing them.

4.1.2 Theatre, Circulation, and the Culture of Cities

Since its emergence in Greek antiquity, theatre has clearly had a close relationship with the circulation of ideas and identities, inscriptions and values. In several key studies, particular stress has been laid on the interrelationship of theatre and theatricality to monetary circulation. In her study *Dionysus Writes*, for example, Jennifer Wise underlines the simultaneity of ancient Greek theatre's emergence not only alongside the phonetic alphabet, but also early economic activity. The same logic of portability that underpinned this "economy of inscription" underpinned alphabetic extensions in theatre. "A connection between money and the festival atmosphere within which drama emerged was soon to be palpable [...]. By the fifth century [...] Aristophanes could speak in the same breath about visitors to the festival and the money they brought with them in the

form of tribute."[449] The "new international status of coinage" in this epoch had direct import for the cosmopolitanism of theatrical activity: "[T]he poetic heteroglossia that distinguished drama from earlier forms accurately reflected this increased cosmopolitanism. With Athenian coinage now intended for use in foreign markets as well as at home, not only traders but also poets were encouraged to expand their sphere of activities beyond their local markets."[450] Just like international currency, which extended trade and bartering spatially and temporally, the dramatic text signified "poetic composition liberated from time and space." Greek drama—"the sole genre of festival poetry to be invented within this new international money market"[451]—became an international commodity. As such, it was also the first genre of poetic activity to charge admission for its consumption.

Jean-Christoph Agnew (1986) has demonstrated a deeply rooted, if not coextensive, relationship of theatricality to the rise of economic market activity in the late medieval and early modern periods. Working in the realm of Anglo-American thought between 1550 and 1750, Agnew's study focuses on how theatre mirrored the developing capitalist market. His analysis reveals how, in the English-speaking world, a general consciousness of an emergent market society corresponds in large measure to a broad awareness of social theatricality. In establishing an undeniable interrelationship between the ideas that "all the world's a stage" and "all the world's a market," Agnew claims that "what bound the market and theater together, then as now, were the same peculiar

[449] Wise, 1998: 176.
[450] Ibid., 176-177.
[451] Ibid., 179.

experiential properties that set them apart from other kinds of exchange."[452] For this reason, it is insufficient to treat "theater as a mere text or register in which to read the cultural consequences of the emerging market economy. The early modern stage did more than reflect relations occurring elsewhere; it modelled and in important respects materialized those relations."[453] Agnew then discerns how "the legitimacy of the marketplace as a social institution was inseparable from its theatricality, for the medieval criteria of authority and authenticity required that both attributes be bodied forth: deliberately displaced, performed, and witnessed. The marketplace of the Middle Ages, like the vernacular theater that had grown up within its bounds, was above all a 'place for seeing.'"[454] Consistent with Gumbrecht's description of a shift to self-referentiality in early modernity, when humankind emerged both as "an outside observer of the world" and as "being seen in this position,"[455] it was, according to Agnew, in the 16th and 17th centuries that "the theatrical perspective entered into the ideological mainstream as an amusing gloss on the literate ideal of the detached and impartial observer of life, the discriminating consumer of the urban spectacle": "No longer was the sense of theatricality confined exclusively to the deliberate representation of common ideals in the negotiated relations between the individual and God; more and more, it suggested the calculated *mis*representation of private meanings in the negotiated relations among men and women."[456] In an exhaustively researched study, *Kalkül und Leidenschaft: Poetik des*

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[452] Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1986): x.
[453] Ibid., xi.
[454] Agnew, 1986: 40.
[455] Gumbrecht, 2004: 24.
[456] Ibid., 13; 60. Agnew further suggests that "theatrical perspective [...] became, at the hands of Adam Smith, a startlingly novel, wholly secular, and decidedly functionalist social psychology of market society. Some writers (Smith included) went so far as to extract out of the hedonistic calculus, with all of its

ökonomischen Menschen (Calculus and Passion: Poetics of Economic Man, 2004) Joseph Vogl has similarly established multifarious interconnections between literature and economy throughout the Enlightenment and Romantic eras. Drawing on countless examples of both theatrical and novelistic discourse, especially Lessing's theory and practice in the Enlightenment through to Goethe's works at the turn of the 19th century, Vogl's study is a media discourse analysis of the "poetologies of knowledge," of the "confrontation and connection of literary and political-economic texts."[457] From this interaction, Vogl traces what he calls the emergence of "economic man," *homo economicus*, by the end of the 18th century.[458]

The idea that theatre is bound up with circulating modes of cultural value clearly has implications for many forms of social movement and rhythm. The foregoing chapters, *Materialities*, *Medialities*, and *Translation*, have all touched on ideas of circulation as an underlying medial feature of theatre and theatricality. I noted early on that media discourse analysis, such as that undertaken by Vogl, examines the institutions central to collecting and circulating information, the archival processes that contribute to the organisation of information as knowledge, as well as to the production of orders of

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complacent assurances about the maximization of human satisfactions, the kernel of a histrionic calculus in which the arithmetic of material interest subordinated itself to the exigencies of social performance" (13).

[457] Vogl, 2004: 14.

[458] At the end of the 18th century, the "theatre is announced as a 'Meisterstück der Gesellschaft' [masterpiece of society] precisely because it commits itself to a 'counter-surge' [*Entgegenwallung*] of individuals, a circulation and modulation of involuntary movements, affects, and passions, and thus secures the dependency of everything on everything in a 'sympathetic and irresistible movement' [*sympathetische und unwiderstehliche Regung*]. [...] Theatre is still that place in which, on the stage and in the hall, proxies and persons are produced who speak and act for themselves, for others and for one another; at the same time it is in many respects a delimited space of traffic that codifies the social and reaches from the most intimate movement to the founding act, a space which stages on the 'immeasurable arena' [*unermeßlicher Schauplatz*] of a national or universal society the moment of its harmony [...]." Ibid., 137-138; my translation. See especially the sections *Tausch der Symbole* [Exchange of Symbols] (107-138) and *Zirkulation* [Circulation] (223-244). This point, and indeed Vogl's entire study, would provide an exciting basis for comparison with Agnew's investigation. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

knowledge. Discourse analysis of this mould is interested in poetologies as orchestrations and representations of knowledge, their *Inszenierung* or *mise-en-scène*, the specificity of which is always subject to medial conditions. I then outlined how an initial understanding of a "materialities of theatre and performance" might turn to the surfaces and spaces of spectacles as they produce and circulate knowledge. In this way, I suggested that theatre and performance are reiterative and circulatory sites of interaction between communicative practices, technologies, as well as the institutional frameworks in which they unfold. By understanding the material turn as a shared interest in "those phenomena and conditions that contribute to the production of meaning, without being meaning themselves," (Gumbrecht) we are able to investigate theatre not only in terms of exterior or externalised formats—the equipment and hardware that make it possible—but also within the contours of circulatory matrices within which something like meaning is formed, carried and disseminated. In this way, drawing on Auslander and others, I challenged Peggy Phelan's contention that "performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations," that "once it does so, it becomes something other than performance."[459] Quite the contrary, I have tried to lay the groundwork to demonstrate that theatre and performance are precisely implicated in this circulation. It is in this sense that theatre in and as circulation can be construed, in the sense put forward by Chandler et al, as an "art of transmission." Arts of transmission, we might recall, are repetitive and circulatory formations that make visible

> the ways in which knowledge has been, is, and will be shaped by the transmissive means through which it is developed, organized, and passed on. Those means are technical, both in the restricted modern sense and in the broader, classical sense. That is, they rest not only on devices like the

[459] Phelan, 1993: 144.

> printing press and the internet but on practices: on skills and crafts that must be learned and transmitted from generation to generation.[460]

Understanding theatre and performance as an art of transmission must address both the "hardware" aspects of the technologies involved—for example in Kittler's analysis of theatrical optics or in the acoustic possibilities introduced by voice alteration—but also the "software" aspects oriented to the communicative practices of a given time and place. And while Kittler clearly privileges "the material structures of technology over the meanings of these structures and the messages they circulate,"[461] his analyses nonetheless provide ample space to consider other communicative practices that make use of these material structures.

In developing a materialities of theatre and performance, we have necessarily had to consider body-centred modes of communication. Paul Zumthor's work on the relations of body to performance and Bertolt Brecht's key theory of *gestus* led us to consider theatre and performance as sites of iterability and citationality. Each of these concepts implies circulation as the constant movement and transfiguration of information through different locales. Samuel Weber's useful interpretation of Brechtian *gestus* not only as citable, but also "re-citable," made clear that theatrical work is always only a potentiality, an open-ended process. In this way, *gestus* itself disrupts a simplistic metaphor of translation as simply the reconfiguration of information recorded in a textual format as action on the stage. At the same time, in delving into a metaphorology of theatrical translation, I also attempted to demonstrate that the related concepts of transposition and hybridity point to translation as one process by which meanings are propelled into circulation. In this sense, translations are themselves artefacts that circulate, and a variety

[460] Chandler et al, 2004: 1.
[461] Gane, 2005: 25.

of medial forms are revealed as the material carriers for these circulations. Finally, in referring to Bakhtin's many notions of linguistic variability, I began to outline a conception of theatre as bound up with the circulation of linguistic exchanges and the impossibility of a totalising or convergent process of translation. The concepts of materialities and medialities addressed in this dissertation attend to the theatre's materially embedded forms and these variable modes of circulation: the interwoven ways in which the theatre functions as a system of circuits of cultural expression and exchange to absorb, transform and reproduce knowledge. These circuits are constantly subjected to variegated flows and paces. In this view, theatre is both a process of converging and a process of disseminating techniques of cultural expression, where inscriptions and iterations of texts, stages, voices and performances work at once centrifugally and centripetally. To borrow from Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, theatre produces "the effect of tangibility that comes from the materialities of communication" as "an effect in constant movement. In other words, to speak of 'production of presence' implies the (spatial) tangibility effect coming from the communication media is subjected, in space, to movements of greater and lesser proximity, and of greater and lesser intensity."[462]

Let's stop here to examine a concrete example. Robert Lepage and the Théâtre Repère's 1984 production *Circulation* seems an appropriate place to initiate a discussion of theatre and circulation. Produced by the Québec-city based company, this play portrays a young woman who travels from Québec to New York to unravel her tangled family history. In French, of course, circulation refers both to the body's circulatory system and to traffic, and *Circulation* draws on these multiple significations to shape its themes. *Circulation* is thus about circulations and also "in circulation." To treat a theatrical

[462] Gumbrecht, 2004: 17.

production as "in circulation" is to view it as a cultural artefact embedded in specific spaces and times, but also in constant movement as it is rehearsed, staged and restaged, repeated and reprised, or taken on tour. After its run in Québec City, *Circulation* toured through the province of Québec before passing through Toronto, Sudbury, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver. A production like *Circulation*, then, is both rooted and mobile. It may reflect on a point of departure in this path—in this case Québec City—but moves onward to varied environments where it is taken up and reformulated. In this way, a given performance of *Circulation* does not instantiate the unique self-completion of the world of spectacle, but rather one position along this trajectory of repetitions. Rather than becoming diffuse or dispersed, a theatrical production like *Circulation* moves and pauses along distinct pathways. In the course of these transitions, it creates and distributes a variety of material traces: playbills and other types of advertising, newspaper reviews, radio interviews and television reports, academic critiques. These materials serve to embed the production in a variety of secondary sites—theatre archives, library collections, and other multimedia depots (such as the digital archives of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation).

Circulation also reflects another theme that preoccupies me in this chapter. This production drew on the borderlines of languages (Robert Lepage was fond of saying it consisted of "one third French, one third English and one third movement").[463] The inspiration for this interplay derived from two objects: an audiocassette recording of an English-language course and a roadmap. (The random phrasings on the cassette became

[463] Robert Lepage, "Method Behind Lepage's Award-winning Play *Circulation*," Interview with Peter Gzowski, The CBC Digital Archives Website, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Last updated: 7 September 2004. <http://159.33.65.179/IDCC-1-74-1410-9057/arts_entertainment/robert_lepage/>. [Accessed 14 March 2006.]

the basis of the narrative, in which the main character, Louise, follows an English course in order to embark on her voyage.) The confrontation of language in this play thus recalls our discussion of translation in Chapter 3. *Circulation* portrays linguistic negotiation as a matter of commonplace social interaction, but unlike *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi* the language is not a hybrid, invented idiom like the one spoken by Gaston Talbot. Further, this real-time interlingual interaction was constantly transfigured in each new iteration as *Circulation* toured outside of Québec, where the Théâtre Repère collective innovated with translated projections of key French words with which anglophone audience members might not be familiar. Neither subtitles nor surtitles, these inscriptions served to highlight the sonority of language as gestural: "we use gestures and movements the same way we use sounds."[464] Here, in line with Paul Zumthor, "voice if functionally linked to gesture"; their interrelation "projects the body into the space of performance."[465] In this way, *Circulation* highlights theatre as an "art of transmission." In the performers' *gestus*, their bodies become the interface between the "technically transmissive means" (for example, the audio recording or the inscriptive projections, which evoke the influence of film on Lepage's work) as well as the linguistic skills and practices of their given "culture of circulation."

In their forthcoming anthology on *Circulation and the City*, Alexandra Boutros and Will Straw propose that "circulation has come to name both (a) the integration of all urban activity within ordered and purposeful systems of interconnection and (b) the unmooring of meaning and identity from the stable structures of tradition or

[464] Robert Lepage, "A young, confident artist." The CBC Digital Archives Website. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Last updated: 7 September 2004. <http://159.33.65.179/IDC-1-74-1410-9034/people/robert_lepage/clip1>. [Accessed 14 March 2006.]
[465] Zumthor, 1994: 224.

community."[466] In the study of media, the term "circulation goes beyond the practical activity of delivery to capture the cultural resonances of media artefacts and their movement." In a similar vein, Ben Highmore has suggested that "rhythmic terms such as 'circulation' overcome the sort of fixity that comes from studying production and consumption in isolation from each other: circulation is the articulation of that relationship."[467] Responding to Gaonkar and Povinelli, Boutros and Straw propose that "to study the 'edges of forms' is to be attentive to the ways in which such forms occupy space, and to the way in which the interconnection of these forms produces the complex textures of urban life." The concept of "materialities" or "externalities" is an invitation

> to consider the materially embedded forms of cultural expression, its inscription (as with writing) or iteration (as with performances) within arrangements of technologies, bodies and physical structures. Cultural forms [...] provide the contours in which cultural expression is contained and shaped; media forms store or transmit this expression is culturally pertinent ways.

At the same time, they note that "the emphasis of recent work on 'externalities' risks fetishizing technological surfaces or renewing long discredited distinctions between form and substance. We believe that analyses which locate circulation within the concrete spaces of cities and include an account of a cultural artefact's embeddedness in specific spaces and times, can most forcefully confront these risks."[468] As I have suggested in Chapter 3, an analysis of the materialities of theatre that relies solely on a technological a priori risks these very shortcomings. However, by turning to various theoretical configurations of circulation, such as "arts of transmission," I believe we can overcome

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[466] Alexandra Boutros and Will Straw, "Introduction," *Circulation and the City: Essays on Mobility and Urban Culture*, Alexandra Boutros and Will Straw, eds., Culture of Cities series, (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming): 7.
[467] Ben Highmore, *CityScapes: Cultural Readings in the Material and Symbolic City*, (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 9.
[468] Ibid., 11.

these limitations. In the remainder of this chapter, I will take up this challenge by extending my analysis to the case of Montréal.

4.2 Histrionic Montréal

In an exuberantly written record of 19th century theatre in Montréal entitled *Histrionic Montreal* (1902), chronicler Franklin Graham describes the city as a node on the circuit of performing troupes circulating from London, Paris and New York.[469] Montréal, in this detailed account, appears as an astonishing accumulation of theatrical activities, continually re-inscribed across its spaces and amassing at an increasing rate. To view the theatre of Montréal as part of a circulatory field that works to organise the city as routes and addresses suggests such a mapping exercise of theatrical institutions and their activities. The distribution of multivoiced theatre companies, performance spaces, support agencies, festival venues, archives, and educational facilities certainly all act as points of orientation, adhering to a spatial rationality of accessibility for a variety of clustered audiences. In a record of the activities of one central support agency, the *Centre d'essai des auteurs dramatiques* (CEAD, later simply the *Centre des auteurs dramatiques*), the CEAD's locations are simply laid out as such a series of *déplacements* across downtown Montréal.[470] Support agencies and archives such as the francophone CEAD and the anglophone *Playwrights' Workshop Montreal*, the francophone *Conseil québécois du théâtre* and the anglophone *Quebec Drama Federation* are highly integrated groupings of

[469] Franklin Graham, *Histrionic Montreal: Annuals of the Montreal Stage with Biographical and Critical Notices of the Plays and Players of a Century*, Second Edition, (New York and London: Benjamin Bloom, 1969).

[470] David Gilbert, Claude Des Landes, and Marie-Francine Des Landes, *Centre d'essai des auteurs dramatiques 1965-1975* (Montréal: Centre d'essai des auteurs dramatiques, 1975): 6.

institutions, working in tandem to promote the diffusion of theatrical activity via translation workshops, public lectures, and local publications.[471] Two theatre and performances spaces in particular, *Usine C* and the *Saidye Bronfman Centre*,[472] working closely with the international *Festival de théâtre des amériques*, (recently converted to the theatre and dance *Festival TransAmériques*), are multimedial, multifunctional and multilingual hubs. Such hubs exhibit both centripetal force as focal points of creative energies, social discourses and new technologies, and centrifugal force through channels of dissemination to wider audiences via internet, newspapers, and other outreach mechanisms.[473] Scripts, playbills, posters, and articles and other circulating artefacts accumulate in a variety of archives such as the CEAD and the *Théâtrothèque* at the Université de Montréal, further demarcating the theatrical circuit of the city.

With roots in both the French and English linguistic communities, it is perhaps unsurprising that Montréal's theatrical history is so littered with interlingual events. With a large base of capably bilingual speakers, theatre in Montréal has always attracted native speakers of languages different from the one used in performance. Theatre thus gives prominence to the linguistic borderlines of Montréal. There are many historical accounts of these traits, documenting the progression of theatrical activity between the English and

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[471] For example, Playwrights' Workshop Montreal's annual "Montreal Festival of New Works in Translation" or the Centre d'auteur dramatique's annually hosted "Semaine de la dramaturgie." For further details see publications such as Nathalie Boisvert and Micheline Chevrier, eds., *Dialogues: Contemporary Writing Practices From Quebec and Canada, Language and Theatre Translation*, (Montréal: Centre d'auteurs dramatiques and Playwrights' Workshop Montreal, 2002); *Québec Plays in Translation: A Catalogue of Playwrights and Plays in English Translation* (Montréal: Centre des auteurs dramatiques, 1998); and annually published bilingual newsletter *Théâtre Québec*.

[472] "Le Centre Saidye Bronfman comporte le seul theatre à Montréal équipé d'un système d'amplification destine aux malentendants et d'un système d'interprétation simultanée." "Cérémonie d'inauguration et visite de la nouvelle annexe des arts du Centre Saidye Bronfman," Section "Regards," *Architecture concepte* (February and March 1989): 11.

[473] See the section "Usine C" in Réne Kural, *Playing Fields: Alternative Spaces for Sports, Culture and Recreation*, Translation by Kenja Henriksen, (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture Publishers, 1999): 90-97.

French communities—the city's "two solitudes"—such as those undertaken by theatre historian Jean-Marc Larrue.[474] French-language Garrison theatre of the late 18th century was notably offered in Montréal and Québec City by educated British regiments. The famous Théâtre Royal, the first major English theatre constructed in the city in 1825, attracted members of both communities, and local directors of predominantly English-run theatre companies often made efforts to allure their francophone counterparts.[475] The *Monument National*—today the production venue for the English and French wings of the *National Theatre School*—was established in 1893 by the St-Jean-Baptiste Foundation as a French-language centre, but soon became home to frequent French, English and Yiddish events, as well as serving the Chinese, Irish, Italian and Arab communities.[476] In 1948, Gratien Gélinas's monumental *Tit-Coq*, which had a run of 200 performances, was translated into English as *Ti-Coq* and performed at the Gesù Theatre. The production was the first that could claim with confidence, as it does in the playbill, "the current occasion is the first in theatrical history that a bi-lingual cast appears (with one exception) in the identical play in a second language."[477] And the sheer number of multilingual companies and support institutions that have emerged in the 2nd half of the 20th century, producing bilingual plays such as David Fennario's *Balconville* (1979) or more recent hybrid

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[474] See especially Jean-Marc Larrue, *Le Théâtre à Montréal à la fin du XIX^e siècle*, (Montréal: Fides, 1981); André-G. Bourassa and Jean-Marc Larrue, *Les nuits de la « Main »: Cent ans de spectacles sur le boulevard Saint-Laurent (1891-1991)*, (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 1993); Jean-Marc Larrue, *Le theatre yiddish à Montréal / Yiddish Theatre in Montreal*, (Montréal: Éditions Jeu, 1996); as well as Herbert Whittaker, *Setting the Stage: Montreal Theatre 1920-1949*, Jonathan Rittenhouse, ed., (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).

[475] Jean-Marc Larrue, "Entrée en scène des professionals (1825-1930)," *Le Théâtre au Québec 1825-1980: Repères et perspectives*, Renée Lagris, Jean-Marc Larrue, André-G. Bourassa, Gilbert David, (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 1988): 30-31.

[476] Bourassa and Larrue, 1993: 27-37; Larrue, 1996: 56.

[477] Many thanks to Prof. Denis Salter for providing me a copy of this playbill.

inventions such as *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi* (1996) and François Godin's *Louisiane Nord* (2004), further attests to the vitality of languages in the city.

Yet with so many examples, it is all too easy to get carried away—in the spirit of the "translative disjunction" identified by Gaonkar and Povinelli—enumerating cases of linguistic interaction inspired by politicized aesthetics[478] or honing in on translation projects as "exemplar[s] of theories of meaning." Such enumerations ultimately fail to delve sufficiently into the theatre's role in the cultural circuitry of the city. In order to further understand this involvement of theatre with the movement of language in Montréal, it is necessary to consider the complexities of speaking in this city.

4.2.1 The Spoken Character of Montréal

In Chapter 3, I suggested that theatre in Montréal operates as a type of "feedback loop," drawing upon, enframing and reiterating the everyday confluence of languages. In order to take this proposition a step further, it is necessary to consider the specific qualities of Montréal's linguistic character. In the North American context, Montréal's multilingual status distinguishes it from other cities with complex varieties of multiculturalism. This condition stems from the combined influences of its dual colonial history, increasing immigration, as well as Québec's linguistic policies since the introduction of Bill 101 in the 1970s, legislation that required the use of French in, among others, the commercial and educational spheres. All of these influences have fostered the highest rates of bi- and tri-lingualism in a North American city. This multilingualism, if we understand it to mean

[478] See for example Annie Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation: Theatre and Alterity in Quebec, 1968-1988*, Translation by Rosalind Gill and Roger Gannon, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

the negotiation of multiple languages both in public and in private life, has become a defining feature of everyday Montréal. The capacity to move between two and even three languages is valued as a characteristic of belonging, of general Montréalness.

The cacophony of languages in Montréal's soundscape evokes, of course, the ancient emblem of the Tower of Babel that Derrida elicits in his discussion of translation and the multiplicity of idioms. Indeed, Babel has come to represent an ancient city type that paved the way to the modern, linguistically diverse metropolis.[479] As I have argued elsewhere, a theoretical conception of the circulation of language in city life requires both spatial and temporal frameworks.[480] In this regard, Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope offers a paradigm for attending to the ways and rituals of speaking in the city, the spatiotemporal ambit of city life where linguistic routes and routines become aligned and collide, as well as to the forms through which these trajectories are represented. As Henri Lefebvre has argued, "space is nothing but the inscription of time in the world, spaces are the realizations, inscriptions in the simultaneity of the external world of a series of times, the rhythms of the city, the rhythms of the urban population [...]. [T]he idea of the city will only be rethought and reconstructed on its current ruins when we have properly understood that the city is the deployment of time."[481] The routines and repetitions of everyday city language—ordering and purchasing, asking and thanking, storytelling and listening—are not only linguistic practices in urban space, but as Michel de Certeau might argue, "spatialisation as practiced place, or the inscription of time onto place, the

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[479] Interestingly, in his analysis of theatre and the market, Jean-Christophe Agnew notes that the ancient emblem of the Tower of Babel was used "almost exclusively" by 17th-century popular writers "to describe the contemporary marketplace." See Agnew, 1986: 86-89.

[480] Part of the following considerations will be reproduced in my contribution to Boutros and Straw's anthology, "Language in the City, Language of the City," forthcoming.

[481] Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, Translation by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, eds., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996): 16.

appropriation of urban places through temporary use."[482] Reminiscent of Barthes's appeal for a "language of the city without metaphor,"[483] de Certeau posits that the city is *written* in the everyday practices of city dwellers in the streets, by the "walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it."[484] He further invokes the notion of *pedestrian speech acts*, equating the act of walking in the urban system to the speech act of a language system—not unlike Ludwig Wittgenstein's labyrinthine metaphor of orientating oneself both in language and in the city: "Language is a labyrinth of paths," he wrote, "you approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about."[485] Where de Certeau posits the analogy between walking as the "spatial acting-out of place" and the speech act as an "acoustic acting-out of language," I suggest that these ideas converge chronotopically. The enactment of spoken language shapes our understanding of districts, communities and scenes as uniquely social places in the city. City spaces are partially instantiated through iterative performances of speech, through the rhythms of language use that mark an area time and again, becoming a force in the city's formation. This is true of neighbourhoods in many cities, such as Montréal, Toronto or Berlin, that come to be identified in part by the predominant language of the local community.

Many narratives of temporality and acceleration in the modern city evoke an impression of cacophony, of a relentless and indistinguishable din. In *The Man Without*

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[482] Mike Crang, "Rhythms of the City: Temporalised space and motion," *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality*, Jon May and Nigel Thrift, ed., (London and New York: Routledge (2001): 190.
[483] Roland Barthes, "Sémiologie et urbanisme," *L'aventure sémiologique*, (Paris: Éditions du seuil, 1985): 265.
[484] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Translation by Steven Rendall, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 93.
[485] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen—Philosophical Investigations*, Translation by G.E.M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953): 82, §203.

Qualities, Robert Musil captures the sense that uttering a few words is never merely routine and repetitive, but relegated to the intervals that fall within the furious rhythm of the modern, mechanised city, "a kind of super-American city" of the 1920s:

> Air and earth form an ant-hill, veined by channels of traffic, rising storey upon storey. Overhead-trains, overground-trains, underground-trains, pneumatic express-mails carrying consignments of human beings, chains of motor-vehicles all racing along horizontally, express lifts vertically pumping crowds from one traffic-level to another.... At the junctions one leaps from one means of transport to another, is instantly sucked in and snatched away by the rhythm of it, which makes a syncope, a pause, a little gap of twenty seconds between two roaring outbursts of speed, and in these intervals in the general rhythm one hastily exchanges a few words with others. Questions and answers click into each other like cogs of a machine [...].[486]

Musil's description resonates with other renditions of metropolitan life from the period. The rhythm of Berlin was exceptionally captured in the feuilleton pages of 1920s newspapers, where authors like Benjamin and Joseph Roth attempted to depict fragments of urban phenomena. Michael Bienert's (1992) analysis of Berlin's feuilleton representations in *Die eingebildete Metropole* (The Imagined City) connects the explosion of circulating newsprint in this decade to images portrayed in stories of the city's endless circulation itself. Depictions such as Joseph Roth's 1924 text *Gleisdreieick* (a U-Bahn station where three train lines intersected) and Hermann Kesser's 1929 text *Potsdamer Platz* "delineate the vision of an 'inorganic' space, fraught with perpetual circulation, in the racket of which the human voice, and with it the humane at all, perish entirely."[487]

In contrast, we may juxtapose this nightmarish speed to the analysis of Henri Lefebvre who, according to Mike Crang, "draws our attention to the overlain multiplicity of rhythms; dominant and quieter, cycles o[f] daily, weekly, annual rhythms that continue

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[486] Robert Musil, Translation by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, *The Man without Qualities*, Volume 1, (London: Pan Books, 1979): 30

[487] Michael Bienert, *Die eingebildete Metropole: Berlin im Feuilleton der Weimarer Republik*, (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1992): 63; my translation.

to structure the everyday as much as 'linear time.'"[488] Language routines are inextricably bound up with the pace of the city, in the city's accelerative tendencies as well as its *timeouts* and *pauses*. If, in Musil's example, speaking has been relegated to the minute gaps within unceasing acceleration, in other examples speaking is more harmonious with city flows and movements, integrated into the city's temporal fabric. In a 1948 poem simply entitled *Montreal*, A.M. Klein crams the heteroglossia of the city into an invented English, superimposed with Gallicisms:

> Grand port of navigations, multiple
> The lexicons uncargo'd at your quays,
> Sonnant though strange to me; but chiefest, I,
> Auditor of your music, cherish the
> Joined double-melodied vocabulaire
> Where English vocable and roll Ecossic,
> Mollified by the parle of French
> Bilinguefact your air![489]

Klein's Montréal is not the backdrop to linguistic movement, but a space itself demarcated through the temporal patterns and routines of speaking. In an article on *l'œuvre migrante*, Michèle Thériault (1999) explains that, for writers of Montréal's Jewish community such as Klein, "it was a question of migrating a plural and diasporic Jewish culture (and spirit) towards a (primarily) English culture, but in the presence of a Francophone reality."[490]

These traces of language usages are equally carved into city structures, leaving an imprint of cultural shifts and conflicts. Language is etched into the city's very foundations: we inscribe our linguistic presence upon our cities, by engraving names and titles into stone and brick, erecting signs and indications, scribbling slogans and spraying graffiti on almost any surface available. The city as palimpsest is not only metaphor:

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[488] Crang, 2001: 189.
[489] A.M. Klein, "Montreal," *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems*, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1948): 30.
[490] Michelle Thériault, "L'Œuvre migrante," *Sur l'expérience de la ville : Interventions en milieu urbain.* (Montréal: Optica, un centre d'art contemporain, 1999): 155; my translation.

inscriptions on city surfaces can indicate the supplanting of one linguistic community by another. Writing on walls in Montréal—fading murals, weathered advertisements, building or store names with missing typography—indicate the shift from English to French as the language of industry, visible language that reflects spatiotemporal transfigurations. With its politicised history of linguistic conflict between English and French, Montréal is rife with such linguistic monuments, and its theatrical past is no exception. On various buildings along St-Laurent Boulevard, the so-called "immigrant corridor" that divided the city's anglophone and francophone communities in the 20th century, one can make out fading indications to the street's many stage entrances on buildings that now house *dépanneurs* or fast cash moneymarkets.[491]

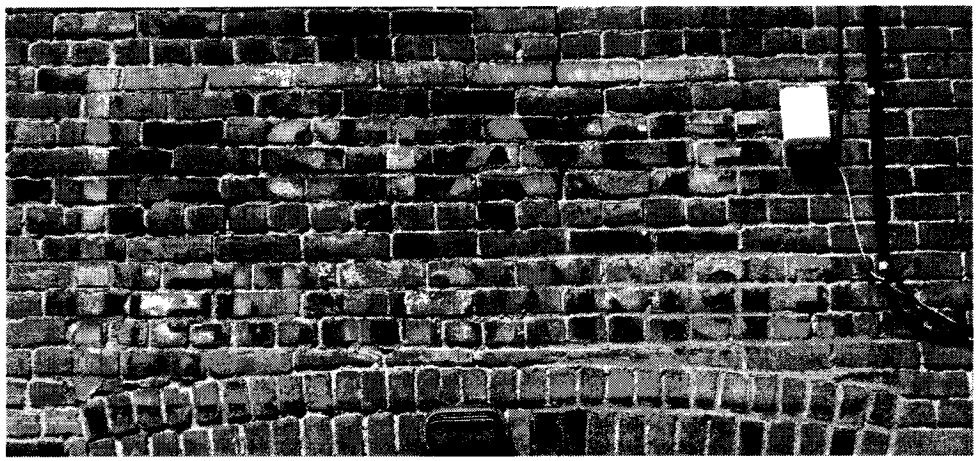

Figure 3. Fading typography on Clark St., behind St-Laurent Blvd. Collection of the author.

Similarly, in New Orleans, one can distinguish a transfer from Napoleonic French to American English etched into century-old family tombstones looming in the famous St-Louis cemetery, where in the late 19th century "né/mort" finally succumbed to "born/died." Fading and missing typography on city surfaces characterise the varying

[491] See Bourassa and Larrue, 1993.

sensibilities toward language use that are prevalent in the marketplace at a given time and place. These are moments where the scraps of city writing all of a sudden bring into relief the temporal shifts of linguistic use.

In cities of many languages, snippets of street language constitute the fragments of the city's greater soundscape, where the sonority and visuality of languages take precedence over the meanings of words uttered. Thériault further delineates an "esthétique migrante" in her study of three artworks that depict the soundscape of Montréal, where the many languages spoken become part of an economy of noises constantly in transit, the din of the city itself:

> Dans une ville où l'usage de la langue est réglementé dans certains contexts, où le territoire qu'elle occupe est constamment mesuré et fait l'objet régulièrement d'analyse dans les medias, nous en devenons nécessairement hyperconscients. Et quand il s'agit particulièrement de l'usage de l'anglais et du français, c'est beaucoup moins la signification des mots qui nous importe que leur simple présence sonore et visuelle. Si l'aspect visuelle de *l'autre* langue est l'objet d'un débat toujours renouvelé à Montréal, sa présence sonore l'est beaucoup moins parce qu'elle est de nature diffuse et difficilement contenue. La ville peut s'appréhender donc selon une géographie purement sonore très significative.[492]

In cities where encounters between languages are ubiquitous, the act of *codeswitching* is not only linguistic, but also gestural, and here we rejoin Zumthor's relation of voice to performance. In Montréal, the importance of being *seen* speaking can be important to being in particular city spaces. Being seen speaking in one way can be as important as being heard whatsoever, that is, being seen to possess the linguistic capital required to choose one language over another in a given context. Monica Heller describes codeswitching in Montréal as involving an "extreme awareness of language" that "comes from the symbolic role it has in political life." She uses the example of hospital clerks to demonstrate, as it were, the hospitable nature of bilingual persons in contexts of complex

[492] Thériault, 1999: 157.

or formal interaction.[493] Formal language games are "acted out" until clerk and patient finally reveal which is their preferred language. In the English hospital of Heller's example, "clerks whose French is passable but not perfect tend to feel that speaking French is, on the one hand, part of their duty to be as helpful and as pleasant as possible, and, on the other, a favor which the patient should appreciate."[494] In Montréal, forms of negotiating the social landscape become increasingly complex if one wanders beyond the familiar grounds of French and English. Gail Scott (1998), a Montréal-based writer whose works shift between English and French, captures this quality in her essay "My Montréal: Notes of an Anglo-Québécois Writer." Attempting to demonstrate her desire for the city's bilingualism to an American friend, she leads him to a bar on Montréal's multi-ethnic "Main" street:

> Unfortunately, in ordering two *Boréales blondes* in French, the waiter, whose mother tongue is Portuguese, uncooperatively replies in English, out of kindness or because he wants to show me that his English is less accented than my French. A game, a battle one risks having each time one buys bread, shoes, or cigarettes, in this neighbourhood where the majority of the population speaks two, three, even four languages. Curiously, even young francophones, wishing to practice their second language, often reply in English if they detect an accent (accents are detected before you open your mouth: a haircut, an item of clothing, a gesture can give you away).[495]

Language and linguistic identity are visibly inscribed on the body through fashion or gesture, acted out in everyday encounters.

As Mike Crang argues, "instead of being a solid thing, the city is a becoming, through circulation, combination and recombination of people and things."[496] The multiplicity of idioms in Montréal reflects a movement and negotiation of language that in my opinion is more circulatory than translative. This constantly evolving relationship might best be construed as framing the nexus of chronotopes of speaking in the city.

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[493] Monica Heller, "Negotiations of Language Choice in Montreal," *Language and Social Identity*, John J. Gumperz, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 112-116.
[494] Ibid., 114.
[495] Gail Scott, "Notes of an Anglo-Québécois Writer," *Brick: a literary journal*, Number 59 (1998): 4-5.
[496] Crang, 2001: 190

Bakhtin's notion of chronotope allows us to conceive of how individual examples of speaking in various cities are representative both of localised peculiarities of urban discourse in particular spatiotemporal spheres and of generalised patterns of speaking that are constantly reiterated in the cultural practices of all cities. While Bakhtin's study is focused on the form of novel, I believe that theatrical forms more effectively serve to organise and reproduce the heteroglossia of contemporary Montréal.

I have developed my reflections on speaking in contemporary Montréal at length because they offer, I believe, a motivational force for Montréal theatre as a network of institutions and practices that layer the city as accumulative acts of repetition. Montréal theatre is immersed in its interlingual field; it is the "generative matrix" within which the theatre operates. In this way, theatre is an abstract form that contributes to, but also serves to interpose, the circulation of languages in this city. In the final two sections, I will first reconsider *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi* before attending more closely to the concept of "edges of forms" in a discussion of Robert Lepage's *The Busker's Opera* (2003).

4.2.2 Border Zones and Chronotope

In Chapter 3, I suggested that Gaston Talbot's experience of language in terms of fitting "with the scenery" and as a "dramatic change" relate the overt theatricality of speaking in the different districts of Montréal. It further suggested that *The Dragonfly of Chichoutimi* stems from the grounded linguistic character of Montréal. Indeed, playwright Larry Tremblay has attributed *Dragonfly*'s evolution to a moment spent contemplating a bilingual menu in Montréal's famous Ben's deli:

> One day, in Montréal, having just let my mind wander in contemplation of a bilingual menu, French on the right, English on the left, I pulled out a little notebook and began to write. I jotted down the first lines of that play that kept running through my head, in which French was to be the main character. There I had my first surprise: the words that I was jotting down were in English. I believed then that this was just a little game, a sort of warm-up before seriously beginning my writing work. But, the next day, when I opened up my notebook, I continued to write in English.[497]

Nevertheless, in Gaston's story/dream, we are provided a variety of descriptions of Chicoutimi, his hometown. Contrary to representing a homogeneous, inner Québec environment, Chicoutimi is likened to a border or frontier, an intermediary zone with many divisions. These aspects of Gaston's surroundings have forced him unwittingly into an unsettled state of linguistic border thinking.

In *Dragonfly,* the space between city and language is vague: the allusions to city dividing lines and border zones seem intertwined with Gaston's own linguistic divide. For a Montréal spectator, the relation between language and space is integral to the perception of difference between city districts and indeed to the public discourse used to describe and categorise the city's spaces. The paradigm of the "two solitudes," borrowed from Hugh McClellan's canonical book of the same title, persists as the standard splitting of Montréal into Anglophone West and Francophone East, divided by the central Boulevard St-Laurent, despite many forms of intermingling of both communities throughout the city's history. Furthermore, the increasingly celebrated high rate of trilingualism among immigrant communities in Montréal lends a linguistic framework to any portrayal of a non-francophone or non-anglophone city space: beyond the vast array of experiences one might enjoy, for instance, in the established communities of Chinatown, the Portuguese Quarter or Little Italy (along the traditional immigrant corridor of Boulevard St-Laurent), or the diversity of newer areas of settlement such as the Côte-des-Neiges district, these

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[497] Larry Tremblay, "Where You're At *à Montréal*," *The Works: Dramaturgy coast-to-coast-to-coast*, Volume 36 (2002): 10-11.

spaces are also perceived as places where particular languages may be heard, spoken and enjoyed.

Gaston's constant re-characterisations of the border zones in relation to Chicoutimi, and indeed to the variable condition of his linguistic self, further relate the dialogicity, the state of constant flux and change that take place in such an environment of sustained and diversified linguistic contact. If we understand the urban experience to be partly characterised by theatricality, that is, by the performance of identity in the presence of strangers, Montréal's particular linguistic configurations intensify the shifting relations between language, identity, and place. Which language, in Sherry Simon's terms, exists in the shadows of the other? In the national discourse of Québec, under the surveillance of such policies as Bill 101, English would seem to exist in the shadows of French. Montréal is indeed statistically more French-speaking than English-speaking, but English is nonetheless spoken by a large community, it is without doubt the dominant language in several municipalities, and furthermore it retains international status as a *lingua franca.* Thus, in Montréal, it is certainly no surprise to anglophones to find themselves in an environment where English is spoken hesitantly or not at all; conversely, a francophone might equally enter neighbourhood streets where French is no longer the main tongue. This experience frequently results in having to assess which language is appropriate in order to address an interlocutor in varying situations, a negotiation of language performance that dramatically animates many linguistic encounters. Moreover, many Montréalers who are comfortably bi- or trilingual live and celebrate the constant shifting between linguistic encounters, both in the public and private spheres.

But once again, we need to look at a text like *Dragonfly* not simply as a text "of translation" but as a text "in circulation"; we need to take stock of its "mobility and

mutability" in order to grasp the interrelation of Montréal's language and theatre as a complex circulatory system. In fact, it is the very iterability of such a text that makes its reflection on Montréal all the more interesting. In its hybridizing effect, *Dragonfly* exemplifies Bakhtin's notion of chronotope as a symbolic form that is always grounded in a particular socio-historical context but, by virtue of its necessary iterability, is simultaneously always in a process of constant renewal and transformation. With its transfiguration from Montréal to performances in Toronto, *Dragonfly* notably elicited starkly different responses. After its initial run in 1995/1996 at Montréal's *Théâtre d'aujourd'hui*, a theatre dedicated to the production of new québécois drama, *Dragonfly* was staged in 2002 by director Kevin Orr at Toronto's *Factory Theatre*. In Montréal press, the everyday nature of linguistic interaction was viewed merely as the backdrop before which the tragic story of Gaston Talbot unfolded. By contrast, in Toronto linguistic conflict and the threat of linguistic assimilation were seen as the central feature of the production, gesturing to a different understanding of multilingualism in a city which, despite tremendous diversity, is dominated by one tongue.[498] The play of supplementarity that took place with this single interurban displacement, without requiring any adjustments to the "English" text for the differing audience bases, exposed a distinctive rupture in the public recognition of *Dragonfly* as an artefact of Montréal's linguistic persona. Thus, while texts of hybrid language such as *Dragonfly* would seem to complicate the notion of "edges of forms" by blurring the distinction between languages, I would argue that, on the contrary, such texts only serve to emphasise their function as "vocalised translations" within the pool of texts informed by the logic of speaking in Montréal.

[498] See Darroch and Morissette, 2005.

4.2.3 Edges and Frames: The Postal Logic of Montréal Theatre

In Michael Ondaatje's novel *The Skin of a Lion* (1987), theatre is depicted as an interactive medium for linguistic identities in pre-talkie Toronto:

> When [Nicholas] returned to Toronto all he needed was a voice for all this language. Most immigrants learned their English from recorded songs or, until the talkies came, through mimicking actors on stage. It was a common habit to select one actor and follow him throughout his career, annoyed when he was given a small part, and seeing each of his plays as often as possible—sometimes as often as ten times during a run. Usually by the end of an east-end production at the Fox or Parrot Theatres the actors' speeches would be followed by growing echoes as Macedonians, Finns, and Greeks repeated the phrases *after a half-second pause*, trying to get the pronunciation right.[499]

After the performance of Lepage's *Circulation* in 1984, audience members described a similar interconnection between the stage and their linguistic everyday. "They play the way we live," said one, "I mean I work in English and I live in French, I speak to her in English, I speak to her in French, and we come to see a play and they do the same thing."[500]

How do languages in Montréal take on form-like qualities that give shape to the city? Can we distinguish their "edges" amidst the city's polyphonic din? Edges imply borders, contours, and limitations, as well as distinctions such as periphery and centre. As such, edges might simply imply dualities, either one side or the other, and once again we could quickly resort to theories of translation to explain the bidirectional action of moving from the one side to the other. But edges also imply frames, and framing implies containing and thus variable or even unknown contents. The act of framing is central to theatricality and recalls once again the aspect of Brechtian theatre that brings *gestures* into relief, makes them citable and recitable. The stage as podium is not only a spatial

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[499] Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin of a Lion*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987): 47; my emphasis.

[500] "A young, confident artist." The CBC Digital Archives Website. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Last updated: 7 September 2004. <http://159.33.65.179/IDC-1-74-1410-9034/people/robert_lepage/clip1>. [Accessed 14 March 2006.]

presentation, a *Vor-Stellung*, that which "sets something apart" from its usual context, but also a temporal interruption, that which sets something apart from its daily routine. Any type of performance—and clearly this is not bound to theatre arts as such—is therefore chronotopic because it allows us to suspend the otherwise constant circulations of city life, if only for a moment. "Quand je pénètre dans l'enceinte du theatre, on me remet un programme, et c'est à cet instant que je quitte l'espace de ma vie quotidienne et m'insère dans un espace où les règles sont différentes, où le role que j'ai n'est plus le même, où devrait s'opérer un changement dans mon rapport au monde."[501] In an acoustical sense, edges also imply pauses and interruptions. (The *intermission* might for that reason be the defining principle of theatrical performance.) Theatre is thus never a simple movement towards totalisation or universalization. Rather, theatricality signals "the unstable processes of repetition and dislocation that occur on condition of the deconstructibility of 'frames' or frameworks."[502] For this reason, when Michèle Thériault writes in regard to the work of David Tomas: "The interdisciplinary site that is translation delves into the notion of 'edges.' It is 'on, between and beyond the edges' that the 'conflicting plural(s)' of translation come to life,"[503] we can begin to conceive of edges as that which delineates and even motivates circulation. Thériault's notion of "conflicting plurality" is consistent, in this way, with her description of the cacophony of Montréal's languages, "une géographie purement sonore," where the sonority of linguistic diversity is separate from the messages these utterances may carry.

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[501] Yves Jubinville, "Mots de passe. Éléments pour une étude du programme," *Veilleurs de nuit, no. 3. Bilan de la saison théâtrale 1990-1991*, (Montréal: Les Herbes rouges, 1991): 200.
[502] Simon Morgan Wortham, *Samuel Weber: Acts of Reading*, (Aldershot, Hampshire, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003): 85.
[503] Thériault, 2001: 65.

The mobility of language in Montréal is facilitated by both textual and oral practices. Theatre is comprised of assemblages of technologies and materialities that act as media for this mobility. In its institutional formats and its repertorial iterations, theatre thus works to organise the city as routes and addresses in ways that resonate with the "postal logic" of halts and relays described by Siegert (1999). In Montréal's postal logic, however, a minimum duality of linguistic signifiers is always in transit.

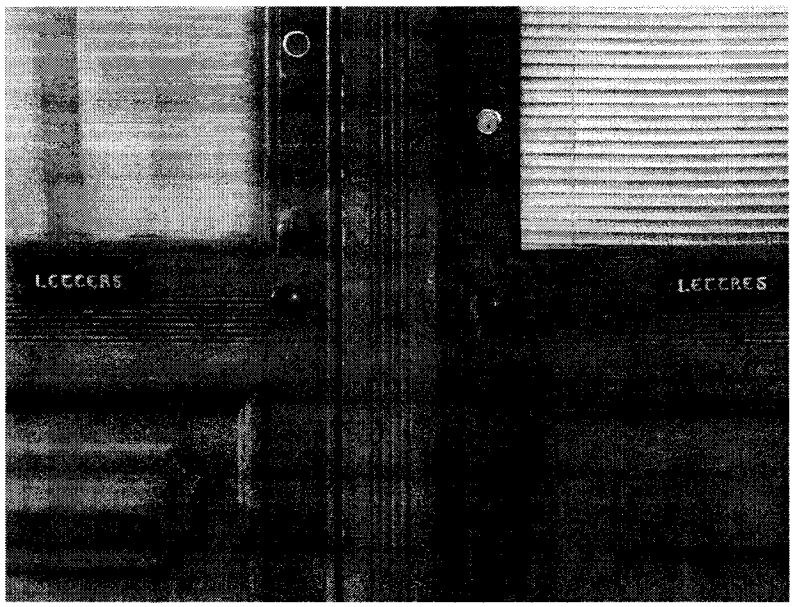

Figure 4. The postal logic of Montréal? Collection of the author.

Language, always translatable by *letters* or *lettres*, is the stuff of theatrical texts, which like literature is an "art of human beings" and a "gift of interception which operates on the basis of feedback loops between human senses and the postal materiality of data processing known as the alphabet."[504] If the materiality of transmission in Montréal consists in the multiplicity of linguistic codes that, taken together, blur into the background *noise* of the city—its "chatter" as "conflicting plurality"—then theatre carves into this soundscape, disrupts and interrupts the "roar of the real," and makes the "edges"

[504] Siegert, 1993[1999]: 10.

of individual languages discernible again. In this capacity for framing, then, theatre makes the languages of the city "citable" and, in particular, "recitable" as gestures, translatable but always retranslatable in words, in the sense we have seen with Brecht and Benjamin. In their iterability, theatrical performances are, from the perspective of information theory, the series of signals made possible by interruption. Theatre *as process* is thus a self-reflexive medium, continuously engaging with its own medial conditions in orality and textuality, audibility and visuality, and communicating itself as "event" with every interruption/repetition. But theatre as *theatron* is also the place where this occurs, where this process is made visibly audible or audibly visible. It is in the combination of *process* and *place* that theatre comes to pass, that is, *takes place*; and thus it is also at their intersection that theatre functions as a *relay* in the system. The printed programme "delivered" to us as we enter a theatre (like the "paratexte" of which Gérard Genette has written) makes this self-reflexivity evident, a textual condensation of the verbal material that will be transmitted real-time during the performance: "Des mots [...] m'attendent à l'entrée, créant ainsi un relais entre ce que j'ai pu lire dans les journaux ou sur les placards publicitaires et la représentation elle-même. Univers des discours. Volontairement ou non, le théâtre participe à la rumeur publique, et le programme, situé à l'avant-poste de la scène, en adopte souvent les poses et le contenu."[505] A "rumeur" is something that one "fait circuler," and thus in circulating "words" or "des mots" consisting of "letters" or "des lettres," theatre in Montréal communicates the "rules of the system," with every relay in the chain of events, as the possibility of reenactment in a different linguistic code.

[505] Jubinville, 1991: 200.

To understand theatre as "hybrid performance," as Tholen proposes, means searching out theatre's processes of overlaying and transfiguration "as partial framing and skewing of the perceptible and the communicable."[506] Following this train of thought, theatre in Montréal is not only incorporated into the city's "circulatory field" and not only constituted in "myriad forms"[507] but can also serve to pinpoint the contours of these. In every accumulation, repetition and rediffusion, theatre is both an enframing and skewing of the "postal logic" of linguistic diversity. This point was driven home by Robert Lepage's English-language version of *The Busker's Opera*, staged in conjunction with Montréal's High Lights Festival in 2003. Lepage's work, from *Circulation* to the present-day, constantly focuses its energy on the centrality of medial overlayings to theatre and theatricality. However, *The Busker's Opera*, Lepage's adaptation of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) to the conditions of today's music industry, folded audio and visual technologies into a format that, perhaps inadvertently, captured the theatrical-linguistic feedback loop of Montréal. As in *Circulation* and many of his other creations, subtitled or surtitled projections were incorporated into the stagework; in the case of *The Busker's Opera*, the surtitles were projected onto a multi-purpose, floating plasma monitor, as if in mockery of the subtitling of foreign-language opera, which would blend and fade into live close-ups of the musicians and actors. In a rewriting that clearly referenced Brechtian *songspiel* (while tidily circumventing the Brecht estate's rejection of his plan to readapt *The Threepenny Opera*, on the contradictory basis of its lack of faithfulness to Brecht's "original"), the language of *The Busker's Opera* was a version of 18th-century English made available to the audience via surtitles in contemporary

[506] Tholen 2002a: 669.
[507] Gaonkar and Povinelli, 2003: 391.

Québécois French. Words and images thus converged quite literally as "floating" signifiers: pre-programmed but nonetheless (nearly) simultaneous translation. For francophone audience members with no knowledge of English, this effect could be explained as an intentional Brechtian strategy of *Verfremdung* (quite in keeping with the production's theme); the same could indeed be said for audiences on the tour circuit outside of Montréal, where the entire performance took place in English. But since the cast consisted predominantly of francophone actors who spoke and sung in, at times, heavily accented (old-)English, Montréal audience members of any linguistic persuasion found themselves reading the French surtitles to ensure comprehension. Reading inscriptions in one language at a slight delay from hearing them aloud in another language encapsulates the feedback effect of theatre with bi- and multilingual audiences of Montréal (and recalls the half-second pause of Toronto theatre that fascinated Ondaatje). This is true as much for francophones who comprehended much of the spoken English as for non-francophones who resorted to reading the French.

The plasma monitor, a frame circulating within the frame of the stage, brought into relief the production's character as *Gesamtkunstwerk*. As an interface of optical and acoustic data streams—here, in the intersection of inscriptions, technologies and voices—the production served as "continual translation work between senses and media"[508] where hearing is intensified as optical (reading) via interlingual transmission. What we see and hear in the *The Busker's Opera* is thus the function of theatre as frame.

In writing about the Frankfurt Opera's 1981 staging of *Aida*, Samuel Weber draws our attention to the materialities of theatre. In the Frankfurt Opera's rendition, the character Radames, captain of the Egyptian palace guard, "dressed in the civilian clothes

[508] Bolz, 1990: 33; my translation.

of a nineteenth-century European businessman," initiates the prelude by seizing a shovel and tearing into the floorboards. "The material basis of the operatic spectacle thus becomes part of the performance. And that materiality includes not merely the actual floorboards of the stage, but the entire social system on which the theater depends."[509] In developing an analysis of this scene, Weber's purpose is to demonstrate this performance as *Entstellung* rather than *Darstellung*, a theatre of *dislocation* rather than *(re)presentation*. However, the dislocating or disfiguring effect of this scene cannot be reduced to an authorial intent, he argues; it cannot be interpreted simply as a Brechtian strategy of *Verfremdung*, for the opera's expected "exotic artificiality" is already based on a contrived and self-conscious distancing effect to which bourgeois theatregoers ascribe: "If audiences identify with opera today, it is precisely because of its distance, not in spite of it."[510] On the contrary, the *Enstellung* or dislocating effect of this scene derived from something beyond calculated design or intentionality. "Rather, something far more disquieting takes place, something which can no longer be understood in terms of the ultimately reassuring opposition of 'outside' and 'inside.' What is represented onstage is an act that calls the space in which it 'takes place' into question. In digging up the stage, Radames undermines the foundations of representation by putting them into (the) play."[511] If the scene was designed as a commentary on the play and its ensuing performance, its unintended effect was to throw into question the entire basis of theatrical performance itself.

> It is this conception of the Work of Art as a meaningful, self-contained entity—which enters time, as it were, only to await realization by inspired but faithful interpreters—that the Frankfurt staging of *Aida* powerfully dislocates. And it does this not by ignoring the text, but by taking that text so

[509] Samuel Weber, "Taking Place: Toward a Theater of Dislocation," *Opera Through Other Eyes*, David J. Levin, ed (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994): 117.
[510] Ibid., 116.
[511] Ibid., 117.

> seriously that its confines no longer appear to be self-evident. Author, work, staging, and audience no longer constitute discrete parameters in an aesthetic (and ontological) hierarchy. Rather, they emerge as aspects of an interdependent network of relationships in which no one instance can be said to dominate the others, or even to function without them.

The breakdown of the specificity of the event begins in the first scene of Act II. Here, the audience found itself facing a staged version of the "original" audience of *Aida* at La Scala in 1872, set in horizontal rows just behind the curtain. As the loges containing the stage audience slowly withdrew, providing the space for the opera's "triumphal scene" to unfold, the dislocating effect of the theatre was laid bare. For

> if the audience thus emerges as the instance that defines and delimits the space of the scene, the latter in turn also defines and delimits the audience. This noncircular circularity dooms any attempt to reduce the *singular specificity* of theatrical representation to the apparently univocal reality of a "real" audience, determined in entirely socio-historical terms.[512]

For Weber, this second scene exposed the perpetual dislocation of theatrical representation as circulation:

> Confronted by its narcissistic double, the Frankfurt audience is impelled to deal with that other of itself, which, like Freud's *uncanny*, should have remained concealed and now begins, not only to emerge, but to circulate.
> It is this circulation—supplanting the more traditional conceptual oppositions of production and consumption, creation and reception—that is transforming the aesthetic space of the Frankfurt Opera, making it into a theater of dislocation in which *taking place* itself becomes the primal scene.

For our discussion, several essential points can be drawn from Weber's analysis.

First, the "framing" effect of theatre cannot be reduced to the unique self-completion of spectacle. Rather, framing itself engages directly in the "skewing" effect to which Tholen gestures. It is precisely in the drive for repetition, for enframing and reframing, that theatrical representation takes place. Second, an analysis of the materialities of theatre has implications on several levels. The first of these, as Weber notes, is the external mechanics of the stage itself—rendered visible in *Aida* by the destruction of floorboards. The second of these, however, are the more intricate

[512] Ibid., 124.

materialities of "the entire social system on which the theater depends." Weber's analysis turns on the social system that surrounds and informs operagoing, but this point presents an understanding of materialities that succinctly recalls Lee and LiPuma's notion of "cultures of circulation" and their "interpretive communities."

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a number of interweaving themes, intended in part to synthesise various strands of this entire dissertation. The first section focused principally on Gaonkar and Povinelli's call to move away from translation theory and towards a more encompassing theory of circulation. The varied studies of Wise, Agnew and Vogl all point to an interrelationship between theatre and circulatory systems of symbols and values. Following their lead, I examined theatre both as a producer of cultural artefacts (as with writings and specific performances) that are embedded in specific spatiotemporal constellations, and as an integrative network of institutions and practices that is intertwined, in the case of Montréal, with the city's circuits of storage and transmission. Since theatre *takes place* both as an intersection of the process of making theatre and the place in which it is made, it is neither stable nor rigid but rather in constant motion. For this reason, I view theatre as an ideal site to track, in Gaonkar and Povinelli's words, the "copresence of varied textual/cultural forms in all their mobility and mutability." Their call to study the "edges of forms as they circulate" was particularly inspiring for an examination of the interplay between Montréal's languages and its theatre as a complex circulatory system. A Montréaler of any background may or may not be a polyglot; the city's linguistic diversity nevertheless resonates through the activities of everyday life.

Theatre provides a base for identifying the interpretive communities of Montréal's particular culture of linguistic circulation. The hybrid language of *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi* and the feedback effect of *The Busker's Opera* demonstrate the variable capacity of theatre to interrupt, transfigure and rediffuse the materialities of linguistic diversity that shape the cultural space of this city.

CONCLUSION: A VOCABULARY FOR THEATRICAL MEDIA

This dissertation developed principally as an exercise in theory-building. I set out to explore the possibility of bringing theatre into a concrete discussion of media and communication. My initial question was: To what extent can the study of materialities of communication accommodate the study of theatre? In the various writings that have contributed to a materialities paradigm, theatre seldom makes an appearance; when it does, it is usually mentioned *en passant*, either to explicate a point or as a metaphor within a broader context. The lack of reflection on theatre seemed, to me, to be an obvious omission, for theatre's presence in Western culture has been as pervasive as "literature" and the media of communication we know today. Throughout this thesis, I have tried to extrapolate concepts central to the materialities outlook and to present them in their relation to the study of theatre. In this way, it was my intention to develop a specific vocabulary for the study of theatre in terms of materialities. The overarching chapter titles of *Materialities*, *Medialities*, *Translation* and *Circulation* were meant to establish the framework for this vocabulary. In this conclusion, I will first briefly review these overarching themes before reviewing each chapter in greater detail.

Like all forms of cultural expression, theatre is comprised of the multitude of materialities available to it in a given era. Deriving from these materialities, theatre works in the realm of mediation, storing and retransmitting cultural knowledge in ways that are at times beyond the purview of any single theatre practitioner. As such, theatre has long functioned as an interface, in Kittler's terms, for various medial streams. However, while theatre works between oral and written, optic and acoustic forms of communication, its

constant engagement with the economy of linguistic exchanges (written and oral) renders *translation* a problematic metaphor. In the age of digitisation, theatre remains a powerful reminder of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of translating any form into any other. With regard to these various considerations, I presented *transposition* as the most viable concept to understand theatre's capacity as an integrative medium. Finally, in considering the effects of such transposition, I further theorised theatre as a system and mechanism of *circulation*. Circulation, I argued, serves at once as a corollary to theories of materialities of communication and overcomes the disjunction between translation as a theory of equivalency and as a process of transposition.

Chapter 1 thus presented the key thrusts of the materialities of communication programme. I suggested that the shared interest in materialities across the social sciences and humanities could be construed as a "material turn," initiated in large measure by the writings of Friedrich A. Kittler in the 1980s and especially Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer's volume *Materialität der Kommunikation* (1988). This material turn has found its most pronounced influence among such scholars of the so-called "German School," to whom I have turned time and again throughout the dissertation. Besides Kittler, Gumbrecht, and Pfeiffer, the work of Norbert Bolz, Bernard Siegert, and Georg Christoph Tholen is also central to this school of theory. The influence of French poststructuralist thought, especially the writings of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, is most clearly represented in the work of Kittler and Siegert. In this way, contemporary German media theory has elaborated French poststructuralism while adhering to its own historical and theoretical orientations. Broadly speaking, then, the term "materialities of communication" refers to "those phenomena and conditions that contribute to the

production of meaning, without being meaning themselves."[513] In his closing remarks to the revised English volume, *Materialities of Communication* (1994), Gumbrecht clarifies this *posthermeneutic* programme as a shift in focus "from interpretation as identification of given meaning-structures to the reconstruction of those processes through which structures of articulated meaning can at all emerge."[514] In the second half of Chapter 1, I explored initial applications of this theoretical base to the notions of hypermedia and to computer technology. Finally, I introduced Georg Christoph Tholen's concept of a "media metaphorology" as a guiding theme into a "materialities of theatre." In rejecting simplistic metaphors of new media as theatre, Tholen's analysis gestures towards situating theatre and performance more directly within contemporary media studies.

In Chapter 2, I began to explore the implications of the material turn for questions of theatre and performance. From a certain perspective, this chapter took Pfeiffer's call to study communication as "performance propelled into movement by variously materialized signifiers"[515] to heart. My critique in this chapter started with the recognition that scholarly interest in the relation of theatre to media has predominantly focused on the uses of new media and technologies in theatrical practice. This by now banal interest in *intermediality* overlooks a more fundamental relationship of theatricality to mediality. I argued that theatre cannot be conceived of separately from prevailing communicational possibilities, even if we accept that artistic intervention takes place within these parameters. My discussion in the first half of this chapter thus focused on the ontology of theatre. Drawing on Philip Auslander's discussion of "mediatized liveness" as well as Walter Benjamin's thesis on "technological reproducibility," I submitted that an

[513] Gumbrecht, 2004: 8.
[514] Gumbrecht, 1994: 398.
[515] Pfeiffer, 1994: 6.

elemental presupposition of theatre is its possibility for repetition and reperformance. Indeed, theatre scholars such as Joachim Fiebach, while rejecting simple communicational models of theatre as a medium, still acknowledge that new technologies of communication have transformed the contours of theatrical practice over time. To develop a discussion of *theatrical presence*, I referred to Jacques Derrida's concept of iterability and his analysis of Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*. Derrida gradually unravels Artaud's paradox: a pursuit of a theatre purely in the present that is ultimately bound to theatrical repetition. These questions of iterability and repetition carried my discussion to James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson and Adrian Johns' compilation on the theme of "arts of transmission." This theme was of particular relevance to the materialities of theatre, I argued, because "arts of transmission" encompass technically transmissive devices as well as physically transmissive practices. In this way, Gregory Nagy's treatment of prealphabetic reperformance was illustrative. In every bodily reenactment, in every repetition of the event, the systemic *rules of the medium* are retransmitted as the materiality of the event itself. Finally, Paul Zumthor's work on body and performance and Bertolt Brecht's theory of *gestus* provided a further basis for conceptualising theatrical repetition as taking place in the play between *(re)citablity* and *interruption*.

In the second half of Chapter 2, I delved more specifically into the technological materialities of theatre. Throughout theatrical history, alphabetical, textual, optic and acoustic technologies have each exerted influence on the emergence and shape of theatrical forms. I first pursued the fascinating proposition that the theatre of Greek antiquity originated as an externalisation of the phonetic alphabet, extending the visual techniques of literacy to the as yet non-literate members of Athens. According to the

varying hypotheses of Derrick de Kerckhove, Jesper Svenbro and Jennifer Wise, this early theatre was a training mechanism for literacy; in de Kerckhove's words, it was alphabetic information processing: a stage of visual and semantic exteriorisation and synthesis, the projection or extension of the eye for "centralized and sustained visual aiming."[516] Of particular interest to me was Svenbro's hypothesis that this extension of the alphabet was a type of "vocal writing." These theses returned us to three preliminary definitions of the materialities of theatre: 1) *exteriorisation* (the material-theatrical sign system as an externalised form of information-processing; 2) *mediality* (theatre as a distinct system of communicative exchange in accordance with technological alphabetisation); and *corporeality* (the orchestration of the public's sensory stimulations while simultaneously separating these sensorial responses from the action on the stage, thereby repressing the public's immediate participation). This discussion progressed, in the final two sections of Chapter 2, to evaluate the place of theatre throughout the work of Friedrich Kittler. Theatre figures importantly within Kittler's overview of the history of optical media. Nevertheless, with his analysis of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art, we are confronted with a relatively dire picture of the future of theatre, announcing in its place the era of sound and film technologies.

In Chapter 3, I extended my theoretical discussion into the realm of translatability and hybridity and sought initial applications in theatrical practice. This chapter did several things, but the general thrust is perhaps best characterised by a quote from Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media*: "Artists in various fields are always the first to discover how to enable one medium to use or to release the power of another."[517]

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[516] De Kerckhove, 1981: 28.
[517] McLuhan, 1964: 62.

McLuhan's understanding of media as translators, and Kittler's position regarding the reintegration of data streams with the advent of digital technologies, offered a point of comparison with views of theatre *as* translation and studies of translation *for* theatre. My goal in this chapter was to bring these theoretical considerations together.

Following Kittler's discussion of digitisation, I asked: Can we indeed claim that, in the current situation, sounds, images, voices and texts have been rendered surface effects by digital technologies? Having spent many years studying theatre in the multilingual sphere of Montréal, I was aware of the theatre's role in engaging with the city's linguistic diversity. A technological a priori, as practiced by Kittler, seemed incapable of attending to this underlying condition of theatrical practice. Following the work of Tholen, I developed a "metaphorology of theatrical translation" in order to situate theatre *between* the increasing effects of digitisation and the recognition of enduring linguistic diversity. Derrida's reflections on the necessary but impossible task of translation were central to this analysis. With this in mind, I asked: In what relationship do language, voice and technical sound reproduction stand to corporeality within the acoustic field of contemporary theatre? To this end, I sought examples in the theatrical work of François Girard, Larry Tremblay and Marie Brassard. My intention here was to present a study of the materialities of theatre that can attend to the fundamental disjunction in translation theory outlined above. I argued that, on the one hand, theatre works to converge media forms as a point of intersecting bodies, texts, voices and technologies. On the other hand, theatre remains persistently tuned to the economy of shifting linguistic exchanges that renders total translation an impossible pursuit. In this way, Girard's production of *Novecento*, Larry Tremblay's *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi*, and Marie Brassard's sound theatre offered illustrative case studies.

Novecento presented a situation of apparent linguistic interchangeability. However, the English and French versions of the production could be said to merge only in those moments when language was suspended. *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi*, on the other hand, made linguistic hybridity its central theme. To take stock of this play's linguistic materiality, I turned to Bakhtin's notions of speech genres. According to Bakhtin, a primary speech genre (for example, the language of everyday life) nourishes a secondary speech genre (such as the language of dramatic poetics). Gaston's invented "hybrid" language could thus be explained as deriving from the materiality of speaking in Montréal. In this way, Gaston is at once an example of, and a thorn in, the logic of universal translation. Yet his invented language ultimately presents words as material objects, as denumerable signifiers floating around with little attachment to meaning. In this regard, Derrida's description of translation as *separating* the sonority of language (its "materiality") from meaning seemed especially applicable. With these examples, I suggested that Montréal theatre operated as a type of feedback loop for everyday multilingual speech acts. This externalisation resonates with Svenbro's description of Greek theatre as "vocal writing," and for this reason I proposed the idea that Montréal theatre frequently works to "vocalise translation."

Finally, Marie Brassard's sound theatre allowed me to reflect on the possibilities of digital sound technologies for modern theatre. This case study revived my discussion of *authenticity* and *liveness* in view of, in Auslander's terms, the "incursion of the mediatized into the live."[518] I drew a comparison between Brassard's theatre with the work of multimedia artist David Tomas, suggesting that each engages in translational activity between medial forms. In considering digitised sound technology as an extension

[518] Auslander, 1999: 158.

of voice, we were once again faced with the separation of sound and voice from meaning and language. With a view to these differing aspects of theatrical translation, McLuhan's chapter on "media as translators" offers another quote that seems particularly revealing: "Translation," he wrote, is "a spelling-out of forms of knowing."[519]

This metaphorology of theatrical translation was informative for my further deliberations in Chapter 4. By introducing *circulation* as a theoretical framework, I undertook an initial synthesis of many of the topics already addressed in chapters 1 through 3. Due to these varied concerns, the structure of the chapter was segmented into four themes: 1) an argument for studying cultures of circulation (Gaonkar and Povinelli) as a corollary to the materialities of communication; 2) a general discussion of theatre and circulation, bringing together many of the themes of the foregoing chapters; 3) a presentation of the spoken character of Montréal as a culture of circulation; and 4) reflections on theatre as a mechanism for identifying "the edges of forms as they circulate" as well as a framing device for processing them. In so doing, I set out to examine cases from Montréal's "theatre network" as the interplay of texts, their enactments, and their dissemination through the interpretive communities of the city.

A reasonable criticism of this final chapter may well be that it remains too fragmented along the fault lines of these themes. There are several possible explanations for this dilemma. One reason may be that, ultimately, no study of the materialities of theatre can evade seeking the meanings, or meaning effects, of texts. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht offers an account of this condition:

> Once again, there is reason to emphasize that the rediscovery of presence effects and the interest in "materialities of communication," the "nonhermeneutic," and "production of presence" by no means eliminate the dimension of interpretation and meaning production. Poetry is perhaps the

[519] McLuhan, 1964: 63.

> most powerful example of the simultaneity of presence effects and meaning effects—for even the most overpowering institutional dominance of the hermeneutic dimension could never fully repress the presence effects of rhyme and alliteration, of verse and stanza.[520]

I would submit that theatre is an equally powerful example. The presence effects of live theatrical performance remain indisputably difficult to disentangle from the production of meaning—a situation to which departments of Theatre and Performance Studies are well attuned. Thus, I believe many would find that there is simply something "missing" from my discussions of *Novecento*, *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi*, the sound theatre of Marie Brassard's *Jimmy*, *La Noirceur* and *Peepshow*, and Robert Lepage's *Circulation* and *The Busker's Opera*. I can only reiterate that, within the scope of this dissertation, it was my intention to use these examples for the sole purpose of delineating materialities underlying the theatre of Montréal.

A second, related explanation may well reside in my perhaps too casual integration of Bakhtin into the theoretical discussions of chapters 3 and 4. Bakhtin's various models for studying linguistic diversity clearly derive from literary interpretation. Indeed, presence effects and meaning effects are ineluctably fused within his complex understanding of *utterance*. For this reason, among the thinkers to which I refer, Bakhtin plainly presents the most antithetical position to the belief that conditions contributing to the production of meaning can be distinguished from meaning itself. Nevertheless, I find Georg Christoph Tholen's (albeit passing) invocation of Bakhtinian theory in regard to "hybrid performance" to be especially telling. For as convincing as I find so many of the viewpoints of materialities that I have presented here to be, no one of these, on their own, seems to adequately account for the persistence of linguistic diversity and its integration into theatrical practice. Thus, I believe that Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and hybridity

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[520] Gumbrecht, 2004: 18.

must be considered in any study of the cultural dynamics of a city such as Montréal and the wealth of multilingual theatre it produces. The place of Bakhtin in such endeavours is an area of study to which I would like to return in future work.

In closing, I believe it also pertinent to reflect on the clear affinities between the so-called "Toronto School" centred on Marshall McLuhan, Harold Innis, and others, and the "German School" which has formed the theoretical base of my study. Both schools are fundamentally sceptical of stable "meanings" or inherent "content," sharing Innis's central concerns with the spatial and temporal biases of linkage, storage, and transmission. Further, their shared emphasis on the "material carriers" of information underscores that the circulation of knowledge via multiple cultural forms can both affect the nature of the message and alter the conditions of its reception. It is my proposal that modern institutions of theatrical activity, such as the large-scale festivals of many global cities, offer an opportunity for a comparative analysis between these Canadian and German theories of media and communication. Such a study could build in particular on Kittler and Bolz's understanding of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a precursor of the "hypermedia" that McLuhan anticipated. In addition, an analysis of theatre festivals as multimedial hubs would provide a specific site for the comparative analysis of cities and the circulatory cultural flows that interconnect them.

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