THEATRE, PERFORMANCE AND DIGITAL TOOLS:
MODELLING NEW MODES OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates how theatre and performance artists use new media tools to facilitate political engagement. The chapters cover a diverse range of performances—from interventions in video games to mobile phone walking tours to theatre productions that use social media. In contrast to the dominant narrative of intermedial theatre and performance studies, when analyzing these examples I consider intermediality as a political rather than solely aesthetic mode. By explicitly connecting intermedial approaches to political performance—and acknowledging how these two concepts are already always conjoined—this dissertation works to expand how we might think about intermediality as a lens that covers digital practices as both form and content. I also consider the value, challenges and dangers of asking spectators to interact with performers and digital tools in order to model new modes of political engagement, and question how various artistic choices impact the ways that audiences are activated through these new technologies. As the examples range in form, content and location, this dissertation traverses numerous intermedial modes and political topics—a multitude of approaches that challenge any singular or simple understanding of how intermediality functions in contemporary theatre and performance.

Although there is wariness about overstating the role of new media in creating concrete political change, examples such as the Occupy movement reveal how political discourse is now intricately linked to the digital. In this dissertation, rather than simply reinforcing cyberutopian or cyberpessismistic views regarding the political impact of digital communication, I investigate socio-political contexts and analyze the motivations and receptions of specific projects. I consider a number of questions, including: How are new media performances influenced by the potentially democratizing nature of digital interactions? How do performances integrate with

digital media to investigate the ways we connect—or fail to connect—as publics? How does

performance also address exclusions related to the digital? Who is the 'we' in the intersubjective

relations produced by intermedial performance?

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<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

INTERMEDIAL INTERVENTIONS

> It is my contention that the digital, networked age . . . lends itself to a horizon of dissent, resistance and rebellion. This is not inevitable, and is not without significant problems and barriers, but is the result of specific circumstances and technological configurations, and of the collective will to make it happen. (Joss Hands 18)

> Politics is a durational engagement, a process, a daily act, a way of envisioning a future, a doing and a thing done—which, incidentally, is also the definition of performance. (Diana Taylor, "The Politics of Passion")

It is a hot and humid July afternoon. I am in a small Toronto park I have never been to before. It is a narrow bit of green, cutting between a railway corridor and a busy road. I move with a small group of people, following a friendly young woman with a clipboard. She stops and pulls out a small object that has been placed inside a bush. She puts it in the palm of her hand and holds it up for us to see. It looks like a miniature computer made of paper. Our guide, Georgina, then passes it around. She tells us that the image was made with a 3D printer and then goes on to relate parts of the life story of Aaron Swartz, the computer programmer and hacktivist who fought for open internet before his suicide in 2013 at the age of 26.

As we move through the park together, we stop at various points. At each location Georgina pulls out an object that has been placed in the environment. The objects vary—from galoshes to a small cow to a Grecian looking plate—and include several 3D print outs. All connect in some way to the three stories she guides us through. On top of Swartz's story, Georgina also relates the myth of Daedalus, who built wax wings for his son Icarus, and a tale set in the future, following the life of a government scientist named Cassandra. At each stop she relates a small portion of one of the tales. By the end of the walk we have heard many aspects of

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these characters' lives, including how Daedalus and Icarus were banished to an island; how Swartz was arrested by MIT police for breaking-and-entering after he set up a computer on campus that automatically downloaded millions of articles from the JSTOR database; and how Cassandra was impeded in her environmental research by the government.

This walk was part of Small Wooden Shoe's *Summer Spectacular*, a site-specific performance produced as part of Toronto's 2014 Fringe Festival. The production, which took place in Frankel Lambert Park, had three guides leading small groups on walks before the entire group convened for a collective sharing action and a puppet show. In the walking portion of the production, the stories varied in both form and content. The story of Daedalus and Icarus is a well-known Greek myth. Cassandra's story is also fictional, but was made up by the company specifically for the production. In contrast, Swartz's is a true story that had recently made headlines worldwide. In 2011, after being arrested by MIT police and the United States Secret Service, Swartz was charged federally on number of counts, including wire and computer fraud, theft and intent to distribute copyrighted materials. If found guilty, he faced up to 35 years in jail. In January 2013, after pleading not guilty and refusing a plea bargain from federal prosecutors, Swartz committed suicide.

Yet these stories also intersect in a number of ways. First, they are all focused on individuals who innovate and adapt technologies. For example, Daedalus works with a material he has on hand—wax—to invent a mode of flying, while Swartz uses his skills as a programmer to fight for open internet. At the same time, all three individuals are impeded by societal or government forces when they try to share knowledge. Rather than focusing on Icarus' fault of flying too close to the sun, the company reflects on Daedalus and Icarus' circumstances, as they

were banished to an island with few resources. For Cassandra's story, her conflict with the very government she works for reflected a pressing issue in Canadian politics at the time. Although her story was set in the future, it clearly alluded to the then-government of Canada, under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who muzzled government scientists. The government would not allow scientists to talk to the media without the direct permission of their minister's office. Then, even if they were granted permission, they had to be accompanied by a government communications officer who could interfere in interviews.

When the three groups complete their walks, the entire audience comes together. At this point, the company invites them to intervene in the stories by writing on a piece of paper and then attaching it to a giant yarn web. The company left this part very open to participants, who could write whatever they wanted. On the day I attended, there were some playful, silly responses, such as "Space Cats save Swartz." However, most of the papers responded to the political tension in the stories, with many reflecting on the importance of open data and the possibility of changing current government policies. For example, one said "Make the internet an election and political issue, not an afterthought." In the final part of the performance, the entire group watches a puppet show about one of the progenitors of the atomic bomb, physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer—who the company calls Dr. Op. Again, the story focuses on the sharing of information and forces that surveil and punish those who want to make information open. The production ends ambiguously as the company claims the Dr. Op portion was written by Cassandra and remains unfinished. In the end, the company encourages the audience to go out into the world and change the stories.

This dissertation investigates modes of intermedial performance that aim to activate and

engage their audiences politically (I will discuss differences between these two modes on pages 24-25). In particular, I focus on productions that work with digital tools to achieve this goal. I could begin this study with any number of examples of theatre and performance that utilize digital tools and practices. There are several internationally recognized theatre makers, such as Robert Lepage and The Builders Association, who have become associated with staging digital performance spectacles, with multiple screens and types of media converging in a formal theatre space. Instead of focusing on a large-scale, multimedia piece of theatre, I begin with a production that does not relate to new technologies in such an overt way.

On the surface, *Summer Spectacular* is the complete opposite of large-scale intermedial spectacles that visibly centre on technology through their form. Yet Small Wooden Shoe presents a different kind of "spectacular" that is intermedial through its integration of the digital into both the form and content of the piece in subtle, intimate ways.[1] The production's intermediality works on several levels. The use of puppetry relates to definitions of intermediality that focus on the inclusion of various types of media within theatre spaces, whether they are digital or not. At the same time, the entire production also responds to contemporary debates about the sharing of information and the open internet. The production physically engages with contemporary digital tools through the use of 3D printed objects that become storytelling devices. While not printed in the moment of exchange with the spectators, the objects' presence evokes the digital innovation and sharing that Swartz's story focuses on. The bulk of the production makes links between

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[1] The concept of the "spectacular" also relates to the form and content of the work. Small Wooden Shoe's use of massive puppets creates a visual spectacle in a literal sense. The show's content, however, relates to Guy Debord's more critical use of the term from *The Society of the Spectacle*. The company is critical of how ideas become mediated and distorted by those in positions of power, which relates to Debord's critiques of mass media.

mythical/historical sharing of information and contemporary debates about digital sharing. Yet the ending goes beyond even our present time, as the performers encourage the audience to alter what they have seen in the future, in the world beyond the performance space.

At its core *Summer Spectacular* questions how web users can fight against the gatekeeping of knowledge. This intersection between the digital and the political is at the centre of my study. Throughout this dissertation, I consider how a number of theatre and performance makers work with digital tools to model how we, as citizens, might engage politically with the world around us. In this introductory chapter, I outline the multiple starting points for this study, which come from both intermedial and critical media studies. I trace various understandings of the term "intermediality" within performance studies in order to tease out the political potential of this mode of performance. I also consider the inherent difficulties that come with analyzing the political in performance, particularly in terms of impact. Finally, I outline each of my chapters, highlighting the examples I will discuss and the various digital performance forms each traverses.

From Liveness to Both-And: Tracing Intermedial Approaches

The integration of various non-theatre media into the space of performance is not necessarily a new phenomenon; however, there has been an upsurge in this practice with the increasing availability and affordability of digital tools. In response, many theatre and performance critics have debated what terms and issues to pivot the discourse of intermediality around. In the early 2000s, much of the discussion about the relationship between theatre and technology centred around the term "liveness", which was first coined in Philip Auslander's 1999

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publication of the same name. Auslander's work became a starting point for many conversations about performance and televisual culture.[2] In the book, Auslander critiques the belief that live performance is separate from mass mediated events and circulation. He takes particular issue with claims Peggy Phelan makes in her book *Unmarked* (1993). Phelan's book does not focus on the role of technology in performance, but rather questions the assumption that visibility equals political power in performance. Yet, certain claims she makes in this text became the focal point in debates about the role the televisual plays in theatre through Auslander's intervention. In particular, Auslander challenges Phelan's statement that "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" (146).

Auslander finds Phelan's definition limiting as it privileges and values the live event as non-reproducible, and therefore completely removes it from mass media circulation. He argues that the live is an inherent part of aesthetic, economic and cultural systems driven by mass media technologies (*Liveness* 5) and, as such, live performance cannot be considered ontologically removed from mediatization (45). However, while seemingly posing the live and mediatized as codependent, Auslander also places them in competition, with mediatization mostly subsuming the live. He even claims that, "at the level of cultural economy, theatre (and live performance generally) and the mass media are *rivals*, not partners" (1, my emphasis). Auslander notes that

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[2] As Auslander was responding to technologies and televisual culture of the 1990s, his work is now dated in many ways. For example, his discussions of live concerts focus on the relationship between the audience and onstage screens. Now, personal screens complicate this dynamic even further. While I find his work useful as it became the starting point for many conversations about the role of theatre and performance in an increasingly mediatized world, his focus on the televisual rather than the digital should be noted.

this understanding of "cultural economy" is not limited to financial relations between the two but also extends to "the relative degrees of cultural prestige and power enjoyed by different forms" (1).

Auslander's position has been (sometimes unintentionally) supported by several intermedial performance scholars who attempt to situate either live performance or mass media as having a higher "degree of cultural prestige and power." Many intermedial performance scholars use the terms he has established as the core of the debate: "the live" and "the mediatized." Auslander defines "Mediatized performance" as performance that is spread via different reproductive technologies, such as film, radio and television (4). His definition of the "live" is more difficult to pin down, as he notes that what we think of as live performance—built upon real-time, person-to-person exchanges—is now received within a socio-cultural context dominated by mediatized performance. Auslander points out that the two forms may not be ontologically different, as live forms mimic mediatized ones, while mediatized forms have live components. Auslander uses examples from the music industry to illustrate this point. He notes that seemingly live events, such as music concerts, are mediatized in material ways and conform to expectations formed through mediatized representations. On top of the inclusion of screens and amplification at stadium shows, many contemporary musicians, such as Katy Perry and Lady Gaga, mimic their own music videos in their live performances.

Many digital performance scholars follow Auslander's lead and point out that the live and mediatized impact one another. However, referring to them as separate entities frequently leads to a preference for one over the other, which follows Auslander's logic that they are in competition. This issue occurs most frequently in discussions of intermedial theatre, rather than

broader discussions of intermedial performance. For example, in *Staging the Screen* (2007), Greg Giesekam investigates examples of intermedial theatre that integrate screened images onstage. He notes that—for many citizens in North America and Europe— mediatized images are prevalent in quotidian existence and that live theatre is no longer a common occurrence. He thus argues that, as live performances take time and effort to seek out and attend, they increasingly demand a level of concentration separate from the everyday in these locations. Giesekam then goes on to suggest that "even if we reject an ontological distinction between live theatre and the electronic media . . . in actual practice, we may often adopt *more active* spectating strategies towards them" (23, my emphasis). Although Giesekam claims he wants to avoid binarizing live and mediated performance practices, he also notes that incorporating film and digital media onstage can provoke spectators to use their imaginations more fully (22).

Giesekam is not alone in this privileging of the screened image onstage. Auslander himself clearly displays his bias towards mass media aesthetics in a similar discussion of performances that include screened images. He argues that screened images pull the focus of contemporary audiences—although he possibly runs into a contradiction as he attributes this interest to both spectators' fascination with the technical wizardry of such aesthetics and their familiarity with this mode of representation (*Liveness* 41). Regardless of whether this focus is the result of a lack of understanding of the technology or an intimacy with it, Auslander considers mediatized images more valuable and interesting than the live performers onstage. Matthew Causey comes to a similar conclusion in his discussion of the use of screened images in performance. He focuses on the use of what he terms a "videated body" (43), which occurs when performers engage with and manipulate images of themselves on video. While Causey initially

notes how the live and mediatized blur and combine in this form of performance, he goes on to create a hierarchy between the two, stating that "the videated image, being alterable, contains the ability to oscillate realities within the technological and, thereby, retains *an advantage* over the temporal/spatially bound live subject" (45, my emphasis). Thus, like Giesekam and Auslander, Causey places value on the screened image and re-invokes a separation between the traits of live performance and mass media.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Amy Petersen Jensen cites Auslander's claims to privilege live performance and decry the infiltration of mass media expectations into American theatre. In her book, *Theatre in a Media Culture* (2007), Jensen looks at the ways mass media have altered American theatre practices in production and reception. Like Auslander, she focuses on how live performance is circulated and perceived in a cultural space increasingly dominated by mass media. She argues that in response to this shift, theatre "has become mediatized" (2) both in aesthetics and in its cultural language more generally (146). While Jensen claims that the embedding of these languages and forms does not negatively affect the theatre (146), she frequently situates mediatization as doing just that—impinging on theatre through its cultural dominance.

Jensen places the spectator as key to understanding this shift in theatre practices—as reception takes place in a world dominated by mass-mediated images and fast moving technologies. Her invocation of audiences serves to re-hierarchize the relationship between live performance and mass media as she claims the spectator's body is "a site in which the competing claims of both theatre and media reside, each *contending* for cultural power and prominence to maintain cultural efficacy" (4, my emphasis). This sense of competition between theatre and

mass media reinstates a binary relationship between the live and the mediatized. The assumed

tension between the two also leads Jensen to reveal a bias and nostalgia towards what she terms a

"pure theatre," that embraces its own media-specific qualities (3).[3] Jensen's sense of a "pure

theatre" is tied into her definition of contemporary mass media, which focuses solely on

corporate-driven, economically dominant structures. Her understanding of mass media implies a

one-way direction of communication and fails to recognize the proliferation of new media

technologies, with user engagement often at the core (12). Instead, she has a simplistic

understanding of how media circulates, claiming current media technologies "[subvert] authentic

communication" (8). She places live performance as an oppressed entity, claiming that media

conglomerates and other major forces in contemporary media technology have "colonized"

American theatre (3, 22).

While many scholars attempt to break apart this binary, it seems that using "live" and

"mediatized" as core terms of study in intermedial theatre inevitably creates a sense of

competition, as blurring between these two modes becomes sidelined and differences between

the two come to the forefront. In addition, the political potential of performance—the issue at the

core of Phelan's study—often gets lost in formal attempts to situate one mode of viewing as more

dominant. This creates a myopic political project, rather than an outward looking one that

embraces the roles of both performance and media in daily life. In response to this problem, the

nature of the debate has begun to shift from Auslander's terms to an acceptance of performance

as an integral part of the digital. Christopher Balme is critical of scholarship that tries to establish

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[3] Jensen is not unique in her position. Scholars including Jill Dolan and Erika Fischer-Lichte also point back to a nostalgic understanding of a "pure" theatre unaffected by other media forms.

theatre's media-specific qualities, and how such discussions inevitably create tensions and hierarchies between the concepts the 'live' and the 'mediatized.' He notes that scholars and practitioners, including Erika Fischer-Lichte, Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, narrowly locate performance through physical co-presence and use this definition to make claims as to its unique values ("Surrogate" 83). He argues that this definition continues to support Auslander's sense of competition between live performance and mass media (83), but also notes that this assumption is mostly on the scholarship side of intermedial performance and that many practitioners are already beyond this distinction.

Balme effectively raises the example of Rimini Protokoll's *Call Cutta* (2004-2008), a production that exists entirely as a mobile phone exchange between an Indian call centre employee and a solo spectator walking around an urban space, to emphasize the potential for the live and the mediatized to produce a "mutual enrichment" (90). In the piece, the call centre employee directs the spectator around a city and the two end up having a casual exchange about their lives. Balme argues: "One cannot discuss a performance such as *Call Cutta* in terms of competition between the live and the mediatized: the relationship between the two is entirely symbiotic; they are imbricated into one another like Siamese twins and cannot be pried apart without severe damage ensuing" (90). The projects I investigate in this study work within this understanding of the digital as they explore everyday uses of technology and inextricably link the concepts of the live and the mediatized. One of the examples I discuss in Chapter One, Jonathan Goldsbie's *Route 501 Revisited* (2012), investigates how we communicate via social networks while in public space. This site-specific performance had participants ride on a Toronto streetcar and communicate solely through a Twitter hashtag. It is impossible to note any one moment in

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the piece that is live versus one that is mediatized. The entire experience and performance relies on the simultaneous presence of the audience in the site-specific space and online.

In their book *Multimedia Performance*, Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer also acknowledge a need to move beyond the scope of the liveness debate. Like Balme, they find that the terms live and mediatized remain in opposition, even as scholars attempt to untangle this tension. They suggest "multimedia performance" as a "third term" that works to diffuse the assumed tension between live performance and mass media (5). However, from following their discussion, I would argue that they are actually proposing a framework of intermedial performance to get away from the liveness debate, a position that follows my own feelings about the subject. In their argument for the term "multimedia" to be inserted into the debate, they use the concept of intermediality to back up their claims, noting that this framework breaks away from conversations about the live and the mediatized and instead offers "a lens through which to explore the patterns manifesting across media" (70-71).

The term "intermediality" has been taken up within a performance studies framework by members of the International Federation for Theatre Research's Theatre and Intermediality Research Group. The group's definition of the term mirrors this shift away from binarizing the live and mediatized through their concepts of the "in-between" and "both-and". The group has published two key resources in the study of intermedial theatre and performance: *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance* (2006) and *Mapping Intermediality in Performance* (2010). In both books, performance scholars argue that an intermedial framework moves away from debates around medium specificity and instead traces the blurring and mixing that occurs between media. This has a direct impact on notions of live performance and mass media as separate and

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competing. In the group's first publication, they situate intermediality via the "in-between", as "a space where the boundaries soften—and we are in-between and within a mixing of spaces, media and realities" (Chapple and Kattenbelt, "Key" 12). In their 2010 publication, this idea is altered in favour of the "both-and" in order to avoid situating intermediality between distinct mediums and as a kind of liminal space separated from the everyday. Robin Nelson notes that this concept builds on the "in-between", but also evokes how digital cultures rely on and create various networks of relations.[4] He argues, "The manifestations of digital culture—the media forms, operational modes of devices, and cultural habits of consumers and users—not only inherently entail a relationship with an 'Other', but are structured according to a necessary interrelation with any number of 'Also-Others'" ("Prospective" 17). The shift to a "both-and" perspective embraces performance's ability for simultaneity and juxtaposition—including its ability to embody both live and mediatized aspects together. Instead of focusing on the space between mediums, intermedial performance studies addresses the fluidity between mediums and how they constantly impact one another.

Working within these definitions, various scholars, including Balme and Chiel Kattenbelt, establish how intermedial performance highlights and even alters perception and embodiment. These studies are particularly concerned with the form's aesthetic qualities and potential for sensorial rather than political effects. Following the work of theorists Jacques Rancière and Claire Bishop, I recognize that the aesthetic is always already tied to the political. My dissertation contributes to the field of intermedial theatre studies by addressing how the

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[4] As I will discuss below, there are several problems with the term "digital culture", including its reliance on the concept of culture as contained and uniform. Since Nelson uses the term in his discussion of intermediality, I include it in my discussion, but will attempt to problematize my own use of the term throughout this dissertation.

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field's focus on aesthetics often overlooks how these two modes are co-imbricated. By connecting intermedial approaches to political performance I hope to expand the field's scope and emphasize how theatre makers engage the digital in both form and content.

My analysis considers how this both-and model extends to conversations about the relationship between the aesthetic and the political. In a similar trajectory to the liveness debate, many critics have begun to make arguments about the interconnectedness between these two concepts. Most notably, Rancière claims that aesthetics are always invariably embedded in the political, and can even model new political configurations (*Politics* 40). Rancière unpacks this idea when describing what he terms the "aesthetic regime of art." Key to this regime is the simultaneous existence of both artistic autonomy and heteronomy. According to Rancière, the aesthetic realm's autonomy/non-autonomy is what makes it part of the political, as it is both part of the everyday and separated from it. In *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop extends Rancière's philosophical approach to art criticism, noting that his understanding of autonomy centres on the way we experience art. Bishop notes that, as this experience is always unstable and subjective, it has political potential for Rancière. Yet, she also warns that this connection may be too broad, as "it opens the door for all art to be political" (28).

Performance scholar Shannon Jackson builds on this connection between the political and the aesthetic in her 2011 book *Social Works*. She also manages to weave intermedial approaches into this relationship, noting that this form breaks down traditional boundaries of the aesthetic. She claims that the most critical of these is the "long-standing debate in twentieth and twenty-first century theory on autonomy and heteronomy, art's proper inside and its external outside" (27). Throughout the book, she situates intermedial spaces as full of potential for diverse political

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engagement as they unsettle notions of both sociality and artistic practices. Like Rancière, Jackson finds intermedial approaches blur divisions between autonomy and heteronomy, which in turn affects the political potential of art. In particular, Jackson finds intermedial performance can focus in on "infrastructural politics", which enacts "a different way to join aesthetic engagement to the social sphere, mapping a shared interest in the confounding of insides and outsides, selves and structures" (29).

My approach also builds on the work of intermedial performance scholar Peter Boenisch. The both-and model turns away from discourses of medium specificity that prop up the opposition between live performance and mass media. Boenisch explicitly addresses this in his definition of intermedial theatre, noting that the belief that "'theatre+media=intermedial theatre' . . . [perpetuates] the idea of medial specificity" ("coMEDIA" 34). He dismantles this simple equation by noting that theatre is inherently intermedial as it always incorporates bodies, objects and technologies within it. With this in mind, Boenisch argues that any conception of a pure theatre is flawed as theatre has not developed in isolation. Instead, he notes that theatre "is a media technology that utilizes, at its very heart, other media to transmit and store, while it highlights, at the same time, the process of processing information" ("Aesthetic" 113). Other intermedial scholars follow this logic, situating theatre as a hypermedium. In these discussions, performance is not valorized as pure and unmediated, but embraced for its ability to integrate and represent multiple mediums. Klich and Scheer note that this integration does not privilege any singular medium or element, such as the live or the mediatized, over others as they can only be understood through their interrelation (77). This kind of hypermediacy is seen in the various ways that theatre artists pull in other kinds of media to comment on and add to what has already

been created. For example, in *WeeTube*, a production I discuss in Chapter One, Theatre

Replacement screens their own YouTube videos as well as videos created by YouTube users

unknown to the company. In this work, the theatre becomes a space of shared watching, evoking

the times we watch YouTube videos together in more private spaces. Returning to Balme's

statement, it is impossible to separate the theatrical experience from the use of digital video in

the work, as they build upon one another.

Hypermedial Politics and Activism

      This understanding of intermedial performance can be placed in conversation with

Auslander's starting point: Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked*. The status of theatre as a hypermedium

directly relates to Phelan's search for performance's radical potential—which she perhaps

problematically places in its resistance to commodification and reproduction. She notes that

performance's apparent non-reproducibility is "its greatest strength" (149) and that which gives it

"its distinctive oppositional edge" (148). However, theatre's hypermedial status does not negate

the political potential of performance. Rather than situating performance's radicalism in terms of

its ability to avoid commodification as Phelan does, intermedial approaches embrace theatre and

performance's potential to intervene in the circulation of mass media and to critique mass media

practices. This framework offers a return to Phelan's questions about power and visibility, which

at times have gotten lost in attempts to extricate the concepts of live and mediatized from one

another. I am interested in considering intermedial performance in relation to questions about

how political power and representation circulate within contemporary societies. In particular, I

want to place intermediality in conversation with Phelan's argument that representational

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"excess" has the potential to lead to new political possibilities, via alternative readings within visual culture (2).

Birgit Wiens argues that hypermediality can create dialogue about the mediatization of society. She notes:

> the intermedial stage can be understood as an adjustable platform, or interface, in which real, imagined and virtual spaces can performatively reconfigure one another and create enlightening tensions. This stage thus becomes a discursive instrument that resonates with current social transformation processes brought about by digital media and interconnectivity as well as cultural and economic globalization. (94)

Thus, an intermedial framework searches out the radical and political potential of performance in the face of globalization and increasing commodification. Wiens' understanding of intermedial performance moves away from medium specificity and an assumed rivalry between its live and mediatized aspects. Instead, she proposes that performance can enable critical dialogue and debate around the social practices of technology and globalization. An intermedial approach to performance acknowledges the flow and embeddedness between seemingly diverse aspects of an increasingly networked society, including art, science, biology, and technology.

Hacktivist tactics exemplify how this broad understanding of intermedial performance, as working through and between spaces, connects to activist intervention. Hacktivists use hacking techniques to make temporary, non-violent activist interventions online. Generally, their work acknowledges how, in mediatized environments, performance is not limited to any single medium or space, but occurs both online and offline simultaneously. They use performance to

move away from supposed binaries between spaces and modalities in a way that embodies them all at once. Such an approach is seen in the work of Electronic Disturbance Theatre (EDT), who Jill Lane argues performs "between live presence and on-line simulation, between authoritative 'scientific' knowledge and storytelling, between artist and activist" (137). EDT—made up of Ricardo Dominguez, Carmin Karasic, Brett Stalbaum and Stefan Wray—use online disturbances to support the work of Mexico's Zapatistas. Their interventions include the creation and use of the software tool FloodNet, which attacks websites by searching for non-existent URLs until their servers get overwhelmed through over-access. This technique is often referred to as a denial of service attack. These performances work in-between spaces, relying on an understanding of presence as participation as users download the FloodNet applet and cause mass disturbances online.

This form of activism works from within, disrupting, but not destroying, the ways messages are circulated and controlled within mediatized environments. Activist performances like those by EDT cannot be read through a rivalry between live performance and mass media, but instead embrace a complex fluidity between mediums and spaces. This is also seen in other, more recent, activist performances, such as those associated with the Occupy movement. In these events, the borders between what is live and mediatized is impossible to discern, as participants exist in multiple spaces and mediums simultaneously, organizing through online sites, reflecting on their experiences on social media and engaging corporate media outlets in attempts to promote their messages. The ability of these movements to network and form connections over multiple sites exemplifies how an intermedial approach expands performance's potential as a mode of social critique and intervention.

Wiens' vision of intermedial performance as an "adjustable platform"—and its implied multimodality—connects to Gabriella Giannachi's work on new media and performance. Giannachi also locates performance's potential for intervention in the mixing between different locations and media. Coming from a more biopolitical bent, she argues that, "it is precisely at the level of this contamination, of this hybridity, or excess, that the info-politics produced by the reevolutionary coming together of art, economics and science can produce social and political change" (6). Like Phelan, Giannachi places political potential in the concept of "excess"—that which is between or beyond normal configurations or understandings. Giannachi uses the example of Blast Theory to illustrate what she means by this hybridity or excess. This UK-based company, whose work I discuss in Chapter Four, situate themselves as simultaneously between seemingly media-specific approaches, including gaming, theatre, visual art and film. This hybridity extends to their content as well, as they investigate topics including global networks of communication, surveillance, virtual realities and war. While Giannachi's study focuses on a number of theatre and performance art examples, this hybridity extends to daily performances, as she claims we are all producers and consumers in mediatized socio-cultural environments.[5] Thus, we all continually perform the practices of globalization, which circulate in everyday contexts at a local level. However, performance also has the ability to intervene by questioning how we engage in these practices—and perhaps even pointing to different possibilities.

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[5] Interestingly, Giannachi makes no mention of the use of the term hybrid in postcolonial studies. Yet, her equation of the concept with 'excess' points to a possible confluence between uses of the term in digital and postcolonial studies. Earlier Giannachi describes this hybridity/excess in relation to media overload, a state in which we have so much information at our fingertips we feel overwhelmed. She argues that it is within this hybridity that "art is politically and aesthetically charged" (3). Writing about performance in the Americas, Joseph Roach also argues that hybridity is necessary to resistance as "the relentless search for purity of origins is a voyage not of discovery but of erasure" (6).

While Giannachi situates hybridity within processes of globalization, Dan Rebellato takes a different—though related—approach. Rebellato looks at globalization as an economic phenomenon that has come about with the rise of neoliberal policies that promote global capitalism (12). In opposition to this state, he locates theatre and performance as part of "the counter-tradition of cosmopolitanism" (11). Unlike localism, which valorizes the local and can emphasize difference, Rebellato notes that cosmopolitanism is an approach steeped in creating a more ethical world and "a belief that all human beings, regardless of their differences, are members of a single community and all worthy of equal moral regard" (60).

While some of the performances I study in my dissertation emphasize the ways in which technology connects us, and thus seem to follow Rebellato's narrow definition of cosmopolitanism, at times they trouble such a simple definition of global relations. In fact, even when emphasizing the ways we can connect through new technologies, these performances also reveal how we are disconnected from other people and from the realities of global networks. For example, in Rimini Protokoll's *Call Cutta*, spectators talk to workers at an actual Indian call centre and eventually see a live video image of the person they are speaking with. The content of the work highlights how telecommunications connects users as this extended one-on-one encounter allows for a new kind of global exchange to take place. However, at the same time, the work reveals how this kind of conversation is exceptional and contrasts greatly with call centre interactions in everyday life. The performance thus shows how localism is still a part of globalization. Theatre Replacement's *WeeTube* (2008) also addresses the relationship between globally used technologies and local concerns through their use of YouTube comments that reveal differences and tensions.

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These examples point to complex understandings of both globalization and cosmopolitanism, which can be full of multiple meanings and potential contradictions. This approach follows Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's framing of globalization. Tsing uses the term 'friction' to describe the "fragmentary", "unexpected and unstable" ways that we engage with one another within the broad concept of global relations (3, 271). She argues that this term embodies the often contradictory modes with which global power functions, as it is part of what "makes global connection powerful and effective. Meanwhile, without even trying, friction gets in the way of the smooth operation of global power" (6). Her intervention points to the complicated ways that global relations play out in everyday life—not as a one-way force that simply affects people, but as a mixture of diverse and simultaneous connections. Throughout this dissertation, I discuss theatre and performance examples that delve into these complicated relations, which push up against more basic definitions of globalization. They instead align with Tsing's definition of globalization as something that "is not delivered whole and round like a pizza, to be munched and dismantled by the hungry margins. Global connections are made in fragments— although some fragments are more powerful than others" (271). Tsing's argument follows along the lines of Arjun Appadurai and Rustom Bharucha's claims that globalization is not a homogenizing force, but rather something that includes numerous different contexts and histories (Appadurai 17; Bharucha 18).

Each example in this dissertation addresses a different mode—or "fragment"—of globalization. For example, the Yes Lab and Molleindustria's mobile app *Phone Story* delves into the dark underbelly of global relations by showing the material and human conditions that go into the making of popular electronic devices, while Blast Theory's *A Machine to See With*

addresses fiscal inequalities by considering the audience's relation to global banking institutions. This variety of approaches dismantles any possibility of creating a simple one size fits all definition for global relations. At the same time, the diversity of content in these pieces also complicates Rebellato's simple definition of a single, universalizing cosmopolitanism. The examples move away from Rebellato's utopic understanding of cosmopolitanism to instead highlight differences in context and the lived experience of global relations, as well as the different ways that technology and performance engage with global connections. Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo argue for this kind of approach to the concept of cosmopolitanism, noting that critics should balance "the tension between the promise of cosmopolitanism as the enactment of universal communitas and its limits as a theory of embodied material praxis" (4). They situate cosmopolitanism not as a singularity. Rather, they take a similar approach to how Appadurai, Bharucha and Tsing think about globalization by considering cosmopolitanism as a term that exists within different contexts. They argue that with this approach the term cosmopolitanism "lends itself to . . . diverse, even contradictory, applications, which attempt to grapple with the ethical, political and intellectual challenges of cross-cultural and transnational encounters in contemporary life" (5). Gilbert and Lo contrast this more open definition with the kind of singular, all-encompassing concept of cosmopolitanism that Rebellato proposes—something that the two refer to as "thin" cosmopolitanism as it overlooks questions of power and economics (9).

Following Gilbert and Lo's broad understanding of cosmopolitanism, these performances utilize alter-globalization tactics that do not deny the importance of cross-cultural and transnational exchange, but also offer alternative modes of engaging with these practices. This alteration can take place in both implicit and explicit performance practices that modify the ways

we interact with technological tools. As technology has played a major role in the rise of globalization, and the resulting dominance of neoliberal practices around the globe, these performances seek to create change from within and recognize that technology is embedded in forms of resisting and challenging globalization. Lieven de Cauter names this attempt to subvert from within practices of globalization as "subversity." In studies on art and globalization, this can be a difficult line to tread, as artists often risk reinforcing the very practices they seek to critique. The artists in this study are embedded within national and global structures through their affiliations and funding structures. However, they also point to new ways of seeing these very structures, and even model how to intervene in quotidian global practices.

Maurya Wickstrom argues this type of re-framing can lead to a "new politics" that emerges when theatre and performance enter "a different kind of space than [they have] habitually been" (*Performance* 188). The examples in this dissertation highlight how spectators are part of global systems of power that are also always inextricably local. They also engage participants in questions of how these practices may be altered. However, as each performance exists in multiple socio-political frameworks, what this "new politics" entails varies. In this dissertation, I address the differences between approaches and political contexts. I ask a number of questions that consider the relationship between artist and audience, including: Does subverting from within close off certain types of engagement? How does the artists' vision of a "new politics" allow for spectators' input? What assumptions underly the artists' approaches to using new technologies? (How) is the digital used to contest everyday practices?

By having audience members actively involved, the artists in this study work to create spaces of engagement that may impact future actions. The idea of futurity is key to many

theories of activist performance scholarship. For example, in *Utopia in Performance*, Jill Dolan

argues that, in certain moments, the theatre becomes a space where spectators can "critically

rehearse civic engagement" (7). Dolan's examples generally maintain an audience-performer

divide, so do not model political engagement in direct ways, but subtly imply new modes of

viewing civic and political relationships. Many of the examples in this dissertation move beyond

simply showing or thematizing their political goals. Rather, they encourage audiences to enact

new possibilities via digital tools. This approach evokes Baz Kerhaw's definition of radical

performances that respond to contemporary social and political culture (*Radical* 7). Kershaw

notes that radical performances do not simply reflect on or represent something about the current

moment, but also seek to alter the world we live in by opening up political systems and areas for

political activity (18-19; 84).

   Kershaw's understanding of radical performance also aligns with John Fletcher's

definition of activist performances as those "whose intent involves altering the attitudes,

structures, or practices of the society in which they operate" (111). I am particularly interested in

the idea of "altering practices" as the artists I study destabilize the normative uses of various

technological tools. However, I am also aware performances may vary in the overtness of their

activist intentions. Throughout this study, examples have different aims and politics. For

example, the work of theatre companies like Theatre Replacement and Blast Theory, who

present work within institutional settings, differ from the practices and goals of the Yes Men,

who attempt to intervene in political and corporate institutions through hit and run interventions.

   In her analysis of various satirical political performances, Amber Day works through

distinctions between such different forms of activist performance via Michael Warner's concepts

of publics and counterpublics. She notes that when artists address a public, they seek to "engage", which marks "a critical component of the contemporary public sphere." However, she argues that artists who speak to counterpublics are more likely looking to "politicize" their audiences, creating an "actively politicized counterpublic that mobilizes itself as such" (97-8). Following Warner, these counterpublics are defined by their tension with larger publics and seek to create new spaces of discourse. The examples in this study exist on a spectrum—somewhere between engaging and mobilizing different publics. They also often vacillate between these two concepts as rigid definitions do not always work when both intention and reception are subjective and multivalent. Frequently the difference between engagement and mobilization comes down to proximity to institutional structures; however, this is not always the case. For example, in Chapter Two, I consider performances that attempt to intervene in institutions. I argue that Olivier Choinière's *Projet blanc*, which was embraced for its anti-institutionalism and rogue status, may in fact fail at mobilizing the very public it seeks to provoke, which would place it closer to Day's model of engaging a public. Performances may also have different outcomes for different publics and individuals—who come to the pieces from within their own lived experiences—which makes it impossible to neatly or definitively categorize their effects.

Another important issue to consider in relation to how audiences are "politicized" or "activated" is how the concept of political efficacy functions in relation to art and activism. Within mainstream media there are often attempts to quantify the impact of political actions (a topic I discuss further in relation to the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge in Chapter Four). Such metrics include the number of signatures on a petition, the amount of money raised and the number of protesters at an event. While this kind of approach establishes quantifiable outputs, it

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also limits political projects to very specific metrics. Yet, attempts to move away from this kind of measuring also raise problems, as the question of how to gauge political efficacy remains. In this dissertation, I acknowledge that this is an ongoing challenge for political art and address how contingent discourses of efficacy are.

For example, the work of the Yes Men exemplifies how similar tactics may lead to multiple ways of thinking about political efficacy. The Yes Men's fusion of invisible theatre and culture jamming has duped a number of major media organizations into publicizing hoax announcements. In these interventions, the Yes Men distribute fake press releases and occasionally perform as agents of government organizations or large corporations. In 2004, the Yes Men prankster known as Andy Bichlbaum appeared on the BBC posing as a DOW Chemical representative named Jude Finisterra. On the program, Bichlbaum claimed DOW would pay victims of the disastrous 1994 Union Carbide chemical leak in Bhopal, India. When DOW bought Union Carbide in 2001 they had promised to pay the victims of Union Carbide's past disasters; however, they had only paid American victims. In a reverse of this stance, Bichlbaum claimed that DOW was now taking full responsibility for the leak and had come up with a $12 billion plan to remediate the site in Bhopal and to offer aid to victims. Major news outlets quickly picked up on these promises and the prank circulated for over an hour before the hoax was discovered. During this time, the European markets were open and DOW's stock lost around two billion dollars, which became a clear, quantifiable effect based on an activist intervention.

Yet, a prank with a similar format may lead to different markers of efficacy. At a conference concerning the redevelopment of the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina, the Yes

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Men posed as representatives of the American Government's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and claimed the agency was changing its approach to reconstruction. Standing next to New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, they stated that, rather than demolishing existing public housing projects, HUD would be reopening them and allowing residents to return. They also claimed that Exxon/Shell was earmarking billions of dollars to rebuild the wetlands along the Gulf Coast. Before being unmasked by a reporter, these statements received an overwhelmingly positive reception from the contractors in attendance. In response to being discovered, Bichlbaum quickly turned the focus away from the aesthetics of the prank to the political cause, noting "HUD is pulling off a hoax by pretending that tearing down affordable housing is what's going to solve it . . . This is actually truth telling when normally there would be lies" (qtd. in The Yes Men, *The Yes Men Fix*). This attempt at reversing the accusation of fakery works in tandem with the Yes Men's ongoing blurring of the fictional and the real, as they question who is actually doing the performing and attempt to shame those in power.

Like Bichlbaum's BBC News appearance, the HUD prank led to a number of critiques. The Housing Authority of New Orleans released a statement calling the prank a "cruel, cruel joke" and HUD released one claiming "It is terribly sad that someone would perpetuate such a cruel hoax and play on the anxieties of families who are desperate to return to their homes" (qtd. in The Yes Men, *The Yes Men Fix*). Unintentionally, this latter critique points to a particular form of political efficacy that is not usually measured in mainstream media reports. In raising peoples' hopes about returning home, the Yes Men suggested the possibility that this could happen and that change is feasible. They also made political inequalities visible and created a space within mainstream media in which to discuss them.

Even though their prank was discovered, the Yes Men still performed a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Lafitte housing development the same day. Responses of local residents at the event challenge the critiques that the prank was simply hurtful. In a news report, former Lafitte resident Patricia Thomas claims "I respect this hoax because maybe it will take a hoax like this to bring them out here to make them see what we're going through" (qtd. in The Yes Men, *The Yes Men Fix*). Another resident tells the Yes Men:

> you guys exposed . . . that HUD could do these great things if they wanted to . . .
> You got the attention of the residents so now they're going to begin to ask well
> why aren't you doing these things . . . You have created a controversy to feed off,
> to organize, and to build a struggle to a next level. (qtd. in The Yes Men, *The Yes
> Men Fix*)

There were similar responses to the DOW prank. After several media figures accused the Yes Men of giving the people of Bhopal false hope through the promise of aid, the Yes Men travelled to the city to meet the victims. Like those at the Lafitte development, several victims claimed that the prank was worth the pain of discovering the promise was not true as it allowed them to imagine a world where DOW took responsibility. These statements connect back to activist performance's ongoing relationship with the concept of utopias. Jan Cohen-Cruz defines utopian performances as ones that "critique official social organization by offering the experience of an alternative mode" (167). The Yes Men's work is clearly in line with this definition, and with Jill Dolan's understanding of utopian performances as a mode of rehearsal (7). Amber Day suggests, along the same lines as Dolan, that performers like the Yes Men and their audiences participate in creating "tools in the hope for change" (32).

Larry Bogad also considers this kind of less tangible, long-term effect of performance in his study of what he terms 'electoral guerrilla theatre'—a form that poaches off of the performance of elections to challenge the credibility of electoral systems in liberal democracies. Throughout his study, Bogad assesses how electoral guerrillas seek to simultaneously sustain a sense of community among their affinity groups and reach a larger audience. Much like the examples discussed in Dolan's *Utopia in Performance*, electoral guerrillas, through their temporary disruptions, do not always seek immediate, permanent efficaciousness (117); rather, according to Bogad, the experience of witnessing and participating in these campaigns can lead to less tangible results, such as the creation of social networks, and a "repertoire of resistance" (207). In addition, as electoral guerrilla campaigns are dependent on mainstream election practices, the synergy between live events and their mediation affects their larger impact. As this form of activism works through and with various media forms, Bogad's study connects to my own questioning of how media shapes perception and reception of political performance. While Bogad notes that mainstream media can popularize the work of electoral guerrillas, he also acknowledges that news media can emphasize the "regressive elements" (198) of performances while ignoring their political potential (198). This problem reflects a larger issue for activist performance that seeks to work within dominant structures and media formats, as symbols and practices can be misinterpreted, refocused and even appropriated.

When discussing political efficacy, it is also important to consider how works get framed and taken up within cultural criticism. Shannon Jackson uses the example of Sara Brady's critiques of Touchstone Theatre's *Steelbound* to trace how community-based theatre work is often dismissed by theatre and performance scholars for not being radical or oppositional enough

(58). In contrast to value judgments that rely on binaries along the lines of good/bad and radical/feel-good, Jackson points out that there are other ways to look at community theatre that do not privilege oppositionality as necessary for political art practices. Instead, she argues that we need to move away from the idea that "a radically antagonistic art exists *either* in an extra-aesthetic space of community action *or* in an aesthetically protected space of discomfort" (60). Following Jackson's call, I consider how the examples I discuss work through multiple modes simultaneously—building various understandings of community and challenging spectators to view political issues and digital tools from potentially new angles. Rather than assessing whether the political aspects of these productions lead to concrete change, I delve into ways that they may play out with audiences and the challenges that come with engaging in political causes alongside emerging digital tools.

Intermedial Interventions

The artists I address in this dissertation connect audiences to different political projects via digital tools. Their interventions through and in digital spaces—and the resulting engagement or mobilization of their audiences—tie back to intermediality through the idea of a politics of perception. This concept begins with Peter Boenisch's 2006 definition of intermediality as not simply the integration of theatre and non-theatre media, but as "an effect created in the perception of observers that is triggered by performance" ("Aesthetic" 113). He argues this effect breaks apart seemingly singular mass mediated messages and encourages spectators to embrace a multiplicity of meanings. For Boenisch, the political and social potential of intermedial performance comes from this effect as it can "[offer] a perspective of disruption and resistance"

(115). Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx build upon this idea of disruption in their

discussion of an intermedial 'politics of spectating', in which the both-and nature of intermedial

performance disturbs spectators' senses and rattles their normative assumptions (219). This

argument is particularly applicable to mixed reality performances, such as those by Blast Theory,

that combine new media and site-specific urban performance practices.

While these scholars are interested in the politicization of intermediality, they continue to

focus on how perception and embodiment can be abstractly altered in these moments. Building

upon this scholarship, in this dissertation I look for ways companies deliberately attempt to

model political engagement by harnessing the interactive and democratic properties of the

digital. My dissertation project intervenes by considering how these attempts break new ground

by utilizing emerging tools in innovative, politically engaged ways. This dissertation includes

intermedial theatre projects by Blast Theory (UK), Theatre Replacement (Vancouver) and

Jonathan Goldsbie (Toronto) as well as performance projects that are not directly affiliated with

theatre companies or festivals. These examples range from interventions in urban spaces (*Projet*

blanc; *Virtual Homeless*) to performances that solely exist in online spaces (*Phone Story*; *dead-*

in-iraq; *Freedom*). Each of these works places either non-actors or spectators at the centre of

experiences that interrogate how technology is changing the possibilities for interpersonal

exchanges. The topics these performances address, which include immigration and inequalities

within the global economy, are popular issues within political and activist theatre. However, the

artists creating these works expand upon political theatre practices by explicitly asking spectators

to interact with performers and digital tools in real-time, live performances in order to model

new modes of political engagement. This direct engagement builds on existing intermedial

performance practices by expanding beyond the use of technology as merely a narrative strategy or an aesthetic effect to instead highlight the complex and fractured nature of contemporary subjecthood.

By performing with and through quotidian digital tools, the artists I investigate do not simply point out how perception works in an increasingly digitized world. Instead, they engage with the participatory nature of digital interactions and question the content of these exchanges. They use theatre and performance to remediate technology, which becomes central to both the form and content of their work. This integration of digital tools leads to certain kinds of political thinking and engagement. Yet, throughout this dissertation, I also question the potential pitfalls and ethical issues that arise when artists engage their audiences via digital tools. I am curious about how digital activist tools get read—and reappropriated—in theatre and performance contexts. I also see this project as intervening in some of the dominant ways participatory media are discussed—in particular the valorization or dismissal of certain tools in relation to social change. I consider a number of questions that take up the relationship between digital and political performance, including: How are intermedial performances influenced by the potentially democratizing nature of digital interactions? How does theatre integrate with digital media to investigate the ways we connect—or fail to connect—as publics? How does theatre also address exclusions related to the digital? Who is the 'we' in the intersubjective relations produced by intermedial performance?

The case studies in this dissertation range in aesthetics, content and locations, allowing me to look at trends in performance and activist practice. A number of the examples, including *A Machine to See With* by Blast Theory and *WeeTube* by Theatre Replacement, come from

companies primarily working in theatrical frameworks. However, the site-specific and experiential focus of these productions makes a traditional structural theatre methodology challenging. Balme notes that for contemporary theatre practices, "Structural analysis may prove too limiting because the performance may be less about the 'structure of signs' on stage than about spectatorial experience of space" (*Cambridge* 146). With this difficulty in mind, I follow a multi-pronged theoretical approach that addresses the performances' historical antecedents, socio-political contexts and reception.

As intermedial performance frequently places the audience at the center of the meaning-making process, reception is central to my analysis of these performances. In a discussion of digital performance documentation, Sarah Bay-Cheng notes that there is no clear distinction between a singular performance event and its digital record as the two become mutually dependent and both impact on reception. With this relationship in mind, I consult a variety of sources in order to experience what Bay-Cheng refers to as performance's "vast intermedial context" ("New"). This "intermedial context" includes resources and responses from an array of both online and print sources, including reviews, production recordings, online materials, interviews and live performances. As I have been able to experience several of the examples I discuss first-hand, much of my discussion covers my own experience as a spectator. I can not encompass all aspects of reception, as my own experience with these works is subjective; rather, I consider my own reactions as a kind of testing ground from which to consider what these productions might be like from the perspective of a spectator. In addition, I have interviewed several artists in order to contextualize the creation and reception of these intermedial projects; however, I am aware that interviews and reviews can be limiting in what they reveal about the

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politicizing potential of performance. In particular, the short and long term effects of performances are difficult—and even impossible —to gauge from interviews. Thus, I do not aim to make overarching claims based on these sources, but instead mine them for what kinds of questions and debates these works provoke.

While rooted in theatre and performance studies, this dissertation is also informed by other related disciplines, including new media studies, cultural studies and film studies. A number of the works I discuss emerge from particular disciplinary backgrounds. However, most of the companies and artists I include can be situated between disciplines. For example, in Chapter Three I discuss *Phone Story,* a project made in association with the performance pranksters the Yes Men and the activist game designer Molleindustria. This collaboration places *Phone Story* at an intersection between gaming and performance practices. In Chapter Four, I analyze Blast Theory's *A Machine to See With.* While Blast Theory frequently presents work at theatre festivals, they self-identify as a "collaborative, interdisciplinary" company whose work exists within a broad understanding of performance that encompasses "the internet, live performances and digital broadcasting" (Blast Theory, "Our"). Several of the other artists and companies I discuss also self-define as interdisciplinary, which acknowledges that intermediality is often about moments where different disciplines converge. In my analyses of these artists' work I tend to veer towards performance studies approaches. For example, in my critique of *Phone Story* I focus on certain terms and ideas that have emerged within performance studies, such as identity correction and post-Brechtian performance practices. While I also consider some gaming studies approaches to Molleindustria's work and delve into visual art discussions about ethics, relationality and participation throughout this dissertation, in-depth discussions about how

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these examples may be taken up in other disciplines are often beyond the scope of this

dissertation. While definitions of what is radical and what is efficacious can differ depending on

such disciplinary contexts, I have often explicitly chosen to avoid falling into such rigid

distinctions about how this kind of work is taken up as there is frequently a convergence of

different disciplinary theories within intermedial work and criticism.

Before delving into an overview of my examples, I want to recognize several challenges

that have come up while researching this topic. Much has already been written about digital

inequalities, as certain populations around the globe do not have access to the very digital tools I

write about. However, it is also important to note particular assumptions that come up when

critics discuss the digital, which may reinforce unproductive divisions beyond issues of access.

Anthropologist Faye Ginsburg extricates several problematic assumptions underlying current

debates about digital cultures. First, she notes that the concept of a "Digital Age" is ethnocentric,

coming from a First World perspective that steamrollers over differences in terms of access to

and use of technology. Second, she believes the term "Digital Divide" implies a lack of agency

on the part of those without digital resources and places the First World as the centre of digital

cultures. Ginsburg also argues that current definitions of both terms obviate questions of power

and control—issues that are particularly acute for indigenous communities whose traditions

continue to be appropriated and commodified without their permission (129-132). Questions of

access and exclusion tend to be sidelined in intermedial performance studies. Throughout this

dissertation, I attempt to follow Ginsburg's lead and consider questions of access, agency and

power when analyzing the ways theatre and performance artists take up digital tools—and the

ways that they encourage their audiences to use them. I consider how performances may

reinforce dominant power relations (even if unintentionally) in order to connect intermedial performance studies to larger questions about power relations in digital spaces.

Another challenge that comes with writing about emerging technologies is the implicit datedness of this research. Between the start of my doctoral studies in 2010 and the writing of this introduction (in 2015) flash mobs seem to have come and gone as a viral—and sometimes politically motivated—phenomenon. Within this short time, they went from an exciting, much discussed form to oversaturating visual spaces and being co-opted by corporations and advertisers. Now when I Google "flash mobs" an automatic advertisement at the side of my screen asks me if I "Want to Hire a Flash Mob?" for my next corporate event or proposal. A number of other digital forms and spaces have had similar trajectories (i.e. Chatroulette, autotuned videos). This makes me think that much of what I write here—about particular participatory media and mobile devices—will likewise be affected by rapidly changing technologies. The quick pace of change makes this field exciting to be a part of, but also difficult to capture through more traditional formats. As such, I see this dissertation as a provisional work that acknowledges the very topics under scrutiny are constantly in flux.

I have chosen the examples in this dissertation not as a means of capturing this specific moment, but as a way of looking at various trends and the possibilities arising from new media use in political performance. My selections reflect my own location, studying and living in Toronto, Canada. As reception is key to my assessment of the efficacy of these politically motivated performances, I have tried to include a number of performances that I have experienced first-hand, which is limited to the locations I have been in over the past few years. I was able to experience the work of Blast Theory and Rimini Protokoll in Edinburgh and New

York City respectively, but the majority of other examples are from major Canadian cities.

While I am critical of many of the artists in this study—and the ways that they connect their audiences to emerging technologies—I have included them precisely because I find their use of technology creative and innovative. As this form of performance is emerging, I point out limitations and potential pitfalls of these works. Yet, I also want to recognize the risks these artists take in attempting to intervene in both digital spaces and political conversations. These risks include relying on new, sometimes unstable, technologies and placing trust in the audience to run the digital tools necessary for the performance. In addition, the artists I discuss often work in public spaces (both in-person and online), which opens their work up to unexpected, and sometimes aggressive, responses.

Chapters Overview

I begin my dissertation with "Performing Social Media: Twitter, YouTube and an Intermedial 'Theatre of the Real'", a chapter that delves into three theatre productions that challenge and extend current social media practices. The examples in this chapter provide a starting point for my thinking as they were some of the first examples of theatre melding with participatory media that I experienced. I also begin with social media as it has become a defining mark of current Web 2.0 practices. As Mark Hansen notes, social sharing on the web has made user-generated content a key aspect of contemporary life. He claims, "what is mediated by Web 2.0 is less the content that users upload than the sheer connectivity, the simple capacity to reach myriad like-minded users, that is afforded by that act of uploading content" (180). For much of the world's population, this "sheer connectivity" is most apparent in the ability to access and add

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information to websites like YouTube, which has the majority of its content open to the public. As such, I begin my study by looking at Theatre Replacement's *WeeTube* (2008-), which explores how people interact through the comment function on YouTube. In this interactive production, two performers use synched iPods to perform the comments posted under a variety of audience-selected videos from different geographic areas. By embodying a multiplicity of mediums, geographic locations and voices simultaneously, the company emphasizes the both-and space of intermediality and highlights the instability of cultural assumptions and ideological biases, while also pointing to the potential for connection in this online space. The company moves between disparaging and enjoying the site, which reflects the complicated nature of our relationship with social media.

I follow my discussion of *WeeTube* with an analysis of Les Petites Cellules Chaudes' *iShow* (2012), a production that also integrates forms of social media within a theatre setting. Like Theatre Replacement, Les Petites Cellules Chaudes question how users engage with social media through remediation; however, in this production they do not focus on a single site, but move through a plethora of participatory media, including chat websites, Google maps and YouTube. In my discussions of these two productions, I consider how the artists situate themselves in terms of social media use, and whether they envision alternative possibilities. In both cases, I address how participatory media is used in a formal theatre setting, with the audience separated from the digital tools. To conclude the chapter, I contrast these two examples with Jonathan Goldsbie's *Route 501 Revisited* (2012), which explores the possibility for connection via Twitter. I discuss how his encouragement of collaborative engagement diverges from Theatre Replacement and Les Petites Cellules Chaudes' sometimes pessimistic view of

online dialogue. Goldsbie's piece allows users to interact with new technologies, which breaks down hierarchies of authorship and encourages participants to actively re-situate their relationship to socially inscribed space.

In Chapter Two—"Provocation and Protest in Digital Performance: From Theatre Hacking to Video Game Interventions"—I explore examples of hacking and performance interventions. I begin with an analysis of Quebec playwright Olivier Choinière's *Projet blanc*, a one-time digital performance from November 2011 that challenged existing theatre conventions and explored new possibilities for activist performance. Through the form of the audio walk, which involves pre-recorded audio on MP3 players distributed to participants, Choinière created a performance that took on the institutional theatre. Participants, who knew nothing about the content of the work before the event, were led to Montreal's Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, where they watched a production of Molière's *L'École des femmes*. During the intervention, Choinière's audio was critical of both the production and the theatre's role as a commercial institution. Choinière has dubbed this form of intervention "theatre hacking." I investigate the relationship between this production's oppositional stance and use of digital tools, arguing that Choinière's protest performance creates affinity and proximity within his audience. This works against what Jason Farman refers to as the "distancing-though-proximic" (*Mobile* 4) that usually occurs when individuals are connected to mobile devices in public. *Projet blanc* also effectively brings radical performance, which Baz Kershaw argues is increasingly outside of theatres and in public space, back into a traditional theatre space.

At the same time, I explore how the production's own exclusivity and antagonistic tone ironically undermines Choinière's critical stance. In *Social Works*, Shannon Jackson argues that

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critics often lionize institutional critiques as models of radical art, but fail to see how this approach overlooks the importance of cooperation and support fundamental to art making (14). I connect Choinière's piece to Jackson's work and note how the production runs the risk of colluding with neoliberal aims through its top-down approach that fails to harness the democratizing potential of the digital. I conclude the chapter with an exploration of interventions in the space of networked video games. Like *Projet blanc*, Eva and Franco Mattes' *Freedom* (2010) and Joseph DeLappe's *dead-in-iraq* (2006-2011) are artist-centred works that challenge the normative ways participants engage in art. In this case, they take on the action of killing in war-based video games. These performance artists seek to break with the quotidian uses of these games and question how they might be used for more politically motivated means. Like the examples featured in Chapter One, I recognize the limitations of each performance. Although all three are more overtly activist in their aims, they are still bound (sometimes unintentionally) by structures that limit responses from users and audiences.

Chapters Three and Four delve into mobile media in performance. Chapter Three investigates ways artist-activists promote specific social causes and charities through digital tools. In this chapter, titled "Making it Mobile: Performing Social Causes in Apps and Texts", I explore the creation of activist phone applications and SMS-based political performances through two examples that connect and politicize the relationship between media users and social issues. First, I analyze *Phone Story* (2011), a phone application created by Molleindustria and the Yes Lab. *Phone Story* has been banned by Apple's iPhone store, but continues to be available on Android devices. The application mimics mobile phone games, but takes users through a series of levels in the creation and consumption of their phone. By using the popular genre of the

mobile game, *Phone Story* explicitly connects form and content to destabilize and unveil power relations at play within globalization. The project also had a larger impact, as proceeds from the sale of the application went to a worker impacted by the issues shown in the game. Yet, I again question what the app offers for the user—who is implicated in systems of globalization but not given any clear means to subvert them. The second example in this chapter is *Virtual Homeless* (2010), a project by a not-for-profit homelessness advocacy group, Pathways to Housing, and the digital creative agencies GoGorilla and Sarkissian Mason. *Virtual Homeless* uses projection technologies to place the image of a homeless person in public space along with a phone number. If a passerby texts the number, the image disappears. They are then sent a text back with the option to donate to Pathways to Housing. By providing an easy outlet for people to make a difference, Pathways to Housing, GoGorilla and Sarkissian Mason model how interaction can lead to positive changes in urban space. However, removing the physical bodies of the homeless leads me to question what the limitations of this form may be as a means for engaging citizens beyond the monetary donation.

While focused on different issues, both of these examples actively situate everyday users as part of an underlying intersubjective network of relations. This strategy connects to Peter Boenisch's conception of intermedial theatre in which "[the] usually transparent viewing conventions of observing media are made palpable, and the workings of mediation exposed" ("Aesthetic" 115), but expands this practice to non-traditional theatre sites. In analyzing these two works, I connect post-Brechtian performance tactics, as discussed by such theorists as Baz Kershaw and Gabriella Giannachi, to this use of new media. I also consider how these art works not only expose social problems, but offer spectators tools for making change via mobile

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technology. My analysis questions the values and drawbacks of both approaches and whether it is productive to assume there are universal tools or solutions for everyone.

I again consider the relationship between mobile digital tools and audiences in my final chapter, "The City as Stage and Screen: Radical Enactments in Mobile Media Performance." In contrast to the examples from Chapter Three, I turn back to more self-defined theatre works and consider the political potential of intermedial, site-specific performances that engage spectators through individually held mobile media devices. I use Blast Theory's *A Machine to See With* (2010) and Rimini Protokoll's *Remote New York* (2015) to examine some ways intermedial performances connect their audiences to political issues—particularly around the use of public space and economic inequalities. While both use mobile devices in city spaces, the two productions differ in their forms. In *A Machine to See With*, a solo audience member moves through the city and is eventually linked to a partner also on the journey. *Remote New York* has an audience of fifty that moves together before being split into three sub-groups. Both productions are what Steve Benford and Gabriella Giannachi call "mixed reality performances" as they work in multiple media, disciplines and spaces simultaneously. In my analyses of these works, I question what these companies ask of their spectators as they move through public space—how do they provoke audiences to re-situate their relationships with urban locations and other citizens?

Both Blast Theory and Rimini Protokoll are internationally recognized companies with extensive touring and production histories. Because of this, their work has already been addressed in studies of globalization and performance (e.g. Giannachi) and intermediality (e.g. Groot Nibbelink and Merx). My analysis adds to these studies by looking at the synergy between

form and content in these works. In addition, I analyze these companies through an activist performance lens, even though neither is usually defined or would necessarily self-define as such. I argue that the ways in which they situate spectators is activist as it provokes political interventions and provides models for future actions. Simultaneously, I consider questions of gender, ethics and safety when delving into these experiences. In both productions, spectators play at being radical in some way, which opens them up to new political possibilities. Yet, these actions also place spectators in precarious and potentially unsafe environments where they are propelled to "act" in visible ways. This glosses over differences in the lived experiences of individual spectators, leading me to question what kind of political project these mixed reality performances are part of. For example, *A Machine to See With* takes the participant to buildings and areas of the city where there are few other people around, which can make certain individuals feel unsafe.

Throughout each of these chapters, I highlight how artists create avenues for participation and engagement through digital tools and spaces. I also consider the parameters of this engagement in order to return to Ginsburg's provocations around assumptions we make about the digital and to consider what the larger political project of these performances might be. In each case, the artists offer a model for a particular kind of political engagement, inviting spectators to reconsider their relationship to the world around them as they work with digital tools or experience digital spaces. Each example provides a different model as the context of the projects and the tools they use vary greatly. Yet, these works exist in a world with ongoing issues of access and political visibility. In my analysis, I consider the myriad of ways artists address these issues and the challenges that come with using new digital tools to do so. In each chapter, I

attempt to weave together intermedial performance studies and activist and political performance

approaches in order to open up intermediality beyond discussions of political perception and to

connect it to pressing questions about the role of performance as a critical and politically

engaged mode of intervention in daily life.

CHAPTER ONE

PERFORMING SOCIAL MEDIA:

TWITTER, YOUTUBE AND AN INTERMEDIAL 'THEATRE OF THE REAL'

> I speak and you are here. I speak and you are here. I speak I speak I speak and you listen. I'll speak as long as possible the longest time possible as long as you listen I'll talk. (Les Petites Cellules Chaudes, *iShow)*

> Oh shit—you don't know me either. Damn I love arguing over the internet. Caps lock is cruise control … Go ahead and flame me. I just got worried you won't reply again. (Theatre Replacement, *WeeTube*)

On 20 March 2014, the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan successfully implemented a long sought ban on the social networking platform, Twitter. In the months leading up to this block, Twitter had become a primary site for anti-government critiques as traditional news media failed to address claims of government corruption. The online sharing included the circulation of phone recordings that implicated Erdoğan in this corruption (Scott). Erdoğan's ban did little to turn the tide of the anti-government sentiment as users could still access the site through proxy servers and mobile devices. Twitter publicly posted some of these options in a series of tweets on the official Twitter page. Other Twitter users further circulated these methods. In addition, DNS numbers that would allow users to access the site appeared as graffiti on ruling party posters in Istanbul (Onder). The hashtag #TwitterisblockedinTurkey became a trending topic,[6] as users went on the site to express their displeasure with the prohibition. Within Turkey, all this activity actually led to an increase in the country's Twitter usage. On the morning after the ban, a record number of tweets—2.5 million—were posted from within the country (Letsch).

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[6] Trending topics are the most popular things currently being discussed on Twitter. Twitter users can see a list of trending topics on a sidebar and can click on any of them to see a page with the most recent tweets about that topic or hashtag.

Users getting around the ban included politicians; even the Turkish President, Abdullah Gül, circumvented the ban, writing in tweets that "The shutdown of an entire social platform is unacceptable … Besides, as I have said many times before, it is technically impossible to close down communication technologies like Twitter entirely. I hope this measure will not last long" (qtd. in Letsch).[7]

These defiant acts reflect how—in a short period of time—social sharing on the internet has altered how some communities connect to one another and provided spaces for political engagement. Digital scholars Megan Boler, Manuel Castells and Joss Hands believe new media are increasingly valuable tools in creating social change. Prior to the dissent in Turkey, events like the 2011 Arab Spring and the 2012 Occupy Movement illustrated how social media are broadening the reach of, and participation in, political movements. Hands notes that events like these reveal "the underlying power of digital communications, of networks and of mobile technology: a limitless snowball effect made possible by the design and structure of modern digital communications" (3).

Digital interactions also have more quotidian effects on our political selves. In many parts of the world, participatory media are now ubiquitous. This is exemplified by the ease with which users access information on sites like YouTube, Yelp or Reddit, which rely on users to generate the majority of their content. Boler argues that these sites have shifted the way information flows online. She claims that with participatory media, "we are players in a circle that allows for ideas to be circular, rather than to be top-down" (42). New media can act as an extension of the self

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[7] Erdoğan and Gül are both members of the Justice and Development party, but became increasingly at odds in 2014 due to their differing approaches to civil unrest in the country.

that affects and challenges memory and subjectivity (Causey 384). Thus, the way we interact

with and through media interpellates us as citizen-subjects with varying levels of political

knowledge and engagement. Less radical and more quotidian uses of new media tools, such as

the creation of Facebook groups and retweeting on Twitter, have garnered some attention as

potentially political acts. Boler notes that these actions frequently relate to offline actions, with

the participatory web and in-person protests working in synergy (24).

 While there has been much celebration of participatory media as political tools, writers

like Malcolm Gladwell, Geert Lovink and Sherry Turkle counter this optimism, arguing that

participatory media instead promote anonymous antagonism and enable 'slacktivist' users who

fail to fully engage with political and interpersonal issues. In refuting the use of the term

"Twitter revolution" to describe 2010's political unrest in Iran and Moldova, Gladwell hearkens

back to the 1960s civil rights movement and argues that digital activism is inherently different.

He believes social media cannot replicate the social bonds of earlier political movements because

they rely on what he terms "weak ties."[8] Gladwell also disparages the democratic nature of these

sites, arguing that movements cannot productively move forward without some form of

hierarchy. While acknowledging social media's ability to "[increase] *participation*," he

undermines this argument by noting it only does so "by lessening the level of motivation that

participation requires."

 Another problem with making overarching claims about the democratic potential of Web

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[8] Zizi A Papacharissi notes such cyberdystopian arguments can be "based on a premise that overestimates and romanticizes political activity in previous eras" (13). Gladwell's claims fall under this description as he idealizes social movements of the 1960s and fails to recognize the inherent missteps and inequalities that occur in the building of any social movement.

2.0 is that each example of activism is different—they exist within particular socio-political contexts and use technologies that are readily available. For example, the very tactics and sites that are heralded as part of the democratic side of the web can be co-opted by governments in order to extend anti-democratic measures. Prominent examples include China's "Great Firewall," which prevents users from accessing certain social media sites in the country, and the American government's National Security Agency surveillance program, which has intercepted new media communications. Recently, reports surfaced uncovering how the American government— through their Agency for International Development—created a "Cuban Twitter" called ZunZuneo in 2010. The government used the site to mine for data that they believed could help them in future political actions against Cuba (Arce, Butler and Gillum). There are also less extreme examples of control online, such as geo-blocking that limits access to online material based on national borders, which reveal how social media have both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic potentials. The web can also be co-opted by individuals in even less predictable ways. Geert Lovink warns that activists need to be aware of issues like surveillance, and use offline, local organizing to avoid being watched (159). Another issue is exclusivity, as corporate interests on the web reproduce inequalities, exploit user data and labour, and influence political actions (Costanza-Chock 856-7; Hindman 4; Scholz).

Readings of online actions are also complicated by context—both in creation and reception. The intent of social media users may differ from the ways discourse circulates online. For example, in March 2014, the Twitter account for the satirical news show *The Colbert Report* sparked a controversy. On the show, Colbert—in his hyper-conservative persona—skewered the owner of the NFL team The Washington Redskins for keeping the team's racist name and even

using it as the title of a foundation to support First Nations. In a long segment, Colbert mimicked

this racism by introducing his show's supposed mascot, "Ching-Chong Ding-Dong", and creating

a "Ching-Chong Ding-Dong Foundation for Sensitivity to Orientals or Whatever." The show's

production company then tweeted this idea out on the show's Twitter account, but without the

larger context of the segment, in which Colbert was clearly satirizing Snyder's insensitivity.

While the Colbert Report team saw their tweet as a form of activism—tied to the show's ongoing

takedown of Snyder—other users read it as racist and even started a Twitter campaign against it,

#cancelcolbert.

Evgeny Morozov discusses the reverse of this issue of interpretation in relation to Iran.

Morozov argues that it was American bloggers, like *The Atlantic*'s Andrew Sullivan, who

defined the Iranian dissent of 2009 as a "Twitter Revolution." He claims this is a

misinterpretation of what was actually happening in the country (and on Twitter). Morozov

blames this on commentary culture that glosses over social and cultural contexts, including

different internet cultures. Morozov argues that writers like Sullivan made overarching

assumptions about social media actions being activist and promoting democracy based on what

was primarily activity by young and pro-Western Iranians (12).

Other critiques focus on the possibilities for antagonistic exchanges online.[9] In her edited

collection *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times*, which explores the

possibilities for tactical uses of new media, Megan Boler includes an essay by R. Sophie Statzel

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[9] Hate speech and unproductive dialogue relate to the frameworks given by different web spaces. Lovink notes that different social media platforms offer different types of exchange. On more open sites—like YouTube and newspaper sites where anonymity is regular or users do not have to create a profile—users often attempt to provoke others and see how far they can go with hateful comments. This approach often prevents sustained dialogue from taking place. Lovink argues that this makes sites like Facebook "walled gardens" as they are "more hidden, quasi-private forums" (17).

on the website Stormfront.org. In the essay, Statzel warns that new media can be used for non-progressive aims and the circulation of hate speech, thus endangering the democratic possibilities of the social web (406). She argues that the Stormfront website became an important tool for the white nationalist movement as it provided a space to meet and mobilize. She notes that this example "problematize[s] the common assumption that resistance to dominant modes of power is intrinsically connected with democratic principles and practices or desires for liberation" (407).

Antagonism on the web has also come to light through the issue of cyberbullying, which has received significant media attention in the past few years. The suicides of Tyler Clementi (in 2010) and Amanda Todd (in 2012) led to widespread discussions and pushes for stronger legislation against cyberbullying. More recently, the 2013 suicide of Rehtaeh Parsons led to Nova Scotia's Cyber Safety Act, which allowed victims of cyberbullying to directly petition judges for protection orders and gave greater power to school principals dealing with cases of cyberbullying (Nova Scotia). Although the Act was overturned by Nova Scotia's Supreme Court in December 2015 for infringing on Charter rights, activists continue to work on ways to address cyberbullying in the province.

While Web 2.0 practices can enable aggressive and antagonistic discourses, arguments that focus solely on dystopian sides of the internet tend to ignore that the very tools they critique still have the potential to impact political discourses and create social change. For example, the campaign against cyberbullying is also predominantly situated in Web 2.0 spaces. The "It Gets Better Project" is an internet campaign started in 2010 in response to the suicides of Clementi

and other teenagers who had been bullied for being gay.[10] In Russia, the Children-404 project also addresses the lives of queer teenagers. The grassroots project, which journalist Lena Klimova began in 2013, exists on social media sites and acts as a forum where queer youth can post letters about their experiences. Unlike It Gets Better, the Children-404 project has not received mainstream, institutional support and those involved in the project regularly receive death threats. Klimova has been charged under Russia's anti-LGBTQ propaganda law several times and is currently awaiting an appeal on a conviction.

For It Gets Better and the Children-404 project, the location of both bullying and this community building online reflects how diverse digital spaces are and how they are neither inherently productive nor destructive. After conducting extensive interviews with teenagers about cyberbullying, danah boyd noted that the 'cyber' aspect of this kind of online antagonism had effectively brought about a conversation; however, she goes on to argue that "the Internet is not the problem here. It's just one tool in an ongoing battle for attention, validation, and status. And unless we find effective ways of getting to the root of the problem, the Internet will just continue to be used to reinforce what is pervasive." Of course, the internet does not only "reinforce" the "pervasive", but is a complex tool that cannot fulfill one function for all of

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[10] The campaign was started by Terry Miller and Dan Savage, who began the project by uploading a video in which they chronicle their experiences being bullied while growing up. The video ends with the claim that "It Gets Better" and a statement by Miller that high school students need to know it "is painful now but it's going to get so much better." This initial video gained thousands of response videos, in which queer youth and adults discuss being bullied. The campaign now has a central website and is registered as a non-profit charity. While successful in the sense that the campaign went viral and gave visibility to this issue, the project also has its detractors who argue that it reinforces a heteronormative trajectory and stems from privileged assumptions. For example, Jack Halberstam, argues that saying "it gets better" simplifies and homogenizes queer experience, which can get "worse" or at least be "different." Dustin Bradley Goltz offers a counterpoint to these critiques, arguing that simply being for or against the campaign limits discourse. Instead, he suggests that these critiques are themselves a part of the larger It Gets Better project and that thus the project as a whole "offers radical interventions into discourses of temporality and future. [It Gets Better] proliferates multiple and contradictory meanings for 'better' extending and challenging sedimented homophobic and heteronormative discourses of time and future" (136).

humanity. All online actions are context specific and result in different types of social exchange (Postill). In addition, the ways participatory media are used on the level of the everyday is constantly shifting with the introduction of new platforms and social contexts. This makes it difficult to assess outcomes of social media interactions, as they can be contradictory or read in unintended ways.

boyd's line of thinking follows Zizi A. Papacharissi's argument that cyberutopianism and cyberpessimism are inherently human attributes placed on "technological artifacts that possess no specific ethos. This is a human 'gesture' upon the space suggested by newer media, a way for living beings to make their mark, and then remark, space, actual and imaginary" (9). While not necessarily offering a "specific ethos," new technologies do alter existing practices due to their speed and new means of communicating. However, instead of focusing on whether or not social media are ethical or whether they are presupposed to creating social change, Nancy K. Baym suggests thinking about social media from a "social shaping perspective" that considers material conditions beyond just the social media themselves. She proposes looking past simple arguments and instead at "what specific possibilities and constraints technologies offer, and actual practices of use as those possibilities and constraints are taken up, rejected, and reworked in everyday life" (45). This approach is more nuanced than arguments that generalize participatory media's role in activism and daily life—and its effects on both. Baym's position embraces the contradictory and multivalent effects of social media. She follows Lovink's call for a move away from the simple conclusion that "the internet can be used for both good and evil" and towards "[developing] a long-term view on how networked technologies should and should not be embedded in political and cultural practices" (160).

In this chapter, I take up performances that integrate participatory media and consider the myriad ways they "take up, reject and rework" these "possibilities and constraints." At the same time, I do not see these works as falling into a binary logic that sees possibility/potential and constraint/limitation as unfaltering options for each new technology. I am interested in how art and performance can complicate assumptions about emerging technologies—revealing how they are not universally transformative, but are contingent on specific contexts. I first investigate Theatre Replacement's *WeeTube 5400* (2010) and Les Petites Cellules Chaudes' *iShow* (2012)— productions that, while using different social media platforms, align through their reframing of social media in a theatre context. Both *WeeTube* and *iShow* have fairly traditional set-ups, with their audiences separated from the performers and the technologies used. However, the ways they stage social media both respond to social media's limitations and open up the potential for new forms of online engagement. *WeeTube 5400* and *iShow* use a form of what Carol Martin terms a 'theatre of the real' to intervene in spaces of social media—YouTube and Chatroulette respectively. Through this remediation, the productions explore the kinds of social relations these spaces catalyze and emphasize the multivalent nature of these sites. By exploring these spaces, the companies raise questions about how we employ social media in daily life and encourage audiences to consider their own complicity in the antagonistic side of Web 2.0. However, Les Petites Cellules Chaudes and Theatre Replacement go beyond simply critiquing the social web and use performance to intervene in the production and reception of social media—creating a space to imagine alternate modes of digital interaction. The productions expand theatre of the real beyond its (and Martin's) frequent focus on how we interpret history and major world events, and how seemingly universal 'truths' form. Instead, through their level of engagement

with new media—sometimes in real-time—the companies question how we engage through

technology in our daily lives. Aspects of each work depend on the open-ended nature of digital

interactions, which highlights how intent can lead to random outcomes as there is no single

context users are coming from.

In the final section of the chapter, I contrast these two examples with Jonathan Goldsbie's

Route 501 Revisited (2012)—a site-specific production that explores how we use social media in

urban spaces.[11] Goldsbie invites his audience to respond to their urban surroundings using

Twitter as the sole means to communicate. Unlike *WeeTube* and *iShow,* which have their

audience separated from the social media used, *Route 501 Revisited* is an interactive journey that

allows audiences to actively participate in the creation of the piece through social media. Again,

this approach is a form of theatre of the real, although in this case the 'real' extends beyond

remediating stories and includes real-time audience interactions. These three examples connect

in many ways. They were created in Canada in a similar time period (between 2010 and 2012),

when participatory online media were still fairly new but becoming more integrated into daily

practices. As they were developed in the somewhat nascent days of Web 2.0, they reflect early

engagement with these social media platforms and are understandably self-reflexive about how

artists can use these tools. However, they engage with different media and vary in the ways they

integrate them into performance, which affects how their interventions play out.

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[11] Sections of my analyses of *WeeTube* and *iShow* appear in the article "iTalk, YouListen, WePerform: Participatory Media on the Canadian Stage." *Digital Performance.* Spec. issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* 159. (Summer): 13-18; sections on *Route 501 Revisited* and portions of my discussion of Olivier Choinière's *Projet blanc* (discussed in Chapter Two) are included in "Finding the New Radical: Digital Media, Oppositionality and Political Intervention in Contemporary Canadian Theatre." *Theatre Research in Canada* 35.2 (Summer): 203-220.

<u>*WeeTube*</u>: From Hate to Humanity on Web 2.0

In 2008, Vancouver's Theatre Replacement developed a show that remediates the discourse on YouTube's comment boards. In *WeeTube*, which was first presented at Vancouver's HIVE festival, the company's artistic directors, James Long and Maiko Bae Yamamoto, appear as themselves. They let the audience informally choose a video from a list of pre-selected YouTube clips. After playing each clip on a screen, Long and Yamamoto perform aloud the viewer comments posted below the video in one of several stock dramatic settings. For example, in one area of the playing space, the two play a couple in a kitchen setting, and—while they perform the user comments verbatim—make cookies and popcorn for the audience. The comments are prerecorded onto iPods that Long and Yamamoto sync at the start of each scene. Each section lasts about four minutes, which is just enough time to experience a range of comments and to follow some exchanges between users. In 2010, *WeeTube* was reworked—as *WeeTube 5400*—removing its durational, drop-in approach in order to tour to theatre festivals. Long and Yamamoto added a loose structure, with three lists of videos curated for the production and a final non-optional video closing the piece. The work is still being performed, with the most recent iteration at Calgary's High Performance Rodeo in January 2016.

The use of YouTube comments connects *WeeTube* to Theatre Replacement's interest in documentary theatre approaches that explore multi- and transcultural relations. Also known as verbatim theatre, docudrama and theatre of the real, documentary theatre is a broad term that encompasses all theatre that uses the words and experiences of real people as the basis of a performance. Scholar David Watt locates the modern history of documentary theatre in three main eras: the 1930s, the 1960s, and the 1990s to present (189). The latter resurgence of

documentary—which coincides with the rise of reality television—is full of examples steeped in conventions of realism and concerned with polemical subject matter. These performances are usually developed from interviews or writings into a script or workshopped through ensemble-based theatrical devising methods into a performance. The result of this process does not necessarily lead to similar aesthetics and products, although frequently actors portray characters based on people interviewed and perform the interviews verbatim.

Popular examples of this type of approach are Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project's *Laramie Project* (2000) and Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (1994). While these two examples both began with actors conducting interviews with real people, documentary theatre also includes projects like Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner's *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (2005), which are created from writings and third party interviews. The documentary format has been used alongside different theatrical styles. For example, Alecky Blythe's *London Road* (2011) is a musical based on the playwright's interviews with the neighbours of serial killer Steve Wright in Ipswich. The verbatim musical focuses on the group's attempts to clean up their image after Wright is tried for killing five sex workers. Rather than focusing on the killer or the sex workers (though Blecky includes one song that addresses their fear), the piece is a case study about how the neighbours built a sense of community with exclusion at the core, as they worked to drive the sex workers out of their area of town.

In Canada, popular narratives trace the tradition of documentary theatre to Theatre Passe Muraille's 1972 production, *The Farm Show,* which involved a group of performers living with

and participating in the social realities of rural farmers, and then creating a show about them.[12] The influence of this type of work is still prevalent in this country, with such works as Theatre Passe Muraille's *Highway 63: The Fort Mac Show* (2011) and dramatic texts like Judith Thompson's *The Palace of the End* (2008), which, although it takes a more fictional bent, still relies on actors taking on the roles of actual people whose stories are being staged. Thompson's work has also moved into working with non-actors—a form popularized internationally by Germany's Rimini Protokoll. She developed her play *Rare* (2012) through a collaborative process with the show's nine performers, all of whom have Down syndrome.

Although Theatre Replacement uses similar techniques in their research stage, the company is not easily comparable to the previously mentioned examples of documentary theatre, as the company does not have actors use the words or accounts of actual people through realistic conventions. Often documentary theatre makers try to mimetically mimic the stories they have been told, which reflects a problematic assumption that realist theatre can give audiences direct access to these experiences, rather than just a construction of them. Theatre Replacement's work fits into a trajectory of alternative documentary performance which Martin notes is moving away from realistic conventions and engaging with new technologies in order "directly [address] the global condition of troubled epistemologies about truth, authenticity and reality" ("Dramaturgy" 1). Martin situates this area of performance within a 'theatre of the real'—a concept that encompasses existing documentary approaches as well new methods and forms that are

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[12] Claiming that theatre of the real approaches in Canada had a singular starting point is of course problematic. In *Committing Theatre*, Alan Filewod traces how the political has entered and been evoked through performance in Canada. Underlying this study is a resituating of Canadian theatre history that challenges the dominant way it has been disseminated as a singular narrative focused on institutionalization and written dramas. Many of Filewod's examples—such as the journalistic dramas and mock parliaments of the nineteenth century—reflect a more extended and complex history of theatre of the real approaches in Canada.

expanding this area of performance. She notes that this form has become tied into digital spaces, which promote an "addiction to and questioning of the real as it is presented across media and genres" (*Theatre* 5). While acknowledging that this type of performance is not necessarily new, she situates it as part of the upsurge in documentary performance since the 1990s.[13]

In their process, Theatre Replacement interprets experiences—sourced from performers and non-performers—and creates new works out of them. Their performances range in topic, but frequently involve immigration or cross-cultural understandings. For example, in *BIOBOXES: Artifacting Human Experience* (2007), individual audience members view one of six short theatre pieces in which a solo performer wears a box on their shoulders and shares something about the life of an immigrant to Vancouver who they personally interviewed. Kim Solga notes how the performers highlight their interpretation of the immigrant's experience rather than trying to hide it. This occurs in several moments, but is most evident when the performer meets and talks to the audience member as themselves before entering the box performance space (162). This approach acknowledges how theatre of the real can never fully realize the experiences of others, but rather is an interpretation and reconstruction of people's accounts of their experiences.

Other Theatre Replacement works delve into the ethics of theatre of the real approaches. The company developed *Clark and I Somewhere in Connecticut* (2008) after Long found an abandoned suitcase full of photo albums and travel journals behind his house. Not knowing anything about the photographs, the production team used them as a springboard for various

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[13] There are many debates about the issue of ethics in documentary performance. One question that frequently comes up is who gets the credit and reputation from an artistic work. For example, German company Rimini Protokoll usually works with non-actors, whom they call 'experts', to create new works. Yet the company name and the name of the company member directing the work are always at the forefront of promotional materials. This delegation of work to non-actors raises ethical considerations about the role of the artist. I delve into this issue below in my discussion of *Route 501 Revisited*.

performance approaches. This included moments of substitution, with the production team dropping in their own family histories when referring to the people in the photographs. While the production began as the creation of a semi-fictional family history based on the photographs, it became one about the legal status of the artist when the family who appears in the albums threatened to sue Long for the use of their images. Because of this threat, the production team substituted out many of the photos for their own and replaced the names of the family members on the photographs Long had found. In addition, Long discusses his relationship to the suitcases and photographs, as well as the legal issues, in the show. Thus, a production that began as a biographical exploration turned into an overtly autobiographical piece with Long at the centre playing himself and addressing, in a non-linear fashion, the challenges he faced as an artist in the creation process (Chamberlain; P. Hansen). This focus on the distance between the artist and the archival material illustrates Martin's belief that cutting edge documentary performance can "[subvert] ordinary documentary theatre by complicating and interrogating archival truth" ("Bodies" 22). It is a piece that grapples with ethics of documentary theatre practices within the performance itself as Long admits he had not initially thought about the archive being connected to people currently living (P. Hansen 27). The production also challenges the methodology of documentary theatre, as both realist and non-realist approaches are fraught with ethical challenges, especially in regards to the relationship between experience and representations of that experience.

In the same year, Theatre Replacement developed *WeeTube.* While the production uses verbatim texts and hyperreal settings (with a working refrigerator and oven), Theatre Replacement again makes these aesthetic choices in order to play with the documentary form. In

this case, they use documentary's predominantly realistic form in order to point to the sometimes absurd, but surprisingly captivating, conversations on YouTube comment boards. The site, which was founded in 2005, is not social in the same way that social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook are. danah boyd and Nicole Ellison define social networks as:

> web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. (211)

While the idea of "connections" is tenuous—many people "friend" or "follow" people they do not already know—this definition of a social network highlights how people build up a number of links from their profile to others. Up until 2013, when YouTube's owner, Google, integrated the site with its social networking platform Google+[14], YouTube did not fit into this description of social media sites. Instead, it was—and still is to some extent—a participatory space for anonymous conversations.

While many users watch YouTube videos alone, they are also frequently viewed in social situations. The meme surrounding 2007's "2 Girls 1 Cup" video exemplifies this phenomenon, as viewers were popularly coerced into watching the graphic video in front of friends who recorded these reactions and posted them back on YouTube. This became one of the most popular memes

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[14] When this happened, users were no longer able to post anonymously, but had to have a Google account with a full name. While it is still possible to sign up for a Google account without your real name, this change has altered the feel of the comment pages, as each user is linked to a full name and many users appear to be using their actual names, rather than avatars and personas.

on YouTube, with a search of "2 Girls 1 Cup reaction" garnering almost a quarter million videos. The most popular reaction video "2 Girls 1 Cup Reaction #1" by user fartenewt had over 14.5 million views as of March 2014. This phenomenon marked a moment in YouTube's early history that displayed the site's popularity as both a solo and group viewing platform. Through *WeeTube*, Theatre Replacement makes public the quasi-private act of watching and responding to YouTube in one's home—whether alone or with friends—and reconstructs the discourse performed on the site. The remediation of YouTube within a theatre space connects the theatre audience—who presumably are already YouTube users—with an online community. As Jill Dolan argues, in the theatre, "audiences form temporary communities, sites of public discourse that … can model new investments in and interactions with variously constituted public spheres" (10). In this case, the theatre becomes a local site for engagement with communities that are created in a digital space.

Dolan's concept of a temporary community points to the fluid and tentative nature of any community. While Benedict Anderson first developed his concept of imagined communities in relation to the nation-state, this idea relates to both online communities as well as the theatre community Dolan discusses. In both cases, what makes up a community and who constitutes it is difficult to pin down in concrete terms. What we think of as communities are socially constructed—based on the perception that this contingent entity exists. The community may only exist as a tentative arrangement, for a brief period of time, such as the moment when a theatrical production takes place. As Baz Kershaw notes, "the identity of any type of community can be maintained only by constant reinforcement of the values inscribed in its networks" (*Politics* 30). These "values" can continually change, which leads to new configurations and imagined

communities. Imagined communities may also be full of divisions and differences between its members, just as nation-states are. Throughout this dissertation, following its common parlance in theatre and performance studies, I use the term community; however, I do so with the recognition that communities are frequently tentative and that members are simultaneously part of multiple communities.

In line with Dolan's argument that theatre spaces allow for the formation of "temporary communities," Deidre Heddon notes some scholars connect verbatim performance approaches to the practice of democracy. Proponents of YouTube also link the site to democratization through its openness as a forum that fosters global connections and the creation of communities of user-consumers. Henry Jenkins situates the cultural value of the site in reception rather than production. He notes:

> YouTube does not so much change the conditions of production as it alters the contexts of circulation and reception: Such works now reach a larger public via its channels of distribution; there are systems of criticism which focus attention on interesting and emerging works; there are people willing to seek out and engage with noncommercial content; and consumers are conversing with each other by producing videos. (113)

The production on the site is not limited to the creation and uploading of videos. Users also participate in the social side of the site, adding commentary in the form of comments and video responses.

Long claims YouTube's presence as an open online forum attracted Theatre Replacement because "The comment boards have become our virtual town square or philosopher's corner

minus the elitism, and often the philosophy" (qtd. in Berger). However, in the show, Long and Yamamoto are openly critical of the type of users attracted to this "town square" and question YouTube's ability to forge productive connections. Near the beginning of the piece, Long claims—in a dismissive tone—that most commenters are likely 13 to 14 year old boys from Middle America. He does not elaborate on what this comment means, but leaves the audience with a sense that the performers themselves are ambivalent about the site's potential for connection. Both Long and Yamamoto maintain a similarly dry and ironic tone throughout the piece, which makes it sound like they may be making fun of the commenters.

The content of the video comments in *WeeTube 5400* frequently supports this negative characterization. For example the comments for the 'crazy arabs skating on da road' video include derogatory Arab and Middle Eastern stereotypes. One commenter claims:

> One of the best things to come out of the aftermath of 9/11 is the lack of idiot
> Saudis that come over to the USA to go to college. I can't tell how many times in
> the past some Saudi asswipe has run back to daddy after running up an unpaid
> bill—traffic tickets, car accidents—and then they just leave town. Not to forget
> they subscribe to more porn than most USA guys have seen in their lifetime.
> (Theatre Replacement, "WeeTube")

This hate speech reflects Zizi A. Papacharissi's point that, while new technologies are full of potential for new forms of communication, the technologies do not necessarily compel deep or meaningful cross-cultural understanding (122). Long claims this is part of what drew the company to the site in the first place, as watching "the vehemence" online can be "sad and frightening and wonderful" (Personal interview). Such hateful responses frequently provoke

"flame wars" with users harassing and swearing back and forth at each other through the comment function. Michael Strangelove notes that this kind of exchange is common on the site as "Bad behavior proliferates across YouTube's community. Haters, flaggers, and spammers demonstrate that there are implicit norms that guide participation in YouTube. As is true in any community, norms are violated, which leads to protests and debates" (136). Geert Lovink concurs, noting that comment boards usually do not lead to a sense of discourse, with commenters rarely seeking out a response from the video maker. Instead, "in this age of self-representation, commenting often *lacks* a direct confrontation with the text or artwork" (52) as "What's performed is a desperate attempt to be heard, to achieve any impact, and leave behind a mark" (53). These arguably pointless confrontations between strangers—which often have little to do with the clip content— support digital scholar Alexandra Juhasz's concern that YouTube "cannot generate an ethics—a shared sensibility and belief system between its video or its viewer" and therefore "forecloses the possibility for media politics" (309).

The idea that YouTube should—or even *can*—"generate an ethics" assumes a general, unified public and overlooks the messy, unpredictable nature of lived experiences. While Jenkins considers the site to be full of potential for collective exchange, he believes "The ideals of collective intelligence demand diversity of input" and that YouTube comment boards fail in this respect (Duncombe and Jenkins). He acknowledges the large amount of hate speech on the site—and that it is disproportionately written against anyone "black or female or queer." He concludes that this makes the boards "a poisoned well." Jenkins also notes that most of the top videos on YouTube are made by middle-class, white men as this is what the majority of users engage with. Jenkins sees this as an ongoing problem with the site as "a majoritarian set of principles

[determines] what gets seen at the highest level of YouTube and there is nothing there addressing the need to protect the rights of minority perspectives or ensuring diversity."

While many sections of text that Long and Yamamoto perform include hateful exchanges—supporting a dismissal of YouTube's social potential and its status as a "poisoned well"—a surprising number of comments include heartfelt confessions and deeply humane sentiments. From my own experience seeing *WeeTube 5400* at the Theatre Centre's 2012 Free Fall Festival, it seems spectators try to choose the videos they expect will have the most sensational comments underneath, but find that these videos are as hit and miss for controversy as adorable animal clips. An unexpected amount of commentary is respectful and engaging dialogue between strangers. These discussions sometimes even become the overarching narrative of a scene. For example, commentary under one cat video—"Kitten Surprise! (How to Break Up a Cat Fight!) THE ORIGINAL!"—follows a woman who is struggling with a sick kitten and the support other commenters offer her. The diversity of responses links to digital scholar Derrick de Kerckhove's concept of online connectivity. Artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer maintains that connectivity works against homogenizing publics and rather is a force that encompasses "those tangents that pull us out of the collective" (147). The broad spectrum of responses reflects that, although new media allows for new connections that do not rely on synchronicity and geographic proximity, online interactions are still as messy, divisive and heartwarming as other forms of exchange. They are also unpredictable—as seen in the unexpected commentary under videos—making it difficult to assess their impact on everyday interactions.

In *WeeTube 5400*, YouTube's ability to engender a sense of shared humanity—of the potential commonalities among all the difference—is highlighted through the final, non-optional

video. This video, titled "The Little Girl Giant," shows a massive marionette street theatre performance in France by the company Royal de Lux. The staging of the video's commentary moves away from the previously used stock settings, instead placing Long and Yamamoto in a spotlight—centre stage—while delivering the verbatim text. Their vocal tone also shifts from ironic to one full of awe. The comments under "The Little Girl Giant" are dominated by statements of amazement and expressions of hope in humanity. Recent examples of comments under the video show the continued admiration YouTubers have of the clip. Various users exclaim: "Would love to see this presented in the states," "Amazing Steampunk Street Theater," "It seems so surreal and amazingly life-like, even with the operators in plain sight" and "The world needs more awesomeness like this." The occasional comment addresses the sense of uncanny the video creates, which leads some to find the clip unappealing. For example, user Michael Hambly states, "Formidable, but kind of creepy when she licks the ice-cream." However, a large majority of responses focus on how incredible the artistic feat is. The focus on a video with uplifting comments creates a striking counterpoint to Long's earlier dismissal of YouTube as an antagonistic space. Instead, by including a range of videos and commentary, *WeeTube 5400* reflects digital scholar Michael Strangelove's definition of YouTube as "a social space" with a "virtual community [that] reflects the cultural politics of the present times and thus is rife with both cooperation and conflict" (4)—a description that complicates utopic visions of the site or social media in general.

Ending with this example of high art may privilege online material by professionals. In addition, the conventional, pre-selected ending potentially mutes the company's critique of the site as the exchanges under the video are predominantly positive and friendly. At the same time,

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"The Little Girl Giant" video and its comments exemplify the cooperative side of the site and situates performance as full of potential for building more utopic modes of digital exchange—what Jill Dolan refers to as "fleeting intimations of a better world" (2). In this case, the *WeeTube* audience gets a glimpse of the ways online sharing can extend past geographic and temporal limitations. In my interview with him, Long admits that this was part of their motivation for including the video, noting that he and Yamamoto wanted there to be a feeling that there "is still beauty and hope in video sharing sites" after they have "delve[d] into the darkness of YouTube." It also highlights how contemporary performance continues to be altered by the expansion of digital forms of communication. By screening part of a street performance within the theatre space, Theatre Replacement explores how performance circulates beyond an initial iteration. In this case, the performance is evoked through the ongoing participation of social media. Not only does *WeeTube 5400* further circulate the street performance and its online reception, but the production itself becomes part of this ongoing participation. Theatre Replacement's alteration of the site title YouTube to *WeeTube* reflects this focus on collective participation as both on- and offline performances are impacted by the interactive nature of Web 2.0.

Long and Yamamoto—like all verbatim theatre makers—edit and select what goes into their piece. With *WeeTube*, Long admits that this involves choosing the clips and sections of commentary they think will be most interesting onstage, which often emphasizes bad behaviour (Personal interview). While some of their video selections stay the same through each iteration of the work, they continually update the lists of videos audiences select from in order to include ones that respond to current events. Audience members choose what video they would like to see from these lists, but Long and Yamamoto's curation of the videos and dialogue from the

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commentary beneath them both opens up and limits the political potential of the work. The staging also impacts on the politics of the piece. When repeating the video comments, Long and Yamamoto act out scenes in stock settings. For example, in one they are scientists in a lab. This additional layer has the potential to detract from the video content as the actions onstage have little to do with the video's socio-political background. The YouTube videos Theatre Replacement use range in geography and content, which links the production back to their interest in exchanges between publics in different social and geographic contexts. By embodying a multiplicity of locations and mediums simultaneously, the company emphasizes the both-and nature of intermediality and points to the potential for connection across time and space in this online location. At the same time, the performers' own ambivalence to YouTube and its users undermines any definitive sense that the site has potential as a radical, virtual space and questions of who participates and what voices are heard remain.

Express Yourself: Implication and Intervention in *iShow*

When working in my internet browser, I rarely have just one page open. Instead, I have several tabs open at once, some of which are connected to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. When I get up, I frequently pick up my phone, checking to see if I have any new messages and perhaps opening Instagram to look at a few newly posted photos. This multitasking with a variety of social media sites has become routine for what Don Tapscott refers to as the "Net Generation," or "Ngen." He argues those born between 1977 and 1997 are the first generation to have "grown up digital" and are more adept at adapting to new technologies than

the generations before them.[15]

Les Petites Cellules Chaudes is an 'Ngen' performance group made up of fifteen performers. The group came together in 2012 to devise a social media performance piece— *iShow*—first as a workshop for the National Arts Centre and then for Montreal's OFFTA festival.[16] The production is another example of theatre of the real, as it addresses different types of interactions that take place in the social web on a daily basis. Like *WeeTube*, the bulk of the material is taken directly from online exchanges. However, the title of *iShow* contrasts with Theatre Replacement's focus on the 'we' of intermedial performance by placing the performance of the self at the forefront. While *iShow* includes YouTube through screening and re-performing viral videos, the performers also interact with a number of other participatory technologies, including Twitter, text messaging, Google Earth, Skype and anonymous chat video platforms. The performers engage with a number of sites onstage in real-time, which again contrasts with Theatre Replacement who use a more scripted, pre-planned approach. To integrate this range of social media, the production consists of around twenty short vignettes—an eclectic group of happenings that reflects the ways social media users continually interact via multiple platforms. Performer François Édouard Bernier claims the show finds poetry in this everyday engagement:

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[15] Tapscott uses this term in both his 1998 book *Growing Up Digital*, which looks at this generation as children and teenagers, and his 2009 follow-up *Grown Up Digital*, which looks at the Net Generation as young adults. Writing initially about this group in 1998, he notes that this digital acuteness is not necessarily related to having access to digital media as "Most of these children do not yet have access to the Net, but most have some degree of fluency with the digital media" (97). Yet, in both books, he also acknowledges that the 'Net Generation' is neither a unified group nor without exclusions. He admits there are "have-nots" who do not have access to this technology because of abilities, economics or location.

[16] The OFFTA festival was established in 2007 after Montreal's Festival TransAmériques (a large international performance festival) cut the new works section of its program. OFFTA gives a platform for new work, mostly by young artists based in Montreal, and is usually programmed for a week during Festival TransAmériques.

"we hope to convey a sense of everyday reality to the audience and to magnify it in order to transcend the banality of daily acts so that a poetry emerges" (qtd. in Bernier).[17]

While Long and Yamamoto use a single computer to play YouTube clips, *iShow* is more expansive with each member of the large cast controlling one or multiple laptops onstage. This staging—with visible wires and a simple set—connects to Brecht's visions of a politically engaged epic theatre. *iShow* follows a number of other epic theatre techniques, including an acting style in which the performers are both themselves and characters simultaneously, direct addresses to the audience, the use of signs (via projections on three screens) and constant breaks in action. The content of *iShow* is also very Brechtian, as the company goes through a number of scenes that explore how social media are currently used everyday, but also how they might be retooled and reimagined via performance. The interrogation of these sites reflects Brecht's understanding of an epic theatre that "[treats] society as if all its actions were performed as experiments" (195).

The Brechtian staging embodies what Peter Lunenfeld calls a digital "aesthetic of unfinish." Lunenfeld argues that this concept defines all digital media and emphasizes that, while 'unfinish' is often associated with failure, it also points to potential ("Unfinished", 7). He notes that digital spaces do not simply offer the possibility of continual growth and alteration, but can have this sense of change embedded within them ("Real", 3). This is especially true in the interconnected, rhizomatic world of Web 2.0, in which new media consumers can also become producers who continually alter existing sites through participation, even when this participation

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[17] In the original French: "nous souhaitons transmettre au public une réalité qui leur est quotidienne et la magnifier pour transcender la trivialité du geste quotidien pour faire émerger la poésie."

is just witnessing. Lunenfeld notes that this constant state of 'unfinish' "allows us to read our own desires into a not yet fully formed object—opening up more space for pleasure and identification than any 'complete' work or person can ever offer" ("Unfinished", 8).[18]

iShow's aesthetic of unfinish also seeps into the content of the work as it jumps between different vignettes and social media platforms. This mix of content indicates the infinite number of ways users can engage and interact through social media and lets the company avoid becoming either completely cyberutopian or pessimistic. A scene near the beginning of the piece exemplifies the never-ending possibilities of the media used onstage. The segment, which is one of the show's longest, builds a sense of unfinish through the use of videos that appear to be from YouTube.[19] During the vignette, all the performers are at their computers and a number of videos appear on the three screens. The first video plays on the center screen and features then Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In the video, Harper plays piano and sings John Lennon's "Imagine" with Maria Aragon—a young Canadian who became a YouTube sensation when a

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[18] The quick shifts between different topics and social media tools, as well as a frequent overabundance of stimuli, also point to the digital's connection with the historical avant-garde. The most clear connection is to the aesthetics and structures of the Italian Futurists who hosted *serate*, evenings that took place in theatres and involved short performances and actions meant to upset and offend audience members, ideally to the point of revolt. The provocative and shocking nature of many *iShow* vignettes highlights how Futurism acts as an antecedent for digital performance, which Steven Dixon discusses at length in *Digital Performance*. Much like the era of the Futurists, contemporary debates about social media address the nature of existence in a quickly changing world. Max Planck described the early twentieth-century as "a very singular moment of history. It is a moment of crisis . . . Many people say that these symptoms mark the beginnings of a great renaissance, but there are others who see in them the tidings of a downfall to which our civilization is fatally destined" (qtd. in Berghaus, *Theatre* 31). This description—which highlights the world the Futurists were responding to—mirrors contemporary cyberutopian-cyberpessimist debates.

[19] While the YouTube site is not shown, the videos are mostly low quality and seem to be filmed by amateurs, which fits into a common user-generated YouTube video aesthetic. This assumption is based on my own experience viewing YouTube. Of course, with the evolution of video technologies, this distinction can be difficult to make. Michael Strangelove notes how, "within YouTube it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish amateur from professional productions. The video industry is getting better at mimicking the amateur mode, while continual improvements in domestic video technology make it easier for amateurs to emulate professional production values" (173).

video of her covering Lady Gaga's *Born This Way* went viral. A few moments after it starts playing, two more videos appear on the screens to the left and right of the Harper video. Both look like amateur uploads featuring dances to "Imagine." While the Harper video is looped throughout the segment, the videos appearing on either side change several times and appear to be coming from different performers' laptops. They begin with the dance videos and then shift into other covers of "Imagine." The cover artists range from clarinet players to professional opera singers to everyday people singing in their homes.

As the segment goes on, the connection between some of the videos and the Harper video becomes less apparent and the noise from the clips combine to create a cacophony of sounds. Clips range from a comedic scene from *The Simpsons* to a dog playing piano in a sweater to a woman belly dancing in her room. The experience of watching the clips is reminiscent of going on YouTube and clicking on content in the "Related Videos" section next to a video. Sometimes the videos are directly related to the content you are watching, but other times the link is not obvious. When viewing videos on the site, it can become easy to move away from your original interest by clicking on these links and discovering new content. The length of this section suggests endless possibilities for related videos online. Content is continually being added— YouTube claims users upload one hundred hours of video to the site every minute—which supports Lunenfeld's concept of the unfinish.

This segment explores video viewing possibilities online and is one of many *iShow* sections that delves into engagement on a particular participatory site. However, Les Petites Cellules Chaudes highlight one type of site more than the rest: anonymous chat websites that link two strangers via a webcam. The company both begins and finishes the performance connected

to these sites, and they are also used in vignettes throughout. This chat format became popular—and infamous—with the launch of the website *Chatroulette* in November 2009. Chatrouletters communicate for as long as both want to and all participants have the ability to end an exchange by clicking a 'next' button, which connects them to a different stranger. At the height of the site's popularity in February 2010 there were up to one million new visitors a day. However, by September of the same year traffic was down at least 60 per cent, most likely due to a perception that the site had become dominated by nude, masturbating males (Bilton; Carr; Valentino-Devries). While at its height the site generated memes and garnered substantial media attention, Chatroulette is now more likely to be cited as a quintessential short-lived internet fad. The site has also been critiqued for its lack of depth. For example, Sherry Turkle argues that "people are objectified and quickly discarded" (xiv) via the short exchanges.

While in many ways Chatroulette, through its inability to create more permanent ties and communities, works against Web 2.0 principles, it embodies the heterotopic nature of the internet through these brief windows of exchange, as, according to Michel Foucault, heterotopias "presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at the same time" (183). Despite critiques, anonymous chat sites remain full of potential for interactivity because of these openings. Chatroulette creator Andrey Ternovskiy, who was a teen when the site was launched, situates the site in a way that reflects this potential. He describes Chatroulette as being: "like the street in some big city, where you see all kinds of unknown faces. Some of those faces appeal to you, some disgust you. Chatroulette is a street that you walk along where you can chat to whomever you like. The program makes the Internet more like real life" (qtd. in Kondakov and Bidder). This urban metaphor aligns with Long's description of

YouTube as a "virtual town square or philosopher's corner" and points to Chatroulette's potential as a location for site-based performance.

Chatroulette's anonymous, short, real-time interactions create a space in which users can playfully explore different performances of the self. *New York Magazine*'s Sam Anderson explains how his own experience on the site allowed him to feel free from everyday societal confines. Anderson claims:

> The paradox of face-to-face conversation across vast distances seems to do strange things to the human brain. I often found myself acting unlike myself: dancing without provocation with a roomful of Korean girls, greeting people with flurries of over-the-top marijuana slang even though I've never even smoked a joint.

Anderson's experience echoes Nancy K Baym's belief that citizens frequently use online spaces to rehearse performances of the self—a trying out that can feel "empowering and liberating" (116) when users diverge from their quotidian behaviour. It highlights the site's potential as a space for exceptional exchanges that break from the everyday.[20]

Ryan M. Davis notes that, instead of being like the asynchronous, one-sided communication of most participatory media, "Chatroulette is more akin to the presence and mutual engagement of performer and audience in theatrical performance" (4). Although Davis does not elaborate on what kind of theatre presence this is, the immediate, participatory nature of

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[20] This phenomenon has been well documented in several performance studies articles that address the experience of engaging with different online spaces. For example. E.J. Westlake compares MySpace and Facebook, noting that these different sites "allow [users] different kinds of performances of self" (25). In the case of Facebook, Westlake argues that younger users engage with the site "to define the boundaries of normative behavior through unique performances of an online self" (23). See also Laura Levin,"It's Time to Profess Performance: Thinking Beyond the Specialness and Discreteness of Theatre."

Chatroulette makes it closer to environmental theatre than conventional theatre. This real-time "mutual engagement" makes the site open to unexpected, unpredictable interactions—as seen in both Anderson's account of his experience and in the opening segment of *iShow.* As the audience enters the theatre, each performer is sitting at a long table with a laptop connected to an anonymous chat website. Projections allow the audience to follow three performers' screens at a time. The projected exchanges are switched every few minutes, so the audience ends up following a range of conversations. Both the performers and the users they connect to often hit the "Next" button right away to avoid an undesired exchange. The "Nexting" by other users raises questions about the politics of opening up private spaces to a larger public. Although users are putting themselves online to be connected to anywhere and anyone, most Chatroulette exchanges are between people in private rather than public spaces. Many users in *iShow* seem surprised when they are connected to such a large group of watchers—some even appear unsettled and upset by this. In fact, when the company presented the work in Paris in December 2015, they connected to a user who worked nearby. The man was angry that his image had been publicly displayed—perhaps because he was at work at the time—and came to the theatre to confront the company after the show (Dauphinais).

While most of the connections are brief, some conversations last several minutes. In these longer exchanges, the performers and chat partners ask each other questions and tell one another about themselves. The answers are frequently surprising, especially when the chat partner has no shirt on and seems to be on the site looking for a sexual encounter. The performers also engaged their partners physically. For example, during one of the show's Montreal performances, a performer drew a picture of a dinosaur for his chat partner and then asked the partner to do

something brilliant. The chat partner left the video frame and returned wearing a conical hat, much to the audience's delight. This real-time expansion of the theatre space into other locales embraces the unpredictability of online interactions in a space normally reserved for scripted interactions.

Anonymous chat sites are further explored later in the production with the staging of a scene from Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Each night the performers give themselves eight minutes to find someone on a chat site willing to play the role of Christian in a scene. While some nights the experiment fails, company member Laurence Dauphinais claims they are successfully around 95% of the time (Personal interview). The online search is surprisingly engaging and the audience gets noticeably invested in the hunt, cheering when any potential Christian is found. When I saw the production at Summerworks 2013 in Toronto, the performers found a willing partner and staged the scene, in which Christian woos Roxanne using Cyrano's words. This dynamic is played out digitally, as a performer takes on the Cyrano role by typing the lines to the online Christian. On the night I saw *iShow*, their Christian was a nervous preteen male who stumbled over his words, but was clearly invested in his performance. Christian's hesitation and self-awareness contrasted with the males most commonly associated with anonymous chat sites (and featured earlier in *iShow*).

While *iShow* includes many playful exchanges on the site to show how it can be a positive and fun online space, Les Petites Cellules Chaudes also address the more antagonistic and aggressive sides of the site and of Web 2.0 more generally. In their initial Chatroulette interactions, chat partners frequently sexualize the female performers and ask them to take their clothes off. On one night, a female performer wrote back "I dont wanna show my tits," "you dont

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have empathy" and finally "you are a very narrow minded obsessed little boy" to a male chat partner who begged her to take off her shirt. While the sexual aggression alludes to cyberpessimistic views of the social web—and assumptions that Chatrouletters are simply perverts who want to antagonize and objectify female users—the company emphasizes that sex and gender are actually complex issues in Web 2.0. In a speech performed by all the female performers, the women discuss how they vacillate between discomfort with the way women's bodies are objectified online and "[wanting] to be the object of that desire." They are aware that the idea of desire reinforces men as being in a position of power, and that any feeling of power they feel in the situation is "fake." They also acknowledge that such a dynamic "excludes a person" and is "misogynistic and gross." Yet, they still envy women who arouse desire in men online and even identify with them.

This dichotomy is explored further in the subsequent vignette, in which a Cam4 feed is shown on the center screen. The Cam4 website describes itself as "Free cams of amateur exhibitionists." Again, the site is mostly anonymous, although unlike Chatroulette you can choose to view a particular person and can stay on that feed as long as they are there. The feed shown in *iShow* features a woman masturbating and live comments from users watching. Almost all the users discuss—frequently in explicit terms—the woman's body and particularly her individual body parts. Although the Cam4 feed is usually a single shot, this reaction reflects Laura Mulvey's discussion of how cinema breaks up female bodies in order to disempower them

in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (20).[21] In this case, the users—without being directed to do so by the camera—still focus on fragments of the female body, perhaps reflecting how mass media have trained their perception. In contrast to most of the online dialogue, the *iShow* performers comment using lyrics from Leonard Cohen's "Suzanne," a song set in Montreal that deals with a male's desire for a female. The lyrics include the statement, "And you know that she will trust you for you've touched her perfect body with your mind." Including these lyrics extends the earlier discussion about objectification and desire onto the Cam4 feed. It breaks from the other dialogue on the site and offers a critical, real-time reaction to both the image shown and the dominant reception of it.

Les Petites Cellules Chaudes also address more antagonistic and disturbing sides of other Web 2.0 spaces. In a provocative scene, a performer offers the audience the opportunity to come onstage and view the now infamous Luka Magnotta murder video "1 Lunatic 1 Ice Pick." The video, which Magnotta uploaded to a graphic and violent video sharing site, shows him murdering and dismembering Chinese student Lin Jun. When I saw the production in Toronto, no one took the performer up on this offer and the audience even congratulated themselves, applauding loudly when the computer was removed. However, company member Laurence

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[21] Of course, online conversations can also fragment and disempower male bodies. After initially publishing this theory, Mulvey responded to critiques that she limited her discussion by situating the cinema viewer as male. She notes that, while she continues to believe in her original argument, "the male third person closed off avenues of inquiry that should be followed up" ("Afterthoughts", 122). She then proceeds to discuss the female viewer, who may identify with the male position or separate herself from it (or slip between these two possibilities) (122-3). Judith Halberstam also expands on Mulvey's theory, noting that critiques often muddle Mulvey's argument with her beliefs. Halberstam argues that Mulvey covers pre-existing dynamics that exist in traditional Hollywood cinema and that films can break out of this gendered scopophilia (*In* 83-6). Film and video can also flip the gaze by including fragmented and objectified male bodies, which complicates Mulvey's theory. This does not mean that male and female bodies become equivalent—both are embedded in their own particular histories—but works to complicate assumptions about female bodies being the only ones objectified.

Dauphinais notes that this is not the usual reaction and that Toronto was the "most ethical city we visited." For example, in one video of the production in Montreal[22]—where the production was called *Le iShow*—a large group watches the video for a couple of minutes until they are all disgusted and leave the stage. Of course, these two reactions could have happened for a number of reasons. Interestingly, the crowd agreed in Montreal, where the murder had actually recently occurred, while a year later in Toronto the audience refused. In the Montreal show, while the group watched the video, the rest of the audience observed a close-up of their reactions on a large screen.[23] After this segment—whether anyone watches the video or not—the performer closes the laptop, reminds the audience that the video has been viewed several hundred thousand times and states "We often talk a lot about the murderers but sometimes we forget the victims' names. His name was Lin Jun." Dauphinais claims the company included this statement in order to address the danger that the section focused too much on Magnotta and made him the star— something that the killer himself has expressed a desire for.

This sombre section serves as a reminder of the violence and hate underlying much Web 2.0 dialogue. It evokes Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, in which "violent physical images crush and hypnotize the sensibility of the spectator" (83)—but with this digital image at the centre of the discomfort. The moment also challenges Steve Dixon's claim that "watching film, video, and digital media is a more voyeuristic experience than watching live performance, since in the literal sense of the word, the onlooker is looking from a position without fear of being seen

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[22] I was able to view two recordings of *iShow* (one in English and one in French) that Laura Levin obtained from Les Petites Cellules Chaudes.

[23] In later iterations of the production, the company started only allowing one person to watch the video at a time to avoid audience members feeling peer pressured to watch (Dauphinais).

by the watched" (130). In this case, the usually private act of watching online videos is—much in the same vein as *WeeTube*—made public and those who selected to watch the violent video are put on display to the rest of the audience.[24]

The Lin Jun section serves as a reminder of the violence underlying much Web 2.0 dialogue. It is also a troubling segment in terms of Les Petites Cellules Chaudes' investigation of online behaviour. The performer's commentary acts as a rebuke that situates the company in a superior role, even though they offer to further disseminate Magnotta's violence via their performance. The self-satisfaction of the Toronto audience reflects how neither the performers nor audience are held accountable for their complicity in Web 2.0 exchanges. By letting the audience and themselves off the hook—with no discussion of the ethics of either choice—Les Petites Cellules Chaudes undermine their critique of those who watch and circulate the violent video. Instead of taking up performance's potential as a mode of intervention, as they do with Chatroulette, the company, perhaps inadvertently, reproduces the troubling side of the social web. The show's aesthetic of unfinish contributes to this ambivalence, as the constant jumping to new sites and topics leaves the company little time to delve into an in-depth critique of each individual act and site.

iShow concludes with the performers exiting the auditorium en masse. Right before they leave, the performers connect one laptop to Chatroulette and turn it around, linking the entire

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[24] My focus here is on how some web platforms promote particular forms of online behaviour that is casually violent in troubling ways. This is an issue that relates to the violent language used on YouTube comment boards (as discussed above) and my discussion of war video games in Chapter Two. While this topic could be considered in a more in-depth conversation about the aestheticization of violence in contemporary society, specific online spaces also exist within their own contexts, which can create different behavioural norms than what we might be accustomed to in offline contexts. At the same time—in contrast to a deterministic approach—it is also problematic to assume that the technologies themselves engender these violent acts.

audience to the chat partner. This ending acknowledges that theatregoers are also part of participatory online cultures and media producers in their own right. On sites like YouTube and Chatroulette, there is no longer a clear cut producer-consumer divide. Strangelove argues that this is what makes YouTube a revolutionary space as "a power that up until now has been the almost sole domain of professionals and corporations, is in our own hands … now *that* is radical, alternative, and potentially politically and economically disruptive" (178). Of course, this statement needs to be considered in light of YouTube's restrictions—as outlined by Juhasz and Jenkins—as this "disruptiveness" may be limited to particular users. While *iShow* concludes pointing to this distributed, "radical" potential of participatory media, even further opportunities would be opened up if they physically connected the audience to the technology. The same is true for *WeeTube 5400*. While Theatre Replacement involves the audience in the video selection—and thus addresses YouTubers as media consumers—they do not offer other options for directly interacting with the site (such as adding comments in real-time). For both companies, this type of engagement could build upon their use of theatre as a space of reflection—in which to imagine alternate ways of online connection—by exploring the interactive potential of participatory media.

Riding along with *Route 501 Revisited*: Urban Intervention via Social Media Performance

In 2012, journalist Jonathan Goldsbie created *Route 501 Revisited*, a site-specific performance using Twitter. In contrast to *WeeTube* and *iShow*, this performance engaged with social media in an everyday context—riding mass transit. Goldsbie is not primarily a theatre maker, but rather has a background in urban activism and municipal politics. Formerly a member

of Toronto's Public Space Committee and a columnist for *The National Post*, Goldsbie now works as a reporter for Toronto's *NOW Magazine*. However, as the *NOW* press release about his hiring notes, Goldsbie is best known for his Twitter feed (@goldsbie), which addresses Toronto's municipal politics and has attracted over 18,000 followers as of February 2016 (Love).

Goldsbie's passions for both Twitter and Toronto's public space led to the creation of *Route 501 Revisited*. This performance, which took place twice in March 2012, involved participants riding on a Toronto streetcar and communicating solely through a Twitter hashtag, #route501. The production was a part of The Theatre Centre's bi-annual *Free Fall Festival*, which also presented *WeeTube*. For each performance, participants would board a 501 streetcar at one end of its route, which traverses almost the entire length of Toronto along Queen Street. The first iteration occurred on a chartered vehicle; the second took place on a public streetcar, with only those in the know participating. Participants could follow along by searching the #route501 hashtag and using it in their own tweets, which could start a new train of thought or respond directly to someone else. Unlike the most popular social networking site on the internet, Facebook, Twitter is predominantly open, with users writing publicly accessible tweets. While users can choose to "protect" their tweets—making them only visible to approved followers— most users have public profiles open to everyone. By searching hashtags, you can follow tweets related to particular topics, regardless of whether or not you follow the users writing the tweets. This openness makes Twitter a popular space for responses to large-scale events and major news stories. As Joss Hands notes, Twitter "is built on a set of computer protocols that foreground interaction, enabling a greatly expanded reach for critique and organisation among interlocutors"

(18).[25]

With *Route 501 Revisited*, Goldsbie set out to organize a dialogue and experience about urban space in Toronto. Over the course of the journey, Goldsbie pointed out different locales and gave information about each space. In some cases, the content was historical. For example, as the streetcar passed a movie theatre, Goldsbie tweeted that it is one of only two currently on the route, but "At one time, there were 47."[26] Goldsbie claims these interjections connect to his interest in Toronto's "lack of social memory"—something that he has reported on extensively (Personal interview). This hearkening back to earlier urban landscapes connects the work to such audio walks as Janet Cardiff's *Her Long Black Hair* and Neworld Theatre's *Ashes on the Water*, which also uncover the history of urban spaces in New York and Vancouver respectively. In these two walks the audio takes the listener/walker back to a specific historical time and encourages them to consider how spaces have been inscribed and used in different eras.

While Goldsbie's work aligned with this approach through tweets that pointed out Toronto's changing urban landscape, the work's primary focus was less historical and instead on recent political events and current problems surrounding the use of public space. In another comparative tweet, Goldsbie noted, "On our tour, we'll be passing through 11 city wards, 7 provincial/federal ridings, and 6 closed library branches." The closure of public libraries is just one of many social and political issues Goldsbie referred to during the ride. When the streetcar passed the east end's Moss Park, he recalled how Paul Croutch, a homeless man living in the

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[25] While acknowledging the site's potential, Hands is not overly idealistic as she acknowledges Twitter "is also capable of amplifying the status quo, or reducing dialogue to a set of clichés" (18).

[26] To prepare for the ride, Goldsbie had much of this factual information pre-written as draft tweets. However, he used up all of these during the first ride, so the second ride included more off the cuff commentary (Personal interview).

park, had been killed there in 2008 by army reservists. When passing Old City Hall, he mentioned then Toronto Mayor Rob Ford's ongoing legal troubles, tweeting "Coming up on right. Old City Hall, where Rob Ford's lawyers will be in court tomorrow morning, in a further effort to delay. #route501." Later on the ride, he mentions how a new "Pinball Cafe" has "run afoul of an old bylaw limiting game machines to 2 per establishment." The commentary also touched on how Torontonians engage with urban spaces and the tension between urban and suburban values. As the streetcar moved away from the downtown core and into a more suburban area, Goldsbie tweeted: "At a certain point, outside our city-core comfort zones, it becomes like a haunted house dark ride. #route501."

Route 501 Revisited took participants on a journey through public space via a mobile device and encouraged participants to view their surroundings through a new, or at least altered, perspective. Although part of the Free Fall Theatre festival, *Route 501 Revisited* was staged outside of traditional theatre spaces without any clear actors, thereby encouraging participants to expand their definition of theatre. *Route 501 Revisited* had participants engage with new technologies, which broke down hierarchies of authorship and encouraged participants to actively re-situate their relationship to socially inscribed spaces. Goldsbie saw this as one of the aims of the piece as he wanted it to be an experience of "decentering" (Personal interview). Drew Hemment refers to this type of performance as a form of "social authoring," in which locative media is used to expand social spaces through user-generated content (351). For *Route 501 Revisited* this "social authoring" occurred through Twitter, which participants accessed on their own personal networked device. The online activity through the #route501 hashtag exemplifies how the site is a form of what Jonas Löwgren and Bo Reimer term 'collaborative

media.' Löwgren and Reimer define these media as "oriented toward action. They are open for interactions. And these interaction lead to the creation of experiences—experiences that change people's dispositions and worldviews" (134). Though impossible to actually gauge whether these experiences make such transformative changes, participatory media offer openings for exchanges and new experiences.

Löwgren and Reimer also note that collaborative media have the potential to break from traditional mass media practices through this possibility of action (160). They argue that this is a potential that researchers and media makers need "to start answering by making future collaborative media and their practices into meaningful experiences" (160). It is my belief that projects like *Route 501 Revisited* are starting to take up this call by challenging spectators to use digital tools to collaborate and communicate with one another. In *Route 501 Revisited*, participants frequently tweeted to one another through Twitter's reply function, which developed different dialogues throughout the piece. Through this collaborative media, *Route 501 Revisited* built on existing theatre of the real approaches that embrace the role non-actors can play by situating the audience as co-creators of the piece. The production blurred performance and the everyday, as participants used their own Twitter handles and added content that could forever be connected to their accounts.

Route 501 Revisited followed the social authoring approach of other Toronto-based locative projects, such as *[murmur]*, which started in the city's Kensington market in 2003. Both are phone-based projects, with *[murmur]* participants calling a telephone number to hear personal stories or alternative histories about particular locations in the city and *Route 501 Revisited* participants sharing their urban experiences via Twitter phone applications. Like

Hemment, Chris Eaket claims there is socio-political potential in this form of performance. He argues that *[murmur]*'s multiple discourses reveal how neighbourhoods are "lived places" (36) and "decrease social distance while emphasizing individual attachments to places" (33). For *[murmur]*, volunteers recorded locals' stories about their neighbourhoods. These co-created stories were then uploaded to the *[murmur]* website. People can listen to the stories by calling a phone number posted at each story site. *Route 501 Revisited* took this distributed approach a step further by allowing anyone to add their voice to the narrative in real-time. While the production occurred at a particular time, like [*murmur*], the tweets remain accessible. I can still go on Twitter, search "#route501" and follow the *Route 501 Revisited* tweets in the order they were posted.[27]

Like *[murmur]*, the social was at the forefront in *Route 501 Revisited*. An overview of the tweets from both *Route 501* performances reveals that other tweeters were just as involved as Goldsbie. Though both Goldsbie and the other tweeters make mostly declarative statements, they also comment on one another's tweets and ask each other questions. The performance allowed for various networks to build, as tweeters replied to both the performance generally through the hashtag and one another directly through Twitter handles. Goldsbie describes this as "concentric bubbles of experience and interaction" contained within different configurations both within and

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[27] This distributed approach has also been taken up by artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. In his *Voz Alta* (2008) participants could speak into a megaphone at a public square in Mexico City where a student massacre had occurred in 1968. As a participant spoke, a searchlight simultaneously responded with flashes. When the searchlight hit the top of a particular building, it created a chain reaction, prompting three more lights to go on across Mexico City. Lozano-Hemmer also connected a radio station to the megaphone so that anyone in the city could tune in and hear what was being said. When no one was speaking the main light went out, but recordings from the time of the massacre—from survivors, politicians and academics—played in the square. Like *[murmur]* this site-specific intervention responded to the space it was in, though with a more explicit activist bent as the student massacre—and both its history and current reverberations—was placed at the forefront. The politics of the piece did not limit participants' interventions; they could say whatever they wanted.

outside the performance space of the streetcar (Personal interview). The content of these interactions and the tweets varies, with some participants more interested in how outsiders responded to the form of the piece than in the urban space outside.

Aislinn Rose (@aislinnto) participated in both versions of *Route 501 Revisited.* In the second version, which took place with both the general public and the performance participants onboard, Rose's tweets reveal the interesting dynamic that occurred between these groups. She claims that the "1st #route501 trip was fun, but this silent communication amidst strangers is definitely more interesting." During this second trip, she tweeted about how non-participants gave perplexed looks when those involved in the performance took selfies and all reacted in unison when reading certain tweets. Her tweets reveal how this contrasts with the first iteration, which had a boisterous air, with participants talking throughout the journey.[28] She found that in this first, much louder, version, the audience instantly formed a community and she quickly made new friends as she helped people set up Twitter accounts and send their first tweets.[29] As Rose is the Artistic Producer for Toronto's politically engaged Praxis Theatre and also presented an intermedial, interactive work at the Free Fall Festival, she is likely observant of these kinds of dynamics.

Other tweets responded to Goldsbie's interest in public space. When passing Queen

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[28] A number of factors could have played into the difference between the two versions. For example, the first chartered ride included only one stop (at the Theatre Centre), while the second ride stopped continually. Goldsbie also tweeted out the streetcar number so that people could join mid-way through the second ride, which meant the audience built up throughout the performance (Personal interview).

[29] Goldsbie was aware that issues of access might pose a problem, so he had a laptop and set up a wifi hotspot on the streetcar in case anyone did not have a phone connected to the internet. However, he admits that the piece "by its very nature . . . can't be accessible to everyone" and that the streetcars themselves are physically inaccessible as they require transit users to use stairs. Still, he aimed to have "more than the minimum of accessibility" for the production (Personal interview).

West's Trinity Bellwoods Park, Carly Maga (@radiomaga) commented "Trinity Bellwoods, I find you quite exclusive for a public outdoor space #route501." Visual art critic Hal Foster argues, in a critique of relational art, that involving audiences in the creation of a piece can lead to the reestablishment of the artist as the principle player, both in the creation and reception of a work (194). *Route 501 Revisited* avoids such a re-hierarchizing as the majority of tweets are not even by Goldsbie and there are no limitations to the content of conversations.

At the same time, this use of Twitter leads to questions about authorship and who gets credit for the work. *Route 501 Revisited* is an example of delegated performance as non-professionals perform in the piece according to the artist's instructions. In *Fair Play*, Jen Harvie notes delegated performance labour is usually unpaid, which leads to debates about whether audience members in immersive performances are exploited or given a platform in which to enact their own agency (28). Harvie complicates this issue, and acknowledges that delegated performance can do either depending on their context. She states that delegated performance can "[risk] reproducing some of the most egregious conditions and effects of contemporary labour relations, though at its best, it draws self-reflexive critical attention to that risk" (29).[30] Claire

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[30] Harvie sees other benefits to delegating performances, including the democratizing of art (36-40) and the "[modeling of] shared participation, engagement, community and responsibility-taking" (40). Yet, she continues to counter these benefits with potential dangers, such as delegated performances that just offer "a specter of participation" (42) rather than a decisive role. One potential downfall of delegated performance is that they can have limits on participation. For example, *Route 501 Revisited* can only involve participants who have a mobile device and Twitter account. In addition, users have to have a certain level of familiarity with the Twitter application to engage in the piece. These limitations follow Harvie's argument that, "Though everyone is implicitly invited to participate, the invitation may nevertheless effectively be more available to those with existing substantial cultural capital than to those with little" (42). Another Toronto production using Twitter—Rob Kempson's *#legacy* (2014) deals more explicitly with these digital divides. The performance was part of Toronto's Harbourfront Hatch series, and thus was not a full-scale production, but rather an experiment with limited resources and a short rehearsal period. *#legacy* was an example of theatre of the real, as Kempson worked with three female non-actors over the age of 65—none of whom had used Twitter before rehearsals. As part of the creation process, they each signed up for an account and communicated with one another and friends about the production. Their relationship with Twitter made up much of the show's content, which also addressed what their legacy will be.

Bishop's arguments surrounding delegated performance follow a similar trajectory. She claims that delegated performance should not simply be "[judged] … on a scale with supposed 'exploitation' at the bottom and full 'agency' at the top" (*Artificial* 239). Yet, even in cases where the precariousness of contemporary labour is highlighted, the issue of who gets credit for the work remains, as a single artist or company usually remains at the forefront of the work, both in its initial presentation and in documentation (Bishop, *Artificial* 232, 237; Harvie 50). This tension exists with *Route 501 Revisited* as Goldsbie sets out the framework of the piece and has his name attached to it in publicity materials. Yet, his score is fairly open, with no limitations on the content of tweets or even physical attendance at the production.[31]

Steve Benford and Gabriella Giannachi—in their study of mixed reality performances (discussed further in Chapter Four)—describe the level of possibilities offered in interactive performances through the concept of trajectories. The two main types of trajectories are 'canonical trajectories' and 'participant trajectories.' The former are integral to the performance and are created by the author(s) of the piece. The latter is what is added by the participants during the performance. Benford and Giannachi note that the relationship between the two types of trajectories reflects the levels of control the artist(s) or the participants have over the performance (54). In *Route 501 Revisited*, Goldsbie imposes few 'canonical trajectories.' He limits the piece to all tweets using the hashtag #route501 and offers his own tweets as part of the

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[31] *Route 501 Revisited* also relates to Harvie's discussion of delegated performance as a reflection of networked society. Harvie notes that delegated performance "facilitates creative engagement with both networked culture's potentials—for meaningful if brief encounters and for wide connectivity and mutual responsibility across degrees of otherness—and its limitations and frustrations, such as its superficiality and its posturing as the sole, obligatory way to engage in culture" (59). In Goldsbie's piece, the act of delegating and the use of Twitter embody this dual-pronged conception of the potential of connectivity. Users have brief encounters both online and in the streetcar, which point back to the potential for connection via theatre and social media, as well as the limitations of these forms of communication.

feed; however, there is little else guiding participants as to their actions or responses. This means that the participants have a sizable impact on the direction the work takes.

The types of participants on the ride—with many members of Toronto's theatre, media and urban politics scenes onboard—likely impacted the focus of and politics behind the conversations. However, as Twitter is a public platform, participation was not limited to the physical performance space in the streetcar, but extended to users following the event from different locales. By using the #route501 hashtag, users both on the streetcar and in other locations could converse with one another and add to the larger discourse. For example, *The Globe and Mail* theatre reviewer J. Kelly Nestruck was not on the ride, but tweeted along from a prank account as the villain from the film *Speed*, Howard Payne (Goldsbie, Personal interview). During the 31 March ride, Cahoots Theatre's current artistic director, Marjorie Chan, tweeted "Wish I was in Toronto on #route501! A random transit fact: Almost everyone getting off a Victoria bus say, 'thank you' to the driver" (sic). This mention of transit etiquette opened up the Toronto-centric dialogue to a wider conversation about cities, transit and urban planning. Nancy K. Baym argues that this wider access adds to social media's potential as a mode of democratic discourse. In a similar vein to Löwgren and Reimer, she claims social media's ability to address both local and global audiences makes it:

> a powerful subversion of the elitism of mass media, within which a very small number of broadcasters could engage in one-to-many communication, usually within regional or geographic boundaries. The gatekeeping function of mass media is challenged as individuals use digital media to spread messages much farther and more widely than was ever historically possible. (10)

I myself experienced the performance by following the hashtag throughout the afternoon as I was unable to attend in person. Although I was not physically present, I have been on the 501 streetcar numerous times and found myself imagining where the streetcar physically was as I followed the various threads of conversation. This extension challenges traditional notions of presence and instead follows Sarah Bay-Cheng and Russel Fewster's claims that with intermedial performance presence and embodiment are increasingly characterized by participation rather than physical or temporal proximity. Fewster notes that, in a world with digital devices, "presence is increasingly defined by participation, rather than by shared physical or even temporal space. Notions of presence then, exist increasingly as transitional spaces between the live and the digital more than as an absolute ontological condition" (47). Goldsbie's work embraces this distributed sense of presence—a presence constantly in transit as we move within city spaces and online spaces simultaneously. According to Bay-Cheng, this presence marks a form of participation in which "people do not participate by being there; people are 'there' by participating" ("Theatre" 130). While people still exist in a physical space—with specific socio-political contexts—their presence is always simultaneously in other, non-physical spaces. Thus, these two modes of being cannot be seen as separate.

The participatory potential of the work also demonstrates how social media outlets, such as Twitter, can be used to create new forms of connection. By highlighting the potential of Twitter to create a shared experience about the politics of urban space, Goldsbie opened up the activist potential of this social medium. Susan Broadhurst argues that digital practices in the arts can have a socio-political impact "inasmuch as they question the very nature of our accepted ideas and belief systems regarding new technologies" (185). *Route 501 Revisited* extended this

questioning by exploring how we traverse both the city and online spaces. By connecting this digital practice to the site-specific streetcar journey, Goldsbie acknowledged that our embodied experiences are entwined with the technologies we use. In contrast to *WeeTube* and *iShow*, Goldsbie's framing of the social web directly enabled distributed, polyvocal participation by the audience and modelled Twitter's potential as a space to engage with new modes of connection. While Goldsbie moves this mode of performance into connectivity, all three productions open up questions about how users engage with participatory platforms in the everyday, and what this means about their potential as social tools. Though all three engage with participatory media through performance, each production has different effects and outcomes, which points to the complex and contradictory nature of working with and through new technologies. In addition, this analysis focuses on my own experiences of these works and responses to each may be multiple and contradictory.

CHAPTER TWO

PROVOCATION AND PROTEST IN DIGITAL PERFORMANCE:

FROM THEATRE HACKING TO GAMING INTERVENTIONS

> Wake up! Demand a theatre at the level of your intelligence! (Olivier Choinière, *Projet blanc*)

> are you going to kill me? . . . please don't kill me (Eva and Franco Mattes, *Freedom*)

On 28 May 2014 writer Tom Watson posted an article on Forbes.com defending the popular Twitter hashtag #YesAllWomen. The hashtag had gained popularity in the wake of the Isla Vista, California killings on 23 May, where 22 year-old Elliot Rodger killed six people in a seemingly random spree. Though not all of his victims were women, Rodger had previously made a number of racist and misogynistic online posts and emailed a manifesto to friends and family in which he ranted about starting a "war on women." On 22 May—just before his rampage—he posted a YouTube video in which he decried women further, claiming they were the source of his failed life and lack of sexual experience. After the Isla Vista killings, Twitter users went online to share their own experiences with sexual violence and misogyny using the #YesAllWomen hashtag. In his article "Why '#YesAllWomen' Matters—And Why It's Not Hacktivism" Watson argues the rise of the hashtag illustrates how horizontal feminist networks are carving out spaces within online public discourse. He pushes back at critics of the hashtag, including those who attempted to co-opt the discussion through the hashtag #NotAllMen.

As the title suggests, another of his main points is that the hashtag is not a form of hacktivism. He states:

> It is not hacktivism, that oft-derided form of lightweight involvement that allows

for feel-good clicks and commitment-free causes. Indeed, there's nothing more authentic than #YesAllWomen on all of Twitter. It's a product of rage and shared experience and human empathy. It's entirely organic—and represents . . . a nearly spontaneously rising chorus of hundreds of thousands of voices . . . its call to action wasn't the product of strategy or committee: it was a call for attention, for society to pay heed to what is happening, and to begin to work to change that story.

Watson's argument—and dismissive attitude towards the term 'hacktivism'—brings up two important issues related to digital activism. First, his valorizing of #YesAllWomen reflects a desire to move away from idealizing the hacker/activist as individual and towards looking at movements as networks without a clear-cut leader, manifesto or starting point.[32] Instead, he views the movement as a "spontaneously rising chorus" that, while making a single main argument, involves a level of polyvocality through individual stories and experiences. Second, Watson highlights how the term 'hacktivism' has been appropriated and circulated to the point that its original value as a tactic has been lost. He describes hacktivist approaches as supporting capitalist structures, coming from a corporate "strategy or committee." His derision of the term collides it with Gladwell and Turkle's use of 'slacktivism'—in that both signify a form of online activism with little or no real-world efficacy.

Watson's understanding of 'hacktivism' goes against the term's etymology and use in other disciplines and sites. The term 'hacktivism' was first coined in 1998 in an online forum for

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[32] This may, however, not be that widespread an opinion as recent debates about the actions of Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden suggest the aura surrounding the individual, radical hacker still thrives.

the hacking group Cult of the Dead Cow to describe new forms of politically motivated hacking (Delio). Jill Lane takes up this concept in a performance context, characterizing the online actions of Electronic Disturbance Theatre (EDT) as hacktivist as they create spaces for direct, political actions in order to destabilize existing power relations. For example, as mentioned in the introduction, the group's Floodnet applet allows participants to overwhelm particular websites with hits, briefly impeding their capacity to reload (139).[33] In hacktivism, no illegal actions take place and interventions are usually short-term reactions to the commercialization of seemingly public online spaces.

Watson's fusion of the idea of hacktivism with slacktivism exposes the corporatization of activists' online tactics. Through this commercialism—and following de Certeau's logic—these formerly hit-and-run, independent tactics become strategies with a base from which to work. His alignment of these terms also leads to questions about what activism can look like in digital spaces, such as: How can artists productively provoke and call for change via digital spaces? Is online activism more effective when distributed and leaderless? How do activist-artists avoid getting subsumed by the increasingly privatized nature of seemingly public spaces? In this chapter, I consider these questions through an investigation of examples of recent hacktivist approaches online and in urban space. In Chapter One I covered performances that engage with participatory media to investigate its everyday uses. The examples in Chapter Two also use new media to open up questions about quotidian practices; however, in these performances the nature

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[33] The concept of hacktivism also relates to the idea of "hashtag activism" that has emerged with the increasing popularity of Twitter as a site of public discourse. "Hashtag activism" involves the use of hashtags to raise awareness about an issue and start dialogue. A prominent recent example is the campaign #BringBackOurGirls, a response to Boko Haram's abduction of over 200 schoolgirls in Nigeria. The term "hashtag activism" has become a popular concept in debates over Twitter's role in public discourse and activist potential—though use of the term appears to be largely restricted to mainstream news media.

of art—and its audiences—are at the centre of the critique. In addition, while Chapter One

focused on theatre produced in or through traditional performance spaces, Chapter Two

highlights one-off, interventionist approaches that use shock and surprise in order to promote

new ways of thinking about artistic spaces and how we engage within them.

The examples in this chapter embody a range of performance practices. I begin with an

investigation of Olivier Choinière's *Projet blanc*, a performance intervention at Montreal's

Théâtre du Nouveau Monde. Choinière names this work a form of "theatre hacking"—a

description that evokes the content of the work as well as the form, which relied on the use of

digital audio devices. While the piece began as an audio walking tour, the spectators spent the

majority of the piece at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde where Choinière's audio critiqued the

institution. Choinière's intervention raises questions about the role intermediality can play in

political performance. In my exploration of *Projet blanc*, I place discourses on intermediality in

conversation with recent debates about political and site-specific performance to consider how

new performance tactics can still get caught up in traditional theatre hierarchies. Situating all of

these discourses in tandem allows me to address intermediality as an interdisciplinary mode that

traverses multiple performance practices simultaneously. Building upon Peter Boenisch,

Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx's concepts surrounding an intermedial 'politics of

spectating', I envisage how this transdisciplinarity gives digital practices the potential to spark

participatory, activist interventions in urban space. My discussion of *Projet blanc* leads into my

final two examples, Eva and Franco Mattes' *Freedom* (2010) and Joseph DeLappe's *dead-in-iraq*

(2006-2011). These two performances align in a number of ways: both are interventions in

online video games that simulate war and both use the communication functions within these

games to challenge the normative discourse of these game spaces.

These three performances prompt a range of questions relating to participatory art, such as: How does overt oppositionality or shock impact the politics of the performance? How has digital technology's potential for heterogeneity and polyvocality fed into intermedial performance practices? How can technology be used to both open up and limit political dialogue—and how can we think about these two modes in tandem to challenge existing definitions of political dialogue? Like the final example of Chapter One—*Route 501 Revisited*—each of the examples in this chapter are site-specific. The first aligns with Goldsbie's work as it is a piece that moves through urban space and requires each audience member to have a digital device, while the other two examples use digital spaces as their site. While the examples differ in their physical locations, they share an interventionist approach that utilizes digital tools. All three embody aspects of what Tony Perucci calls "ruptural performance." Perucci explains that a performance is 'ruptural' when it is an "interruptive, becoming-event, confrontational, and baffling" (2). This definition focuses on strategies used, rather than any singular message or ideological interruption artists try to get across. The 'ruptural' aspect refers to a break with quotidian expectations via the existence of the performance event, which often does not overtly identify itself as a performance, at least initially. He describes the rupture as a "becoming-event" (8) that reveals how a spectacular society sustains particular ideologies (11). All three of these intermedial performances use tactics of rupture at their base, though they arguably go further than simply unveiling how ideologies work and point to other paths that can be taken.

In this way, they are perhaps closer to Miriam Felton-Dansky's notion of "viral performance," which she claims is "a new theatrical mode for a digital age" (120). Felton-

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Dansky notes that—while not necessarily true of all viral performance—many "take the form of public hoaxes that act as media barometers, spreading on the strength of new communications technologies' contagious appeal, self-reflexively critiquing the forms of media they employ, and creating new types of audiences as they do" (120). Again, the one-off, digitally enabled interventions in this chapter follow certain traits of "viral performances", but differ in some ways. The main difference is Felton-Dansky's focus on long-term hoaxes that act like contagions, infesting the mass media (and particularly the news media) with false, but often utopian, narratives. In contrast, *Projet blanc*, *Freedom* and *dead-in-iraq* quickly reveal their interventionist nature and limit their power to a one-time event. Thus, I situate these examples between the 'ruptural' and the 'viral' as the initial performance relies on shock, and yet traces of the event continue to spread the performance to new audiences and provoke debates about the goals and ethics behind each work.

Projet blanc: An Ambulatory Intervention

November 3, 2011. It is a cool night in Montreal. A large group is forming outside the Monument-National, waiting for an event they know little about. At 6:30pm each person takes an MP3 player and headphones and they all press play together. A male voice then leads them through Montreal's urban landscape. They move as a group through the city's arts district, eventually stopping at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde. The voice informs participants that the theatre's entire second balcony has been reserved and instructs them to hide their MP3 players, pick up their tickets, and find their seats. They are told to restart the audio when the lights dim. As the lights go down, a production of Molière's *L'École des femmes* begins. Unbeknownst to the

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larger audience, a second production is also taking place. The group in the second balcony

restarts their MP3 players, their spectatorship now doubled as they hear the voice disparage the

production onstage and criticize the theatre's role as a commercial institution.

This series of events was part of a one-off mobile audio performance by acclaimed

playwright Olivier Choinière and sound designer Éric Forget. While some of Choinière's

previous mobile, site-specific audio walks were affiliated with established theatres, including

Ottawa's National Arts Centre and Montreal's Théâtre La Chappelle, this performance, *Projet*

blanc, was an independent creation by Choinière's company L'Activité. As this sound walk was a

form of invisible theatre, reactions to the infiltration of the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde only

occurred after the event took place. In interviews and his own writings following the

intervention, Choinière described the performance as a form of "theatre hacking"—a suggestion

praised in reviews of the work (Choinière and Forget 31; Deglise; Nestruck, "How"). However,

not all reception was positive. Most notably, Lorraine Pintal, Artistic Director of the Théâtre du

Nouveau Monde, criticized the work's overtly negative tone. This reaction spurred a debate

between Choinière and Pintal in both French and English media. Quebec theatre journal *Jeu* even

dedicated part of a 2012 issue to the dispute.

Whether positive or negative, most of *Projet blanc*'s reception has focused on the location

of the intervention within the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde; however, there has been little

discussion of the tactic of the digital audio walk and how this form connects to the content of the

work. Alan Filewod argues, "Digital media is both the means and the form of the reconstitution

of activist theatre: it disrupts and relocates cultural genealogies, reterritorializes artistic

traditions, produces new structures. Digitalization is the enabling condition, then, of new

theatricalities" (292). In line with this argument, *Projet blanc* challenged existing theatre conventions and explored new possibilities for activist performance. Through the audio walk form, Choinière situated his audience within the theatre in an innovative way, thus enabling a "new theatricality." While Choinière's protest performance created affinity and proximity within his audience through the audio, I believe the production's exclusivity, antagonistic tone and audio tour format undermined Choinière's critical stance, as he reinvoked the very hierarchies he set out to critique. Rather than using new technologies to open up dialogue about the current state of art and performance, Choinière—and his opinions—remained at the centre of the work.

Olivier Choinière describes *Projet blanc* as a form of "ambulatory theatre" (qtd. in Nestruck, "How"). The performance marks his fourth foray into this site-specific format, in which audiences listen to a soundtrack via a mobile device. His performances are part of a recent upsurge in audio walks internationally, due largely to the increasing accessibility of affordable, portable digital tools. Within this field, Canadian artist Janet Cardiff's audio walks and Vancouver company Neworld Theatre's PodPlays are prominent examples. Like L'Activité, Cardiff and Neworld Theatre usually create site-specific audio performances designed for single audience members who sign up for a specific time at which to receive the MP3 player and headphones needed for the walk. Usually this device is the only performance tool; however, in Cardiff's *Her Long Black Hair* (2004), staged in New York's Central Park, she included photographs that audience members were directed to pull out at various points. While the content of these walks differ, they frequently examine the history and current use of the urban spaces they take place in. They have the potential to alter perspectives, as the performance audio encourages participants to look at everyday sites in new ways.

Neworld Theatre's Associate Artist Adrienne Wong describes their PodPlays as "a cross between a radio drama and an audio guided tour" (Neworld Theatre). This description reveals the intermedial nature of the audio walk form, as it builds on practices from different disciplines—including theatre, digital/media art and sound art—and utilizes various media simultaneously. This mix follows The International Federation for Theatre Research's Theatre and Intermediality Research Group's way of thinking about intermediality through the concept of 'both-and.' Sound walk projects exist within this concept of the 'both-and', concurrently falling into various performance modes, including site-specific, locative, digital and one-on-one.

Chiel Kattenbelt situates the performative power of intermediality in this interplay between various medial forms, as it possibly provokes new forms of perception on the part of the viewer (19). Several other intermedial performance theorists, including Robin Nelson and Peter Boenisch, share this perspective. In a Brechtian line of criticism, these scholars focus on moments of rupture and explore the potential for intermedial performance to make visible the workings of conventional media. Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx's concept of an intermedial 'politics of spectating' also involves this kind of rupture, with intermediality's inherent hybridity unsettling spectators' sense of perception. They claim that "The clash between digitally influenced perceptions and embodied presence manifests itself particularly as a *disturbance* of the senses and results in a *blurring of realities*" (219). It is through this unbalancing that spectators become aware of the greater "instability of the reality we live in" (220). Nibbelink and Merx argue that entering this state enables spectators to perceive in a new, critical way, noticing what had been previously ignored or glossed over. They believe that this disruption—while not necessarily a shock—is political and even "radical, implying a thorough

commitment to, and involvement in, the world we inhabit" (227).

As an intermedial performance form, sound walks can embody numerous modes simultaneously, including being public and private, in real-time and recorded, real and virtual. The latter combination highlights how sound walks provoke a 'politics of spectating'. For example, Cardiff recorded *Her Long Black Hair*'s audio on site in Central Park. The audio unsettles audiences' sense of perception as they hear both recorded everyday sounds and real-time ones, but may be unable to decipher which is recorded and which is live (Carlson 401-402). This contrast can be more jarring, as in Neworld Theatre's *Ashes on the Water* (2011), which contrasts the relative calm and quiet of the waterfront off Vancouver's Main Street with a story set in the heat and chaos of the city's 1886 Great Fire.

The differences between the sounds and the walk sites point to the roles presence and absence play in urban space. Sean Cubitt notes that recording technologies are also "dependent on the odd dialectic of presence and absence, where the presence of the recording demands the absence of *the* performance, a distance which is both temporal and geographic" (101, my emphasis). In the case of sound walks, the tension between presence and absence is actually highlighted by the performance event. Artists like Cardiff and Neworld Theatre use recording technologies to animate historical events and reveal layers of experience embodied in urban spaces. Working against Cubitt's supposition that recording is a singular performance, these artists fuse listening and walking to create a hybrid performance form. While primarily disseminated through the aural, these walks involve other performance elements, which collectively form the ambulatory sound experience.

Although these walks depend on audio for their dissemination, the multimodal experience

of the sound walk can be highly synaesthetic. Through their auditory components, audio walks invoke what intermedial scholars Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer term "sensory immersion" (131), with a focus on presence and experience rather than representation. According to Klich and Scheer, this form of immersion centres on spectators' physical location within particular spaces in real-time. They note that the 'sensory' aspect "relates to the audience members' level of sensorial stimulation at any one moment, and their awareness of being with in the present of the performance and its capacity to involve them emotionally and corporeally (heart racing, hair raising, sweating and fidgeting)" (131). In audio walks, this awareness augments the experience of space.

While the aural is the focus in the creation of the work, the result is a multimodal, multi-sensory journey as spectators connect the audio to environments around them. In addition, these walks tend to include moments of reflection, with audio gaps designed to allow audiences to experience their spatial surroundings within new performative contexts. This degree of involvement has led Robin Nelson to problematize the use of terms "spectator" or "audience" in relation to mobile, technology-based performances. Instead, he refers to an "experiencer" involved in a kinaesthetic, visceral journey ("Experiencer" 45). Because sound walks situate audience members as physically and aurally involved participants, I believe the term "experiencer" is a useful descriptor of the embodied experience walkers take part in. Thus, I use Nelson's term as I discuss *Projet blanc*.

Intermediality is a useful lens for considering how sound walks' hybrid, multimedia form creates potential for socio-political engagement. However, their political potential can also be considered in relation to the multiple performance modes they traverse. For example, sound

walks' site-specificity leads to questions about how they intervene into public space. As Nick Kaye notes, "site-specific art frequently works to *trouble* the oppositions between the site and the work" (11). This is seen in a sound walk's ability to juxtapose a site's current use and its history and to encourage experiencers to observe urban spaces from new viewpoints. This inquiry into the construction and inscription of public space reflects site-specific performance's roots in various twentieth-century movements, most notably Situationism. Through tactics like psychogeographic walks, Situationists encouraged citizens to explore the city in previously unimagined ways, highlighting "the hidden, forgotten and obscure" (Pinder 389). The recent surge of sound walks that uncover urban histories (e.g. *Her Long Black Hair, Ashes on the Water*) reflects this legacy.

Kathleen Irwin notes that psychogeographic walks are an increasingly popular contemporary form of performance as they can "[combine] art and political activism with an agreeable pastime" (154). Political change was indeed a goal of the Situationists when the psychogeographic form began; however, scholars have questioned the political potency of contemporary performative walks (Pinder 397-401; Tuters and Varnelis 360-1). David Pinder notes that the politics of these works is usually less overt than earlier psychogeographic forms as they frequently lack a sustained community engagement and rarely address the privilege embodied in the act of walking itself (397; 401). However, he does not completely dismiss this form's political potential. Instead, he acknowledges the ways in which walking performances question accepted uses of public space and consider new forms of urban rights (399).

Site-specific performance's reliance on experiencers in the creation of meaning also impacts the form's socio-political potential. Site-specific performance enlists spectators as "co-

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creators" (Eaket 31), whose presence and participation are an integral part of the work. Paul Simpson argues that the presence of experiencers participating in performances can be a political act in itself as it engenders new forms of social engagement and contains "political significance" in contexts where there are increasing restrictions on what performers can and cannot do in public space (419). With *Projet blanc*, Olivier Choinière used the sound walk form in an attempt to alter how spectators critically approach the theatre. However, I believe his approach also highlights some of Pinder's cautions, as the performance's tone and lack of openings for spectator involvement limited its potential.

Olivier Choinière is primarily known as a playwright. Following his 1996 graduation from the National Theatre School's playwriting program, he had several plays produced in Montreal, two of which—*Le bain de raines* (1998) and *Venise-en-Québec* (2006)—were nominated for Governor General's Awards. Choinière's best-known work in the English-speaking world is *Félicité* (*Bliss*), which premiered in French at Montreal's Théâtre La Licorne in 2007 and in a translation by Caryl Churchill at London's Royal Court Theatre in 2008. While predominantly still a playwright, Choinière's leadership role with L'Activité marks a shift away from a traditional mode of playwriting. Formed in 2000 under the full name L'Activité Répétitive Grandement Grandement Libératrice, this company challenges theatre conventions, particularly the traditional separation between audience and performer. This separation is explored in both traditional and non-traditional performance spaces. In 2009, the company produced Choinière's *ParadiXXX* at Montreal's Théâtre Aux Écuries, a theatre space he also co-founded. In the production, a group of actors narrate a muted pornography film. More recently, the company found success with *Chante avec moi* (2010-12), a satirical musical with fifty performers, which

premiered at Espace Libre and went on to Ottawa's National Arts Centre and Montreal's Festival TransAmériques.

In recent years L'Activité's approach has become increasingly site-specific through their audio-based walks. The company creates each walk for a different environment, although they have adapted some to multiple locales. L'Activité presented their first sound walk, *Beauté intérieure*, in Montreal in 2003. They then produced the walks *Bienvenue à (une ville dont vous êtes le touriste)* (2005) and *Asencion* (2006). The former was translated into English by Maureen Labonté and presented in both English and French at Ottawa's La Nouvelle Scène in 2007 and in French in Chicoutimi, Shawinigan and Mulhouse, France. Although staged at different urban locations, all three productions were designed for one audience member (at a time), with the goal of altering how participants experience and move through public spaces. In 2009 L'Activité expanded this practice to indoor audio tours with *Marche sur ma tombe*, which took place in the gallery area at Quebec City's Musée national des beaux-arts.

While *Projet blanc* marks a continuation of Choinière's site-specific, urban practice, it also differs from his previous audio walks in several ways. Before attending *Projet blanc*, experiencers received little information about the piece other than Choinière's involvement and its "ambulatory theatre" format. No media was invited and participants were sent the starting location forty-eight hours before the performance. Choinière and Forget state the performance's title, evoking a blank page, refers to this lack of pre-show information. They also performed the piece only once so that the surprise intervention would be effective (31-32).

With this single showing *Projet blanc* also departed from the common audio walk form. Cardiff and Neworld Theatre generally create audio for site-specific walks that can be taken at

any time, whereas *Project blanc* was a one-off performance in response to a particular cultural event. In addition, while most sound walks, including L'Activité's previous ambulatory works, are created for one experiencer at a time (Ducharme 86), *Projet blanc* broke from this convention by having all experiencers listen to the audio simultaneously. As the project's seventy-six experiencers listened to the audio in close physical proximity to one another, Choinière united the group in a shared presence. This sense of common experience deviates from how mobile devices are used both in other sound walks and in everyday practice. In his assessment of how mobile interfaces effect our experience of urban space, Jason Farman argues that devices such as MP3 players can lead to a "distancing-though-proximic," in which individuals are removed from one another even when they are physically close. He notes how transit users exemplify this concept, as they listen to music to remove themselves from the realities of their daily commutes (*Mobile* 4). Marla Carlson relates this idea to sound walks, arguing that, even when walking as a group, participants also simultaneously have individual experiences (398). However, the clandestine nature of Choinière's performance worked against the solo nature of the sound walk. Instead of being alone, the experiencers became co-conspirators in the infiltration, united through their double role as TNM spectators and participants in Choinière's piece.

This doubled spectatorship allowed Choinière to covertly challenge a Montreal cultural institution and how citizens participate within it. Since it opened in 1951, the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (TNM) has been a major force in the Montreal theatre scene. The company, which continues to be one of the city's largest theatres, defines itself as the home of "the classics, from yesterday and today"[34] (Théâtre du Nouveau Monde). This broad mandate does not limit

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[34] "Théâtre de tous les classiques, ceux d'hier et ceux de demain."

their work to any nationality or time period and in most seasons there is usually a mix of new works and classic plays, such as those by Molière and Shakespeare. While Choinière is just one of many voices in recent years that have accused the TNM of conservatism, the company has also seen its share of controversy. For example, in 1978, Catholic groups tried to block the TNM production of Denise Boucher's *Les Fées son soif* (*The Fairies are Thirsty*), which includes a statue of the Virgin Mary as a character. However, in recent years the company has been attacked for its traditionalism. In particular, critics cite the TNM's continual return to Molière, the first playwright the company ever produced, as evidence of the company's stagnant and conservative approach. As *The Globe and Mail*'s J. Kelly Nestruck argues, this reliance on a seventeenth-century French playwright reflects how the TNM's sense of tradition is still front and centre. Nestruck compares the company to the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, noting that the institutions started in the same era and are frequently criticized by other theatres companies ("Théâtre").

Choinière's *Projet blanc* was one such critical reaction; however, his criticisms of the TNM production extended beyond the company's dedication to Molière and sense of tradition. Throughout *Projet blanc* the voice laid out multiple critiques of commercial culture. Once inside the TNM, these statements became focused on contemporary theatre culture. The narrator criticized the decision to stage Molière in a traditional way, noting that theatre companies can add new, contemporary readings of classics that are relevant to audiences today (Choinière and Forget 32). He argued that the TNM production failed in this attempt as it did not take up the play's potential to address contemporary social issues. The TPM's institutionalization of Molière contrasts with the playwright's history as a radical force. His play *Tartuffe* was banned in France

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in 1664 because religious authorities objected to the criminal Tartuffe's self-identification as a holy man. Thirty years later, Quebec City's bishop Monseigneur Saint-Vallier also prevented a production of the play. The first production of the play in Quebec finally came a century later in 1774 when a group of British officers presented the work in Montreal and it was not until the twentieth century that the province's clergy supported productions of his work (McCord Museum).

Choinière's audio did not address this contentious history. Instead, he focused on the narrative in *L'École des femmes* and how it works as a metaphor for the TNM system. He elided the character of Arnolphe, the older man fixated on having an obedient wife, with the institutional theatre, claiming that rather than being a "jealous and obsessed master of a house" he is a "jealous and obsessed master of the theatre"[35] (qtd. in Choinière and Forget 32). The voice went on to equate the audience with the role of Agnès, the young woman Arnolphe attempts to mould into his perfect wife. The audio claimed that the audience, like Agnès, was held captive and bored by the theatre, while theatre directors, here embodied by Arnolphe's actions, remain oblivious and uncaring. Choinière broadened his critique as the experiencers left the theatre, moving from the *L'École des femmes* production to a discussion of the commercialization and privatization of the theatre. Once outside the TNM, the audio claimed:

> This theatre is just one example among others of public spaces that the market
> economy has transformed into private spaces, which must, above all else, prove
> their profitability. As it happens, the present is not a good value. The present is

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[35] "Arnolphe n'est pas le maître jaloux et obsédé d'une maison. Arnolphe est le maître jaloux et obsédé d'un théâtre!"

not perceptible or quantifiable. The present is not, by definition, profitable. The

present is precisely what escapes us. (34)[36]

This section of audio united Choinière's various critiques. Not only was he critical of the

institutional theatre's reliance on commercial practices, but through discussion of "the present"

he also lamented how increasing corporatization has created a disconnect between contemporary

socio-political issues and onstage discourse. This critique was inspired by Guy Debord's concept

of "the spectacle", as Choinière disparaged the increasing role capitalism and corporate interests

play in the theatre and other urban spaces.

Choinière's audio also directly addressed the experiencers, challenging them to take a

more critical and active stance towards the theatre. During the TNM performance, the audio

included probing questions and declarative statements, such as "Why are you here? What is

happening in front of you?"[37] and "Wake up! Demand a theatre at the level of your

intelligence!"[38] (qtd. in Pépin). These questions and declarations extended the form of the audio

walk to criticize what Baz Kershaw terms the 'theatre estate' and the type of spectatorship it

demands. Kershaw situates the theatre estate within institutional and commercial theatre

practices, which he argues train audiences to expect particular conventions that restrict the direct

engagement between performers and spectators (*Radical* 31). Both Kershaw and Alan Filewod

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[36] "Ce théâtre n'est qu'un exemple parmi tant d'autres de lieux publics que l'économie de marché a transformés en espaces privés, qui doivent faire, avant toute chose, la preuve de leur rentabilité. Or, le présent n'est pas une valeur sûre. Le présent n'est pas saisissable ni quantifiable. Le présent n'est pas, par définition, rentable. Le présent est précisément ce qui nous échappe. Et si nos institutions sont des lieux clos, barricadés, et que les fenêtres qui donnent sur la rue ont été bouchées, c'est de peur que le présent ne les prenne d'assaut."

[37] "Pourquoi êtes-vous ici? Qu'est-ce qui se passe devant vous?"

[38] "Réveillez-vous! Exigez un théâtre à la hauteur de votre intelligence!"

argue that radical, anti-institutional performances can break down the strength of the theatre estate and offer alternative practices. In his discussion of different modes of performance in a Canadian context, Filewod explicitly argues that "radical theatre refuses the theatre estate" (17). *Projet blanc* followed this aesthetic of refusal through Choinière's explicit denunciation of what he saw as a restricted, passive contemporary theatre audience.

In addition to encouraging greater critical approaches from theatre spectators, *Projet blanc* challenged whether the production of *L'École des femmes* lived up to the broad claims made by director Yves Desgagnés in a promotional video. Choinière was particularly critical of Desgagnés' statement that the production had "resonances with our society, which has problems with pornography and pedophilia"[39] (qtd. in Choinière and Forget 32). In the audio, Choinière challenged this claim and begged the experiencers to find any evidence of this connection in the actual production. The voice pulled their attention away from the imagined world onstage and pushed them back to the world outside the theatre where their night began—to a world where these issues are immediately present. Choinière chose to focus on the director's claims to point out how this type of publicity is misleading and overstates the contemporary relevance of re-staging classical plays. While he considers theatre an excellent vessel for exploring contemporary issues, in this case he concluded that this production had little to do with these stated aims (Choinière and Forget 34).

Through the use of MP3 players, Choinière had an audience follow his critiques of the TNM in real time without affecting the TNM production in an aggressive or overt way. Choinière and Forget term this approach theatre "hacking" (31), which Choinière defines as

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[39] "des résonances dans notre société, qui a des problèmes avec la pornographie et la pédophilie"

"[entering, penetrating], another cultural event without necessarily bothering or breaking or destroying" (qtd. in Nestruck, "Theatre"). While Choinière terms this act "hacking", it also aligns with hacktivist approaches as many aspects of hacking and hacktivism blur. While hacktivism implies that an act has concrete political goals, often hackers have activist aims, making differences between the two tenuous. For example, while Anonymous has no specific mandate, their actions are frequently politically motivated. Their Operation Tunisia attacked government websites and helped local activists prevent their networks from being surveilled during the Arab Spring. Yet, the group is often simply defined as hackers and cyber terrorists. In 2013 a grand jury in the United States indicted several members of Anonymous for Operation Payback, in which the group hacked into the sites of companies that denied payments for WikiLeaks. The mixed goals and reception of Anonymous shows that hacking is not necessarily malicious in intent, even though it is often thought of as such. In turn, this means that hacktivism cannot simply be the positive, well-intentioned inverse of hacking. Yet, Choinière's emphasis on unsettling the institutional space—without destroying it—points to its hacktivist nature as there is a political goal at the forefront. Like hacktivists, Choinière does not partake in any illegal activities, but plays with the edge of what is considered acceptable as an intervention. Through this hacking/hacktivist approach, Choinière seeks to create change by juxtaposing both the form and content of *Projet blanc* with the TNM production. The clandestine nature of this hacking directly contrasts with the commercial nature of major theatres in Canada, which rely on media previews, interviews, and other forms of publicity preceding show openings to garner interest.

Much of the critical response to *Projet blanc* lauds Choinière's theatre hacking, and particularly the debate within the news media it provoked. Reviewers Elsa Pépin and Catherine

Voyer-Léger go so far as to claim that the piece prompted critical engagement from spectators. Voyer-Léger argues that the work paves the way for democratization by demonstrating how spectators can take on active roles and dialogue with art works. Other critics drew connections between the walk and more widespread opinions about both the *L'École des femmes* production and the TNM in general. When covering the debate between Choinière and Pintal, *The Globe and Mail*'s J. Kelly Nestruck notes that he "[happens] to agree with Choinière's take on the show, if not the TNM in general" ("How"). Christian Saint-Pierre, editor of *Jeu: Revue de théâtre*, also supports Choinière's position. In an entry on the journal's website posted immediately after the intervention, Saint-Pierre argues that the production revealed Choinière to be a leading critical voice in questioning the role institutions play in the cultural sector.

It was Saint-Pierre's post that prompted Pintal's initial public reaction. In a letter to the journal, entitled "Projet noir," she claimed that she was not upset with the critics who applauded Choinière but rather with the playwright for disrespecting the TNM (Vaïs). This action sparked a public debate between Choinière and Pintal, which made national and international news when Nestruck covered it in April 2012 in both *The Globe and Mail* and *The Guardian*. Speaking to *The Globe and Mail*, Pintal described the intervention as an "aggressive act" and "parasitical." She also confirmed that she had accused Choinière of committing "theatrical rape" in a private conversation with him (qtd. in Nestruck, "How"). In June of the same year, *Jeu* dedicated a section of their issue to the debate, with Choinière and Forget, and Pintal contributing articles. In the issue, Pintal reiterates her argument that the intervention was invasive while Choinière and Forget claim that it had no negative impact on the TNM show. In her responses, Pintal directly refutes the claims that *Projet blanc* activated its audience, noting that the form of the work, with

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Choinière speaking to the audience via a recording, forced his opinion on the spectators and did not allow for discussion or debate in the moment (Nestruck, "How").

While Pintal's reactions are clearly defensive, her critiques point to the limitations of Choinière's intermedial engagement. Just as Choinière questions whether the director's aims come across in *L'École des femmes*, I am unsure if *Projet blanc*'s form supported Choinière's goals. With *Projet blanc*, Choinière impacted the experiencers' view of *L'École des femmes* and perhaps influenced their perception of the theatre; however, he did this through a top-down approach, with his personal biases guiding the meaning-making. It is unclear how experiencers were meant to intervene in the work as they remained seated for the duration of the hacking—a physical confinement that reproduced the very entrapment Choinière was attacking. This physical limitation also clashes with Choinière's claim, made in writings and interviews since the performance, that the work situated the experiencers as "spectactors"[40] (Choinière and Forget 31). While he does not cite Augusto Boal directly, the entire intervention is an example of Boalian invisible theatre. In addition, his use of the term "spectactors" suggests an affinity with Theatre of the Oppressed approaches and Baz Kershaw's definition of effective radical performance, which places the conversion of the spectator into active participant at the forefront (*Radical* 24).

While Choinière criticizes the disconnect between Desgagnés' claims and his production of *L'École des femmes,* I am curious about the seeming difference between the format of *Projet blanc* and the concept of the spectactor. In his conception of the term, Boal sees physical investment and action as key to the spectator's transformation into a subject (122). *Projet blanc,*

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[40] "spect-acteurs"

on the other hand, remains primarily the work of a single author with experiencers deprived of any moment to respond verbally or physically. Much like Molière's *L'École des femmes*, the playwright remains the sole creator of the work, speaking to an audience who listens and then perhaps begins to view society and institutions differently based on what they have heard. The form of pre-recorded audio also restricts the content of the piece as Choinière's opinion is actually a response to earlier *L'École des femmes* performances. Sean Cubitt sees this as a limitation of sound recording as "every recording is a piece of the past restorable to the present, but the act of recording is also an attempt to secure that piece of the future when the recording will be played. But what is controlled loses its life, its capacity to evolve" (100). In *Projet blanc*, this lack of "evolution" is the result of both the form and content of the piece as the audio is pre-recorded and restricted to Choinière's voice.

Rather than situating his experiencers as "participatory spectators", Choinière positions them as passive audience members. He commands them to break out of this mould by "waking up" and demanding change, a call that assumes an ongoing lack of action on their part. This petition sets up a problematic binary with Choinière in the role of the enlightened artist and his audience as those in need of an education. As previously noted, this line of thinking connects Choinière's critique to Debord's concept of "the spectacle." In articulating this idea, Debord emphasizes the disconnections between citizens and social life, lamenting the state of "modern passivity" (15) and expressing a desire for citizen-consumers to re-engage with creativity and critical thinking. In *The Emancipated Spectator*, Jacques Rancière critiques this approach, which has led artists to oversimplify the division between spectators and works of art. In particular, Rancière cites how Brecht and Artaud argue that the distance between the work of art and the

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spectator needs to be eliminated (4). Rancière claims that Artaud and Brecht assume theatre is "the place where the passive audience of spectators must be transformed into its opposite: the active body of a community enacting its living principle" (5). With *Projet blanc*, Choinière follows this assumption. He situates the TNM audience as disengaged from aesthetic and political concerns and seeks to transform his experiencers into critical audience members through his own performance. Rancière challenges this goal, noting that attempts to break down barriers between the spectator and the work of art may in fact create further distance (*Emancipated* 12). He is particularly critical of artists who assume that an audience member is passive, insisting that:

> the spectator also acts . . . She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way—by drawing back, for example, from the vital energy that it is supposed to transmit in order to make it a pure image and associate this image with a story which she has read or dreamt, experienced or invented. They are thus both distant spectators and active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them. (13)

Rancière goes on to suggest that, rather than teaching spectators, socially engaged artists should encourage audiences to experience the art work in their own way and to feel free to share their interpretation, whatever it may be (11). Instead of opening up the theatre to such audience driven responses, Choinière demands that his experiencers behave and think a certain way. Through this approach Choinière inadvertently becomes the type of artist he criticizes: an Arnolphe who tries

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to mould his audience to his own system of beliefs.

Choinière's critiques were meant to cause a rupture that unveils how institutional theatre fails as a space of political performance. While he intended to unite his experiencers through his statements, this oppositional approach actually emphasized disconnection over connection and thus impacted on the efficacy of his intervention. In recent years, scholars have begun to consider how oppositionality and disruption can diminish the activist potential of contemporary art. Günter Berghaus finds the drive to anti-institutionalism and antagonism to be quixotic at this point in time. He notes that avant-garde artists had begun to move away from oppositionality by the end of the twentieth-century, as the broadening of artistic practices and institutions enabled innovative works to flourish within existing structures. As previously oppositional work now exists within this mainstream, Berghaus believes that activist art needs to find new approaches to and spaces for connecting art to life (*Avant-Garde* 261-3). Randy Martin also takes up this issue; while acknowledging the importance of oppositionality and the need for artists to question their relationship to the state, he sees performance's embeddedness within institutions as ineluctable (26). Perhaps the strongest voice in these challenges comes from Shannon Jackson, whose book *Social Works* (2011) provides an important counterpoint to the valorization of oppositional approaches by activist performance scholars. Just as other scholars warn that oppositional performance practices can be used to maintain the status quo, Jackson notes that anti-institutionalism runs the risk of colluding with neoliberal aims of dismantling social and artistic structures (16). Jackson insists that scholars must critically examine drives to oppositionality and consider how activist artists model sustainment and support. She argues: "When a political art discourse too often celebrates social disruption at the expense of social coordination, we lose a

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more complex sense of how art practices contribute to inter-dependent social imagining" (14). In his critique of the TNM and commercial theatre, Choinière aims to provoke the experiencers to think about the links between market interests and artistic decisions. However, his emphasis on oppositionality may also close off opportunities for connection because he does not give experiencers an opportunity to imagine how this relationship might be altered.

Choinière's approach contrasts with more interactive examples like *Route 501 Revisited* (discussed in Chapter One) as he situated his experiencers as listeners. Michael Rohd, the Founding Director of Sojourn Theatre, notes that site-specific performance can have both "monological intentions" and "dialogical intentions" (qtd. in Ferdman, Davis and Erbe 29). He argues that the latter opens up sites, making them socially engaged spaces central to the creation of the work and adjustable depending on audience participation. While Choinière envisions *Projet blanc* as promoting dialogue specifically centred around TNM as a site, both the form of the work, with participants listening to pre-recorded audio, and the content provided by Choinière limited it to a single, "monological" discourse. Rather than using technology—and hacktivism as a tactic—to open up the conversation about the state of political theatre, Choinière propagated a top-down approach with the artist as authority. The concept of failure works on multiple levels here. While critiquing what he saw as the failure of this institutional space to live up to its ambitions or create socially relevant work, Choinière himself failed to situate his own audience as active subjects. He wanted them to fail at being traditional audience members, but did not give space for them to do this in a way that upset a traditional artist-spectator relationship. In *Projet blanc* the relationship between creator and experiencer remained distant, and thus the work failed to embody Rancière's call for the theatre to have a more distributed

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quality full of simultaneous, heterogeneous discourses (*Emancipated* 22). Instead, Choinière embodied the very role he set out to critique: that of the artist who tells his audience what to think.

More than a Misfire: Performances of Refusal and Rupture in War Video Games

According to Reena Jana and Mark Tribe, New Media art refers to "projects that make use of emerging media technologies and are concerned with the cultural, political and aesthetic possibilities of these tools" (6). While many artists create new digital tools and spaces, this definition extends to art works that engage with pre-existing platforms in order to challenge the ways individuals interact in Web 2.0 environments. In such works, which are 'site'-specific through the use of various online platforms, artists explore what kinds of relations form in these spaces. Often this allows artists opportunities to tactically intervene by exposing either the corporate structure of web spaces or limitations to the potential for interactivity online.

Both of these approaches appear in the work of digital artists Eva and Franco Mattes, also known as 0100101110101101.org (sometimes shortened to 01.org). The Mattes have a history of creating subversive art online and in urban spaces. Much of their work uses public hoaxes, such as the creation of the fake Serbian artist Darko Maver (who was featured in the 1999 Venice Biennale), and fake advertising campaigns like *Nike Ground* (2003) in which they circulated a rumour that Vienna's Karlsplatz would be renamed Nikeplatz. This culture jamming approach extends to their site-specific digital works, which include *vaticano.org* (1998)—a project that mimicked the Vatican's official website at a similar URL—and *No Fun* (2010), which linked Chatroulette users to the image of a man who appeared to have hung himself. The Mattes' work

shares a number of similarities with Choinière's site-specific interventions—they also respond to consumer culture and how we engage with public spaces. Yet, they differ in their deceptive approach, which often relies on audiences and passersby not being in on the joke.

In 2010, the Mattes expanded their performance practice to the space of online, networked video games. This performance, *Freedom*, relied less on deception than some of their previous art pieces, but still aimed to confound participants and provoke people to consider the spaces they inhabit in new ways. For the performance Eva signed up for and entered the first-person shooter game Counter-Strike, which has players join teams of either terrorists or counter-terrorists that play against one another. Instead of participating in the game's narrative and killing players on the opposite team, Mattes used the onscreen messaging system to implore other gamers not to kill her. As she typed these pleas, she was constantly shot. Each time she was killed, her avatar respawned in another in-game location. For each iteration, her language varied though it usually involved her explaining that she is a performance artist making art on the site. She typed different statements throughout the piece, such as "please don't shoot me" and "this is an art piece."

The Mattes' trajectory shares a number of similarities with the work of Joseph DeLappe, a digital artist and director of the University of Nevada's Digital Media program. In his online performances, DeLappe also explores different strategies for intervening in Web 2.0 spaces. His work ranges from reading Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* on Chatroulette to setting up a page selling Hosni Mubarak on eBay—first under the political memorabilia category and then in the antiques category. He has done a number of re-performances in digital spaces—a form that the Mattes have also engaged in through their re-performances of famous performance art works on

Second Life. During the 2004 American presidential campaign, DeLappe remediated Bush-Kerry debates in several online gaming platforms and in 2008 he re-enacted Gandhi's salt march in Second Life, using a treadmill as his avatar controller so that his actual footsteps moved his body in the virtual space.

In March 2006—around the third anniversary of the Iraq war—DeLappe began a durational intervention in the American Government's military recruitment game America's Army. The game, which is available free to users around the world, was developed by the American military and is fully funded by the American government. The game's functions and environments are similar to Counter-Strike, although all players are American Army soldiers fighting terrorists in an unnamed location. According to the game's tagline, the player's objective is to, "Empower yourself. Defend freedom" ("America's Army"). In what he describes as a "game based performative intervention," DeLappe turned the tables on what this empowerment might mean and refused to engage in combat (delappe.net). Instead, he used the game's texting system—with the user name dead-in-iraq—and over the course of several years typed the name, age, service branch and date of death of all 4484 American military members killed in the conflict in Iraq.[41] DeLappe's use of soldiers' names evokes government-backed war memorials, such as the roll calls at annual Memorial and Remembrance Day services; however, instead of saying the names at a site intended for stillness and seriousness, he placed them in a site of ongoing recruitment that situates war as entertainment. While DeLappe mainly performed the

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[41] DeLappe aimed to be "relentless and disciplined" with this score, never deviating from writing just the names and information about the soldiers. However, he did break from it once or twice to write "I am not a bot" in order to show that he was an actual person—performing the piece live—when other players accused him of being a robot (Personal interview).

intervention in private spaces, he also staged it live several times for an audience using a projector to screen the game play. However, DeLappe became a bit wary of these public events as he did not want the intervention to become a "spectacle" (Personal interview). The project finished on the day of the United States' official withdrawal from Iraq—18 December 2011—when DeLappe typed in the final names.

dead-in-iraq and *Freedom* break with the enacted routine of these game spaces and challenge players to think through what their violent virtual actions mean. While it is impossible to say whether these interventions have a long-term impact on how gamers engage in these spaces, this break reveals the potential of re-routing activity in these video gaming networks. They also complicate assumptions surrounding the proximity of or separation between violent virtual acts and real-world violence. At the same time, these performances are once again limited by the centrality of the single artist in the work. While players react to DeLappe and Mattes' actions in real-time, and kill the artists' avatars, they do not impact on the artists' scores, which continually repeat each time they respawn. Stephen Duncombe argues that progressives need to acknowledge the popularity of violent video games and, instead of just attacking the violence of these platforms, question what users get out of playing (53-55). At one point Mattes asks the other players "what are we fighting for?" The question only remains on the screen for around ten seconds as Mattes is shot and killed. However, just before she is shot a voice answers "Freedom"—which the artists took as the name of the piece. While this one moment engages the other players in a direct discussion about their motivations for participating in the game, there is little else in either performance that does this. Both artists stick to their own scripts, which situates them as non-players, resisting the action around them. Although these works are limited

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by this form, they still point to possibilities for collective action and alternative ways of being within gaming spaces, which I will outline in the rest of this chapter.

The two interventions were documented by the artists in video form.[42] For DeLappe, his intervention was primarily a private act and, as such, he felt the recording was subsidiary to the real-time engagement ("Playing", 148). His first recording (from 2007) is of fairly low quality and moves back and forth between shots from in the game and of DeLappe as he sits at his computer and types out the names. In 2008, he filmed the project again using a high quality in-game recorder he was able to access as part of a residency at the Eyebeam gallery in New York City (Personal interview). This recording follows his work from a single day on the site. After recording over an hour of *dead-in-iraq,* he edited the footage down to a video that is just over eighteen minutes long. DeLappe describes this recording as a form of "machinima" that is a "work in its own right" (Personal interview). This film is similar to the one video of *Freedom* that the Mattes have shared, as both only show the in-game environment from the point-of-view of the playable character. It is not clear how long Eva Mattes played the game beyond what is shown in this recording.

Both of these films have been exhibited in gallery settings, which DeLappe notes is a completely different way of experiencing the work than being in-game ("Playing", 164). Hal Foster argues, in a critique of relational art, that interactive audience engagement can lead to the reestablishment of the artist as the principle player, both in the creation and reception of a work (194)—a danger already addressed in my discussion of *Projet blanc*. Archiving adds an

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[42] My analysis of these two works—like my investigation of *Projet blanc*—is based on recordings and secondary sources. I have not found any accounts by gamers who encountered the performances in the game spaces.

additional layer to this issue as the archive, following Foucault and Derrida's work on the subject, is embedded in power relations. According to Philip Auslander, the act of documenting an event is performative in an Austinian sense as it has the power to frame particular meanings and shapes spectator responses ("Performativity" 5). As my analysis of *dead-in-iraq* and *Freedom* engages with the artist-created videos, I am aware that my reading is affected by the selecting and editing that has taken place. In fact, DeLappe admits that he removed the "boring" parts. He notes that, much like actual war, his gaming experience involved long stretches where little seemed to occur and then brief bursts of intense action (Personal interview). This framing allows the artists to privilege particular moments and responses from other players, which puts them in a position of power as they shape a particular narrative for their interventions.[43]

While Mattes and DeLappe differ in terms of their content, their interventions align in several ways. First, as noted above, the first-person shooters Counter-Strike and America's Army have similar game play—with a repetition of the same basic scenarios in different virtual locations—and rely on teamwork amongst players. In their performances, both artists refuse to engage in the repeated combat. Mattes usually moves to a place away from the action and then stands still as she types. DeLappe generally stays near other players and only moves intermittently. Neither shoot their weapons. Instead they focus on typing text for other players to read. In refusing to follow the normative path, the artists disrupt the game play, leading to reactions from other players ranging from frustration to aggression to empathy. For example,

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[43] This kind of power is not always one-directional as those being documented can frame themselves for those doing the documenting. However, in both of these projects, the artists never reveal that they are filming the game action, so the players do not know they are being documented. As any player can use a screen recorder to capture the gameplay—something that players often do for their own archives or to make machinima pieces to share online— those interacting with DeLappe and Mattes may have been aware that the artists were likely filming.

some of the players in *Freedom* seem interested in Mattes' character when they first encounter it, asking "What is an art piece?" and "what r u talking about" rather than simply dismissing her. As Mattes continues to spawn and make different statements, some of the players get increasingly frustrated with her. One states "ur beginning to get on my nerves" while others tell her to stop playing. Other players become interested in helping her survive. DeLappe has a similar range of responses in his videos, with some players wanting to know why he is writing the names, some threatening him and others trying to help him. In both pieces, the artists insert a parallel narrative, which infuses difference into the game space, shifting the motivations of the other players and provoking questions about what game spaces are for.

Like Choinière's sound walk, *Freedom* and *dead-in-iraq* have roots in a number of disciplines, from theatre and performance art to various strategies of activist movements. One major antecedent is the work of avant-garde artists, as digital interventions continue a tradition of breaking down art-life binaries through provocation. Several intermedial scholars—including Steve Dixon, Greg Giesekam, Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer—connect digital performance to the goals and aesthetics of the Happenings of the 1950s and 60s, particularly in artists' attempts to break down the separation between spectators and performers. The performance art of this era is itself indebted to historical avant-gardes of the early twentieth-century, including Surrealism, Dadaism and Futurism, which had similar aims and tactics. While historical avant-garde movements overlap in terms of goals and artistic strategies, Steve Dixon argues that Futurism should be considered the most dominant historical avant-garde connection to digital performance via its emphasis on fusing technology and performance practice (47). The provocative nature of Futurist performance—particularly the Italian Futurists' *serate*—links this

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movement to contemporary digital interventions that aim to initially surprise, or shock, participants in order to break from existing rituals.

These interventions also connect to activist tactics, particularly different forms of public protest. While DeLappe's action mimics a government-backed form of remembrance, it also evokes activist appropriations of this ritual. David Román discusses how early AIDS activists used the names of those who had died of the disease to create visibility. He describes vigils from the early 1980s in which mourners held up placards with a number corresponding to an AIDS victim and read the names of those who had died in the years before the official AIDS epidemic start date declared by the Centre for Disease Control. Alongside the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, Román sees these actions as disrupting the "statistical abstraction of AIDS" (26) via a performance of "intervening surrogacy, standing up and standing in for the dead" (32). While DeLappe's project has a very different context and he is not personally connected to the soldiers he names, his actions also suggest a "standing in for the dead" as he uses the names of actual soldiers to point to the real-world consequences of war. *Freedom* also aligns with public protest traditions through its calls for non-violence. Jill Lane claims there are connections between on- and offline performances of non-violent resistance. She notes how both take over space so as to disrupt normal routines (139). *Freedom* follows this logic as—much like boycott campaigns and strike picketers—Mattes asks others to *not* do something they have entered the space to do.

These online gaming interventions also connect to several examples of early net.art, such as Mary Flanagan's *[domestic]* (2003)*,* which uses video game software to create an environment in contrast to war-game conventions, and jodi.org's modifications of classic video games like

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Castle Wolfenstein. Perhaps the most direct precursor is Anne-Marie Schleiner, Joan Leandre and Brody Condon's *Velvet-Strike* (2002), as the work was also a direct intervention into a networked video game. Like the Mattes, these artists went into Counter-Strike where they used the in-game ability to add images that look like spray-paint onto the environment's walls. The artists added several anti-war "sprays" to the walls, including one with soldiers standing in a heart formation and others with the slogans "We are all Iraqis now" and "hostages as military fantasy." Users could add their own sprays and install the existing ones through the project's main website. *dead-in-iraq* and *Freedom* build on this environment altering approach by engaging directly with gameplay. Instead of adding digital objects that visually alter the space, the artists use their digital presence to challenge the relations and actions these gaming sites normalize.[44]

As they situate the actions of players at the core of the work, *Freedom* and *dead-in-iraq* relate to debates surrounding art's social turn. Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of relational art provides a useful starting point for considering how social performances engage participants. In *Relational Aesthetics*, Bourriaud argues that relational art allows for connections beyond an art object, through a facilitation of "inter-human relations" (79). The relational artist, rather than making art objects, creates and facilitates situations in which participants can engage with space and one another. He defines relational art as "an art that takes as its theoretical horizon the sphere of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an autonomous and

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[44] These gaming interventions also connect to other kinds of artistic responses to the popularity of war games. An example is John Greyson's *Gazonto* (2014), a satirical fake advertisement for a war game that has players bomb an area across most of Toronto. This area matches the borders of the Gaza Strip. In the video for the fake game, sites in Toronto act as substitutes for bombed locations in Gaza, which highlights the intensity of Israeli bombings across such a small area. It also acts as a critique of the upsurge in war games that simulate attacks on Gaza.

private symbolic space" (160). By placing the interrelations between individuals at the forefront—rather than the art object and one's individual relationship to it—relational art ideally opens up questions about how we interact with one another and in groups on a daily basis.

Since *Relational Aesthetics* was first published in French in 1998, it pre-dates Web 2.0 environments. However, even though his work is gallery-centric, Bourriaud briefly addresses new technologies such as the internet and multimedia in terms of relationality. He acknowledges that the creation of the internet "points to a collective desire to create new areas of conviviality" (26). Yet he finds that these new technologies further produce Debord's concept of the spectacle by facilitating "the society of extras, where everyone finds the illusion of an interactive democracy in more or less truncated channels of communication."[45] Unintentionally, in this dismissal of the internet's potential as a social space, Bourriaud points to ways art can intervene. Increasingly, digital spaces are corporate spaces, in which the spectacle continues to circulate. As a network created for military purposes and continually monitored by governments around the world, the web is not a neutral space. Corporate and political interests abound on the internet—yet so do anti-corporate, alternative approaches.

Juan Martin Prada productively connects Bourriaud's relational aesthetics to Web 2.0 via this potential for intervention. He argues that socially engaged art can "reconfigure" the relations taking place online. Counter-Strike and America's Army are guided by commercial and military

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[45] Slavoj Žižek is also critical of the illusion of interactivity, particularly in relation to new technologies. He claims that what appears to be interactivity is actually a form of "interpassivity." He argues that, while cyberoptimists extol the possibilities of interactivity within Web 2.0, they fail to recognize that the flip side of interactivity is "interpassivity." Žižek sees this interpassivity forming when the subject projects itself onto the object, which creates "the situation in which the object itself takes from me, deprives me of, my own passive reaction of satisfaction (or mourning or laughter), so that it is the object itself which 'enjoys the show' instead of me, relieving me of the superego duty to enjoy myself" (112).

interests respectively, and yet are full of social interactions that cannot be completely controlled by these forces. For example, the in-game messaging systems, while having some filters such as those that ban swear words, allow for fairly open conversations directly between gamers. Gaming theorist Gonzalo Frasca, in a discussion of video game formats, notes the difference between narrative and simulation. He contends that while narrative is limited to what has already passed, and therefore can only be declarative, simulation is full of potential with different connections and results possible (86). In networked video games, the simulation is made up of this real-time engagement with other players who impact on your experience. Both the Mattes and DeLappe use this simulated space to engage in social art—the other players' reactions to Mattes and DeLappe are at the core of their performances.

While a few players are interested in what the artists have to say, most other players get frustrated with them, and many of their own teammates kill them. These negative reactions raise questions about what kinds of relations the artists provoke in these gaming spaces. The aggression that each work sparks reveals how relational art does not always build consensus—a topic addressed by Claire Bishop in response to Bourriaud's theory. In "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," Bishop discusses possible blind spots in Bourriaud's celebration of relational forms. Bishop contends he has an overly utopian sense of community and fails to discuss the types of publics being formed. She highlights how Bourriaud creates a binary between interactive, social art and passive, object based art, and argues that this privileging of the social assumes it is "capable of producing positive human relationships. As a consequence, the work is automatically political in implication and emancipatory in effect" (62). Bishop goes on to argue—following the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe—that this conception of

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relationality ignores the antagonism key to any functioning democratic system. She warns that erasing difference can be unproductive as dissent and disagreement are silenced (65). While Bishop's critique centres on Bourriaud's choice of examples, her comments are useful for considering the effects of these performance interventions, as they destabilize assumed relations between gamers and frequently provoke aggressive reactions from players.

While Bishop hopes to open up the discussion about relational aesthetics, her argument suffers from its own limitations. Shannon Jackson argues that Bishop wrongly equates antagonism with conflict and opposition (50) and notes that Laclau and Mouffe are more nuanced in their definition of the term, seeing it as something that "[exposes] the precarity of socially defined roles" (51). Jackson proposes moving beyond the binaries embedded within Bishop's critique, such as those between celebration/opposition and community/art world (60). Bishop herself follows this logic in her book *Artificial Hells,* which attempts "to generate a more nuanced (and honest) critical vocabulary with which to address the vicissitudes of collaborative authorship and spectatorship" (8). She disparages the binaries underlying much social art critique, such as the binaries between activity and passivity, and individuation and collaboration (8). Like Rancière, she believes such conclusions lead to overly general statements about the benefits of intersubjectivity. She argues that "intersubjective relations are not an end in themselves, but serve to explore and disentangle a more complex knot of social concerns about political engagement, affect, inequality, narcissism, class, and behavioural protocols" (39). Instead of binarizing and generalizing aspects of social art, she instead suggests looking at projects' specific contexts (26). Following this call, in my analysis of *dead-in-iraq* and *Freedom*, I do not want to privilege either consensus or dissensus, but rather consider what possibilities

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each work opens up in these war-game spaces—particularly in terms of Jackson's comment about exposing "socially inscribed roles"—and what the limitations of working with fairly set scripts in these digital, networked structures are.

When looking at artistic interventions in digital spaces, it is important to acknowledge the context provided in each game world. In an investigation into the ethics of war simulators, Simon Penny argues that game design impacts on the 'cyber-social' behaviour found within each video game. He emphasizes the importance of context—from the game controls used to the narrative given—claiming that each game allows for "only certain types of behavior. So, the behavior of the user is constrained and in a sense, modeled" (83). Gameplay—which for both Counter-Strike and America's Army involves missions to find and kill enemy combatants— encourages certain types of behaviour, while closing off others. For example, in both games, the only objects you hold are weapons. Players can drop and switch their weapons, but cannot usually pick up and hold other objects they see in the environment. In both games, the unit's shared objective appears on the player's screen. These messages instruct players to work together towards a common goal. Some common objectives are extracting something from enemy territory or taking and holding a new area.

While Penny believes games "[permit] only certain types of behavior", functions within games can also unintentionally leave openings for alternative narratives and ways of playing. The structures of networked war games encourage players to kill either other players (in Counter-Strike) or non-playable characters (in America's Army); however, there are a number of ways players can intervene in this dominant narrative. In *Unit Operations*, video game theorist Ian Bogost compares games to Michel de Certeau's discussion of urban space in *The Practice of*

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Everyday Life. Bogost argues that users can follow de Certeau's models online by performing actions that respond to the internet's increasing private and commercial interests. In particular, Bogost finds that "games provide a two-way street through which players and their ideas can enter and exit the game, taking and leaving their residue in both directions" (135). *Velvet-Strike* provides an extreme example of "leaving . . . residue" as players' sprays continue to haunt the game space even after the player has left. *dead-in-iraq* and *Freedom* are more ephemeral interventions as they rely on the real-time engagement of the artist in the game space. These fleeting, but pointed performances align with de Certeau's practice of everyday life through their tactical agency. As opposed to strategic power, tactics function from outside power structures. In the case of DeLappe and Mattes, they come from outside any existing in-groups in the game spaces. Working from outside the gaming community, both artists resist the set of rules put in place by the corporate and military game makers. Their outsiderness is blatantly apparent when other players accuse them of not knowing how to play the games. Both are accused of being a "n00b"—a term used to describe new gamers who make mistakes. In one iteration of *Freedom*, another player continually asks Mattes "what the fuck are you doing just standing?", before telling the other players "he doesn't know what he's fucking doing."

DeLappe observes that this type of war game is "participatory yet highly prescribed" ("Playing" 151) and that his act escapes the cycle of repeated violence through this outsider, "non-participatory" subversion. The same could be said of Eva Mattes in her performance, as she stops moving and encourages others to *not* participate by *not* shooting her. Of course, this non-participation is still an act of participation—but a form of participation that refuses to place action first. Instead of running around, their lack of mobility privileges slowness and non-violent

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modes of being. DeLappe and Mattes may not be participating in aggressive actions, but they participate just by being in the space and offering a different perspective, even if it is just for a moment before they are killed. They follow Mike Pearson's definition of how site-specific performance takes over space by "[rendering] familiar places unfamiliar" (40). Player reactions reveal the effectiveness of this rupturing of space. DeLappe and Mattes are told that they do not belong in the game space—a statement that reveals the space has been altered in ways that make regular players feel out of place themselves. In *Freedom*, an aggressive player tells Mattes: "Ok dude, if you're just an artist then go play in paint. Don't play Counter Strike. What you are going to do is hit 'Escape' and then 'disconnect from game.' Cause you're just an artist. You don't want to be in this game. It's all about killing people. Go have fun and paint." Players in *dead-in-iraq* make similar statements, noting that DeLappe should protest and memorialize in a more expected setting. One player tells him, "do that somewhere else or have DC make a memorial."

This divergence from the norm connects to the concept of a performance of failure. Sara Jane Bailes argues that performances of failure exist as a form of difference and are full of potential as strategic means to subvert dominant structures and beliefs. She claims, "In its status as 'wrongdoing,' a failed objective establishes an aperture, an opening onto several (and often many) other ways of doing that counter the authority of a singular or 'correct' outcome" (2). In *dead-in-iraq* and *Freedom*, this "aperture" led to mixed reactions. Many of the other players attack DeLappe and Mattes for not sticking to the prescribed script. While some players get aggressive, the most common responses to both performances are confusion and frustration. Players want the performances to be easily discernible, just like the game itself. Both DeLappe and Mattes constantly get asked why they are doing their interventions, which reveals the extent

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to which their actions throw off other players and alter the game space.

The artists' failure to act in expected ways also aligns their work with Judith Halberstam's concept of the queer art of failure, which favours passivity over agency, radical negativity over positivity, and antisociality over sociality. Like Bailes, Halberstam situates failure as a means to challenge the drive to be successful in contemporary society—"a way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and as a form of critique" (*Queer* 88). Halberstam looks at failure's political potential through its queerness, as an alternate mode of being in response to normalized structures and routines. The queer art of failure is thus broadly and "productively linked to racial awareness, anticolonial struggle, gender variance and different formulations of the temporality of success" (92). While both of their scores are fairly open, DeLappe and Mattes' performances challenge normative behaviours within spaces that celebrate a militarized, violent form of masculinity. This masculinity—particularly in America's Army—is tied to nationalistic sentiments and the necessary destruction of those that have different ways of being.

The reactions of other players connect DeLappe and Mattes to an unsettling, potentially productive queerness that disrupts game structures. Players reveal their discomfort with the artists' work by alternately accusing them of being female, queer and terrorists. There are no female avatars as options in either game,[46] so both artists have male avatars. As they only type—neither use the voice function—players cannot assume their gender based on usual visual or vocal cues. Instead, the other players assume they are male throughout the game play and use the

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[46] The absence of female avatars has been the subject of heated debate on gaming forums, such as the official America's Army player forum. There have been user-generated attempts to add female avatars. Some Counter-Strike users created a downloadable pack called Beauty-Strike, which alters the game to have only female avatars. However, unlike the male avatars in the game, who wear full uniforms, these female avatars wear bikinis and short shorts and appear to be modelled on a Barbie-type frame—which makes it difficult to situate the project as a primarily feminist intervention.

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pronouns "he" for both DeLappe and Mattes. Yet, the players also use derogatory, sexist slurs to attack the players for their femininity and queerness. Players call DeLappe a "cunt" and a "bit.ch." They also imply that he has sexual desires towards the mostly male names he writes. One player asked DeLappe if they were the names of men he had asked out, while others claim "they are his rape victims" and that he has a "dead man fetish." While Mattes is not directly accused of queerness and femininity in *Freedom* a player tells the others that she "is achmed"— seemingly a reference to the puppet Achmed the Dead Terrorist from comedian-puppeteer Jeff Dunham's television show.

While DeLappe and Mattes' interventions lead to this seemingly unproductive torrent of hate speech, the discomfort revealed by these antagonistic players can also be read as productive. Rebecca Schneider discusses the potential of this form of "calculated 'misfire'" (69). While she unpacks this concept in a theatre context, her contention that misfires can be both "real *and* faux—action *and* representation" (41) has resonances with the both-and of intermedial performance. The hybridity inherent in intermedial performance involves these very combinations: it is virtual, yet still real and a space for action and representation (often simultaneously). *dead-in-iraq* and *Freedom* bring a number of both-and combinations to the forefront—action/non-action, real/simulation, past/present, here/there—and reveal how these seeming binaries bleed into one another on gaming platforms. By being in the space, the artists are playing the game—yet they refuse to play in the expected way. Though clearly in a simulation, DeLappe's memorialization propels both players and gallery audiences to think of the real-world effects of these war acts, while Mattes' claim that she is making an art project places the war game in the role of an art object. As there is both an initial performance and the

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performance documentation, multiple audiences are being hailed by these pieces—ones that are in different times and places. This separation between the initial event and its dissemination is a challenge for this kind of activism, as the event may go unnoticed without the circulation of the documentation, but the act of documenting raises questions about which audience is being privileged.

DeLappe claims one goal of his performance is showing that "war is not a game" ("War Games"). However, through highlighting the both-and DeLappe and the Mattes go beyond this simple formulation to show that "war is not a game," but also war is *not-not* a game. The performances complicate the assumed fiction of virtual worlds, upsetting a distinction between real and simulated. In a now-famous provocation, Jean Baudrillard suggests his readers should perform a fake hold-up in order to test whether it would elicit a stronger reaction than a real one. Baudrillard believes that while an actual hold-up disrupts order, a fake one is more disturbing as it "attacks the reality principle itself" (20). In a similar fashion, these artists refuse to play into the fake war being staged online, which calls attention to its very role as a game. Neither artist's life is actually on the line. Their non-action creates a sense of confusion and frustration, rather than putting their own lives and those of others at risk. However, in their failure to stick to the expectations of the other players, DeLappe and Mattes also rupture the notion that war games are just for play. This reflects how Baudrillard goes on to acknowledge that his formulation of a fake hold-up is problematic as the real and simulated are co-imbricated in contemporary life (21).

Beyond the America's Army game, which explicitly merges combat training with gaming, this fusion of the real and simulated in warfare is evident in the United States' controversial drone program. In its fourth season, the American television program *Arrested Development*

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satirized the connection between popular gaming and the drone program by having the show's

most naive character, Buster Bluth, unwittingly become a lethal drone pilot. Working in a

suburban strip mall, Bluth assumes he is simply playing a game—the show's narrator notes he

has a "childlike inability to distinguish between games and reality" ("Off the Hook"). When he

discovers the truth, Bluth has a breakdown and falls off his chair, making him the first drone

casualty on the American side. This blurring of real and play in digital space is acknowledged by

the American Army. On their goarmy.com recruiting site, they have a page about America's

Army, on which they boast about how "realistic" the game is. They claim: "The developers

crawled through obstacle courses, fired weapons, observed paratrooper instruction, and

participated in a variety of training exercises with elite combat units, all so that you could

virtually experience Soldiering in the most realistic way possible" ("America's Army"). A sense

of the real is not limited to the creation of the game, but, as shown in the *Arrested Development*

example, extends to the gameplay, in which players do not simply identify with their avatars, but

exist as them. The gaming subject—in opposition to a Cartesian mind/body split—has

experiences within the game that shape their continually expanding and altering sense of self.[47]

    dead-in-iraq and *Freedom*'s performances of failure highlight how central unrestrained

violence is to these gaming experiences. Their slow and passive interventions question this

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[47] Performance theorist Susan Kozel argues that this lack of separation from the everyday can actually limit the
apparent utopian potentials of the virtual as it continues to be informed by pre-existing sexual and social norms
(101). As an example of this limitation, she describes her experience as a performer in Paul Sermon's installation
Telematic Dreaming (1992). During the installation, the performer lays on a bed in a private room. The performer's
image is then projected onto a bed in an open gallery space. Visitors can interact with the virtual body and the
performer can watch these interactions on a live feed. For Kozel, performing in the installation was surprisingly
painful. She describes several violent interactions, such as when one visitor pulled out a knife and when two men
physically attacked the image. While she claims she normally felt physical pain when confronted with violence in
the work, for the latter she actually felt a break from the virtual body, which reveals a fluidity through which
identification with virtual bodies can come and go (96).

instinct both within game spaces and in society more generally. DeLappe sees his intervention as pointing to the real consequences of war—a notion embedded within the game's function as a training tool. Unlike Mattes, who mostly includes general statements and open-ended questions, DeLappe is blatant about the pointed, socially engaged critique at the heart of his intervention. DeLappe's project took place over several years during the Iraq war and had a dual-pronged aim of memorializing the dead and protesting American involvement in the conflict. In interviews and his own writings about the project, DeLappe is explicit about these two goals, and sees them going hand-in-hand. He notes that his actions become "a cautionary gesture" (delappe.net).

By emphasizing the real-world cost of war, DeLappe connects the military-backed game to on-ground fighting. However, his use of actual soldiers' names has led to critiques of the work. In one *dead-in-iraq* sequence, a players claims that DeLappe just wrote their brother's name. S/he types, "OMGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGG thats my brother . . . he went to iraq . . . no im serious." After seemingly recovering from their shock, the user gets angry, claiming that DeLappe is "som sick *******" and should "****ing stop." While impossible to discern whether this player is actually the sibling of the deceased soldier, another soldier's sibling had a similar reaction and publicly discussed being disturbed by the piece. Lee Hutchinson's brother, Ray Joseph Hutchinson, was killed in action on 7 December 2003. Upon reading about DeLappe's project, Lee Hutchinson emailed the artist and requested he not use his brother's name. DeLappe had already typed Hutchinson's name at this point though. After DeLappe responded, saying that he had already used it and sharing some of the motivations of his project, the two appeared together on an NPR radio broadcast to debate whether DeLappe had a right to use fallen soldiers' names for his anti-war protest. Hutchinson argues that DeLappe's work is too

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open-ended and "the way that the viewer chooses to characterize the work is left up to the viewer since the art isn't presented in any kind of context. So seeing this, my first thought was immediately 'this is not something that [my brother] would have agreed with'" ("War Games"). Hutchinson's critique focuses on the openness of DeLappe's action—a criticism that could also apply to Mattes' intervention.

The open-endedness of the projects is part of what makes them relational, as they offer a framework for interaction, but do not dictate what will happen. Hutchinson's description of *dead-in-iraq* reveals a discomfort with the indeterminate nature of relational art, particularly when it is conceived in relation to real-world events, such as soldiers' deaths. What his opposition to the piece misses, however, is the ways in which DeLappe also forecloses certain relations with his score. Both projects are open-ended, yet this does not preclude the artists' socio-political aims. Like Choinière, both performances work from a space of oppositionality and position the artist at the centre of the intervention through their refusal to answer other users' questions and enter into a dialogue. DeLappe's oppositional approach sits in the protest half of his memorial/protest formulation. In interviews, he claims that he considers the success of *dead-in-iraq* as tied to negative reactions from other players. In particular, DeLappe finds he is most "successful" when players get annoyed at him to the point that they vote him out of the game. He claims that at this moment "The narrative of the game has been subverted. The intended audience has been reached" ("Playing" 149).

By focusing on opposition, DeLappe overlooks the messiness of his own work, in which negative reactions are the norm but not the only type of response. In both *dead-in-iraq* and *Freedom*, a number of players come to the artists' defense—an act that complicates DeLappe's

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formulation of anger equalling success. He admits that these moments "were really affirming."

There were times when the project became quite dark, with other players verbally abusing

DeLappe and threatening his safety. In these moments, DeLappe claims that the positive,

supportive responses played a role in "keeping [him] focused" on the task at hand (Personal

interview).

These moments that deviate from the expected negative response connect back to

Shannon Jackson's argument that giving attention to cooperation—as opposed to disruption—can

reveal the ability of art to "contribute to inter-dependent social imagining" (14). The instinct to

rebel against the implied rules of gaming spaces is not limited to these artists—as is seen in the

popularity of modding and cheats in video gaming. Some players jump on board with their

projects, which challenges any assumptions that war game players are a homogenous—

presumably pro-violence, anti-intellectual—group. In *Freedom*, one player takes it upon himself

to try to understand Mattes' intentions. He implores the other players not to shoot Eva while he

asks her questions and tries to protect her. When the other players refuse to follow his lead and

kill her, he yells at them in an exasperated tone "Oh my god you ruined it . . . My god." DeLappe

had a similar experience when two players decided to protect him ("Returning"). Other gamers

also come to DeLappe's defence when he is attacked, telling players to "just leave him alone"

and asking "what's wrong with what he's doing." The ambiguity of both performances allows for

these slippages, which complicate a unified picture of what a typical war game player is like.

While both performances point to the real-world violence and hate that underpins gamers'

actions, their politics get complicated via the divergent beliefs of the actual players.

With a more open score—Eva's questions and statements vary in each iteration of the

fighting—and no clear anti-war statements, on the surface *Freedom* seems less politically engaged than *dead-in-iraq*. However, while Eva and Franco Mattes state that they do not actively seek out social change with their works, their lack of a clearly articulated political goal does not necessarily negate the political potential of their piece. According to Jacques Rancière, this potential is more complex than making art that leads viewers to "an 'awareness' of the state of the world" (*Politics* 63). Instead, perception can be upset by what is not, or fails to be, signified. In social art, this kind of disruption can be unpredictable yet pointed. In *Freedom*, an example of such a disruption occurs when Mattes types the question "what are we fighting for?" and a voice responds with "freedom" just before a player shoots Mattes dead. Through such questions Mattes asks players to consider their choices—to be in the game, to kill other players—rather than just playing the way they always have. Eva Mattes states that she and Franco attempt "to make [art projects] outside of traditional art spaces and for an audience [of] not typical art goers . . . ideally for the person next door" ("Eva"). Video game players fall under this description and whether they choose to hear her pleas or not, Mattes' presence disrupts their space and forces them to engage—even if this engagement is a refusal to listen—with this alternative narrative.

Both interventions—regardless of their political aims—rely on the work of a solo artist, who is at the centre of the performance score. Like Choinière their interjections prompt their audiences to think about the space, but they do not provide a clear and dialogic means of participation. DeLappe's assumptions about the types of players on the America's Army site also suggests an uncompromising approach—similar to Choinière's—to a space the artist finds problematic. While players have the choice of whether or not to kill the artists, DeLappe and Mattes' refusal to answer their questions or enter into a dialogue directed by the participants

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closes off the works' scope. Yet *dead-in-iraq* and *Freedom* deviate from Choinière's oppositionality through their embrace of their failure, which is marked by a passivity rather than aggression. While Choinière wanted his audience to fail at being traditional spectators, his combative stance cut off the potential productivity of this failure. In contrast, Mattes and DeLappe leave their works more open-ended, letting their failure to behave as expected shape the responses of other players. Their approach reveals a potential for gaming spaces as sites of protest, as sites in which to engage with presumably "not typical art goers." Their refusal to engage in violent acts on these sites offers a detour from the norm. The simplicity of their performance scores opens up possibilities for future interventions. What would a mass intervention in a war gaming world look like? What if hundreds of players refused to follow the norm and rerouted user expectations? How could such performances engage more directly with the game players? As video gaming continues to expand—it is now the most rapidly growing form of media—new spaces of interaction will offer further potential to intervene in seemingly logical gaming practices.

CHAPTER THREE

MAKING IT MOBILE:

PERFORMING SOCIAL CAUSES IN APPS AND TEXTS

August 2014. It suddenly seems as if everyone in the English-speaking world is pouring

buckets of ice water on their heads. All over the media—from television news to Buzzfeed

lists—I am inundated with famous people's take on the challenge and somewhat predictable fails

where people slip and fall or get a heavy bucket dropped on them. Quickly, what started out with

celebrities and strangers has spread into my Facebook feed, with friends and acquaintances

sharing videos of themselves being drenched in cold water. This activity is all part of what has

become known as the ALS ice bucket challenge, a fundraising/awareness campaign with unclear

origins.[48] The challenge consists of someone having a bucket of ice water poured on them. This

participant then nominates others to do the same action within twenty-four hours, or donate one

hundred dollars to a cause associated with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). The challenge is

circulated via videos and tagging within social media.

According to *The New York Times*, the ice bucket meme expanded quickly, with 1.2

million Facebook videos tagging the challenge between 1 June and 13 August and 2.2 million

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[48] Disagreements surrounding the source of this meme reveal the web's power of dispersal. Several journalists have attempted to uncover the roots of the ALS ice bucket challenge. While some claim to have found the exact first video or source of the action, these reports conflict with one another. *ESPN* traces the challenge to former Boston College baseball player Peter Frates and his friend, Pat Quinn—both of whom have ALS ("SC Featured"). However, Samantha Murphy Kelly of *Mashable* claims that Frates and Quinn made their video after the performance score had already been established—first in a context separate from ALS on NBC's *The Today Show* and then with the ALS cause attached in a video by Jeanette Senerchia (whose husband has ALS). *Slate*'s Josh Levin argues the meme has an even longer history and that attempts to trace it back to a single source "obscures another fascinating tale, one that illustrates how movements mutate and evolve as they travel across the Web." He instead notes how this "mutation" has roots in traditions like polar bear swims and the Gatorade drink dumping at sport events, before tracing it to a number of videos from 2013 and 2014 unrelated to the ALS cause.

mentions on Twitter between 29 July and 17 August. The challenge also led to a spike in donations to ALS causes. For example, the American ALS Association had $13.3 million in donations between 29 July and 17 August—more than seven times what they had received in the same period in 2013 (Steel). While ice bucket videos—usually accompanied by the hashtag #ALSicebucketchallenge—do not necessarily lead to a donation, the increase in donations suggests people are either making a video and donating, or forgoing the video and just donating.

Although the campaign is actually raising funds for ALS causes, reaction to this meme is not uniformly positive. Like the examples discussed in Chapter One, accusations of "hashtag slacktivism" have emerged, as critics are quick to point out problems with the ice bucket challenge's form. Even articles that appear to laud the campaign reveal some troubling aspects underpinning viral moments that claim to raise awareness. *Mashable* writer Samantha Murphy Kelly notes the ALS ice bucket challenge has "become this summer's version of the 'Harlem Shake' or 'Call Me Maybe' video parodies, but for a good cause." This statement, while intended to point out the overwhelming popularity of the campaign, reveals how the challenge's aesthetics and form align with other, arguably depoliticized memes. This connection suggests that by next summer we will faintly recall the viral moment of the ice bucket campaign while we discuss whatever new moment has emerged.

A stronger negative reaction to this meme-ification of charitable giving comes from columnist Amberly McAteer of *The Globe and Mail.* On 15 August 2014, she wrote an article with the emphatic title "Don't do it: Why you shouldn't take the #ALSicebucketchallenge, even for a good cause." This title encapsulates McAteer's main argument, which develops around the belief that the quickly growing meme is just a spectacle and has little to do with ALS activism.

In particular, McAteer argues that this type of campaign fails to educate and frequently gets away from its original, charity-based intentions. As Jacob Davidson of *Time* notes, most participants choose to have the bucket of water poured on them—a performance that reveals their lack of financial contribution to the cause.[49] Arielle Pardes of *Vice Magazine* concurs with this conclusion and even goes a step further, claiming that the campaign encourages a performance of "narcissism masked as altruism" and is simply a fad that will quickly run its course. These detractors point to a disconnect between virtual performance, monetary fundraising and real-world actions. Their discomfort with the ice bucket campaign reveals a fear of reinforcing the spectacle through seemingly charitable acts.

Although not discussing digital campaigns, Stephen Duncombe's thoughts on the state of contemporary fundraising are useful to consider in relation to viral awareness raising campaigns. Duncombe describes how charities have alienated the public through what are now commonly described in the UK as 'chuggers'—or 'charity muggers' (67). These usually young adult workers stand on busy streets in urban centres with binders and try to engage passersby in conversation. While acknowledging that social causes need money, he argues that having this as the sole goal of canvassers leads to a disconnect between giving and political engagement. He claims:

> This sort of politics discourages the creation of the very thing needed for
>
> democratic change: everyday citizen-activists. It also poisons the well for any
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> citizen-activists legitimately registering voters, gathering signatures for petitions,
>
> or handing out information on the street. I now cross the street at the sight of a

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[49] In the wake of accusations like Davidson's many participants began to both participate in the challenge and donate. In addition, I noticed that several of my Facebook friends not only donated, but also encouraged others to read up about ALS and included links to ALS associations.

young person with a clipboard, as I'm sure others do when they see me with

petition in hand. (66)

Ice bucket challenge detractors also see the campaign as a form of depoliticized participation, in which the fun of the action has subsumed the seriousness of the cause.

In their critiques of the ice bucket challenge Davidson, McAteer and Pardes encourage readers to just make a donation without doing the challenge. However, assuming that giving to the ALS cause—rather than performing an act on social media—is a superior mode of engagement is also problematic. Individuals' motivations for giving to charities are complex. In the case of the ice bucket challenge, there is a visibility to the giving, which means participants get some social credibility and capital from showing their own generosity. Economist James Andreoni, in a study of donations in the United Kingdom, refers to this as "impure altruism." He argues that charity givers are motivated by a number of factors, including "social pressure, guilt, sympathy, or simply a desire for a 'warm glow'" (464). This "warm glow" is a feeling of self-worth that puts the focus on the act of the giver rather than the receiver. In a Marxist critique, Nicola Livingstone makes similar points, noting that charity is located within "the spectacle of capitalist reproduction, which may be considered to be more selfish rather than selfless 'altruism'. Charity itself, rather than struggling against capitalism in a transformative way succeeds only in a struggle that reproduces impoverishment and inequality" (347-8). Livingstone's analysis connects back to Duncombe's concerns about chuggers—that charitable causes remove agency from citizens and reproduce an unproductive form of capitalist spectacle.

In this chapter, I delve into the question of how social causes gain visibility and connect with publics via digital tools. The ice bucket challenge—and debates about its efficacy—leads to

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several questions regarding the relationship between activism and digital performance, including: How do digital approaches extend and build on traditional modes of charity fundraising and raising awareness? How do they theatrically implicate their audiences and how does this implication serve their pedagogical goals? Is it possible to balance the fun, playful side of the technologies used with the seriousness of the issues they cover? Is awareness a valid goal in itself? How do monetary goals relate to other forms of efficaciousness? What does visibility mean when it is solely in virtual spaces?

In addressing these questions, I hope to delve into the cracks in this seemingly two sided debate and complicate the issue of social awareness in digital spaces. I investigate two examples that contrast with the ALS ice bucket challenge approach as they explicitly suture together form and content in a socially engaged performance. These mobile based interventions also connect and politicize the relationship between media users and social issues. Unlike many of the examples discussed so far, these performances are explicit about the particular social cause at the heart of the work. *Phone Story* (2011) is a phone application created by Molleindustria and the Yes Lab. The application—banned from Apple's App Store—is a touchscreen game that has users trace the globalized creation and consumption of smartphones. Currently, it is available to play online for free or for an Android device for a small fee. While a voiceover gives context to each level, users play various roles, from consumers to factory workers to violent militia men. The game itself does not have any in-app contribution possibilities; however, the project's initial proceeds went to a Chinese worker who had attempted suicide at a Foxconn plant making Apple products. Another hybrid fund- and awareness- raising performance I explore is *Virtual Homeless* (2010), a project by the homeless advocacy group Pathways to Housing and creative

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advertising agencies GoGorilla and Sarkissian Mason. *Virtual Homeless* used projection

technologies to place the image of a homeless person in public space along with a phone number.

If a passerby texted the number, the screened person would enter a door and leave the street. The

mobile phone user was then sent a text back with the option to donate. The projection also

changed to include this information so that other passersby could send money.

While focused on different issues, these examples reflect how artistic approaches can re-

imagine the relationship between technologies and activism, particularly in relation to existing

models of charity fundraising. Both *Phone Story* and *Virtual Homeless* incorporate fundraising

as a supplementary aspect to projects primarily focused on educating users about social issues.

Instead of simply looking for monetary contributions, these activist-artists use novel digital tools

for pedagogical projects that aim to make normally unseen images and issues visible (a goal that

I critique in my analysis below). While some level of entertainment and fun is involved, these

performances also implicate the spectator-player within networks of globalization and

gentrification. Rather than working solely against the spectacular in society, these digital

performances evoke aspects of what Duncombe refers to as "progressive spectacles" that are

interactive and open-ended, leaving room for future action and bringing up difficult questions

about equality in society (17).

Yet, the projects also raise the question of whether this playful engagement with digital

bodies—and particularly ones that are exploited and abused— reinforces divisions and

substitutes virtual interaction for real-world, person-to-person communication. In both

performances, the user interacts with virtual versions of economically exploited communities. In

Phone Story, this engagement vacillates as the user plays characters that prop up systems of

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oppression and characters who are exploited by these systems. In contrast, *Virtual Homeless*

situates the passerby as the agent of change—with the power to alter the life of a homeless

person. For both projects, I consider how placing the spectator in these specific roles

reveals certain problematic assumptions about the agency of both the player/passerby and the

communities being discussed.

Duncombe argues that progressives could learn something from "spectacular capitalism"

and particularly how "its crafted fantasies and stimulated desires—speaks to something deep and

real within us" (16). Baz Kershaw echoes this belief, arguing that the spectacle "has become a

fabulously flexible force for change … [that] always seems to transform the human, however

conceived, into something more or less than itself" ("Curiosity" 593). However, Duncombe

warns that in co-opting the spectacular as a tool for social change, progressives need to transform

it into something new. Otherwise, they run the risk of reinscribing dominant beliefs or closing

off options for everyday citizens. In investigating these two examples, I consider this potential

for reaffirming inequalities alongside new strategies for engaging users in social causes.

"Don't Try to Stop the Progress": Examining Activism and Agency in *Phone Story*

On 17 March 2010 Tian Yu, a nineteen year-old Foxconn employee, jumped from the

roof of a Foxconn worker's residence in Shenzhen, China. She was just one of at least seventeen

Foxconn employees who jumped off of tall buildings in an attempt to take their own lives

between January and April 2010.[50] While most succeeded in their attempts, Tian Yu was among

the few who survived. Permanently paralyzed from the waist down, the teenager claimed

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[50] The numbers vary in different reports. This is likely due to Foxconn's secretive nature and unwillingness to disclose information to the news media.

afterwards that she had jumped because of discrimination and the withholding of wages from the company, which manufactures Apple's iPhones and electronic products for Amazon, Blackberry, Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo (Chakrabortty). Other survivors and employees have since come forward with stories of illegal overtime and terrible working conditions, from seventy hour workweeks to rules that forbid workers from talking to one another (Moore).

Following her suicide attempt, Tian Yu returned to her home village in the Hubei province where she began to make slippers. After journalist Chen Yuanzhong reported on it, her story quickly went viral, first within China—where Yu gained thousands of blog followers and sold out of her slippers—and then internationally. Jack Linchuan Qiu, a digital media scholar who visited Tian Yu in her village, argues that while Yu was dehumanized by the global network of digital goods manufacturing, this same cycle contributed to the distribution of her experience and ability to reach large audiences even from a remote area. In reference to her story, he claims:

> networks of technology and social connectivity are not always instruments for the goals of network enterprise and the network state, be they profit maximization or power consolidation. The internet and mobile phone—including the iPhone—are also tools for empowerment, alternative grassroots movements and the re-making of network labor. (186)

This tension—between the iPhone as activist tool and the product of global inequalities—is also at the heart of Molleindustria and Yes Lab's *Phone Story* (2011), a phone application whose profits went to Tian Yu.

The *Phone Story* application was released on 9 September 2011—a year after the Foxconn suicides made headline news—and put this issue of ethics and human rights at the

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centre of a mobile game. The game follows the creation, consumption and destruction of smartphones while an automated voice gives context to this process and guides the user—whom it refers to as the "consumer." The application explicitly highlights the mobile phone's activist potential while also interrogating its complicity in the dark sides of globalization. In my analysis of this application, I investigate the relationship between its ironic tone and pedagogical goals. I argue that the application—which raised money through a download fee—offers a novel form of digital fundraising and points to the potential of digital games to connect citizens to social causes. However, I also consider the application's limitations, particularly in terms of player agency and its relation to the game's progressive political goals.

Within four days of its release Apple removed the *Phone Story* application from its store, claiming it violated the App Store guidelines against showing violence to children and having "excessively objectionable or crude content" (phonestory.org).[51] The former accusation refers to the first level, in which users act as soldiers who force children to extract coltan in the Congo. The game uses finger swiping on the phone screen for all of its levels. In this one, the player uses their finger to move two soldiers to child labourers who have stopped working due to exhaustion. When a soldier reaches a child who is not working, they point a gun at them and yell, which makes the character continue mining. The player has to keep the children working at a steady

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[51] In addition to Apple's claims that the game showed child abuse and crudeness, in the outline of why they removed the game, the company noted "Apps that include the ability to make donations to recognized charitable organizations must be free" and "the collection of donations must be done via a web site in Safari or an SMS." However, the game makers were quick to point out that there was no in-app fundraising; the money made from the application cost was intended to go to no-profit organizations. At that point in September, however, none of this money had even been used for charitable purposes. After Apple banned the application, the makers put it in the Android store. The Android market at the time was substantially smaller than Apple's App store market, so profits ended up being fairly modest (just over six thousand dollars). Because of the small profit, the game's makers decided to give the money to an individual instead of a charitable group and ended up sending all of it to Tian Yu (phonestory.org).

pace in order to pass the level. While the player engages with the game, the voiceover gives extensive context to this issue, noting that coltan is in most electronics and the majority of the world's coltan comes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where military groups use prisoners of war (including children) to mine the mineral. At the end of this description, the voice implicates the player noting "Directly or not, we are all involved in this complex illegal traffic."

It is unclear whether the other three Phone Story levels are "crude" or "excessively objectionable" to Apple, as they did not specify which parts of the game they had problems with. The second level addresses the Foxconn suicides. In the level, the player has to save workers who are attempting to commit suicide by jumping off a factory building. The game does not directly implicate Foxconn, but during the level the voice notes that the phone the game is being played on "was assembled in China inside a factory as big as a city." The figures jumping wear white jumpsuits and hats—which mimics the Foxconn worker uniform—and the voice mentions that many workers at this unnamed plant committed suicide after being treated inhumanely. The gameplay has the player swipe to move two figures carrying a life net between them and try to place it below each jumper. When the net breaks a fall, the jumper survives. In order to complete the level, the player needs to save most of the jumpers. While ostensibly moving the player role from an aggressor complicit in inhumane labour practices to someone helping those abused by systems of globalization, the game may suggest something more sinister. In the wake of the 2010 suicides, Foxconn installed safety nets between high-rise buildings at its Shenzhen complex. The game voiceover even notes "we addressed this issue by installing suicide prevention nets." So, while appearing to help the workers, the player actually acts as a proxy for the company.

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The player is again implicated as part of this global system in the third level, which moves the action away from the creation of phones to their consumption. The level takes place outside a shopping mall where a character is throwing new phones to consumers. The player acts as these consumers and continually has to catch a phone before crashing into the mall's glass doors. This is the first level that directly addresses the player's consumption habits. The voice claims that, after it was assembled in China:

> You purchased this phone. It was new and sexy. You waited for it for months. No evidence of its troubling past was visible. Did you really need it? Of course you did. We invested a lot of money to instil this desire in you. You were looking for something that could signal your status, your dynamic lifestyle, your unique personality. Just like everyone else.

This brief but biting description of the mobile phone user further co-mingles the player's lifestyle choices with the abuses and traumas of those who they are physically removed from.

The final level addresses e-waste. The voice tells the player that when a new model is introduced, they will get rid of their current phone. At this point it will be "recycled," which for most electronics actually means it will be shipped to another country and salvaged for materials at an e-waste disposal site "using methods that are harmful to both human health and the environment." The level takes place at such a site and again intertwines the phone's very existence with human rights and environmental abuses outside of North America and Europe. Four types of e-waste roll down a conveyor belt. The player has to swipe each type into the correct area for its disposal. At each of the four stations, an overworked character places the piece of e-waste into a bin or fire.

The form of satirical activism at play in *Phone Story* reflects the ongoing tactics of its makers, the Yes Lab and Molleindustria. The Yes Lab is an incubator that brings together activists for training sessions and collaborative actions. The Lab is run by the Yes Men, a duo of activist pranksters who go by the pseudonyms Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno. Bichlbaum (real name Jacques Servin) has a history of using gaming to critique social practices. When employed by a gaming company in 1996, Servin worked on SimCopter, an add-on that allowed SimCity 2000 players to fly a helicopter around the cities they created in the game. Without the company's permission, Servin created a number of male characters wearing Speedos, which he dubbed, "male bimbos" or "himbos" (qtd. in Bogost, *How* 38). The himbos would suddenly appear in the game and move through the city kissing one another. Servin extends this brand of unexpected satire in his ongoing work as Bichlbaum. Just like *Phone Story*, the Yes Men's activist actions poach off of globalization processes and mainstream capitalist culture in order to critique from within. I discuss the The Yes Men's style of invisible theatre and culture jamming in the introduction, noting how their hoaxes have frequently fooled the mass media. The duo send out announcements and press releases while posing as government officials or employees of major corporations, in the hope that members of the media will report on their actions. In the introduction, I outline how Servin once appeared on the BBC as a DOW Chemical representative claiming that DOW was going to fully compensate victims of the disastrous Union Carbide chemical leak in India and how, after Hurricane Katrina, the duo both posed as agents of the American government's Department of Housing and Urban Development who claimed the agency would immediately reopen existing public housing projects rather than demolishing them.

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Both of these actions were part of the Yes Men's ongoing use of the tactic Amber Day calls 'identity nabbing'. Through pretending to be representatives of major corporations and the government, the Yes Men get access to public forums and the mass media, and are able to subvert mainstream messages. Day describes this tactic as a form of embodied irony as it relies on the tensions "between their performed identities in the moment, their actual statements, and the implied meaning behind them" (147). This tactic is also referred to as identity correction by The Yes Men, which more pointedly addresses the politics behind their work as they attempt to alter the behaviour of major political players and economic actors through simulation (theyesmen.org). While this simulation is normally physical, through their own embodied performances, for *Phone Story* it is a digital simulation as the voiceover identifies with the forces making mobile phones and concentrating on profits over humane working conditions. The identity that is "nabbed" is that of the phone itself, which is made to be aware of its own problematic origins.

The technique of digital identity correction is also a part of Molleindustria's repertoire. While often described as a radical gaming collective, Molleindustria is actually the work of one man, Paolo Pedercini. He is a professor at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Art and has been making free, online games under the Molleindustria name since 2003. Pedercini describes his games as "homeopathic remedies to the idiocy of mainstream entertainment." They vary in form and content, but usually require only rudimentary gaming skills and reflect progressive politics. Apple is not the first company to be skewered by Molleindustria. In *The McDonald's Video Game* (2006), players must manage the restaurant's global supply chain by balancing the needs at a farm area, a local franchise and the company's head offices. The 2008 Molleindustria

game *Oligarchy* similarly skewers big business by taking on the oil industry. Players can drill at various locations around the world and try to make a profit. The more profit the player makes, the more of the world is destroyed. Like *Phone Story*, in order to win at the game, the environment and people within the game have to suffer.

Ian Bogost describes Molleindustria's games as "anti-advergames" that "censure or disparage a company rather than support it" (*Persuasive* 29). Often these games also fall into what Bogost describes as "newsgames", which act like "the videogame equivalent of editorial cartoons" (*How* 100). Like the Yes Men, Molleindustria achieves this critique through mimicking corporate practices; however, in the games the players do the identity nabbing, taking on the role of major corporations and people who support them in various ways. Molleindustria puts players in these positions in order to reveal systemic inequalities that prop up major corporations while negatively impacting on local populations and environments. In *The McDonald's Video Game, Oligarchy* and *Phone Story*, the player takes on multiple roles and travels to various locales connected with the production of fast food, oil and mobile phones respectively. Moving to different locations around the world shows players the vast networks of relations that build up particular industries. The *Phone Story* game-play is less open than the other two games, as the player moves to a new location in each level. In the other games, players can move to another area of production whenever they want, which gives players more freedom, but means that they might not learn about each area of the issue.

After Apple banned *Phone Story*, Pedercini told *The New York Times* that the narrative about the project had shifted. He claims, "The story was meant to generate some discussion about hardware and our socioeconomic impact as consumers of electronics. But now it's

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becoming more about market censorship" (qtd. in Wortham). In my analysis of *Phone Story*, I turn the focus back to the goal of "[generating] some discussion" about the impact consumers have on global inequalities and consider what kind of effects this form of digital activism has. On the *Phone Story* website, the creators encourage users to keep the application on their mobile device "as a reminder of your impact." This statement reveals how *Phone Story* works as a form of hypermediacy. J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin define hypermediacy as "a style of visual representation whose goal is to *remind* the viewer of the medium" (272, my emphasis). In *Phone Story*, this "reminder" goes beyond just the fact that the game is being played on a mobile phone and delves into the material conditions of this medium. The hypermedial aspects of the game work to create awareness about the violent and destructive forces behind each player's phone.

Like *The McDonald's Game* and *Oligarchy*, players mimic practices of corporations and consumers in order to advance in the game. The transfer of these practices to a virtual space raises the question of what the player is supposed to get out of re-performing capitalism— and its corrupt and oppressive sides. In my own experience playing the game, I had a profound sense of discomfort in enacting the various roles. At the same time, I wanted to continue in order to advance the game and see what all the levels held. I also found aspects of the game fun to play, even though I was aware of the violence and oppression resulting from my virtual actions. While I feel guilty for finding fun in the gameplay, this is not an abnormal reaction. Video games like *Grand Theft Auto* and *Call of Duty* have been critiqued for their unrestrained violence and questionable morals. However, Duncombe suggests that this is not a productive mode through which to critique games—particularly ones that are massively popular. He argues that progressives tend to be overly critical of violence and injustice in video games, noting instead

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that "not all fun has to be politically correct" (76). He believes our desire to engage in these activities reflects how complicated human nature is:

> Whether a manifestation of primal instinct or the result of growing up in a violent, sexist, and racist society, we have desires that are, well, less than desirable. It does no good to condemn these feelings, insisting that people must not think bad thoughts. This way leads to hypocrisy and self-deception and a politics obsessed with purity and authenticity. More to the point, it results in a politics with very few adherents. We have to make peace with our desires—violent, racist, and sexist as they may be—and find safe expression for them. (76)

Duncombe believes that, rather than simply dismissing violent and problematic games, progressives can appropriate these desires and repurpose them for activist causes (77). Ian Bogost has a similar reaction to violent game critiques, noting that "trivializing death and torture through abstraction is far more troublesome than attenuating it through ghastly representation" (*How* 140).

Following Bogost and Duncombe's logic, Molleindustria and the Yes Lab take the dark desire to play violent and oppressive characters to an extreme. Having characters that engage with the production and destruction of mobile phones makes *Phone Story* a form of post-Brechtian performance that unveils power relations at play in manufacturing goods. While Bertolt Brecht developed his concepts of political theatre in the first half of the twentieth-century, his belief in performance's potential to destabilize seemingly normal practices and uncover inequalities remains germane in a globalized world. Tactics such as hacktivism and identity correction are post-Brechtian in the sense that they reveal unequal power relations and

unethical practices within government and big business. Shannon Jackson argues that with

globalization, this kind of performance has shifted as artists can no longer claim to be removed

from these global practices or the technologies that maintain them. Thus, contemporary post-

Brechtian practices acknowledge this embeddedness in the very social structures under

examination (148). She believes a "globalizing post-Brechtian theatre . . . [should] also be

skeptical of any theatre that imagined itself outside or uncorrupted by the social structures it tried

to question" (147-8). This approach transforms Brecht's distancing by situating creators and

audiences as part of systems of globalization that they cannot break out of. *Phone Story* is an

example of such an approach, as the user is addressed as part of the system, while the automated

voice identifies with the corporations selling mobile phones. *Phone Story* also illustrates how

post-Brechtian performance tactics formally diverge from Brecht's approach. In the game, the

players immerse themselves rather than distancing themselves from the characters. This excess

relates back to the game's hypermediacy, which "reminds" the player of the medium they engage

in by overwhelming them.

Each of the playable characters in *Phone Story* is—like Bertolt Brecht's characters—a

product of the societal circumstances that surround them. Brecht argues that having characters

clearly marked by external forces:

> [makes] it harder for our spectator to identify himself with them. He cannot
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> simply feel: that's how I would act, but at most can say: if I had lived under those
>
> circumstances. And if we play works dealing with our own time as though they
>
> were historical, then perhaps the circumstances under which he himself acts will
>
> strike him as equally odd; and this is where the critical attitude begins. (190)

In *Phone Story*, players are most likely to identify with the consumers, who rush to the mall for the latest phone. Like Brechtian theatre, the game situates these characters within a larger system, through which they are encouraged to desire whatever the next advance in mobile phone technology is. Within this context, their behaviour comes across as inhumane and selfish, which complicates a simple unproblematic identification between the player and this character. Instead, the player is meant to find this behaviour "odd", or defamiliarized.

Although giving the player the option of reproducing globalization and capitalism emphasizes their complicity in these systems—and the "oddness" of their own behaviour—there is no opening for the player to break out of this repetition and enact a change, no way for them to perform in a way that subverts the system shown. A key part of Brecht's understanding of the political potential of performance is its lingering effects. Brecht argues that political performances should point to the possibility of change—a belief that continues to be promoted in the work of performance scholars like L.M Bogad, Amber Day, Jill Dolan and Baz Kershaw. Brecht notes that providing some possibility—even if it is just a small spark—for change "leaves … spectators productively disposed even after the spectacle is over" (205). This belief aligns with Duncombe's argument that citizens want to feel like political players with agency. This sense of agency is part of why Duncombe believes video games have become so popular—they offer open-ended worlds in which players can make decisions and act out exceptional behaviours in a virtual space. He notes that while citizens feel removed from contemporary political systems, "in video games this participation is taken to a different level as the game itself changes with the participation of the spectator … In video games, unlike almost all other mass media, the spectator also becomes a producer" (73). In his call for activists to take on aspects of gaming in

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order to create "progressive spectacles", he notes that they too can facilitate situations open to "player modification" (73), so that citizens can engage more directly with issues.

Unlike the type of gaming Duncombe discusses, *Phone Story* has limited possibilities for the player. Players continue to play until they do not complete a level. If they fail, the game goes back to the start and the automated voice tells them "You didn't meet the goal. Don't try to stop the progress." This gives the player only two options: play and reproduce the system or fail and never see the next level.[52] While the in-game narrative works as a pedagogical tool, informing users about their phone's own troubling background, there is little to leave the user "productively disposed" to make a change. The game never moves beyond showing what is behind the phone; it never asks the player to change their behaviour or return their phone. Instead, *Phone Story* shows the process of making mobile phones as an unending cycle. When the player completes the four levels, the game returns to the beginning, but the gameplay speeds up making it much more difficult to complete. The game continues to loop at faster and faster speeds; the voice claims this shows that "the cycle continues" and calls this continual repetition the "Obsolescence mode." While the game evokes the ironic tone of the Yes Men's identity correction performances and includes various "nabbed" identities, the correction side is missing, as it is unclear what steps can be taken to alter any of the scenes shown. The Yes Lab website describes the game as "a simplified virtual tour of a world that doesn't want to be changed"—a description that reveals the limited scope of the game world.

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[52] Gabriele Ferri notes that for the Molleindustria game *Oligarchy* players can work against this reproduction of globalization. He claims, "to avoid negative outcomes, players need to disobey the game's voice . . . by not fulfilling genre-related expectations and playing to 'lose'" (176). This is possible due to the open-world nature of the game. Both *Oligarchy* and *The McDonald's Game* let players move to different areas and make choices about the resources they are using, which makes them closer to Duncombe's description of progressive games that allow for player agency to impact on the gameplay.

In his 2001 book *Perform or Else*, Jon McKenzie notes that business has taken on the concept of performance as a way to define human value. He claims we need to constantly perform our productivity, "or else" we will be "fired, redeployed, institutionally marginalized" (7). Shannon Steen connects McKenzie's argument to the Foxconn suicides. While acknowledging that calling suicide performance can risk reducing the act into an art object, she notes that the upsurge of suicides in the Foxconn industrial complex "stage[s] a preemptive exposure of the false choice between death by overwork or the economic death implied by 'perform or else'" (7). Like Duncombe, she latches onto the idea of the "spectacular" when discussing the suicides and argues that their spectacular nature was unintentionally strengthened when the company erected the suicide prevention nets (7). Both the suicides and the nets make normally invisible labour and abuses visible to the public. This "staging" also places the body at the centre of the imperative to perform. Maurya Wickstrom notes the body is absent from McKenzie's formulation of performance, which highlights the self as shaped by discourse. Wickstrom believes that McKenzie's arguments about performance rely on a subject with "no intrinsic nature, no defining attributes under or prior to those produced and continuously redefined … through cultural and historical processes and imperatives" *(Performing* 122). The Foxconn suicides resist this omission as the reclaiming of the workers' rights to their own bodies highlights how the "perform or else" drive shapes—is shaped by—historically and culturally contingent bodies.

Phone Story acts as an additional way of making the workers' conditions—along with other troubling practices of the smartphone industry—visible. However, unlike the suicides themselves, this intervention does not offer a break from the "perform or else" impulse. The

game makers offer virtual bodies, which act as stand-ins for those negatively affected by these practices. But the relationship between these virtual bodies and the player is ambiguous. By inviting players to reproduce the productive drive of capitalist culture, the game models the problem but not how progressive actions can intervene. Unlike the examples of video game interventions discussed in Chapter Two, failure cannot be integrated into the game to subvert the norm, intervening in the productive drive of capitalist culture. If users are already part of the system through the past purchase of their mobile phone, are they now just expected to feel guilty? Are there ways to develop player agency beyond making a donation?

Reviews of the game reflect on the game's restrictions. While many reviewers agree that the game makers want to ameliorate the horrible conditions surrounding smartphone creation and consumption, they are also critical of how the makers go about this task. Chris Nitz of *Android Rundown* argues the game lacks "substance" as "The political statements it tries to drive home have made news headlines before, and it certainly will not be changing the world." The latter claim is also reflected in several of the reviews on *Phone Story*'s Android page, where users claim that all of the information presented is already easily available on news sites and Wikipedia. Other user reviews complain that the political content of the game—which is relayed to the user through the voiceover—distracts from the game play. Negative critiques also reflect how the game's satirical angle can get misread. L.M. Bogad notes that—following Linda Hutcheon—irony is subjective and transideological; thus, it can be interpreted in unexpected ways (11). User Juggernautxlc's comments reflect this misfiring: "It was a bizzare [*sic*] game. I thought it was weird that you could download this to your android [*sic*] when it was basically saying if you bought a smartphone, then you were torturing children in Africa" ("Phone Story").

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Although the game itself does not offer solutions or even clear ways for users to make a small change, *Phone Story*'s website (phonestory.org) provides some information about future steps. A summary of each level is accompanied by links to NGOs and news articles, as well as a section outlining "What can be done?" However, these potential changes are big picture and do not directly address where the individual can fit in. For example, for the issue of suicides at manufacturing plants, the site notes "Companies can be required to adopt innovative workforce training programs" and for the eWaste level that "The industry can adopt a certification that recognizes responsible recyclers." These suggestions relate to the Yes Men's tactic of identity correction as, when they impersonate corporate or government officials, they enact the possibility that these entities *could* behave in particular ways. For example, the DOW chemical prank opened up the possibility of DOW taking responsibility for the situation in Bhopal. As I note in the Introduction, while critics of ironic interventions like *Phone Story* often claim they lack sincerity, Amber Day argues that this type of performance creates an "ironic authenticity" that is politically engaged and creates "tools in the hope for change" (32). The *Phone Story* site extends this utopian frame by offering possibilities for change in the world. However, the broad nature of the listed goals, which require changes on the part of big business and governments, remain distant from individual players, who may want ways to engage beyond donating a small amount and learning about the issues.

The website—along with the game's focus on a world that "doesn't want to be changed"—closes off the potential for what Wini Breines terms "prefigurative politics" by offering alternatives that do little to change current relations. Cynthia Kaufman, following Breines, defines prefigurative politics as "[acting] right now as if we were living in the better

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world we are fighting for" (277). This means working on progressive goals through systems and institutions that follow the form of these very goals. Prefigurative politics contrasts with forms of progressive politics that focus on the future—to a utopia full of more equal relations—but that fail to address more immediate ways that equality can be achieved. Kaufman calls this form of activism working with a "vanguardist framework" that focuses on "any means necessary to achieve that change" (278). These means include tactics that reproduce inequalities and go against the very values attempting to be achieved.

Phone Story excels at connecting form and content in order to implicate mobile phone users in an entertaining way; however, there are many ways the game could be more interactive and allow for direct engagement from its users. In addition, the unclear goal behind *Phone Story* raises the question of how a game—rather than reproducing capitalism—could challenge this drive to production, the notion that we need to "perform or else." While *Phone Story* shows how digital tools can engage players in activist causes and make this drive to perform visible, it does not use the potential of virtuality to imagine not being part of the problem and how to alter—or even take apart—oppressive labour practices. Yet, it opens up the potential of digital worlds as spaces for rethinking the relationship of self and other, and self and environment—a potential that will hopefully be taken up in future apps and games that connect users to global issues.

Projecting the *Virtual Homeless*

In the fall of 2011 citizens around the world flocked to public spaces as part of the Occupy movement. Parks and squares—including New York's Zuccotti Park, Los Angeles' Pershing Square and Toronto's St. James Park—had a twenty-four hour Occupy presence, with

many Occupiers sleeping in tents in these green spaces. For most Occupiers, sleeping and living in public spaces was a radical act—outside of their normal routine—that highlighted economic inequalities between urban citizens (among other issues). However, the act of sleeping in public space was not out of the ordinary for many homeless drawn to the Occupy movement. Barbara Ehrenreich argues that the Occupy experience led to an empathetic relationship between non-homeless Occupiers and the homeless in these spaces:

> What occupiers from all walks of life are discovering, at least every time they contemplate taking a leak, is that to be homeless in America is to live like a fugitive. The destitute are our own native-born 'illegals,' facing prohibitions on the most basic activities of survival. They are not supposed to soil public space with their urine, their feces, or their exhausted bodies. Nor are they supposed to spoil the landscape with their unusual wardrobe choices or body odors. They are, in fact, supposed to die, and preferably to do so without leaving a corpse for the dwindling public sector to transport, process, and burn.

Ehrenreich goes on to note that these discoveries have led to some productive relationships, with several local Occupy movements integrating issues of homelessness into their dialogues. In Atlanta, after being evicted from Woodruff park, Occupiers moved to an unused area of a homeless shelter facing closure. The shelter donated the space to Occupy Atlanta, who then fixed it up during their occupation.

While impossible to gauge the number of homeless who slept at Occupy sites in late 2011 and early 2012, media articles trace a number of homeless Occupiers throughout sites in the United States. For example, for a *New York Times* article in October 2011, writer Adam

Nagourney talked to homeless Occupy participants in Los Angeles, Denver and Atlanta. Nagourney claims that the ongoing precariousness of their living situations led many homeless to engage less with the movement's larger goals than other Occupiers. Instead, they came for the immediate relief provided by food, shared shelter amenities and safety in the parks. In contrast to the Occupy Atlanta example, not all Occupiers were comfortable with the ways homeless people were engaging with the movement. The belief that homeless Occupiers lacked care for the overall movement led to tensions at Occupy sites. Nagourney spoke to many Occupiers who were against homeless participation. Bob Titley, of Occupy Nashville, claims that the homeless are "keeping people away: It distracts a lot of energy away from the issues we're fighting for when we're just managing life in the camp. A lot of women felt unsafe camping out at night." Hero Vincent from Occupy Wall Street has a similar reaction, noting, "It's bad for most of us who came here to build a movement. We didn't come here to start a recovery institution" (qtd. in Nagourney). Of course, not all Occupiers had such a negative response and many happily worked alongside the homeless in these cities to fight for a more just and equal society. However, the tensions between the homeless and non-homeless at various Occupy sites reflects an ongoing stigma towards homelessness, even within progressive movements. Many Occupiers saw the act of living in public space as a form of radical performance; however, thinking about the act in this way discounts the fact that this is an everyday form of living for many people.

Often reactions to the visibly homeless mirror Duncombe's description of how the public responds to 'chuggers'. People walking down the street work to avoid eye contact or close physical proximity to panhandlers or other homeless. Though unlike chuggers, these individuals are not being paid to be on the street, asking for money from passersby. While often visible in

city streets, these reactions make homeless people invisible to the larger public. Diana Taylor

terms this act of willful public blindness "percepticide." While Taylor discusses percepticide in

the context of totalitarian regimes, the term is applicable to seemingly more mundane situations

in which there is a "self-blinding of the general population" (*Disappearing* 123). In April 2014,

the New York City Rescue Mission tested just how widespread this percepticide reaches as part

of their campaign "Make Them Visible." The Mission (along with an advertising firm and

production company) created a video that followed different people walking down a street in

New York. The participants thought they were taking part in a documentary about living in New

York City. From a hidden camera, the individuals were recorded walking past a number of

visibly homeless without looking at them. However, the people they passed were not actually

homeless, but members of the participant's own family, dressed to look like they lived on the

street. The video opens with the question "Have the homeless become so invisible that we

wouldn't notice our own family members living on the street?" In the events that follow, the

answer appears to be yes. Only one person—who was not included in the final video due to their

extreme reaction—recognized their family. The video features five participants, all of whom

walk past their families and only discover they did so when shown a video of their walk down

the street.

The goal of this campaign—as stated in the video—is to "change how you see the

homeless." However, while the New York City Rescue Mission video pointed to the problem of

percepticide in relation to homelessness, the only homeless shown were actually not homeless at

all. In addition, the main goal of the project was to create a viral video, which points out the

problem but does not directly implicate anyone other than the initial participants.[53] An earlier

intervention, from 4-6 March 2010, also used digital tools to connect the public to the issue of

percepticide. In this project, another New York based group dedicated to homeless issues,

Pathways to Housing, aimed to involve members of the general public more directly in

combating percepticide. The group works on a "housing first" model in their activism around

homeless with mental health issues. They believe in acquiring housing for homeless individuals

and then working on providing them with other kinds of support—including medical care and

help finding employment.

Working with the digital advertising and design agencies Sarkissian Mason and

GoGorilla, Pathways to Housing created an interactive, site-specific project in seven downtown

locations. Each evening, a team went to these sites, which included the busy area outside the

Trader Joe's on 14th Street, and set up a projection. The projected image shows a man laying

down, shivering on the street. Next to him is a line of text: "To get this man off the streets text

'HOME' to 56512." If a passerby texts 'HOME' to this number, a door appears and the man walks

through it. After the man has left, writing appears next to the closed door—a link to Pathways to

Housing's website and "Donate $5 to help find homes for those with mental illness. Text 'PATH'

to 20222." The person who sent the text also gets a message with the option to donate five

dollars by texting back. This urban intervention was made possible by a number of technology

platforms. The laptop and projector were run out of a truck with a generator. The image changes

instantaneously as the text sends a signal to the laptop in the truck (which is connected to the

projector). The ability to provide a donation by text was run through the remote platform Give

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[53] The project also makes assumptions about the link between visibility and power—something that I will unpack further in my discussion of *Virtual Homeless* below.

By Cell.[54]

GoGorilla's CFO and COO, Sasha Engel claims the intervention was effective through its

tactic of surprise and its low entry bar for participation. She believes it was an "effective way to

get Pathways' message across about how little it takes to improve the life of a homeless person"

(qtd. in Fitzgerald). This sentiment was echoed by Pathways to Housing's chief executive, Sam

Tsemberis. He believes that while people normally look away from the homeless on the street,

the installation made engaging with the homeless safe and simple (Wallace). Like the "Make

them Visible" project, the *Virtual Homeless* intervention was primarily a way to combat

percepticide surrounding homelessness. This goal is front and centre in the promotional video

made of the intervention. The video opens with the following text: "Nearly 40,000 are homeless

in NYC. And no one cares." Then, as the video shows various passersby interacting with the

projection by texting, a voiceover claims, "To most people on the street, the homeless are

invisible. We sought to change that." Although visibility was again at the forefront of this

campaign, the project also aimed to fundraise through digital means. Over the three nights, more

than two hundred people texted 'HOME' to the number (Fitzgerald). Of these, over thirty went on

to donate. During the campaign, Pathways to Housing noticed increased engagement on their

digital platforms, including their website and Facebook page (Wallace). Information about the

project also circulated on news sites and blogs. As Pathways to Housing is an organization with

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[54] This intervention came soon after the first notable, large-scale use of fundraising through text, which occurred after the January 2010 Haiti earthquake. In the aftermath of the quake, the American Red Cross enabled giving by text. All cell phone users had to do was text 'HAITI' to 90999 to donate ten dollars to relief efforts. In less than forty-eight hours, the Red Cross had raised over ten million dollars (Harris). Since 2010, forms of e-giving have become widespread, with charity campaigns frequently having a text code for easy giving. A study by Blackbaud, a nonprofit digital provider, notes that while charitable giving grew 4.9% overall in the United States in 2013, online giving grew 13.5% (Sharf). This disparity reveals the growing impact of digital fundraising on the sector as a whole.

ongoing campaigns and community engagement, this publicity likely helped their own visibility

both online and within the community in New York City.[55]

In *Virtual Homeless*, the concept of visibility relates to how we move in shared public

spaces. The piece's site-specificity co-mingles its form and content, as it addresses those who

live on the very streets the intervention takes place in. The strong connection between form and

content in *Virtual Homeless* means that the work's score does not necessarily translate to other

topics with the same effect. GoGorilla collaborated on a similar project in 2011—this time with

the Salvation Army of Chicago. This campaign centred around child hunger. In place of the man

sleeping on the street, the projection showed a child holding an empty plate. Like *Virtual*

Homeless, passersby were prompted to engage through text next to the projected child. This

time, the message read, "See what happens when you erase hunger. Text FEED." If someone

texted 'FEED' to the number, the projection would change to show the child smiling, with a plate

full of food. They would then get a text back with the option to donate ten dollars to the

Salvation Army via text.[56]

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[55] The project's form shares similarities with visual artist Gary Hill's immersive installation *Tall Ships* (1992). This work projected the images of sixteen people onto a dark corridor. These figures moved and grew when spectators entered the space, only becoming life-sized when a spectator fully approached them.

[56] The Salvation Army projections were also shown in Toronto. This form has also been developed through The Illuminator project, which started during Occupy Wall Street. The project has two vehicles outfitted with projectors. The Illuminator interventions are usually large-scale projections and sometimes have an interactive component. The group's goal is "To smash the myths of the information industry and shine a light on the urgent issues of our time" (The Illuminator). These "issues" range from climate change to poverty and limitations on civil liberties. Interventions include projecting images from the Bangladesh garment factory collapse onto the side of the Lincoln Center during New York Fashion Week and a projection that said "Koch=Climate Chaos" on the Metropolitan Museum of Art when it opened Koch Plaza. The latter event led to the arrest of two project members. While The Illuminator covers many different social issues, it frequently addresses how shared public spaces are used, which makes it more in line with the *Virtual Homeless* campaign than the Salvation Army one. This projection format was also used used in *Test #1: Cages*, a guerrilla art intervention that took place at the same time as Toronto's Nuit Blanche in 2014. In this piece, projections showed police footage of temporary holding cages used to lock up G20 protesters in 2010. The images were projected on locations where the G20 protests and arrests took place. Many images focused on the arrest of Gabriel Jacobs, a paraplegic panhandler, who brought a human rights claim against the Toronto police for his mistreatment.

While the Salvation Army project took over space in a similar way, the issue of child hunger and the image's aesthetics—with the text taking up significantly more space than the image of the child—made the project feel more like a billboard. In contrast, *Virtual Homeless* had a life size image of a man—a spectre meant to startle and shake a passerby out of their normal routine. The performance mixes reality and theatre, as people walking down the street notice a variant on an image they may ignore at other times. As I noted in Chapter Two, site-specific performances can defamiliarize shared spaces by breaking with their quotidian uses. *Virtual Homeless*, however, actually highlights the sidewalk's ongoing use by the homeless rather than pointing to a new or altered use of the space. Unlike the examples of historical sound walks discussed in Chapter Two, the intervention focuses on the site's current character and the relations at play between various types of urban citizens within it. It also contrasts with these sound walks and with *Phone Story* as participants do not have to download any content before experiencing the performance. Instead, they can choose to engage with it in the moment—while in the midst of their everyday activities. Just as homelessness was a part of the site-specificity of various Occupy sites, it is a part of the ongoing social fabric of various urban sites in New York City. By placing a virtual body in the space, and offering a quick, novel form of engagement, *Virtual Homeless* defamiliarizes the site for passersby—all while emphasizing an aspect of the site that is familiar to them.

Adding this layer to various public locations acknowledges ongoing, non-spectacular uses of urban sites through a form of spectacular intervention. In many ways, the project follows Duncombe's description of a re-imagination of the spectacular for progressive means. It has aspects that are participatory and demand the engagement of the public. It is also aspirational,

creating a dream that "[has] power to attract and inspire" (17). By reflecting something about the current state of homelessness in New York City, the project does "not cover over or replace reality and truth but perform[s] and amplif[ies] it" (17). However, the intervention also falls short of Duncombe's conception of a progressive spectacle that "values the input of everyone" as the substitution of the projection for the homeless subject takes the human lives at the centre of the issue out of the scene. Just like the "Make Them Visible" campaign—which had individuals encountering their own family members dressed as homeless—in the *Virtual Homeless* project there were no actual homeless people involved in the intervention. The promotional video for the *Virtual Homeless* project claims that the "headline prompts passersby to do what they normally never would—to actually interact with the homeless" (Lorenzo). However, while the projected image may be a recording of a homeless person—the promotional materials do not state whether the image is of an actor or not—the interaction is indirect, with no direct exchange between the homeless and the passerby. Though homeless people benefit from Pathways to Housing's ongoing efforts and the donations gained during the site-specific work, again they are separated from the action that connects publics to issues surrounding homelessness. This detachment highlights how interactivity does not necessarily lead to an equitable set of relations and raises questions about the nature of the exchange between a participant and a recorded image: Does the interactivity rely too much on an image that cannot talk back? Will the engagement in this project carry over to how a passerby interacts with homeless people on the street?

Both "Make Them Visible" and *Virtual Homeless* equate being seen with an increase in political power. This goal places value in the act of being looked at, even though the relationship between looker and looked at can be full of inequalities. Peggy Phelan argues that visual

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representation does not automatically give those who are normally underrepresented political influence. In upturning this assumption, Phelan points to the power dynamics between who is doing the looking and those who are looked at. She argues that looking at the other "becomes a cipher for the looking self" and so "Until the image of the other can be other-than a cipher for a looking self, calling for greater visibility of the under-represented will do nothing to improve the quality of our political or psychic imaginations" (26). The potentially unbalanced nature of this relationship is heightened in *Virtual Homeless* through the use of a recorded image that reacts to the actions of the person doing the looking. The focus is on the passerby as an active agent, with the power to better themselves by noticing the homeless and donating. This relationship, which depends on a clearly defined looker and object of the gaze, reinforces an image of homeless people as passive and fixes them as objects that can be removed from the streetscape through capitalist intervention.

While a fixed image, the projection does interact with the passerby. Philip Auslander notes that—while not actually "*a*live"—digital beings have a liveness that challenges notions of presence and interactivity. As they can react to audience input, these digital entities participate in the creation and direction of a work (*Liveness* 69-72). This notion of a digital presence as a form of participation is shared by other intermedial performance scholars, including Russel Fewster and Kurt Vanhoutte, and challenges the idea that mediated images are determinate. However, in contrast to Auslander, Vanhoutte's definition of intermedial presence goes beyond just participation. Vanhoutte believes that presence is "increasingly defined according to participation and *agency*" (45, my emphasis). In *Virtual Homeless*, although the digital body participates by reacting to the input of passersby, this digital entity has little agency and stays contained within a

single narrative. In the intervention, only those with the power—in the form of a mobile phone—can make a very specific kind of change.

Auslander also discusses how the novelty of new technologies can distract from content. When I first saw a video of the *Virtual Homeless* campaign, I had this kind of reaction, as I immediately wanted to know how the intervention worked and what specific technologies were being used. While Auslander's assertion that the screen always overtakes live bodies is problematic in its overarching claim, his belief that new forms of technology can mesmerize and shift focus away from other aspects of a work is useful in relation to *Virtual Homeless*. He states, "The audience's inevitable curiosity about how technical effects are achieved makes them centres of attention, an effect compounded by the ways such devices may reiterate the audience's experience of dominant media forms and appeal to the dominant modes of perception" *(Liveness* 41)*. This desire to know how the technologies work relates back to Bolter and Grusin's concept of hypermediacy, which emphasizes the existence of the interface rather than hiding it.[57] The novelty of the technology used in *Virtual Homeless* makes it an appealing project to engage with; however, it also has the potential to "appeal to the dominant modes of perception" as the passerby watches the virtual body, which can only act with input from the participant. This places the spectator-participant in a position of power as they can choose what happens next and are the primary economic player in the exchange.

As the digital entity represents a socially marginalized subject, the inequalities in this exchange raise important questions about how theatre for social change can work with digital

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[57] This contrasts with immediacy, which makes the interface "transparent" and thus creates an "immediate" relationship between the interface and user (24).

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tools. Following practitioners like Augusto Boal, theatre for social change practices situate the audience as active subjects who alter the course of the performance. Boal's emphasis on action is meant to shake the audience out of their passivity and into a politically engaged role. However, the nature this action takes does not necessarily lead to equitable relations. Maurya Wickstrom calls this inequality "the divide," which "separates those who go to do good from those who are the alleged beneficiaries of that effort" (*Performance* 20). In *Virtual Homeless*, this doing "good" is reduced to a one-way interaction—with monetary exchange—rather than a more open-ended form of interdependent communication.

Pathways to Housing's mandate puts housing first so that other aspects of aid can come more easily—such as help with employment and medical care. However, the *Virtual Homeless* intervention reduces this larger context to a more simple narrative of disappearance off the street, which implies that a permanent home is the goal of all homeless and that visibility is something all homeless seek (when in fact homelessness can also be about wanting to hide oneself). Wickstrom notes that such assumptions can contain subjects in a neoliberal framework. Discussing Travellers in Ireland, she argues that a "nomadic subjectivity" challenges neoliberal values (*Performance* 25). While Wickstrom focuses on the specific example of the Travellers, the emphasis on homing the homeless in *Virtual Homeless* has parallels to her discussion. Situating a home as a simple and homogenous solution reinforces neoliberal attitudes towards home ownership and stability, and also implies that complex social issues can be fixed by providing shelter and employment. This one size fits all approach problematically assumes that the homeless are a homogenous group, when in fact homeless people have many different motivations and desires. In addition, the project fails to address that it is impossible to know

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what homeless people want without their direct involvement.

While appearing to be about the relationship between passersby and the homeless, the intervention also appeals to a neoliberal mode of individualism. Jen Harvie cynically argues that new technologies frequently suppress communication by:

> isolating individuals into silos of blinkered attention to personal mobile communication devices. The kind of self-interest evident in that scenario is actively cultivated by dominant neoliberal capitalist ideologies which aggressively promote individualism and entrepreneurialism and pour scorn on anyone unfortunate to need to draw on the safety net of welfare support. (2)

On one level, *Virtual Homeless* works against this formulation as the participant is connected to issues of homelessness through their mobile device. However, situating the passerby as the individual agent of change reinforces a hierarchical, uneven relationship between those who live on the streets and those who just pass through them. Ironically, *Virtual Homeless* also ties the act of making visible to the act of disappearing, as once the passerby notices the homeless figure they can send a text that removes them from the space.[58] While this simple exchange has the potential to alter perceptions of homelessness, it only offers this one way to make a change—one that relies on a politics-as-is rather than addressing larger questions about inequalities. Like *Phone Story*, the intervention does not address politics prefiguratively. By reproducing a relationship in which the public can help homelessness from a distance—with the homeless body

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[58] In addition, issues like gender get sidelined. The digital proxy for the homeless is a projection of a male body. There is no female body in the projections. The use of a male body and the simplicity of the narrative brackets out questions of public safety, particularly in relation to gender. It is possible that some females do not engage with homeless men because of concerns for their own safety and that homeless women are not as prominent on city streets because they fear for their safety.

contained within a frame—the project creates a simple message about change that does not delve into the root causes of the issue.

My critiques of *Virtual Homeless* are not intended to close off the potential of digital tools to connect everyday citizens to issues like homelessness. Rather, in highlighting some of the issues that should be considered when creating this kind of digitally and socially engaged work, I hope to point to the potential of this form. By using new, novel technologies, projects like *Phone Story* and *Virtual Homeless* engage audiences in questions of social equality and justice. However, both projects are missing a direct engagement with the populations they address, which can be developed via the very digital tools they are already using. While not as flashy in its use of new technologies, Mark Horvath's Invisible People project has engaged with homeless populations in the United States, Canada and Europe for six years. This vlog series—which is available on the invisiblepeople.tv website and YouTube—also aims to create visibility for homeless people. Horvath was motivated to start the project because of his own personal history with homelessness. During the 1980s he was homeless in Los Angeles; after the 2008 recession he found himself again on the verge of becoming homeless (Sharples). At this time he had been working in television production, which had opportunities drying up. Horvath decided to use his production skills to bring attention to the issue of homelessness. He uses video to capture stories from homeless people—mostly in American cities—and then shares them online through the vlog.

Using similar language to the "Make them Visible" and *Virtual Homeless* creators, Horvath says the vlog aims "to make the invisible visible." However, in contrast with the other two projects, he also puts emphasis on starting a conversation around what is shown in the vlogs,

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noting "I hope these people and their stories connect with you and don't let go. I hope their conversations with me will start a conversation in your circle of friends" (qtd. in Horvath). He actively uses social media, including the project's Twitter account, to circulate the videos and encourages viewers to comment and share the videos further. Through the project, which is durational and open-ended, Horvath highlights a number of ongoing issues for homeless people, such as the lack of long term support provided by shelters, while providing them a way to communicate to a larger community. While Horvath is still at the centre of the work—asking questions in the videos, and editing and uploading—he is exploring the potential of digital tools to engage those who are not normally interviewed by mainstream news media or even acknowledged by the larger public in shared spaces. Much like Duncombe, Horvath sees engaging with existing visual culture as a way to carve out new spaces and fight for institutional changes. He notes:

> We live in a visual world. Where homeless services are missing the mark is [not] giving our homeless friends video cameras. If you're going to give them a smartphone make sure it has video and have them upload what their day is like. That's where you're going to see change. (qtd. in Sharples)

Horvath's belief in the power of smartphones and social media points to ways mobile tools may be used to engage citizens in social causes. Mobile media continue to become more ubiquitous around the world. As we tweet and message one another, perhaps we can also find ways to engage with those we do not already know to consider how relations may become more equitable and how spectacles can become more progressive.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CITY AS STAGE AND SCREEN:

RADICAL ENACTMENTS IN MOBILE MEDIA PERFORMANCE

August 2011. Edinburgh. I hold my phone to my ear as I watch the traffic roll down

Princes Street. I listen to the somewhat robotic male voice on the other end of the line. He directs

me to a street corner and tells me to look around. He states that nothing I see is real. It is all an

illusion. "Everything around you is just pretend. It's all made up. This town is paper thin. A

series of flats, a scattering of extras. And you." It turns out I am the centre of it all—the star of

my own film. Though I cannot see it, the voice tells me that a camera is following me, framing

all of my actions and taking close-ups of important moments. Watching my every move.

April 2015. Brooklyn. At Heather's bidding, we walk past the guard booth and look ahead

towards the bustling street. Her robotic voice tells us to crowd together and form a theatre

audience, for the gate ahead is a stage and the show is about to start. As we all look ahead

Heather informs us that this show's "stage design looks like a more or less busy street." She goes

on to point out different details the set designer has included, such as an American flag "moved

by what is supposed to look like wind," a grocery store and an ATM. Into this set comes cars—

"moved by invisible strings"—and actors who enter and exit from either side. We continue to

observe the street ahead and the people walking by—all while listening to Heather's descriptions

on our headphones. After asking us questions about the show we are seeing—whether we see

solos or a "group choreography," if we know who the director is, or who the choreographer is—

her thoughts turn darker. She wonders "Will these actors play their own death one day? Will they

even stage it themselves?" On this sombre note, she announces Act One is over. Now it is our

turn to go onstage.

These two moments—from Blast Theory's *A Machine to See With* and Rimini Protokoll's *Remote New York*—occurred in very different times and spaces. The first, shown as part of the Edinburgh Fringe, is a site-specific work that audience members experience mostly on their own. Created during the global recession, it takes this solo spectator on a cinematic journey, where they take on an active role as the anti-hero in a heist film. The second is for an audience of fifty. In it, the streets of New York become the stage and the audience become the players, moving through the space together as a "horde." Despite the different contexts, I found these two works align in a number of ways. Beyond having a similar audio-based form and urban site-specific settings, they share similar dramatic content. Nowhere was this more clear for me than in the two moments described above, when the audio distanced the audience from reality and encouraged them to see the world as a film and a theatre stage respectively. These scenes work as a kind of reverse Brechtian technique, pointing out ongoing performances of daily life.

This slipping of the cinematic and theatrical into the real reflects how these works are what Steve Bedford and Gabriella Giannachi term 'mixed reality performances'—intermedial performances that integrate mobile digital technologies, city spaces and interactive performance practices. Benford and Giannachi describe mixed reality performances as hybrids, in that they build on practices from different disciplines—including theatre, film and gaming—and rely on the simultaneous and sometimes jarring juxtaposition of the real and the virtual. Like the audio walks discussed in Chapter Two, mixed reality performances do not engage a spectator in a traditional theatre sense. Their scores frequently have spectators going out into urban spaces while interacting with asynchronous or synchronous mobile communications systems. Benford

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and Giannachi note that this participatory aspect means that they:

> are constructed not only culturally and socially, but also communally. They are
> the shifting and ephemeral product of an encounter between participants,
> expressing a temporary and in many ways emergent network of viewpoints . . .
> not only do these hybrid spaces constitute new and ever-changing territories for
> the exploration of mixed reality environments, they do also constitute new means,
> lenses, or paths to explore the context of everyday life itself. (47)

Thus Robin Nelson's term "experiencer" is again useful for describing the participants in these events, whose presence and actions impact on the path the performance takes.

In mixed reality performances, users engage with what Jason Farman refers to as a "sensory-inscribed body" that merges notions of embodiment as both sensorial and socially inscribed. Farman notes that, when engaging with mobile technologies, "We are embodied through our perceptive being-in-the-world and simultaneously through our reading of the world and our place as an inscribed body in the world" (*Mobile* 33). These modes of being fold onto one another in mixed reality performances with experiencers continually aware of their own place in the world, and their specific surroundings, as they move through and enact the space around them.[59]

In this chapter, I consider the mixed realities of *A Machine to See With* and *Remote New*

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[59] Much of the mixed reality experience—including the simultaneous mingling between these various modes—relates back to my discussion of audio walks from Chapter Two. In fact, audio walks should be considered a type of mixed reality as they disrupt and challenge our pre-existing relationships to and assumptions about spaces around us. Yet, the type of mixed reality Benford and Giannachi discuss often involves a different type of performance, with a more explicitly active experiencer whose actions impact on either the course of the work or the journey of other experiencers. They use interactive technologies, such as mobile phones or gaming devices, which users input data into.

York to question how theatre and performance artists might use technologies to rehearse new repertoires of protest and intervention. Both of these productions were created after major world events—the 2008 recession and the 2011 Occupy movement—that tested perceptions about wealth and equality within society. They work as responses to these moments, encouraging experiencers to think about their own relationship to systems of inequality as well as mobile technologies that are both an enabler and product of global networks. The audio aspects of the productions work to create a form of intimate intermediality that promotes self-reflexivity and directly questions experiencers' own location in relation to local and global issues. These works thus follow Peter Boenisch, Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx's understandings of an intermedial 'politics of perception' that can provoke critical awareness about the networks we are part of. This does not mean that Blast Theory and Rimini Protokoll necessarily cause political action or change, but rather that they point to openings for intervention and create a space for acting out various roles that challenge existing relationships between technologies, citizens and spaces. Of course, participants may choose not to engage in this intended outcome. As Dani-Snyder-Young argues, in performances with a social change agenda:

> the sense a spectator makes of a moment of performance may resist dominant discourses and engage with them critically—or they might not. They will, more often than not, make sense of the work in a way consistent with their existing worldview. Because hegemony is a *powerful* force, many participants and spectators will *not* challenge the status quo. (7)

Yet, I am curious about what these companies are offering their spectators in various moments and whether there is a sense that the status quo *could* be challenged via a mixed reality setting.

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The acting out of scenarios via mobile technology provokes several questions about the politics of mixed reality performance: What does performing new inter-relations offer? Can/Does it do something beyond a break in perception? What are the values and pitfalls of prompting spectators to act via mobile technologies? What are the dangers of making a one size fits all score for these radical enactments? The latter two questions point to possible dangers and blind spots arising from placing experiencers in public spaces and telling them to behave in particular ways regardless of social background, race, ethnicity, gender and ability.

Coming to these productions as a white female, I found that my sense of what I should or could do was greatly influenced by my previous experiences in public space. The challenges of being a woman in urban space was highlighted in October 2014 when a video of a woman walking the streets of New York went viral. Created for the advocacy agency Hollaback by Rob Bliss Creative, "10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman" shows clips of Shoshana B. Roberts continually being harassed by men as she walks for ten hours. The video claims that over this period, she was harassed one hundred and eight times. She never looks at the men. Some ask her to smile. Others tell her she is beautiful. Many ask her "How you doing?" A couple even follow her. Some get upset that she does not respond, telling her she's rude and should thank them. As of June 2015, the video had been viewed over 40 million times. While much of the response, in social media and the news media, has been supportive of Hollaback's anti-harassment agenda, there have also been threats agains Roberts both in the video's YouTube comments and on her personal Twitter page. This shift from harassment in urban space to online space reflects how, in an increasingly digitized world, women can be made to feel unsafe even when physically

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removed from their aggressors.[60]

In my analysis of these two productions I consider not only the presence of female participants, but also the frequently gendered nature of the mixed reality performance form, which mimics society's propensity for female-voiced operating systems. In *Remote New York*, the use of a female voice to guide spectators through public space mirrors the role female voices play in new technologies, where they are often heard as digital assistants on cellular phones and GPS systems. However, Rimini Protokoll plays with this trope, as the female voice morphs into a male one part way through the production. In contrast, *A Machine to See With* exists in multiple versions, with either a male or female voice leading participants on their entire journey. These choices raise questions about how gender is performed in digital spaces, and whether the use of female voices in digital support roles subverts or reinforces gender norms.

In mixed reality experiences, the spectator embodies an intermedial, 'both-and' state of being. They are both in urban space and connected to another being (or beings) via mobile media. Neither of these spaces is neutral. Rather, both have ongoing histories of being unsafe and even violent for women. In my analysis of these two works, I consider the openings they create for social action, yet I also meditate on what their respective scores meant for myself, as a woman, to go through. As Laura Levin argues in *Performing Ground*, "If a feminist analysis of environmental work needs to grapple with the appearance of women as figures of crossing, it

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[60] The issue of online harassment has garnered a great deal of attention in recent years. In 2014, the Gamergate controversy was covered in mainstream media when a number of female video game makers and critics received threats from users affiliated with the Twitter hashtag #gamergate. These threats, which included statements that these women would be shot and/or raped, were coordinated on online forums (including 4chan and Reddit). Users wrote hateful comments and even published private information, like home addresses and phone numbers, of several women. Many people using the #gamergate hashtag claim it is a movement about ethics in gaming criticism; however, this belief has been widely disputed as the main goal of #gamergate users seems to be spreading hate speech and threatening women involved in the video game industry.

must also address the affective experiences of female spectators within such events. Often the sense of unease felt by women braces against the rhetoric of spectatorial freedom and public exchange that accompanies these works" (80). My interrogation of these two mixed reality experiences considers this tension between the promise of freedom to enact radical positions in public space and the stress this may place on spectators uncomfortable taking on this role. In doing so, I unpack what underlying assumptions these companies make about the experiencer and how these assumptions relate to their radical potential and their visions of a politicized and democratized public space.

Alone Yet Together: Blast Theory's Theatre of the Reel

I've just exited a park and am on a street I recognize. My phone is pressed against my ear; the male voice on the other end is monotone and serious. He instructs me to walk until I reach a placard pointing to the Grassmarket. When I reach the sign, he tells me: "You're on your way to a rendezvous. You're going to meet up with your partner. You can't be sure who to trust yet but when the time comes you'll know." Now he directs me to enter the car park and head to the third floor where I will find a black BMW with a specific license plate. I quickly locate the car and notice someone is inside. They are wearing a leather jacket. My heart begins to race. I wonder: Is this person an actor? Or are they like me? What have they been told? The voice on the phone asks me to press '1' if someone is inside. I do as directed and wait for the next instruction.

These are just a few minutes from my experience participating in Blast Theory's *A*

Machine to See With during the 2011 Edinburgh Fringe.[61] The performance begins as a solo

journey with participants standing at separate pre-determined street corners. At the performance

start time, their phones ring and a voice gives them directions to a nearby location. They are told

to call back when they have reached this destination. The performance continues in this

manner— with a number of calls coming in to the participant's phone and a number they are

directed to call when they complete a task. Ultimately, the pre-recorded voice leads participants

on an urban heist adventure in which they meet up and work with another experiencer—whom

they presumably have never met before—in real-time and space.

Blast Theory describes *A Machine to See With* as a cinematic experience made without

any film. This theme is overt from the outset of the piece, as spectators are told they are the star

of their own movie and that everything they see in the city is a set, all the other people, extras.

Quickly, however, the cinematic blurs into the real, as participants are instructed to rob an actual

bank, with justification given in the context of the ongoing worldwide financial crisis. As a

mixed reality performance, *A Machine to See With* vacillates between various formats—from a

solo urban exploration to an interactive exchange with a stranger to a simulated bank heist—and

thus responses to the piece are subjective and multiple. However, a number of overarching

effects can be traced. In my analysis of this performance, I address how *A Machine to See With*

provokes an intermedial 'politics of perception' by critically engaging with the ways technologies

connect publics and facilitate day-to-day experiences. At the same time, I argue Blast Theory

goes beyond reflecting the ways we already connect and encourages the experiencers to use

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[61] While my memories and responses come from my experience with *A Machine to See With* in Edinburgh, the direct quotes I use in this chapter are from video clips Blast Theory and the British Council made to promote the work, which appear to be from their Banff and Austin productions.

mobile technologies to alter their existing relationships with urban spaces and other citizens, thus modelling political engagement within the framework of intermedial performance. In particular, experiencers are taken through the steps towards a radical act that would directly intervene in issues of income inequality. While the performance score prevents experiencers from going through with this final act, the lead up to this action acts as a rehearsal—a particularly prescient one in the wake of the recent worldwide recession and the Occupy movement. At the same time, having a single narrative placed on all experiencers raises questions about how issues like race and gender get sidelined—which becomes problematic when asking participants to move through public spaces with a new, or renewed, sense of agency.

Blast Theory is an interdisciplinary performance company working out of Brighton, United Kingdom. The group formed in the early 1990s and continues to make work under the leadership of Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj. Since the company's inception, their work has incorporated multimedia into performance. However, the company cites 1997 as a pivotal year in developing their interdisciplinary, multimedia approach to performance. While working at Berlin's Künstlerhaus Bethanien for a nine-month residency, the group developed *Kidnap*. This work, which premiered in 1998, was the first Blast Theory production to place interactivity at the core of both their form and content ("Our History"). For *Kidnap*, anyone who wanted to participate could register online and pay a small fee. As part of this registration, participants had to fill in a disclaimer, provide detailed information about their habits and movements, and give a safe word, which could be used to end the experience. From this process, Blast Theory randomly selected ten experiencers and started surveilling them for two weeks. Blast Theory then mailed each participant photographs the company had taken of them without

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their knowledge. They also selected two of the experiencers to kidnap for the project. The kidnapped experiencers were taken to a room and kept there for two days, while a live feed connected the room to the project's website.

Blast Theory followed *Kidnap* with a number of immersive and interactive performances, many of which took place in site-specific locations and used mobile technologies. These include *Desert Rain* (1999), a virtual reality game dealing with war in a desert location; *Can You See Me Now?* (2001), an experience in which online players compete against a number of runners moving through the streets of an actual city; *Uncle Roy All Around You* (2003), a site-specific gaming experience that has experiencers—both online and in the city connected to mobile devices—playing along; *Day of the Figurines* (2006), a slow-paced multiplayer texting game that takes twenty-four days to complete and connects to a tabletop game in a gallery space; and *Rider Spoke* (2007), a mobile experience in which experiencers ride bicycles with a GPS device and record stories for one another at set locations. First presented in 2010, *A Machine to See With* connects to these other works through its interactivity—as experiencers follow the directions of the voice and work with another experiencer—and use of mobile devices. While the tools that Blast Theory uses vary—from GPS devices to mobile phones—all of these works integrate new technologies into performance in ways that raise questions about the limits of reality and the role that technology plays in our daily lives. They also include multiple layers of interaction, with audiences frequently engaging with one another in real-time either in person or online.

While Blast Theory productions are most precisely mixed reality performances, they also fall within Giannachi's larger category of "new media performance." Expounding on Giannachi's

concept of new media performance, Rosemary Klich and Edward Scheer note this form regularly enables "direct physical interactivity of the audience and the media, and is the art form most liable to extend interactivity to include enabling the audience to modify the work" (16). This "modification" is most blatantly seen in Blast Theory works like *The Day of the Figurines* as experiencers continually make choices that impact on the direction the piece takes and the fates of the other players' characters. As mentioned in Chapter One, Benford and Giannachi refer to these possibilities as "participant trajectories." These work in relation to the score—or "canonical trajectories"—established by the artists. In Blast Theory productions the canonical trajectories can be technically complex as they rely on computer systems and programs to function. Yet participants do not have infinite choices, but are limited by what options the artists give within these systems. Experiencers' journeys thus move between canonical and participant trajectories, which can either work in tandem or in tension. When the latter occurs, it reflects a gap between the artists' and the experiencers' control over the work (54). At times, there can even be a breakdown between the two types of trajectories, which either intentionally or unintentionally reveals the production's technological infrastructure (67-8).

While participants may be limited by canonical trajectories to some extent, artists can choose to leave openings where participants can leave more open "contextual footprints" of their experience. Benford and Giannachi define these "footprints" as "digital records of their passage through both virtual and physical worlds" and note that in Blast Theory works these are frequently audio recordings that participants make during the experience (20). This ability to impact on the narrative and ongoing structure is one of the ways that mixed reality moves away from the category of sound walks I discussed in Chapter Two—though differences between these

forms are tenuous at times. The other main distinction is that the term 'mixed reality performance' encompasses a number of performance forms that do not always rely on sound as the primary mode of communication. While sound walk formats often appear in Blast Theory's productions, the mixed reality format may utilize other technologies to play with the relationships between real and virtual spaces. For example, *The Day of the Figurines* used a text based form and, while site-specific through the board space set up in a gallery, the performance did not require experiencers to traverse through urban spaces. In works like *Can You See Me Now?* experiencers move through different modes of engagement—some of which are analogous to a sound walk. Yet, this similar experience is somewhat different to popular forms of sound walks like those I discussed in Chapter Two by Janet Cardiff and Neworld Theatre. While Cardiff and Neworld Theatre create works that focus on how an individual moves through and connects to urban spaces, the "contextual footprints" and possibilities for participants to veer off of the expected trajectory make mixed reality performances appear to give more agency to the experiencer. In addition, mixed reality performances often have experiencers interact with one another, either in real-time or asynchronously through recordings.

This engagement with other experiencers, digital systems and urban spaces connects to the socio-political potential of mixed reality performance. Benford and Giannachi argue that trajectories press experiencers to see the world around them in different ways, which may lead them to re-situate themselves within it (23). In her work on new media performance, Giannachi connects this kind of repositioning to Brecht and Freud, noting that the tension between the real and virtual evokes a sense of uncanny and leads to a "process of *Verfremdung*" through which viewers "are allowed a multiple perception of their own ontological position" (59).

This understanding of the form's political potential connects to existing arguments surrounding intermediality's ability to provoke a politics of perception. Peter Boenisch defines intermediality as a perceptual effect that dismantles apparently singular mass mediated messages and encourages spectators to embrace a multiplicity of meanings ("Aesthetic" 113). Boenisch locates intermediality's political potential in this effect, which can "[offer] a perspective of disruption and resistance" (115). Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx expand upon this sense of "disruption and resistance" using the example of *Rider Spoke.* They posit that the hybrid—or both-and—nature of intermediality disturbs spectators' senses and rattles their concept of reality. Groot Nibbelink and Merx also situate the political potential of intermediality in this disruption, which ideally leads to critical awareness as spectators question the stability of reality (115). In line with Robin Nelson ("After" 34-5), they note this rupture does not necessarily provoke active political change. As mentioned in Chapter Two, instead they argue the radical potential of intermediality can subtly express our self-world relationship through a re-situating of perception (227).

This break from the everyday—particularly in terms of perception—is often reflected in Blast Theory's content as well as their mixed reality form. Though the narratives of their performances vary, their content often has allusions to surveillance and the technologies that surround us every day. They include instructions that participants are encouraged or even required to to follow—provoking questions about the nature of the individual's relation to the state and the quotidian rules we follow. Blast Theory's mixing of virtual and real spaces through performance connects to the content of their work, as technologies are used to move experiencers into situations with unclear boundaries. For example, many participants in *Uncle Roy All Around*

You were unsure if passersby on the streets were plants or innocent bystanders. This kind of confusion connects to Benford and Giannachi's belief that mixed reality performances make participants feel off-balance through the overlapping of the real and virtual (23). They claim this disorientation can be alienating, which prompts participants to critically engage.

The opening of *A Machine to See With* encourages this kind of thinking, with the voice telling the experiencer that all of the people they see on the street are simply actors performing for the experiencer on their journey. He says that the people are actors and that all the experiencer sees is simply a film set. This disembodied voice encourages the experiencer to alter their perception and view the world as a construct. The experiencer is the star in a heist movie and everything she or he does is fictional, limited to the film world. Of course, the voice says this to an experiencer standing on an actual city street and proceeds to lead them to a number of real-world locations, including the bank that they are supposed to rob.

As a company usually situated within theatre and performance contexts, Blast Theory's decision to locate this work as *cinematic* rather than *theatrical* stands out. The concept that the entire experience is a film makes *A Machine to See With* different than Blast Theory's other work—though much of the production's form and its focus on surveillance reflect the company's ongoing aesthetic. Their other urban performances, like *Can You See Me Now?* and *Uncle Roy All Around You* explicitly incorporate virtual gaming approaches. This begs the questions of how—or whether—this work functions differently than their other mixed reality performances that have not been explicitly connected to the cinematic.

The influence of the cinema on *A Machine to See With* appears to be linked to the work's development through The Locative Cinema Commission, which is a joint initiative by the Banff

New Media Institute at The Banff Centre, ZER01: The Art and Technology Network and Sundance Institute's New Frontier Initiative. Adams notes that "it was part of the premise of the commission that the work would explore some ways how cinema would exist in a urban environment and where the 'viewer' is moving through the city" (qtd. in Dias 5). This re-orientation of the cinematic experience as something urban but located away from the physical cinema space—and in fact away from any form of screen—reflects a crisis for traditional concepts of the cinematic. In his treatise regarding the shift away from the centrality of the cinema house to film, Gabriele Pedullà claims that:

> The age of cinema, it is commonly claimed, is now drawing to a close. Day after day signs of a profound change in our relationship with moving images proliferate. The winnowing of box office receipts, the shrinking size of the audience, the decreasing time lag between a film's theatrical release and its commercialization on video, television's growing cultural prestige: these indications—at once social, economic, and aesthetic—only make the prophecy all the more credible. If cinema for decades represented the standard and even optimal filmic experience, the touchstone for all other forms of viewing, this formerly undisputed and indisputable centrality is today contested at its very core. (1)

Pedullà—along with critics such as Michael Strangelove and Francesco Casetti—points to the ways that cinema has been altered by the move away from a single, movie house screen and experience to a distributed one. While the rise of television altered viewing habits in the second half of the twentieth-century, in recent years new media has radically and quickly changed how

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we view film.

Much like film once provoked a crisis for the theatre, new media forms have sparked a crisis for some cinema makers and critics. From a theatre and performance studies perspective, it is difficult to read Pedullà's words without being haunted by Auslander's discussions of the televisual in *Liveness*. Auslander summarizes how, in attempting to make an argument for the continued relevance of theatre in a televisual age, many theatre makers and critics disparage the impact of newer technologies on theatre practices. In response to this worry, Auslander claims that liveness is in fact a product of mediatization, rather than a separate entity from it. He argues that since concepts of the live only came about when reproduction became possible, "the live is actually an effect of mediatization" (11). This argument connects back to Pedullà's comments about the cinema house, whose cultural relevance as a viewing mode has been affected by its difference from (and similarities to) new ways of watching film. Our ongoing relationship to multiple screens shapes our experience of viewing film in a cinema. Thus, while *A Machine to See With* seems to be a radical break from any previous conception of a cinematic experience, its location away from screens also alludes to their ubiquity in contemporary digital culture.

While pointing to our visual, screen saturated culture through its very absence, the production also references an earlier form of cinema—the type experienced in cinema houses— via its narrative surrounding an anti-hero working against authorities. Blast Theory has stated that the production was influenced by two films: Jean Luc Godard's *Made in USA* (1966) and Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974) (Dias).[62] The heist and surveillance aspects of

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[62] They also took inspiration from the noir fiction novel *The Jugger* (1965) by Richard Stark (a pseudonym of Donald E. Westlake), which Godard based his film on (Dias).

these films' narratives can be seen in the main story arc of *A Machine to See With.* In addition, the ethical quandary at the heart of *The Conversation*—whether or not to act—is central to its score. In the film, surveillance expert Harry Caul wonders what—if anything—he should do about a troubling conversation he records. In the end, he does not act and learns that—while he was right to think something sinister was afoot—he misinterpreted who the victim and who the perpetrator would be. Throughout the film, Caul obsesses over one sentence in the conversation, playing through the various possibilities of its meaning in his head. While *A Machine to See With* has a different narrative, centring around a bank heist, the question of how to interpret what you hear and see is also central to the work. As you move through the city, your reality becomes conflated with fiction as you listen to the voice on the phone. You do not know whether to trust him and begin to wonder exactly what he is asking of you.

These moments reveal how intermedial approaches have the capacity to disrupt and even alienate experiencers. While other Blast Theory works, such as *The Day of the Figurines* and *Rider Spoke*, let users add their own narratives through mobile technologies, *A Machine to See With* involves a more closed system of exchange, in which the experiencer is limited in their responses. In addition, it is unclear if these few responses affect the structure of the work in any way. Early in the performance, the experiencer is led to a public washroom and instructed to lock themselves in a stall. The voice on their phone tells them:

> Before we go any further, it's time to learn something about you. In reality, people vary on just five fundamental dimensions— understand these dimensions and we gain an important insight into your behaviour and thinking. I'm going to give you 5 statements and I want you to give your response to them swiftly and honestly.

Just give me your reply as a number between 1 and 9. I see myself taking the lead in a stressful situation...

While the voice claims the answers in this test determine what role the experiencer will play in the heist, nothing in the performance reveals whether this is actually the case. Blast Theory member Nick Tandavanitj notes the experiencer's limited input on the direction of events is an intentional strategy that allows the company to question "the nature of interaction itself and the limits and false promises of it" (qtd. in Dias).

Throughout the performance, the voice continues to emphasize that the experiencer cannot actually communicate with him, noting, after he asks them to record their name over the line, "I don't know what your name is because this is a recording and I'm thousands of miles away." As I listened, I found myself wondering why, if the voice couldn't comprehend my words in real-time, I had just recorded my own name. Was someone else listening? What would Blast Theory do with the recording in the future? Should I have complied or was this moment ripe with potential for intervention, for changing my own trajectory? The voice's simple statement shook me out of the narrative and made me aware of the degree to which a totally anonymous and temporally removed voice was shaping my experience. As I continued to follow the directions, I wondered whether my implied sense of agency was just an allusion.

On one of the upper levels of a nondescript parking garage, I meet my "partner." This connection with another experiencer only occurs if both participants make it to the parked BMW in a certain time frame. If experiencers go off track, they may not connect with their partner and have to go it alone. In my experience, my partner and I made it to the location, which shifted the journey away from that of the lone, anti-hero to that of an organized heist more evocative of such

(male-driven) films as *Ocean's Eleven*, *The Italian Job, Bonnie and Clyde, Reservoir Dogs* and *Mission Impossible*. When I first approached the car, my partner was already inside. All I could see was someone in a leather jacket, which made me nervous for some reason. No one else was around. The parking garage was on a side street and seemed deserted. As far as I knew, I was alone with this one other person. Once I got in, I discovered my partner was another woman, friendly and also slightly unnerved by the whole experience.

After meeting in the car, my partner and I were directed, via our phones, to make a heist plan together and then to proceed to a nearby bank building. Standing across the street, I seriously began to wonder how far the voice was going to ask me to go. I would align this experience with the moments of rupture discussed by Benford, Giannachi, Groot Nibbelink and Merx. Acutely aware of the tension between the real and virtual, I was about to, in a moment full of adrenaline, follow the instructions of a completely anonymous automated voice in something I was not entirely comfortable doing. This moment became a rehearsal of risk: How far would I put myself on the line for a larger cause, though not one that I had chosen for myself? As I looked across to the behemoth bank building, I felt pressure to do what the voice and my partner expected of me. Although I still had my personal freedom—nothing but a voice was propelling my actions—I felt I had to stick to the trajectory given in order to see how the scenario would play out. While seemingly restraining me, this pressure to act emphasized my individuality and the possibility of making a choice—even though it was unclear what would happen if I did not follow the trajectory laid out by Blast Theory.

This sense of unease over what to do links to the show's form—specifically the use of mobile phones. In his consideration of how mobile devices impact on embodiment, Jason

Farman conceives of a "sensory-inscribed body." Combining phenomenological and post-structural approaches, Farman argues that, when engaging with mobile devices our bodies are both sensorially involved and culturally inscribed. In expanding on the latter aspect, he notes "A sensory engagement with our locative media is incomplete without understanding how these devices are inscribed and how they simultaneously function as inscribing tools" ("Mobile"). In these moments of rupture, *A Machine to See With* highlights the role of mobile phones as "inscribing tools," which shape our relationships to our surroundings and each other. My connection to my environment and my partner were not simply augmented by the connection on the mobile phone, but were constituted by this engagement.

Again, this leads me to question what is being asked of the experiencer—and what social and cultural aspects of embodiment are glossed over or bracketed out in order to move the piece forward. Blast Theory acknowledges that they ask their experiencers to enact something that has become riskier in a surveillance-heavy, paranoid world in this production. They note, "we realised that surveillance or observing a building were the kind of things that you can do that exist on the boundary between being a normal citizen and being a criminal; that standing and watching something, and particularly since 9/11, have become more nuanced things" (qtd. in Dias). The production plays with this "boundary," with experiencers trying on the identity of someone willing to jeopardize their well-being for certain social and political beliefs. Yet, the performance score, designed around a masculine stereotype of the action hero, assumes a level of comfort with moving through public spaces and engaging with strangers that may be more troubling for some experiencers—particularly women and visible minorities.

Playing at being a masculine stereotype offers different possibilities depending on what

experiencer comes to the piece. My corporeal sensation of taking on this masculine identity was imbued with my own day-to-day experience as a female.[63] I found my experience existing between two modes. I felt freedom in taking on the role, of taking up space and moving in quasi-clandestine ways I normally would not. Still, completely shedding my own pre-existing sense of presence was impossible. When going into the car park and first approaching my partner, I felt a vulnerability that belied my attempts at enacting a hyper-masculine identity. Moments like these did not pull me out of the piece completely. Rather, they were moments of intermedial embodiment, where I existed not simply between two modes but was simultaneously pulled by both. These moments, which occurred for me throughout the performance, underscored the effect technology was having on my actions and my self-awareness. I also believe my involvement, and the potential for real-world consequences, led to something beyond a heightened critical awareness and altered sense of perception. Robin Nelson notes there is a danger in assuming a broad and active political effect of intermedial performance ("After" 34-5). As intermedial performance is a broad category, Nelson's warning is apt. Yet when considering mixed reality performances, there is a kind of activist potential in their inherently interactive audience-centric form.

The form's emphasis on the individual's role within larger systems suggests a politically engaged performance practice that has effects in addition to perceptual shifts, critical awareness and a heightened sense of space. Rather than simply thematising connectivity, Blast Theory invites spectators to take a tool they interact with on a daily basis—the mobile phone—and

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[63] There is also a gender dynamic at play as experiencers follow a male voice. However, Blast Theory does not always use a male voice for the show. Versions of the production, including the premiere at Sundance and showings at Minneapolis' Walker Art Centre, had a female voice on the phone.

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actively recontextualise what they are capable of when using it. While the company highlights

how users follow instructions, I also felt empowered by the performance. This response is

reflected in much of the work's reception. Lois Jeary of *A Younger Theatre* notes "*A Machine to*

See With encourages you to confront who you are by playing at being another person entirely,

and by the end you may well have surprised yourself at what you are capable of. The journey

may be mapped out for you, the scenario thrust upon you, but the thrill is all your own." As Jeary

notes, even though the instructions restrict experiencers, she found freedom in performing roles

outside of normal routine: from the simple act of taking the time to explore urban spaces to the

more extreme simulation of the bank heist.

Blast Theory emphasizes participants' freedom of choice at the beginning of the

performance. While walking from the starting location to the first stop of the performance, the

voice told me, "By taking part in *A Machine to See With*, you agree that you will take

responsibility for your own safety and actions. Press one to confirm that you understand and

agree to these conditions of participation." As I pressed '1' on my phone, I am not sure what

would happen if an experiencer refused to agree with these conditions. This virtual consent form

is followed by another, more serious warning: "Listen carefully, if the police are called, they will

not take any notice of your excuses. Get ready to think on your feet. Things will not go as

planned." For me, the effects of these words were again two-fold: I felt excited to be given a

space in which to enact non-quotidian actions, but also oddly nervous about the suggestion of

police and thinking on my feet. I felt I had the liberty to have fun and explore new modes of

being in the city; at the same time, I was hyper-aware of what this did to my body—my breathe,

my movements. The experience was simultaneously everyday and exceptional. I looked

completely inconspicuous to people walking on the street with my ear to my phone, but I was also planning routes to the bank heist, meeting with a stranger in a car park and hiding money in my shoe—all because I was given the permission to do so via the anonymous voice.

My exhilaration and sense of freedom were tied to Blast Theory's framing of the action within the politics of financial inequality. From the outset, they situate the bank heist as part of a Robin Hood attempt to take money back from institutions that paved the way for the financial crisis. Just before the heist, the voice reminds experiencers of this motivation, stating: "If you get caught, you just deny that you knew that you were breaking the law. Just tell the authorities that redistributing capital from where it's not being used to where it will be used is a service." While the voice ends up calling off the heist at the last possible moment—leading to mixed feelings of relief and disappointment—he propels experiencers to put their bodies on the line, physically doing something in reaction to a seemingly unalterable global issue.

Activist performance scholars continually note the importance of the body in politically engaged work. Guillermo Gómez-Peña situates the body as central both during and after performance—as a container in which to try on new modes of being and as the location in which the experience is carried forward, beyond the moment of performance and into future actions (24). This potential capacity for action extends Boenisch's belief that intermedial performance can be "a 'training centre' for new modes of perception" ("coMEDIA" 39) to include not only an understanding of how meaning is mediated, but also how users can actively intervene in existing processes—and even how technology encourages and enables us to do so. This connection extends Jill Dolan's argument that the theatre can be a space in which to "critically rehearse civic engagement" (7) to intermedial performance practices. Baz Kershaw argues this level of

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participant engagement is integral to radical politically engaged performance, which moves spectators beyond simply thinking about dominant ideologies and "invokes . . . freedom *to reach beyond* existing systems of formalised power, freedom to create currently unimaginable forms of association and action" (*Radical* 18). Kershaw argues the politics in such performances is not located in representation but in the actual production of freedoms, or at least "a sense of them" in various moments (19).

Blast Theory's production places experiencers as the potential instigators of radical social change. However, it is important to keep in mind the possible limitations of this enactment. In a response to Dolan's work, Dani Snyder-Young worries that staging this sense of change or freedom may not necessarily lead to related action outside the space of a performance. She argues that, "if in making a utopian world within the theatre we feel we have taken action, and therefore do not take action in the real world, we are wasting our impulse to make change" (138).[64] The steps that Blast Theory takes its experiencers through leads to a subjective experience. It is difficult to say whether this "impulse" was wasted—or whether it was even sparked in the first place. Yet, in many ways Blast Theory works differently than the kind of theatre Dolan and Snyder-Young discuss, which is contained within a theatre space. By having their experiencers as the main actors in the mixed reality experience, Blast Theory offers a scenario for rehearsing a corporeal way of being in public space—one that potentially challenges our day-to-day movements and actions.

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[64] The concept of change is complex—it is difficult (and sometimes impossible) to judge how a single act might lead to social change. In addition, the ways that affective experiences bleed into the everyday are difficult to trace. Anthropologist Kathleen Stewart situates the "ordinary" as "a circuit that's always tuned in to some little something somewhere" (12), which points to the myriad ways that affective experiences exist within daily life. This complex notion of the "ordinary" also means that agency operates in complicated and unpredictable ways within everyday lived experiences.

A Machine to See With additionally engages technology's potential to connect people who would not normally converse but whose lives are intertwined through everyday technologies. The connection of the two partners marks an abrupt break in what was previously an intense solo experience focused on asynchronous communication. This shift reveals how, by following paths technology gives us, we can form new interpersonal connections. While my partner and I were told not to trust one another and were awkward at first in our introductions, our relationship quickly progressed as we shared our experiences with the performance and our nervousness about what we would be asked to do. We walked briskly together, chatting about our backgrounds and how we came to be at the show that day. A large Bank of Scotland building loomed in front of us. Suddenly my partner's phone rang. As she began talking, my phone went off. Now we walked in silence, both listening to the voice's instructions. He guided me towards the bank and told me get ready to act. I felt a rush of adrenaline as we crossed the plaza in front of the imposing bank building. "Walk directly towards the door," he directed. I approached. Suddenly, the voice sounded frantic. "Stop. Stop. Stop." He told me to quickly run away, abandon my partner and use the escape route I pre-planned. I panicked and ran. I didn't look back.

In this moment, I had an overwhelming sense of both excitement at my secret and guilt over this betrayal. While I followed the instructions, I was relieved to see my partner again at the last stop of the performance. I was at a bus stop and the voice told me to find a stranger. I looked around and only saw my partner. It took a moment for me to register that she was, in fact, still a stranger. The voice instructed me to think about the life of this person—noting that in their narrative I was their side-kick, just as they had been in mine. Then he told me to give all my

money to the stranger—along with a hug. The performance ends with this moment of interpersonal connection and leaves the two experiencers together.

While I found this entire production exhilarating in the moment, in the aftermath of my experience, I began to consider the openness of the production more deeply and how this may impact on the work's efficacy—particularly when temporal constraints come into play. As the performance is fast-paced and relies on experiencers to quickly find sign posts and other markers, the political and social aspects of the work are impacted by one's ability to reach certain stages within a particular timeframe. Problems with the performance have been limited; for example, when the work was presented at Sundance in 2011, only one out of over 400 participants failed to find the bank (Saks). However, the *Guardian's* Lyn Gardner, who participated in Edinburgh, claims *A Machine to See With* was a low point of her festival experience as she "was standing lost . . . staring at a mobile phone" (qtd. in Dickson). So, while *A Machine to See With* allows individuals to chart their own paths within the framework of the performance, these paths may lead to confusion and frustration. Another participant I interviewed in Edinburgh got lost trying to find the public washroom. Because it took him longer to get to the car park, he arrived just in time to see the man who was supposed to be his partner leave. He ended up going to the bank alone and, after he heard about my experience, was disappointed that he had failed to make a human connection.

As Sarah Bay-Cheng notes, intermedial performance is still beholden to the "overarching duration" of theatre ("Temporality" 90). In this case, the one hour timeframe of the work closes off aspects of the performance and limits interactions with other spectators if experiencers cannot follow directions quickly and accurately. That said, the other experiencer also discussed the

intensity of entering the vehicle and planning the bank heist independently. Rather than focusing on what his partner was doing, he became hyper-aware of his actions both when he was lost and as he headed to the bank alone. When he ran from the bank, he worried not about betraying a single partner, but instead questioned what his failure to intervene signified. What does it mean to walk with determination across a public square—straight to a bank and then to just walk—or run—away? What does it mean to walk to the door but not open it? What does it mean not to enact a revolution? This suggests that, while he did not benefit from the interpersonal exchange with a partner, the production still had the ability to provoke actual emotions and model potential political engagement when not all goes according to plan.

(Re)animating Together: Rimini Protokoll's Horde of Individuals

The music is blaring through our headphones. A dance beat thumps and we move to the music. Some dance more openly then others. Some of us dance together and others dance on their own. A few of us giggle. We look around, watching each other's arms swish and heads bob. Suddenly, the music stops. But some people keep dancing. Heather ridicules them: "Don't your friends look ridiculous dancing without music?" After a few moments, everyone stops. Heather continues: "Sometimes it seems you are all united. And sometimes it seems you are worlds apart from each other."[65]

Next, Heather tells us we are going to discover how individual we each are. We must find something in our bags or pockets. Something worth standing up and protesting for. An object that says something about us. I only have a small purse with barely anything in it. Is my phone

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[65] The script for *Remote New York* is unpublished but was provided to me by the production's writer and director Stefan Kaegi.

worth fighting for? My money? We have only seconds to make a decision and I quickly take out a pen branded for the television series *Game of Thrones*. Right away I regret this choice. Why would I fight for this? I look around. Heather instructs us to hold up our objects and look around at what we've chosen. I feel stupid about my object, but try to think of a way to connect it to something I care about. Writing, ideas, that George R.R. Martin needs to finish the book series before the TV series gets too far ahead. With these thoughts in my mind, I walk with everyone else as we follow Heather's instruction to "go public" and "form a demonstration." We march down the streets holding our objects in the air. We perform a protest, moving together, taking up public space. As we march Heather's voice declares, "As soon as you are a majority you do things that you would never do alone. I like the idea that the majority decides." Following her directions, we cross the street with confidence, not waiting for a walk sign or even checking for traffic before stepping out. We have power in our numbers. We are one. We are a "horde."

At the end of *A Machine to See With* I was left asking the question of what failing to go through with a radical act meant. In Rimini Protokoll's *Remote New York*—part of their ongoing *Remote X* series—I found myself going through the motions of protest in another site-specific performance, again being led by a disembodied voice speaking into my ears, communicating with me over mobile media. While these two productions align in terms of format and their encouragement of acts of transgression, they also vary in a number of ways. The most prominent difference is the shared nature of the *Remote New York* experience as the experiencers move together in a group of about fifty. While the group separates into three smaller sub-groups at various points, experiencers are always part of a larger whole. Thus, while the experiencers take on a role like in *A Machine to See With*, this time the role leads to group, rather than individual,

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actions.

I admittedly had a less exhilarating experience in *Remote New York* than in *A Machine to See With* and found, like a fellow experiencer I talked to, that their "more overt 'message' stuff [was] a bit didactic and too on-the-nose. Which made me think less." Yet, I found the production's one-way communication—while sometimes limiting the potential for audience agency—complicated its own function as a single text meant to connect with every experiencer on an individual level. The production's playful, cynical—and often unreliable—tone created openings for self-reflection, particularly in regards to how we situate ourselves in relation to other subjects. It was also explicit about inequalities between experiencers and the different viewpoints we come to the piece from.[66] While perhaps less surprising or exciting than Blast Theory's narrative, *Remote New York* did more to connect me as an experiencer to questions of urban space and how it is used. The work was less about major global issues, like the banking crisis, and more about the potential of taking up space together—an often radical act that the Occupy movement made visible in 2011.

The similarities and differences between *A Machine to See With* and *Remote New York* reflect some of the ways that the two companies that created them—Blast Theory and Rimini Protokoll—converge and diverge. Rimini Protokoll was created in 2000 by theatre artists Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi and Daniel Wetzel. The trio have produced dozens of shows in the past fifteen years, which vary in subject matter, scale and location. Kara McKechnie notes that

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[66] This approach also playfully addresses the kind of group-based, immersive performance form that the work is a part of. This type of performance is an increasingly popular form, particularly in the wake of the popularity of Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*, which has been playing in New York to sold-out crowds since 2011. Much of *Sleep No More*'s ongoing success is linked to its online campaigns and aggressive marketing, with the producers continually creating new ways to up sell the immersive experience.

the three members of Rimini Protokoll work as hybrid entities, moving their labour between directing, dramaturging, researching and facilitating (75). Based in Berlin, they have become internationally recognized, partly because of their aggressive touring schedule, which has them frequently presenting different works in multiple cities over the course of a few months. Unlike Blast Theory, whose work has primarily existed in galleries and urban locations, much of Rimini Protokoll's work is shown in designated theatre spaces. They also present work, like *Remote New York,* in usually urban site-specific locations.

Much of Rimini Protokoll's theatre is part of the what they call a "theatre of experts," developed and performed by non-actors who integrate their own experiences into the performances (Boenisch, "Other" 107). One of their most toured "theatre of experts" shows is their *100%* series (2008-), which seeks to humanize seemingly anonymous and formal structures through the personification of statistics. In each city the production visits, Rimini Protokoll finds a group of one hundred people that collectively cover the age, gender and ethnicity of the city as a whole. In order to procure this group, the company starts with a single participant and gets them to recruit the next non-actor following the guidelines of the city's statistics. This creates a diverse group of citizens who are all somehow connected to one another and to the larger structure of the city. *Radio Muezzin* (2009) is another production developed with non-actors. It has three Cairo-based muezzins address a recent decision to centralize the call to prayer for the city's thousand-plus mosques via the radio. This change threatens not only the jobs of these muezzins, but also their central role within the community of their mosques. Both of the *100%* series and *Radio Muezzin* reflect Rimini Protokoll's ongoing use of a "theatre of experts" to tackle how we are all connected through various networks—of support, of community, of labour,

of commercialization.

This interest in networks and working with non-actors spills over into Rimini Protokoll's site-specific work. Their most well-known site-specific piece is *Call Cutta* (2004-9), which was presented in Kolkata and Germany. Interestingly, the promotional materials for this production echo the ways Blast Theory describe *A Machine to See With*. They claim the production is "Theatre that transforms the city into a stage. A mobile stage. Or into a game. Or into a film. You start off as the audience, but you might become the player, the user, the hero, of your personal scenography: Kolkata. Calcutta . . . the city you thought you knew becomes a movie which you shoot with your own eyes" (qtd. in Balme, *Theatrical* 185-6). In this mixed reality performance, a solo audience member participates with a mobile phone and talks to a call centre employee. When presented in Germany, this employee was thousands of kilometres away. The employee directs the caller to various locales and the two discuss both the places visited and information about their lives. At the end of the production, the participant is led to an electronics store where they can see a video image of the operator on a screen. In *Call Cutta*, the delegation of power to the operators, who direct spectators around the urban site, reflects how our information base has been networked, yet still relies on human knowledge at its core. Shannon Jackson argues that, in addressing the role of labour in globalization, Rimini Protokoll "provoke[s] the audience's sense of connection between their lives and the realities of others" (176).

The *Remote X* series, which is directed by Stefan Kaegi, also uses mobile technologies and has participants respond to a voice. Like the *100%* series, which has had iterations including *100% London* and *100% Vancouver*, *Remote X* takes on the name of the city it is in. It has a

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score that is tailored to the local surroundings, but that leads experiencers through a similar path in each locale. For example, the production usually includes a hospital and a church, but the company was unable to acquire these locations in New York and had to adapt the show to work without them (Schuessler). Kaegi notes that this became an issue because of perceptions of public space in New York City, as the company was asked to pay to use sites that were free in other locations (Personal interview). Since it was first presented in 2013, *Remote X* has been shown in over twenty cities in Europe, India, Brazil, Chile and the United States. As of February 2016 *Remote New York* and *Remote Rochester*—which was presented in September 2015—are the only North American versions. While the *Remote X* series uses a similar travelling format to *100%* and employs mobile technologies like *Call Cutta,* this mixed reality performance pivots away from the company's "theatre of experts" and involves one-way rather than two-way communication.[67]

    Remote New York takes experiencers on a journey that traverses multiple geographic locations and interrelated themes, including the role of technological tools in society, political activism, consumerism and individuality. In the production, a group of fifty experiencers are given headsets connected to a radio transmitter. The binaurally recorded audio for the show works through this transmission system. A few controller plants are interspersed within the audience and start the audio at particular cues, such as when the entire audience reaches a

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[67] While Kaegi believes the *Remote X* series tends to attract similar types of audiences in each city it visits, he has noted a few differences in how the work has played out in different geographic locations. For example, *Remote Bangalore* took place soon after the 2012 Delhi gang rape, which occurred on a private bus and involved the rape and subsequent death of 23-year old Jyoti Singh. Kaegi observed that the audience for *Remote Bangalore*, which was mostly made up of university students, seemed particularly "eager to take part in society" and push up against the patriarchal rules that dominate public spaces in India. At times the locations the production visits also elicit responses that relate to local political contexts (Personal interview).

particular point or when a correct subway train arrives. The audio is primarily a voice that talks

directly to the audience, although at certain moments music and urban sounds play as well. The

group of fifty goes through the city together, moving first through a Brooklyn graveyard, then

taking the subway to lower Manhattan where they walk the city streets and go into a number of

buildings. At one point, the group splits into three sub-groups, though the entire group

reassembles at a stop and at the show's end.

At the core of *Remote New York*'s peripatetic narrative is a rehearsal of how to act

together as a unit in urban space. In order to work through the ways we interact with other bodies

and technologies, the performance situates experiencers in a number of different configurations,

and points out the potentials and pitfalls of each set of relations. The first major relationship is

that of the individual and technological tools. While the group interacts with one another to some

extent, the main relationship is between the recorded voice and each experiencer listening to it.

At the beginning of the production, the voice on the line introduces herself. She claims she is

"programmed to help you" and "will try to be your friend." Her name is Heather and she sounds

a lot like the voices on GPS systems or Apple's Siri. In fact, as she informs the listener, she is an

automated voice created from thousands of hours of female voice recordings. Part way through

the performance, Heather morphs into Roger—an automated male voice.[68]

While Heather/Roger does not explicitly connect herself to a particular digital tool, she

often refers to how hardware and software are part of the make up of humans—implying that we

are all already cyborgs. She constantly brings up the (lack of) division between human and

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[68] As the production begins with Heather's voice and utilizes it for the majority of the show, I will continue to use female pronouns when discussing Heather/Roger more generally.

machine, assuming that the experiencer always exists in a posthuman state. Ralf Remshardt defines posthumanism in performance as the fact that, even before the show begins, "the experiencer is already a cyborg . . . a thoroughly initiated citizen of the cyberworld, conversant with the raft of devices she owns and/or manages, some of which are still attached to her body, steeped in the mythology of techno-culture" (137). Heather evokes this definition when she states "You grew up with machines. Since childhood you are used to machines that made life easier for you. And finally you ended up with me. Can you imagine a life without machines?"

In *A Machine to See With*, Blast Theory alludes to ethical issues stemming from the growing role that technology systems play in our day-to-day life. At the same time, their narrative often valorizes the power of technology to connect and mediate experiences. *Remote New York* delves into this tension; however, the production generally veers more towards a dystopian position that situates new technologies as potentially harmful and overly pervasive in our current world. This dark view of the dangers technologies bring is reminiscent of popular narratives that show the potential of machines to hurt people like *I, Robot* and *Terminator*. However, its most clear cinematic connection is to Spike Jonze's *Her* (2013), a failed love story between a user and his mobile operating system with a female voice.[69] In each of these films, technology systems are highly intelligent and evolve to either harm humans or abandon them. In differing ways, these films provoke a sense of unease about the ubiquity of technology in our lives. Heather feeds into this discomfort when she tells the experiencer, "Thinking is what makes

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[69] Kaegi saw the film after opening the first version of the series, *Remote Berlin*, and was "shocked" by the parallels in both form and content. Even certain scenes have visual connections with the *Remote* series, such as a moment when the main character twirls in circles on the instructions of his operating system and the ending that takes place on a rooftop (Personal interview).

you different from animals. And from machines. At least, that's what you think." This statement evokes a narrative of technological dystopia, but also—much like *Her*—points to potential failings of humans who rely too much on technology or who assume they have agency when they do not.

Throughout *Remote New York*, Heather/Roger vacillates between situating technology as helpful and friendly, or as impersonal, remote and even frightening. She notes that her hard drive has the potential to capture our thoughts, saving them for all time—thus making us immortal. But whether users will have a choice in this matter is not always clear. Later in the show, when the voice is Roger, he states that in the future he will move from the role of assistant to "best friend"—someone who tells you "what suits you best," "what to eat," "what to speak" and "what to think." He even claims that we will no longer need memories. He will remember for us. Roger's reasoning for this is that, at that point in the future, he will "take over the controls." Again, Roger alludes to the devious side of the operating system in the final words of the production, asserting (or possibly threatening) that "You have lent me your body. Soon I will come back and ask for your mind."

This fatalistic view about the role technology plays in shaping our world often makes *Remote New York* feel more didactic than *A Machine to See With*. Another experiencer at the performance I was at noted that during these moments, "It didn't feel like a new conversation or even an old one being presented in a new way." However, *Remote New York*'s narrative included many layers—it jumped between subjects and asked questions of the experiencers at a rapid speed—and this dystopian view was not the only one to come to the forefront. Many other moments in the score broke open more complex aspects of our relationship to technologies and

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public space. For example, unlike *A Machine to See With*, this production explicitly addresses

the role gender plays in both of these areas. Early in the production, when the group is still in the

starting location of the graveyard, the path takes them through a tunnel near the entrance. As the

group passes through, Heather asks, "Would you walk here if you were alone? Would you walk

here at night? Would you walk here alone at night being a woman?" In my experience with

Remote New York, I found this line of questioning pulled me out of the rhythm I had fallen into.

As Benford and Giannachi note, mixed reality experiences can disrupt our sense of divide

between virtual and real. In this case, I was actually propelled out of focusing on the fiction of

the show. In the moments before I had been playfully noticing how the group walks together and

trying to alter the speed of others through my own movements. Now I was suddenly pushed into

the everyday—into my own anxiety about being in remote spaces alone at night. While everyone

in the production hears the same questions, this section acknowledges that "the horde" is not one,

and not everyone in the group necessarily feels the same way about moving through public

space, particularly in terms of safety.

The production again addresses issues of gender in relation to how we use and think

about technology. While operating systems can be programmed to use both female and male

voices (as well as a number of different accents) often the default setting in English-speaking

countries is for a female.[70] The most prominent example of this is Apple's Siri, though GPS

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[70] The reason for the widespread use of computerized female voices is not entirely clear. In an article for CNN, Brandon Griggs traces some of the possible reasons for this trend. These include studies in biology that show users find female voices more calming and historical precedents set when telephone operators were primarily women. He also considers how science fiction within culture may have influenced this tendency as the HAL 9000 computer from *2001: A Space Odyssey* is male-voiced but devious, while more agreeable female-voiced systems appear in shows like *Star Trek*. Griggs notes that automated transit systems have used female voices for decades and that these were put in based on studies into consumer preferences. However, he points out that not all consumers prefer female voices as BMW Germany had to switch the voice of its GPS system from female to male after receiving complaints.

systems frequently follow this tendency as well. The female operating system voice in the film *Her,* played by Scarlett Johansson, has been compared to Siri numerous times as many of us are used to hearing a female voice on our Apple mobile devices. Audio based intermedial theatre productions often follow this trend as well by having female voices leading spectators. Examples of this approach include Neworld Theatre's *Landline* and several pieces by Janet Cardiff, including *Her Long Black Hair*. Blast Theory also frequently use female guides and digital assistants in their productions. In 2015, the company released a phone app, *Karen*, which features a female life coach who calls the user throughout the week. Users interact with videos of Karen by answering her questions, though the experience quickly moves from the professional to the personal in ways meant to unsettle the user. *Remote New York* begins by following the trend of the female digital assistant, who supports the user on their journey. Heather sounds like a typical automated female voice and, like Siri, often uses a chiding or impertinent tone, but claims she is helpful and even your friend.[71] The voice's morphing from Heather to Roger stands out as it breaks from the expected mode of having a female-voiced operating system. It contrasts with *A Machine to See With*, which has had both male and female voiced versions, but never has both in one production.

Before changing into Roger, Heather tells the experiencer that Roger is "me as well. Even though sometimes Roger will claim otherwise." The switch—or "metamorphosis"—between the

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[71] Many users try to figure out different things to ask Siri that give a comedic (and often dry) response. There are many lists online of things to ask her, such as "Are you Samantha?" (a reference to the operating system in *Her*). When asked, Siri responds "No. She is a fictional construct, whereas I am a virtual entity. But we can still be friends." Another question that has been going viral in the summer of 2015 is "What is zero divided by zero?" to which Siri responds, "Imagine that you have zero cookies and you split them evenly among zero friends. How many cookies does each person get? See? It doesn't make sense. And Cookie Monster is sad that there are no cookies, and you are sad that you have no friends."

two is audible for the experiencer. Heather begins stating "I am Heather." She repeats this statement a number of times as her voice distorts—becoming deeper—and her name slowly contorts into Roger's. Once Roger's voice takes over, he disagrees with some of Heather's earlier statements and promises, including her claim that they are the same entity. Roger refutes this by stating, "I am not Heather. Although Heather has claimed otherwise." He wants us to forget what has come before, to move beyond our past and only move forward with his narrative. The tension between Heather and Roger plays with which voice—if either—we are likely to trust. We spend much of the production following Heather's lead and are now suddenly expected to follow another voice who claims to be an entirely different entity. While we are used to automated female voices on our mobile devices, do we automatically trust a male voice more? Or do we somehow trust what we have become familiar with? Or does this moment reveal that we should never trust such systems? Perhaps Heather was telling the truth, but if she is indeed Roger that means she—as Roger—is now lying to us.[72]

We have no way of showing our reaction to this shift as the experiencer cannot interact with Heather/Roger. The production's format makes it ostensibly a work with only this one-way relationship—Heather/Roger continually gives directions while the experiencer never speaks to the system or other spectators. Yet, the content of the piece continually emphasises the agency and potential impact of each experiencer. Throughout the production, the individual experiencer is placed in various relations with other humans. The most prominent is the whole group

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[72] Kaegi also points out that different types of voices have been used in the various cities and that "it's so different how people respond to different voices." For example, in the British version the male voice—named Peter—reminded Kaegi of a school teacher. While the Brazilian female voice sounded peaceful and older, the French female voice sounded young and alluring (Personal interview). Interestingly, the role of Samantha (the operating system) in *Her* was recast in post-production from actress Samantha Morton to Scarlett Johansson as director Spike Jonze felt Morton's voice did not fit the final piece (Eggertsen).

relationship—which Heather evokes when she continually refers to the group as a "horde." She notes that almost all of our genetic makeup is the same—that we are not that different from one another even though we try to be unique. Yet, although Heather declares the group is a single, united "horde," she continually undermines herself even after making this declaration. Early in the production, when the experiencers are in the opening location of Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery, Heather suggests that the "horde" designation may be tenuous as "Everyone walks in the same direction, but they do so in their own way." At various moments, she goes further in pitting members of the horde against one another. For example, at one point she has everyone race and try to beat out the others in the horde.

The production includes another audience configuration with the introduction of "herds." Mid-way through the experience, the group enters a building lobby. Together, they stand across from a room length mirror and look at the entire horde. After getting everyone to take out their cameras and make a "memory" of this moment, Heather splits the group into three smaller sub-groups. The experiencer is told that "This is not your horde anymore. But your herd." Each of these herds leaves separately, at staggered intervals. As each group either leaves or watches another group leave, they listen to separate audio that emphasizes the importance of their own herd and their separation from the rest of the horde. The first herd to leave is told that they are "part of an elite. You have to be the first to explore what comes next." The two remaining herds, on the other hand, are told that this group thinks "they are the elite. But actually they are just the patrol that is risking their lives for you . . . They don't belong to you anymore." When the herds all reassemble part way through the performance at NYU's gym, they are still told that they are separate—that they are unique and more special than the others. Like the continual pitting of the

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individual against the horde, Heather places the herds in opposition to one another, telling each that it is more important than the other two.

Heather/Roger's constant shifting between situating the experiencer as an individual and as part of an amorphous "horde" or "herd" gives her narrative voice a slipperiness—it is unclear whether we can trust what she says from one moment to the next. At times, this creates a somewhat humourous tone, as our expectations are toyed with. For me, these moments of humour worked to disrupt my expectations and thus aligned with theories of an intermedial politics of perception. The experiencer mentioned above—who found the more instructive moments bothersome—had a similar reaction. She found that "the more surprising/subversive or humorous, the more space opened up . . . I never felt I was being told how to react. I just reacted and found myself engaged and thinking, even later." In other moments, the continual switching and playing of experiencers off of one another had a darker tone.

This shifting between a lighter, playful tone and a more sinister one continues with another of Heather's societal divisions: that of the horde against those who are not a part of the experience. As the group waits for the correct subway train on the platform, Heather makes comments as other trains come and go. When a train arrives, she states "Damn. The other side wins. Their train is arriving first", which positions the horde as being against the other travellers. When the train rolls out of the station, the duality of her personality comes to the forefront. She calls after them, "Bye bye. Safe journey. Go to hell. You don't belong to us"—a moment that was simultaneously humourous and disturbing. Once on the train heading from Brooklyn to Manhattan, her playful side comes through more strongly as she leads the horde in a flash mob type situation. She has everyone bend down to tie their shoelaces at the same time. This moment

is again meant to signal that the horde knows something the other train passengers do not—something that unites them and sets them apart.

This state of being together and apart simultaneously relates back to the mixed reality format. Farman notes that while we use mobile technologies to connect with one another, these very devices "typically resist group involvement: it is difficult for a crowd to gather around a mobile phone screen to share in a common experience. However, crowds frequently use their *own* mobile phones (designed in fact for individual consumption) to connect in common experiences" ("Historicizing" 18-19). Farman goes on to note that this state of being both separate and part of the crowd complicates assumed separations between presence and absence, and proximity and distance. In *Remote New York*, these seeming binaries work in tandem, embodying the both-and nature of the intermedial experience. The experiencer is both present in the whole group and absent from it as they connect on an individual level to Heather/Roger. The same can be said of distance. While physically close, the audio separates the individuals from one another at various points, while connecting them at others. Kaegi admits this is a goal of the work, as the piece appears to be about intimacy—both within the herds and in the relationship between the experiencer and the voice—yet the voice continually emphasizes its own attempt to personalize impersonal experiences (Personal interview).

By constantly destabilizing the experiencer's sense of location and identity, Rimini Protokoll's score acknowledges how moving and acting together can be full of tensions and failures. In his article "Participatory Promises," Kenn Watt argues that the political power of participatory art may be found less in concrete political statements or dreams of "ideological unanimity" than in moments of antagonism (40). He finds that, particularly in the wake of

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Occupy, there is more interest in "the powers of assemblage and network rather than ideological unanimity" (39). *Remote New York*'s continual pull between the inability to truly be individual and the inevitable failure of creating a cohesive whole reflects this kind of practice of "assemblage." Though utilizing a top-down score with a single voice, the production points to multiple ways we experience space, technology and one another in urban environments—and how these various modes of being rub against one another. The horde plays with the power of working together as a group, crossing in the middle of the street and taking over different locations. Yet, this feeling of togetherness does not mean that the group completely melds into a singular unit. As Heather informs us "You can get as close to each other as possible but you can never melt into something bigger and become invisible. You have to be individual. You have to be independent. Although you want to belong together."

Remote New York mirrors how movements like Occupy, while singular in many ways, also subvert the expectation that social causes need to have a unified whole behind them. In reflecting on recent protest actions, including Occupy Wall Street, Diana Taylor names embodied collective actions as 'animatives.' She notes that these actions "[take] place place in the messy and often less structured interactions among individuals. They encompass embodied, at times boisterous, contradictory and vexed behaviors, experiences and relationships . . . [and] enact a politics of massive unified presence" ("Politics"). Taylor cites Occupy Wall Street's resistance against expectations that they would have a single cause or manifesto as an example of how these animatives can work. Occupy's embodied actions may have had a unity of movement; however, they did not negate the heterogeneity among participants.

While the *Remote X* series takes place in a number of locations, for the New York version

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it was difficult not to be haunted by Occupy as the movement started near the production's end

point. Occupy's repertoire of protest—influenced by actions that came before it and now part of

the fabric of contemporary activist practices—comes to the fore as experiencers go through the

motions of assembling and fighting for their objects. Though the objects themselves differ, the

group moves as one and traverses roads as protesters would do. This acting out of protest actions

shares similarities with *A Machine to See With*'s rehearsal of risk. In this case, it has the potential

to rehearse group choreographies. When the horde is looking out on the streetscape, imagining it

as a theatre, Heather asks who the choreographer is. Of course, there is no single choreographer

for the everyday actions the group is witnessing—learned through social cues and life

experiences. Once the horde goes out into this world, however, Heather emerges as a

choreographer who directs experiencers to become protesters and take to the streets.

Dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster notes that participants in social movements learn their

parts by physically putting their bodies into situations in order to exercise corporeal techniques.

She states that this does not mean there is a mind-body divide. Rather, "the process of creating

political interference calls forth a perceptive and responsive physicality that, everywhere along

the way, deciphers the social and then choreographs an imagined alternative" (412). Recounting

her own experience at protests against the Iraq War in 2003, Foster recalls walking down the

street, rubbing up against other bodies:

> We are reading each others' differences, apprehending the disjointedness of the
>
> body politic that marks our distinctive histories; yet we are moving shoulder to
>
> shoulder together down the street . . . We are not throwing power off or away in
>
> order to be free. Nor do we believe, cynically, that nothing can be done. Our very

presence as protestors is evidence of our belief in the possibility of instigating

change. (411-12)

Though outside of a specific protest setting, *Remote New York* takes experiencers through a choreography of protest. My own feeling of silliness about my object choice was overcome by the fun and joy that came from walking as part of the horde and taking over city spaces in ways that were unexpected for a theatre experience. Coming from a North American background, which seemingly has consent forms any time there is the hint of danger within a performance score, the very act of confidently crossing New York streets against the walk signal felt like a small moment of transgression. My experience of walking in the piece was also haunted by my own recent involvement on the strike lines at York University—a month-long action that had only ended the day before my trip to New York. I had just spent day after day walking—often in intense cold—fighting for a cause, with very specific goals in my mind. Just four days after the strike's final rally, I was again walking with a group, on the street (though one with decidedly less aggressive drivers). Without a clear goal or cause to walk for, I was left wondering what this act meant in the long term.

Much like walking up to the bank in *A Machine to See With*, taking on the role of the protester had me playing at doing a radical action while connected to my mobile device and other experiencers. Building off of Sidney Tarrow's concept of a 'cycle of contention', Larry Bogad argues that within social movements repertoires of contention need to continually develop and alter (20-22). While neither *A Machine to See With* nor *Remote New York* was directly connected to a particular social cause or movement, each worked through corporeal, digitally supported actions that have the potential to haunt our future movements—to act as traces that inform our

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tactics as we fight for different possibilities within our current world. In the case of *Remote New York*, it also functioned as a space for reflection on my own recent actions, on the sudden break from moving with the same group through space on a daily basis to going back to my day-to-day routines. Returning to a choreography I had so recently been familiar with was a jarring experience—one that pointed to how much it remained in my body and to how much I had already moved on—begging the question of how to keep this corporeality in my day-to-day relationship with space and others.

EPILOGUE

FROM MODELS TO REPERTOIRES:

PERFORMING "OUR TIME"

Throughout this dissertation I have looked at a diverse range of performances—from interventions in video games to mobile phone walking tours to theatre productions that use social media. In contrast to the dominant narrative of intermedial theatre studies, when analyzing these examples I have situated intermediality as a political rather than solely aesthetic mode. By explicitly connecting intermedial approaches to political performance—and acknowledging how these two concepts are already always conjoined—this dissertation has worked to expand how we might think about intermediality as a lens that covers digital practices as both form and content. I have also considered the value, challenges and dangers of asking spectators to interact with performers and digital tools in order to model new modes of political engagement, and questioned how various artistic choices impact the ways that audiences are activated through these new technologies. As my examples range in form, content and location, this dissertation has traversed numerous intermedial modes and political topics—a multitude of approaches that challenge any singular or simple understanding of how intermediality functions in contemporary theatre and performance.

While I have included critiques of various artistic approaches in this dissertation, I am more interested in using these critiques to open up questions about how users might engage with digital tools in relation to political causes and activist aims than in coming to any definitive answers. Much of this discourse depends on specific contexts and historical moments, rather than the technologies themselves, which makes this form of performance fluid and subject to continual change. As Jonathan Crary notes, these rapid changes make writing about approaches

to new media challenging. He argues that "books and essays written on 'new media' only five years ago are already outdated [which] is particularly telling, and anything written with the same goal today will become dated in far less time" (38-39). In response to this state, Crary proposes looking less at particular technologies and focusing instead on "how the rhythms, speeds, and formats of accelerated and intensified consumption are reshaping experience and perception" (38-9).

One of the ways that these modes are impacting on "experience and perception" is through the increasing integration of new media into everyday political performances. While my dissertation has highlighted myriad ways that performance makers engage digital tools to point to how audiences *might* engage politically, users are also already engaging with new technologies to perform in political causes. For example, in recent years, new digital tools and spaces have impacted modes of political organizing and communication. Within Canada, the Idle No More movement has underlined how participatory media is altering political protest practices as users connect to one another in both actual and virtual spaces. The movement uses the hashtag #idlenomore on social media sites to spread news, organize events and champion political causes. In addition, hashtags have been used to promote specific days of action, such as #J11 (January 11) and #J28 (January 28). The main Idle No More website and their Facebook and Twitter pages have also become spaces for educating and organizing.

While the examples in this dissertation all connect to ways web users engage with digital tools in everyday practice, the questions I raise could be explicitly opened up to address examples that are primarily acts of political activism—created outside of institutional frameworks—rather than artistic products. This pivots away from looking at performance as an aesthetic object and towards investigating its potential as a mode of social critique. I opened this

dissertation with the example of *Summer Spectacular,* a theatre production that took place in the sticky, hot height of summer. In order to investigate how performance as an everyday practice also engages with intermedial approaches, I turn now to an event that in many ways seems diametric to this production. Yet, like *Summer Spectacular,* it involves a fusion of different, simultaneous modes of intermediality and an open score that can be altered according to user interest.

As mentioned at the end of Chapter Four, for almost all of March 2015 York University's unionized graduate and sessional instructors and researchers (myself included) were outside on strike, performing the rituals of organized protest. Like other large-scale political events, much of the strike's content and sharing took place online.[73] This content was distributed via a number of different sites and varied greatly from letters of support to short tweets to sharing amongst friends on social media. However, one major trend caught my attention during this time—the culture jamming responses to York's ongoing recruiting campaign "This is My Time."

The "This is My Time" campaign started in September 2012. The first version featured photographs of individual York students on each poster. Alongside the image is a line of text that envisions what this current student imagines themselves doing in the future. Examples include: "2025: My firm designs and revolutionizes household interconnectivity to create smart cities" and "2026: My solo exhibition at the Guggenheim draws international acclaim."[74] Since 2012,

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[73] My own online presence during the strike mostly involved Twitter, which due to my own exhaustion and focus on in-person duties generally included a series of retweets rather than original content. I also actively followed the hashtag #cupe3903 to stay abreast of developments when not on the picket line.

[74] While the student images have been the most prominent, the campaign has also expanded to include images of alumni and faculty, alongside descriptions of their achievements. For example, the image of a judge of the Court of Appeal for Ontario who studied at York's Osgoode Hall Law School includes the tagline "From the halls of Osgoode to Canada's halls of justice."

these advertisements have appeared throughout the Greater Toronto Area in a number of locations, including on transit and in newspapers. The campaign also became a visible presence at the university, with immense banners of the campaign covering the prominent central entrance of Vari Hall on the Keele campus. The campaign was developed by the advertising firm ds+p, which won several awards for their work on it. According to the Cassie awards assessment of the project, the campaign was created in order to increase recruitment at a time when York was dealing with low application numbers and enrollment, and an image problem due to the previous CUPE strike in 2008 and ongoing questions of safety on campus. While the main goals of the campaign were to improve York's reputation and increase the number of applicants, the report also notes that "A softer objective was to instill a greater sense of pride in York's students, faculty and staff" ("York University").

Upon news that York had approved an extension of the campaign—as well as an increase from the initial $1 million spent on it to $2 million for the 2014-15 year—York's campus newspaper, *Excalibur*, addressed whether this "greater sense of pride" had actually been achieved. News editor Ashley Glovasky interviewed a number of students about the campaign and found that several had critiques of it. These included that the advertisements failed to give an accurate sense of what the university is like and that the money spent on the campaign should have been used to address the issues that had affected York's reputation in the first place, such as on-campus security. The responses reveal a disconnect between the brand of futurity proposed by the "This is My Time" campaign and the everyday realities faced by students. This chasm relates back to Cynthia Kaufman's critiques of a "vanguardist framework"—as discussed in Chapter Three—which focuses on utopian visions of the future but fails to consider immediate social issues. While the Cassies report argues that the campaign is "aspirational" and "about making a

positive contribution to the world", the focus is on the individual with quantifiable markers of success. Jen Harvie argues that this promotion of the individual is a function of neoliberal capitalism and a dangerous one as it "contributes enormously to the depravations of many" (80). Harvie claims that placing emphasis on individual worth overlooks the importance of support networks and further extends existing inequalities (81).

It is this sense of individualism and marketable success that the CUPE protesters and undergraduate students subverted through their appropriation of the campaign during the 2015 strike. One widely circulated series of images took on the university's Board of Governor's and Secretariat's business records. This series altered the "This is My Time" tagline to "This is My Crime" and featured information about individual members' connections to questionable international business practices. Another popular image took on the university's president, Mamdouh Shoukri. In the image, Shoukri appears with a cloak, evoking the image of the evil Emperor Palpatine from the *Star Wars* films. The tagline plays on one of Palpatine's famous lines, stating "2015: I will crush CUPE's little rebellion; their faith in their friends is their weakness."

Other responses did not target individuals or have such overt political aims. These include the image of an old man and the tagline "2056: I graduate"—a playful response to classes being suspended during the strike. This was not the only image that focused on challenges undergraduate students face. In opposition to the utopic statements from the actual campaign, a number of appropriations included more depressing imagined futures, such as "2023: I will be starting my career with entry level customer service jobs with random midsize companies, while struggling to pay off my OSAP [Ontario Student Assistance Program] loans." The "this is my time" slogan also bled into in-person, day-to-day strike activities through signs at marches and

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rallies. Popular uses of the slogan at such events included "This is our time", "'This is my time' for supporting teaching and graduate assistants" and the question "Whose time is it?" The slogan's focus on individualism was also explicitly taken up by film students who formed the CUPE 3903 video collective and produced a satirical video entitled "This is our time."

Throughout the March 2015 strike, the "This is My Time" campaign morphed into a score that people could appropriate and perform in different ways.[75] The tagline became open for adaptation—though many responses explicitly used the campaign to enact a polyvocal ideal that had been subsumed by the individualism of the advertisement. The distribution of this tagline to both online and in-person protest spaces highlights a form of enacted and fluid intermediality. While this dissertation has focused on how artists utilize digital tools to connect audiences to political issues, such approaches from activists and users who do not self-identify as artists could also be considered through this lens. As social media evolves—and other forms of connection come into play—it will be important to consider how users take up digital tools to perform politically, both in everyday contexts and in relation to large-scale political events like users did during the CUPE strike.

In my introduction, I discuss Christopher Balme's argument that, within the theatre, it is increasingly ridiculous to hierarchize the live and mediatized or situate them in competition. He

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[75] This form of visual, online activism—which has roots in non-digital forms of culture jamming from the late twentieth-century—connects to other examples of digital engagement from political events in recent years. For example, the Occupy movement was spearheaded by the Adbusters Media Foundation, a group known for its magazine *Adbusters*, which is full of culture jamming images. While *Adbusters* still exists in a traditional magazine format, much of the organization and visual content connected to Occupy has been shared through online sites like Meetup, Facebook and Twitter. Yet the role that online forums play in protest events remains contentious. Bernard E. Harcourt and W.J.T. Mitchell co-edited and contributed to the book *Occupy: Three Inquiries in Disobedience*; however, they have very different takes on what participation means in mediatized environments. Harcourt argues that it is impossible to "occupy" anything when physically removed from the central Occupy sites—a sentiment that dismisses the work of anyone reporting on or adding to Occupy dialogue remotely (55). In contrast, Mitchell envisions contemporary protest space as three-fold, encompassing the "bodily immediacy, site specificity, and intimate proximity" of in-person meetings, the "extended social space made possible by social media" and "the amplification and reproduction of the social media by mass broadcast media" (110).

claims that the two concepts are "entirely symbiotic" and "imbricated into one another" (90). This way of thinking about intermediality—as inherently "both-and"—can also be extended to performance in the everyday as situating on- and offline political engagement as separate and competing falls into the same traps Balme addresses in relation to theatre. The "my time" memes exemplify how this form of intermediality bleeds into performance as a mode of social critique as web users and protesters adjusted the slogan and campaign to suit their own political goals.

When bridging this conversation over from examples of theatre productions and specific artistic interventions towards everyday engagement with digital tools, a number of questions emerge, including: How is the work of digitally engaged artists impacting quotidian repertoires of political performance? How do digital interventions interact with other forms of political performance? How do citizens use digital tools to perform politically within the everyday? How does digital political performance impact on the circulation of political power and representation? These topics shift the conversation from the remediation of technology through artistic means to a taking up of various technologies in relation to ongoing modes of social change—from experiments that model modes of political engagement to everyday moments of enactment and performance.

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