

Mapping Intermediality in Performance

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Temporality

Sarah Bay-Cheng

Theatre is perhaps the first and most enduring time-based art. Indeed, for Aristotle, the compression of dramatic time – “to exist during a single daylight period” – was one of the distinguishing characteristics between the form of tragedy and epic poetry (Aristotle 1970, 24). Although the emergence of Happenings and other performance art of the 1960s and 1970s drew new attention to the manipulation of time in performance (perhaps most famously in John Cage’s silent durational work, 4’33”), theatre and drama had long bent the dimension of time into a range of performance conventions. Photography and cinema made such manipulations of time newly visible to the observer, while playwrights devised techniques to convey past occurrences, memories, and simultaneous events. These experiments suggest an early twentieth-century proto-digital foundation, in which the concepts that inform current digital technology and networks first appeared via photography, cinema, and theatre. For example, theatre historian John Fell notes that melodrama functioned as a precursor to cinematic temporality: a “main structural problem confronted by melodrama was that of simultaneity. The stories turned so often on coincidental appearances of characters at unexpected times and on rescues in the face of imminent danger that staging had to facilitate two or more playing areas at the same time” (Fell 1970, 27). When Michel Foucault identified the postmodern period as “the epoch of simultaneity” and juxtaposition, he articulated the emergence of a condition (*per* Lyotard) that had its roots in early twentieth-century theatre.

Foucault, of course, was responding to earlier instabilities of time as articulated in Henri Bergson’s considerations of duration and his designations of “pure time” as opposed to “mathematical time” (cf. Bergson 1910). Whereas classical theory conceived of time as progressive and linear, modernist and later postmodern theory fashioned it as a kind of constellation, or as Gilles Deleuze later called it, a rhizome. Such time-bendings followed new developments in theoretical physics, first by Albert Einstein and later by Max Planck and theorists of quantum mechanics. These theoretical advances transformed the conceptions of time and space from fixed entities into dynamic, responsive systems. Such transformations affected domains from philosophy and mathematics (cf. Edmund Husserl) to psychology (cf. William James). Later advances in technology would bear out these philosophical assessments of time and its relation to technology. Paul Virilio (1995), for example, cites the rise of time-sharing and real-time networks, such as linking the computer and telephone, to create the basis for present-day telematics (→ TERM: TELEMATICS).

Such technologies, even those of the mechanical pre-digital era, affected notions of time and perception. Philip Auslander in his influential *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (1999) argues that live performance emerged not as a condition of physical proximity and co-presence (though this is a common usage), but as a correlate of time. Specifically, he cites the invention of broadcast and recording technologies. Although the radio was first a technology to bridge a spatial gap – listening to a musical performance in one’s living room instead of a concert hall – recordings spanned a temporal dimension as well. One could listen to a recorded Friday-night concert on Saturday. Identifying this temporal confusion as a “crisis”, Auslander thus locates the origin of liveness: “The response to this crisis was a terminological distinction that attempted to preserve the formerly clear dichotomy between two modes of performance, the live and the recorded, a dichotomy that had been so self-evident up to that point that it did not even need to be named” (Auslander 2002, 17). Similarly, Lev Manovich draws clear parallels between cinematic, temporal montage (a composite of multiple images in a single moment in time) and digital compositing. Noting the pervasive shifts in modern conceptions of temporality, Manovich notes that digitization – the transformation of media into data – was part of a much larger project of “cultural transcoding” (→ TERM: TRANSCODING) in which new media act as a precursor for a “more general process of cultural reconceptualization” (Manovich 2001, 47). Mark Hansen further explores this reconceptualisation of time, space, and the body in his influential *New Philosophy for New Media* (2004). In particular, Hansen explores how non-perceptual neurological duration correlates to new “machine time” made visible in media art (→ INSTANCE: GRANULAR SYNTHESIS).

From the Ontology of Space to the Performance of Time

Perhaps most radically, performance theorist Alice Rayner describes the shift from material performance into cyberspace as one from the ontology of space to the performance of time. In her essay “E-scapes: Performance in the Time of Cyberspace”, Rayner notes the ways “in which performance aligns with digital technologies to resist landscapes and geometric space, and to resituate space in the fugitive dimension of time” (Rayner 2002, 350-51). For Rayner, performance in cyberspace occupies no place, but rather ontologically exists only in a time, the perpetual now. In this sense, time is the most dynamic and yet most intractable element of digital theatre and performance. While the notion of time has always been a fluid one, in the “new temporality” of digital media (as Manovich calls it), theorists have positioned time in digital culture as many things simultaneously: constructed (Lyotard), digitally compressed (Dixon and Smith), regressive (Baudrillard), elongated (Virilio) and annihilated (Huyssen). For his part, Manovich traces the evolving temporality in digital media to Sergei Eisenstein’s experiments in cinematic montage which followed a similar pattern to radio: changing from spatial montage (the first use of the cut in early cinema) to temporal or rhythmic

montage, in which the very same edits could be used to create not only the simultaneity that D.W. Griffith developed from melodrama in his parallel editing, but also a new cinematically dependent rhythm that articulated a space and time exclusive to the cinematic experience. This dependence on mediated time would recur in digital art and performances in which, as Anne-Marie Duguet notes, “Time emerged not only as a recurrent theme but also as a constituent parameter of the very nature of an artwork” (cited in Rush 2005, 12). Chiel Kattenbelt in his essay “The Role of Technology in the Art of the Performer” argues further that the presence of recording technologies – both video and audio – disrupt the traditional reception of time and space, such that, “The expansion of the principles of the theatrical imagination through the use of live video and recorded sound can be characterised most concisely as a temporalisation of space and a spatialisation of time” (Kattenbelt 2006, 24). Kattenbelt grounds this shift in his reading of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, specifically Kant’s notion that “different times are not simultaneous but sequential (just as different spaces are not sequential but simultaneous)” (qtd., Kattenbelt 2006, 24). In the experience of digital media on stage, Kattenbelt’s formulation of Kant suggests that time adheres to spatial properties as juxtaposition, while space becomes temporal and sequential. Akin to the synaesthesia embraced by the historical avant-garde, such confusions of temporality and ontologically disruptions of space thus become essential to our understanding of contemporary performance practices and their responses to digital media.

Ironically (and rarely noted by contemporary critics), the temporality of performance and its response to the change in technologies was perhaps first considered in detail by Gertrude Stein in her 1934 lecture, “Plays”. Drawing on her early training with William James and his investigations into perceptions of time, Stein articulated her theory of the “continuous present” in relation to drama. In particular, she described the theatre and its manipulation of time as creating a sensation of “nervousness” due to its syncopation with the individual viewing experience. This nervousness, she wrote, “has perhaps to do with the fact that the emotion of the person at the theatre is always behind and ahead of the scene at the theatre but not with it” (Stein 1935, 103). Stein traced this experience of temporal syncopation to the cinema. Although she claimed “never to go to the cinema or hardly ever”, Stein argued that the cinema was trying to solve the problem of modern time; that is, how to create art and performance in “the actual present, that is the complete actual present” (Stein 1935, 104-105). In this sense, Stein’s approach resonates with Henri Bergson’s spatialisation of time, and perhaps even more closely with Rayner’s articulation of cyberspace as the perpetual *now* of time without space. In Stein’s own plays, this meant articulating a temporal stasis that was nevertheless imbued with action – a duration of now in word play to replace the syncopated dramatic time and action. In digital contexts, temporality – which had originally referred to time as within the sphere of human life and the material

world, that is, terrestrial as opposed to heavenly – came to represent a displacement of material space. No longer based in linear progression, external measures, and materiality, time in digital contexts evolved into a dynamic, dispersed, yet coherent network of temporal points – a time that could encompass, as noted by Foucault, many different points simultaneously; what Stein might have recognised as a further realisation of the continuous present.

New Temporalities of Theatre

It is not hard to find dramatic examples (and postdramatic, to cite Hans-Thies Lehmann) beyond Stein. Samuel Beckett and Heiner Müller in particular deploy radical reconceptualisations of time in their writing. In Beckett's case, the permeability of time finds an outlet in the technological (though analog) apparatus, as in *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), a revisiting of the past played simultaneously in the present (and, it must be noted, inspired by a BBC radio broadcast from 1957). Indeed, Beckett's play relies on the recording device to create the construction of memory invoked by Bergson. Bergson's description of memory is striking for its notion of simultaneity and his technological metaphor. In his chapter, "Of the Survival of Images. Memory and Mind", he writes that in act of memory "we detach ourselves from the present moment in order to replace ourselves, first in the past in general, then in a certain region of the past – a work of adjustment, something like focussing a camera" (Bergson 1911, 77). Beckett read Bergson, and as others have argued, he drew on notions of time from Marcel Proust in much the same way that Deleuze would decades later. And yet, Beckett's attention to the singularity of the individual, of the particular, even when used to represent potentially larger groups follows the model of modernist time.

To understand these relations among different temporal constructs better, it may be best to start with the classical notion of time as a line, one that extends horizontally and progressively. This model is replaced by a modernist, Steinian/Bergsonian notion of time in which the horizontal line is replaced by a vertical stack, in which any particular moment in time is suffused by the past, present, and future simultaneously. Einstein's theories of relativity rejected the notion of an absolute time; emphasizing only dynamic, subjective relationships. Lehmann describes this development as the "loss of the time frame" (Lehmann 2006, 155, original emphasis). Although theatre artists such as Robert Wilson drew on Stein's theories for his own postmodern theatre (using her notion of the continuous present in particular to justify the extended duration of his theatrical actions), this is fundamentally a modernist temporality, one rooted in individual subjectivity. One need only adjust one's perception "like the focussing of a camera" as Bergson suggests, or replay a moment as Krapp does, to explore the past and future in the present moment.

The temporalities of the network similarly draw from this notion of the simultaneous, continuous present, but whereas the modernist conception relied on a

singular consciousness in a moment of time, the postmodern, networked model draws not from a single perspective or memory, but from many multiple points simultaneously. As Deleuze points out in his imagery of the rhizome, there is no centre, no fixed point of entry and no singular consciousness to adjust (just as the camera has given way to digital imagery without a singular point of reference). The experience of time, the new temporality, is one of many simultaneous experiences and memories capable of being stored and accessed in random order, just as a computer deploys RAM, or random access memory, as the essence of data cognition. It is this change in processing structures – random instead of linear; simultaneous instead of sequential – that thus reorders time in digital media and changes our perception of past, present, and future. Beckett’s fascination with tape was, after all, a fixation on an analog technology, but the contemporary Krapp can access not only the moments of his own recorded memory, but also everyone else’s.

This change in temporalities came slowly to theatre, seemingly decades after philosophy, art, and cinema had engaged new temporal modes of expression. Although integrating mediated images in theatrical performance was nothing new, these techniques followed older conventions such as simultaneous actions in melodrama and linear memory and flashbacks, as in Tennessee Williams’ proto-cinematic suggestion of a screen in the opening to *The Glass Menagerie* (1944). Performance in the theatre had always been a linear, temporal experience, one explicitly defined by the performance’s duration. As Lehmann observes, “The real time of live performance ... overdetermines all theoretically distinguishable levels of time” (Lehmann 2006, 153-54). It was this overdetermined, seemingly inescapable temporality that art critic Michael Fried disdained in his assessment of theatre as “the negation of art” (Fried 1998, 153) and theatre seemed little able to escape it. Even early explorations of new media and telematics in performance seemed temporally constrained. George Coates’ 1994 *Nowhere NowHere*, for example, used live feeds from webcams at multiple global locations seemingly to pass a ball from screen to screen, thus confusing the sense of space. But this confusion of space inherently depended on the unification of potentially disparate time without either disrupting the viewer’s sense of time or even acknowledging the time differences among the different locations. Performance, it seemed, would always follow a temporality determined by its duration.

Against such immutabilities, playwrights sought to subvert duration. Heiner Müller, for example, de-centres his human subject to allow for a more expansive conception of time and space. As Jonathan Kalb describes it,

Müller’s dissolving of dramatis personae results not merely from the historically shrinking significance of the singly human subject. It has to do much more, for him, with the reconnaissance of regions in which time, logic, space do not function, in which the subject does not experience itself as centered but

rather as a contradictory imaginary *landscape* (Kalb 1998, 171, original emphasis).

This concept of the landscape (another concept derived from Stein) offered a potential model for the rethinking of theatrical relations between time and space. Theatre groups following the example of the landscape thus attempted to spatialise time, using a variety of techniques designed to materialise time itself visible as an aesthetic object. Lehmann points to a number of these techniques in his *Postdramatic Theatre*, noting particularly Wilson's extension of time (what Wilson calls "natural time" after the speed of imperceptible changes in nature, but which Lehmann calls "non-natural" time for its extremely slow motion); the use of repetition in performance; the time-image (adapted from Deleuze's theory of cinema) in which an image forces the viewer into his or her own memories and thus requires an individual construction of time; and simultaneity, the perception of disparate actions or events in a single moment in time. In spite of techniques that draw attention to the temporality of theatre, it is unclear how performance itself might work its way out from under its overarching duration.

Conclusion: Performance in Networked Time

The answer may not come from performance that relies on a mutual simultaneous experience of an assembled audience in spatial proximity, but from performance that is created in tension and collaboration with an audience disparately assembled in different space and times and therefore outside of time; an audience constructed through the digital network of augmented realities connected through mobile technologies and alternative non-environments such as Second Life. If we return to Rayner's description of cyberspace, we see that the no-place of online digital environments becomes the unceasing time of *now*, the spatialisation of time as all-encompassing location. As she points out, cyber-temporality is always in the present moment. This present moment, like the continuous present and the rhizome, is enduring beyond any one individual experience of the moment. To put it in terms of the interface: the internet structure is 'there' when I log on and when I log off. My time online may register outside of the computer, but digital access means that anything created within its parameters is automatically subsumed into the constant now of RAM. The past is as accessible as (and perhaps indistinguishable from) the present and it behaves the same way temporally; its time depends only on the strength of my online connection. Theatre and performance in this context do not rely on conventional notions of duration and as such are not created in time (or real-time as is often required to distinguish between relays, delays and lags – not unlike Auslander's live radio transmission), but rather culled from time. This is the new temporality that digital media, networks, and connectivity offers and it is a formulation of time with which emerging forms of intermediality in theatre and performance must engage.

Spatiality

Birgit Wiens

Since the early twentieth century, space has occupied an important status in theatre studies, with Peter Brook's (1968) seminal definition of the empty space as a landmark in the ensuing debate. Since Brook, theatre and performance scholars have recognised the importance of space and spatial relationships in re-conceptualising theatre as a performative phenomenon, and theorists have developed a more precise vocabulary to discuss the multiple dimensions of the way space figures in performance. Notions of space and spatiality are used to refer not only to theatre buildings and stages (as "empty space"), but also as integral and, at times, determining, components of performative processes. Indeed, space is now seen to function as an "active agent" and co-player in theatre events (McAuley 1999, 41). Spatiality may be defined as interactions among: (1) theatrical space (architectural conditions of theatre); (2) stage, or scenic space (set design, scenography); (3) place of performance (the local, sociocultural context); and (4) dramatic space (spatial designs as evoked by the dramatic or postdramatic text, libretto, choreography etc.) (cf. Balme 2008, 48f.). The critical discourses of the 20th century broke open essentialist concepts of space and, over time, the modern relativisation of space gave way to the postmodern discourse on deconstruction and spatialisation.

In recent years, however, new spatial models have revised conceptions of theatrical space. At the turn of the 21st century, digital media and global communication networks heralded a new spatial turn. The exponential increase of interconnections and real-time contacts between individuals and societies that are spatially, even geographically, apart from each other leads to new concepts of, and experiences within, actual and virtual spaces. These developments pose a challenge for contemporary theatre that has made new connections by allowing the virtual qualities of other spaces, transmitted via digital media, to appear onstage. As Christopher Balme notes: "The possibilities of integrating live radio, television or even internet links into stage action suggest that the question of stage space will become an important area of experimentation in the coming years" (2008, 56, original emphasis). Indeed, a new type of stage, the *intermedial stage*, has emerged, affording an exciting field of theatre practice and research.

Theatre Spaces and Media Variations: a Sketch History

At the beginning of the 20th century, the established concept of space changed. Notions of space as a fixed container, dating back to Isaac Newton, were revised in the wake of Einstein's insights toward dynamic and relativistic spatial concepts. This paradigm shift widely affected culture, social life and the arts: "One

should not lose sight of the fact that in the same time period that Einstein annulled absolute space, Sigmund Freud dissected human identity, the Cubists deconstructed shape and form as a whole and Ferdinand de Saussure developed his structuralist approach” (Löw 2001, 23). In the realm of theatre, it was the Swiss designer, Adolphe Appia, who in the 1910s rejected the concept of the proscenium and perspectival stage in favour of an open, kinetic space. His experiments replaced perspective image construction, static scenery, and two-dimensional backdrops with moveable elements (platforms, steps) and “scenic modules”. Electric lighting was a key innovation: instead of serving as a mere technical tool, light for the first time in theatre history was assigned an active role capable of altering the density, energy and atmosphere of spaces. The music, the actions of the performers and the changing of the lights turned the stage and its material elements into temporal, “rhythmic spaces”. Appia influenced numerous artists of the time including Max Reinhardt and the protagonists of the Bauhaus. Remarkably, in his later essays he also discussed the relationship between inner and outer spaces for the theatre: “Dramatic art has burst the frame that had held it rigid for so long, and the very concept of theatre has so expanded that it gives us vertigo and a slight feeling of anarchy” (qtd. Beacham 1994, 264). Appia was patently committed to an open art conception of theatre, for which modern technology was the catalyst: “I shall bear in mind all the different possibilities for expansion and transformation that modern technology can supply” (Beacham 1993, 140).

Not only Einstein’s insights but also early 20th-century everyday experiences with new types of mobility impacted perception. The new film medium led to new spatial experiences. It was Walter Benjamin who observed that film offers an “immense and unexpected field of action” which allows for options that transgress the “prison-world” of the space of nearness and to split these up into a “prism” of spaces through which “we undertake far and adventurous journeys” (Benjamin 1977a, 35f.). According to this formulation, space, in its capacity as communication and action space, was no longer perceived as something ‘given’ but rather as an occurrence. Propelling this change forward is the ever-increasing dissemination of the telephone as a medium that “like no other decisively forced open the formation of 20th century communication possibilities” (Münker and Roesler 2000, 12). For the first time, a medium allowed the transmission of audio/voice signals affording the sense of telepresence (→ TERM: PRESENCE). This transgression, experienced as a perforation of a stable here and now, offered a type of shock for contemporaries and was initially perceived as being frightful, or at least ambivalent. Nevertheless, in the arts, new communication forms subsequently became a hot topic. At that time, the telephone began to enter the realm of theatre and drama (cf. Jean Cocteau’s piece *La Voix Humaine*, 1930). Slide projection and film also entered scenography – for example, it became part of the “epic stage” of Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht. Based on the principle of “the separation of the elements”, their stage forms aimed to demonstrate the con-

structuredness of the world and thereby its changeability. Brecht's attempts artistically to interpret the radio not as a distribution but rather as a communication apparatus might also be noted in this context. Dynamic concepts of space thus began to transform the theatre. Later in his life, Brecht even called himself "the Einstein of the new stage form" (Fuegi 1972, 336).

Although numerous scientific and technical transformations led to shifts in the perception and interpretation of space throughout the 20th century, static spatial models remain tenacious. It was left to the neo-avant-garde to postulate that spaces (and especially places) are not determined as such, but rather are produced through performative multivectorial movement and action. Einstein's dictum "There are no fixed points in space" became a principle of experimental dance, performance art and performative installation since the 1960s (cf. Reynolds and McCormick 2003). The idea that there is not just one centre but rather a "multitude of centres" that "interfuse and penetrate each other" subsequently suggests an equal treatment of actors and audience (Cage 1981, 102). Spaces – in their complex relevance as material, corporeal as well as communication modes – turn out to be complex and dynamic components of culture and communication, in other words, they are always precondition and product at the same time.

According to Foucault, the 20th century might be defined as an "epoch of space", as "the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed" (Foucault 1986, 22). Spatialisation in the postmodern debate became a model of philosophical thinking, and the rejection of diachronic in favour of synchronic concepts of space and time became a prominent concern. The question of the media was always implicit in this debate, and at the turn of the 21st century it gained attention again with the emergence of the so-called second media transition that marked the change from analogue to digital media and its plurimedial, interconnected and newly defined virtual spaces.

Spatiality and the Intermedial Theatron

At the turn of the millennium configurations between theatre and media spaces arise as new live events (→ INSTANCE: CHRISTOPHER KONDEK). These performances comply with the established spatial and temporal conception of live theatre – performed before an audience in the here and now – but in a form that reinterprets and extends these concepts. The question of space, in certain ways, becomes neuralgic here since the traditional medial specificity of theatre barely allows questions as to the participation of other media vis-à-vis its production. Often, spaces of other media, such as those within film, are categorised as *technical reproductions* and thus incompatible with theatrical space. The conception of theatre is thus troubled by intermedial practices.

In theatre theory, though not so much in theatre practice, this spatial exclusiveness has a long tradition. There is now a controversy about to what extent media spaces can be connected with those of the theatre, as the relations among them

are rethought. Digitisation and the possibilities of interactivity allow media spaces to become dynamically inter-engaged in ways that modify understanding of the liveness criteria of real-time events (cf. Auslander 1999; Dixon 2007). Artists experiment with feedback loops (← TERM: FEEDBACK LOOP) between spaces in ways that extend the spectrum of the new stage from platforms located in real space to manifestations of cyberspace. The challenge of this approach is that it undermines established notions of real space actor-audience relations (cf. Dixon 2007, 462f.). A both-and model is, however, provided by the intermedial stage. At first sight, this platform is primarily located in real space, and from there – as a spatial configuration – it travels across different spaces, actual and virtual (→ TERM: TELEMATIC). According to this concept, 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 globalisation. As Chiel Kattenbelt puts it:

If the expression “all the world is a stage” is (or seems to be) no longer just a metaphor, but on the contrary a characteristic feature of our mediated culture, then we really do need a stage on which the staging of life can be staged in such a way that it can be deconstructed and made visible again (Kattenbelt 2006, 38).

The intermedial stage affords the exploration of performative configurations between *here* and other spaces, and experiments with simultaneous actions at different (locally or geographically separated) locations. These complex scenographies not only go beyond the bounds of theatre space in order to extend it within the local context (see Environmental Theatre and Site Specific Theatre since the 1960s) but also include what George Christoph Tholen calls the “playing space of media” (Schade and Tholen 1999, 17). In other words: the process of performance is no longer limited to the here and now, but rather transgresses local contexts and environments and playfully connects to telematic and other remote spaces (→ TERM: TELEMATIC). The space of intermediality, in this regard, is not already *there* but can only be understood as a temporal, dynamic and highly complex spatial configuration, which is created within the process of the performance.

‘Spatial Turn’: Redefining Space as a Category of Performance Analysis

Thus, the advent of the intermedial stage subjects the traditional definition of theatre to renegotiation and rethinking. The live phenomena of media spaces (virtual spaces, telespaces, networks) that emerge on stage are no longer constrained simply to the radius of the here and now. This signals a need for a fundamental

revision that is challenging some of the basic premises of the Theatre Studies discipline. Among these is the assumption that actors and audience have to be present in one location (“corporeal co-presence”), a definition applied not only to traditional forms of theatre but also to postdramatic theatre and its scenographies. For all his reconceptualising of theatre and drama, Hans-Thies Lehmann continues to define a theatre event as a “time segment in one’s life that is spent together by the actors and the audience in that *space* in which they both breathe and in which the theatre acting and the act of viewing occurs” (Lehmann 2006, 12). Meanwhile, it has been emphasised on numerous occasions that “the ontology of performance (liveness), which exists before and after mediatization, has been altered with the space of technology” (Causey 383). According to Balme, “the doctrine of media specificity...is becoming obsolete, and needs to be replaced by a more integrative concept” (2008, 205). As a consequence of this paradigm shift, the categorical ascertainment of space (and the concept of co-presence) has to be qualified. Definitions of space must be supplemented by a subcategory, *medial space*, the digitally-generated spaces in which theatre is composed.

As Dixon has pointed out, the term space in a digital context certainly includes virtual representations of space that show up on the surfaces of screens and other interfaces but is, in effect, even more varied than this. Indeed, its usages, especially in relation to the spaces of electronic communication and the Internet, are indistinct and “largely metaphoric” (2007, 462f.). Nor is it helpful simply to observe that the term “cyberspace” (Gibson 1984) has, in its short history, already undergone a remarkable change with regards to its interpretation. Far from early visions of a happy “global village” (McLuhan), more recent critical readings of electronic space conceive it as a domain of vast data transit and distribution, and of surveillance, commercialisation and exclusion. The ubiquity of the Internet in cultural and social spheres led to predictions that real space would lose its relevance vis-à-vis the virtual (cf. Paul Virilio, 1977). Following this discourse, the question of virtual space, during the last two decades of the last century, had been discussed mainly as a simulation problem. Then, at the turn of the millennium, another shift of perspectives happened. Decisive events such as 9/11 were interpreted as a collapse of the “non-geographic world view”, and since then and in contrast to the simulation hypothesis, many point to the “permanences of space”, to its materiality, to political and social impacts, and to geographic reference points (cf. Maresch 2003, 16).

These changes signal not a new essentialism, but an extension of the postmodern discourse of “spatialisation” which encompasses positions of postcolonial and gender-specific geography (cf. Edward Soja, Doreen Massey et al.) (→ TERM: DISPLACEMENT). In the meantime this perspective, inspired by Cultural Studies, has been extended by “media geography” which analyses the use and effects of media in a global and intercultural comparison (cf. Falkheimer and Jansson

2006). The underlying claim here is that the interpenetration of real and virtual spaces has to be analysed in a more differentiated manner than previous formulations allow.

Regarding the still unresolved question of space, academic Theatre Studies must attend to the “spatial turn” noted above. This means that media spaces have to be examined not only in terms of their semiotic and phenomenological characteristics, but also in terms of their technological ramifications and culture-specific usage. This affects the media tools as well as the software that is being implemented and, as far as this can be analysed, the technological infrastructure. In respect of theatre practices, a key concern is how actors and audience behave within new spatial and intermedial configurations. The challenge is really to understand the interpenetration of differently constructed spaces and the concepts engaged within them: connectivity; presence, telepresence and absence; perception and teleperception; and new performance modalities. The performativity of the intermedial theatron, in this respect, has to be analysed as a complex, heterogeneous and relational phenomenon.

