

**Biography and the Digital Double:
the Projected Image as Signifier in the *Mise en
Scène* of Live Performance**

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Introduction

This research report will take as its subject the role of the projected image in the *mise en scène* of live performance. Having a background in graphic design and animation, my involvement in live performance began around seven years ago with the creation of video projections for dance performances. What was initially a hermetic practice – with my concern being the content of the projections alone – evolved to finding ways in which the projections might become more integrated with the live elements of these performances and to begin questioning the conceptual underpinnings of the relationship between these two media. This ultimately led me to a formal course of study, the result of which will be presented in this report. Having no formal training in the dramatic or performing arts, my natural inclination was to approach this study from a scenic design perspective. Taking into account that what I would be investigating were not static visual elements, but dynamic ones, my focus has included the role of light, shape, movement, gesture, composition and – to a lesser degree – speech, music and sound. My interest is in how all of these elements contribute to the creation of meaning in the interaction between the live performer, the staged environment and the projected image.

Aims and Intentions

Early in his book, *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance*, Chris Salter states that “...the performing arts are really an unstable mixture amalgamating light, space, sound, image, bodies, architecture, materials, machines, code, and a perceiving public into unique spatiotemporal events.” (Salter, 2010: xxii) – a definition

which harks back to Richard Wagner's notion of the *Gesamkunstwerk*¹ (Total Artwork) and still further back to the earliest performance traditions which incorporated movement, costume, sets, props, light and sound – making them, in the most literal sense of the term, *multi-media* events . My focus in this document will be on one particular part of this 'mixture' – the role of the projected image as a signifier in live performance – or what some have billed as cross-disciplinary or *intermedia* performance. As new works are staged and new technology develops, the inclusion of the projected image in live performance is open to a potentially limitless number of permutations and an equally limitless number of potential meanings and interpretations. It is a highly evocative combining of media which - despite having first been attempted a century ago – is still ripe for further exploration and enquiry. Indeed, in a world which is becoming ever more media-saturated and media-dependent, I would argue that the meeting of live performance and the projected image is more relevant now than at any other time in our past. Steve Dixon, in *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance Performance Art and Installation*, defines what he terms 'digital performance' (which I will be equating with intermedia performance in general) as "...an additive process. New technology is *added* to performance, a new ingredient that is delicious for some but unpalatable for others. In digital performance, extra technologies are added, extra effects, extra interactions, extra prostheses and extra bodies" (Dixon, 2007: 28). This he terms the *via positiva*, in contrast to the *via negativa* of theatre directors like Jerzy Grotowski who, in the 1960s, sought to strip theatre of its excess baggage and growing tendency to compete with cinema and television and arrive at a 'poor theatre' rooted in embodied performance. Digital performance celebrates technology and the synthesis of the live and the projected, the mediatized. It belongs to the category of theatre as *spectacle*, where the visual aspect of the staged performance becomes its primary point of focus.

¹ Wagner's *Gesamkunstwerk*, or Total Artwork, was conceived by the composer in the mid-1800s as an amalgamation of several branches of the arts – including music, singing, dance, theatre, poetry, lighting and design – into a unified whole that would provide an immersive experience for its audience.

This document will detail a process of practise-based research which I have undertaken in order to explore the role of the projected image as signifier in the live performance environment, using five performance-based works which I have been involved in producing over the past five years, namely: *They Look at Me and That's All They Think* (2006), *Black!...White?* (2008), *MC Hally...and Da Boyz* (2009), *Krapp's Last Tape* (2009) and *Heaven and Hell: The Life of Aldous Huxley* (2010). The earlier works will introduce my use of what Dixon terms *the digital double* and how it may act as a signifier in the creation of meaning within the context of intermedia performance. These earlier case studies will serve as a lead-up to the later works – *Krapp* and *Huxley* – which saw a kind of resolution of my work with the double and an attempt at a movement beyond this particular paradigm.

I have included the term *biography* in the title of this report, as both *Krapp* and *Huxley* take as their central themes the recollection and recreation of personal history. The bulk of my analysis of these two works will focus on how both the digital double and other approaches to the projected image which I have employed in these performances have facilitated the recreation of history and memory – and how this in turn has served as a means to generate what Phaedra Bell terms a *dialogic exchange* between live performer and projection.

In using this series of works as case studies, my enquiry will take as its subject what Keir Elam defines as *theatre* and *drama*. Theatre, according to his definition, being: "...the complex of phenomena associated with the performer-audience transaction: that is, with the production and communication of meaning in the performance itself and with the systems underlying it", and drama: "...that mode of fiction designed for stage representation and constructed according to particular ('dramatic') conventions." (Elam, 1980: 2). Narrowing this down somewhat, I will focus on the role that the projected image plays in helping to create what Elam terms the *performance text*: that which is

produced *in* the theatre through the interaction of the elements present in the *mise en scène* of the performance². With intermedia performance being primarily based on spectacle, my emphasis will be on the role of *visual* element as signifier in these performances, with reference to music and the spoken text being made only where necessary and as an adjunct to this primary element.

Using a practice-based research method has allowed me interrogate certain theoretical models – such as Dixon’s digital double – by applying them to the production of staged works. The testing of these models through practice gave me insights which I could then translate into writing. This written work then in turn became the basis of further practice-based works. Thus, both the performance work which I have been involved in and the writing which I have produced have been the result of a dialogue between these two modes of research, one which I believe has resulted in a more thorough and rewarding research process. Theory can inform, contextualise and help to clarify practice, but in doing research within a performance-based field, it is only by engaging with the hands-on approach of *doing it* that insight can be generated off of first-hand experience.

An Explanation of Terms Used

As used in the context of this document, *the projected image* refers to any image, still or moving, that is projected via a digital, film or any other kind of projector, on to a screen, or via the screen itself, as in a television screen or computer monitor. The image itself may be a filmed, photographed or drawn image, captured from life or created as a rendering. In using the term ‘projected image’, I include the content of the projection (the image itself), the physical shape of the projection and its dimensions, as all of these constituent parts may act as signifiers and contribute to the communication of meaning (although I will specify which of the parts I will be referring to as and when necessary). Although the projected image may, and often does, include an audio element – being

² Which Elam juxtaposes against the *dramatic text*: that which is written *for* the theatre.

speech, music and incidental or synchronous sound - in this study, I will be focusing predominantly on the visual element of the projection and its relationship with both performer and the staged environment, but will refer to the audio element where necessary.

The Digital Double is a term which I have adopted from Dixon's chapter of the same name in his *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation*, and which I will present a more detailed explanation and interpretation of in Chapter 2: The Digital Double.

Throughout this report, I will be using the term *intermedia performance* as a term interchangeable with 'live performance and the projected image'.

A Note on Structure and Style

Chapter 1 will present a brief history and general overview of the field of live performance utilising projection – including some of the works from within this field in South Africa – as a means of contextualising my own practice. Throughout this chapter I will provide a type of running commentary on some of the performance works and key figures covered in it, as a means of relating these examples to my own practice.

Chapter 2 will introduce Dixon's notion of the digital double and my varied use of it in *Black!...White?*, *They Look at Me and That's All They Think*, *MC Hally...and Da Boyz* and *Krapp's Last Tape*. The chapter ends with establishing some of the limitations of Dixon's model and introduction of other relevant theoretical paradigms in Chapter 3 with Phaedra Bell's notion of dialogic exchange and Philip Auslander's exploration of *liveness* in intermedia performance.

Chapter 4 brings all of these theoretical paradigms to bear on my analysis of *Heaven and Hell: The Life of Aldous Huxley*. This chapter will also include an assessment on the

success of this theatrical work, based on critical response to it and drawing comparisons between it and the productions dealt with in Chapter 2, with particular emphasis on its relationship to *Krapp's Last Tape*.

The Conclusion will present final reflections on this research and possible directions for my personal future research in this field.

Chapter 1 / Establishing the Field

Given the spatial constraints of this report, it would be impossible to attempt a detailed account of the role which the projected image has played in live performance over the past century. Neither do I think it necessary to undertake such an in-depth history for our purposes here. What follows will therefore be a very brief orientation – a fly-through – of the major landmarks in this particular field of practice, so as to help contextualise the performance works which I will be discussing in the subsequent chapters.

This history owes much to Steve Dixon's *Digital Performance* and Chris Salter's *Entangled*, two recently published books which deal extensively with the field of performance and new media. Both are what I would consider seminal texts dealing with intermedia performance, presenting as they do comprehensive histories and overviews of the field. While the first part of the chapter presents a distilled synthesis of Dixon and Salter's histories, I have also included a section on intermedia theatre work in South Africa, so as to narrow down the context within which my own performance works were executed.

The Early Years

Reaching back into antiquity, Salter traces the emergence of the projected image in Western theatrical performance to the Greeks, with the introduction of the stage backdrop in the Theatre of Dionysius in the 5th century BC. His contention is that, while the original stage backdrop – the *skene* – was low-lying and allowed the audience to see the surrounding countryside, the raising of the backdrop obscured this view and created a frame against which the drama was seen. He states that the "...Hellenic *proscenium*, a series of columns set above the façade of the *skene* already anticipated the later sixteenth-century Italian construction of the proscenium arch, which would hence box in

and frame the theatrical stage for the next four hundred years.” (Salter, 2010: 113). I am in agreement with Salter in beginning his history of the projected image with the development of the stage backdrop as, with its ‘picture framing’ of the action on stage, it is the natural precursor of the projection screen which – despite the many attempts in the past century to break the four-sided format – has remained ubiquitous in cinema, television and theatre.

Salter also cites Javanese puppet theatre, originating around the 10th century AD, as one of the early instances of the projected image as a performance medium. Here a cotton screen formed the projection surface which was back-lit by candlelight and onto which were projected the shadows of paper puppets, manipulated by a puppeteer. This technique already allowed for a degree of sophistication, in that the puppets could be brought into sharper focus by bringing them closer to the screen, or become blurred, indistinct and eventually disappear by pulling them away from the projection surface.

What the shadow-puppet plays draw our attention to is that light – both in its presence and its absence - is the substance of the projected image and that on one level, the interaction between the corporeal and the projected is forever the interplay between the solid and the intangible. This particular dynamic has affected my own work by demarcating the projection surface as the area where the ephemeral – memory, dream and the subliminal – can become manifest and act as a counterpoint to the clearly defined edges and parameters of the corporeal.

However, despite these early precursors, the history of the projected image in live performance only truly comes into focus and picks up speed in the early part of the twentieth century. The harnessing of the electrical current and technical advances of the Industrial Age meant that light could now be projected more powerfully and at greater distances. Early experiments with film projection in theatre included a lighthearted Berlin revue in 1911, attempts at the incorporation of moving images

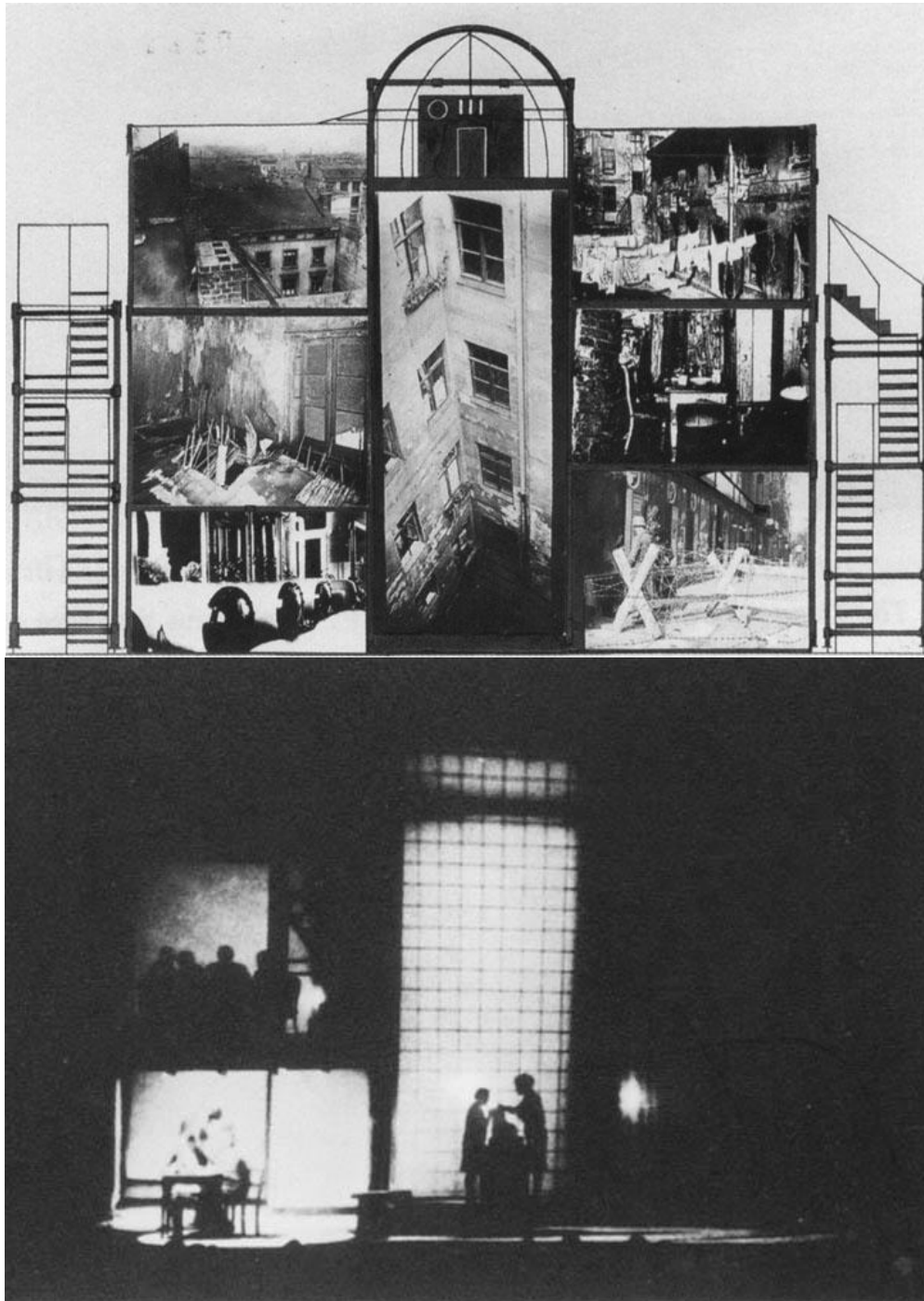
against painted backdrops in productions of Wagnerian operas and – across the Atlantic - Winsor McCay's live interactions with the animated projection of *Gertie the Dinosaur* in 1914, which Phaedra Bell cites as one of the earliest examples of what she terms "dialogic inter-media exchange", but more on that later...³

A more conceptual approach to the use of projected film footage in the theatre could be found in the work of Erwin Piscator. While one among many who were exploring the potentials of using the projected image in theatre around that time – including the Italian Futurists, the Russian Constructivists and the German Frederick Kiesler – Piscator's work provides perhaps the most comprehensive document of these early developments in the field. Motivated by Socialist ideals and ideology, Piscator saw the projected image in theatre as a dramaturgical tool and a powerful means of propaganda. In using the projected image as a backdrop to the live action on stage, he referred to it as "...a living wall... the theatre's fourth dimension. In this way the photographic image conducts the story, becomes its motive force, a piece of living scenery..." (Willet, 1978: 60). Salter explicates Piscator's conception of the uses of the projected image in theatre, citing the latter's self-penned book, *The Political Theater*:

For the director, the projected image functioned in three distinct manners: (1) didactic, (2) dramatic, and (3) editorial/commentary. The didactic use of film presented the viewer with objective facts – historical information about the subject on stage. In this context, the projected text, slide, or moving image was given a documentary function. In contrast, through what Piscator called "the playing of a part in the development of the stage action and a *substitute* for the live scene," the dramatic function of the projection suggested its full incorporation into the dramaturgical fabric of the stage event... In addition to its documentary and dramatic functions, film also served the similar role of the Greek chorus – as an instructional commentary

³ Chapter 3, pg 45 of this report: 'From the Double to the Dialogic'.

on the stage event, addressing the spectator directly while accompanying the action (Salter, 2010: 146).



Figures 1.1 & 1.2 Traugott Müller's set design for stage projection in Erwin Piscator's *Hoppla, Wir Leben!* (1927), and a still from one of the performances

These techniques found their culmination in what Dixon refers to as “the definitive early-twentieth century multimedia theater production”, Piscator’s 1927 staging of Ernst Toller’s *Hoppla, Wir Leben! (Hurrah! We’re Living)*, a highly ambitious undertaking which included the projection of entire environments on a multi-tiered set, subdivided into various ‘rooms’, within which the actors moved, and included documentary newsreel footage and original films shot for the production. As noted by one author’s account of the show, “What impressed critics and audiences alike was not so much the acting... as the use of film, set and sound effects” (Willet, 1978: 84).

Piscator’s use of documentary footage and the production of narrative-based films for inclusion in the theatrical event had a pronounced influence on my staging of *Heaven and Hell: The Life of Aldous Huxley*. However, where Piscator used these techniques as a means to promote Socialist ideology and highlight the plight of the working class, my interest lay in the facility of these techniques in being able to illustrate the workings of subjective memory and fantasy and their relationship to documented history.

In the 1930s, 40s and early 50s, the United States continued the work begun in Germany and Russia in the 20s of incorporating the projected image onto theatre stages, with the work of the Federal Theater Company and the writings and lectures of Robert Edmond Jones.

The Federal Theater Company and their Living Newspaper project were part of an initiative by the US government to create employment after the Great Depression, and as a means of educating audiences on relevant social issues. These included housing, health, poverty, race and class issues, labour politics and the abuse of power. Tackling these issues using popular theatre and incorporating Constructivist-influenced set design and documentary-style projected film footage made the Living Newspaper the heir-apparent of Piscator, Bertold Brecht and the Russian Constructivist Meyerhold.

In 1941, American stage designer Robert Edmond Jones published a book titled *The Dramatic Imagination*, in which he enthusiastically proposed the use of projection alongside the live actor as a means of creating a new stage language, whereby the projected image would represent the thoughts, feelings, dreams and drives of the character which the live actor was depicting. Thus the actor would portray the character's outer actions, while the projections would describe his inner world. Jones, however, never advanced his ideas from theory to practice. Dixon states that while his "...extraordinary lectures...have an arguably equivalent power and originality of theatrical vision as the canonical works of Artaud, Grotowski, Barba and Brook, and similarly evoke a transformational theater", he left no concrete tools for applying his vision and "...fail(ed) to acknowledge the significant demands the form makes on both theater-makers and audiences." (Dixon, 2007: 81).

Jones' notion of the projection screen being used to represent the inner world of the live actor is one which I have used in both *Black!...White?* and *Heaven and Hell*. While unfamiliar with Jones' work – at least while working on the former of these performances – the notion seems a natural one when considering, as mentioned above, the projection as being a play of light on a surface, ephemeral and intangible, and therefore corollary with the intangibility of thoughts and inner states of being.

Meanwhile (with a slight rewind), in the Czech Republic in the late 1920s, the scenographer Emil F. Burian began developing the *theatergraph* system as a direct reaction against the didacticism and stripped-down aesthetic of Piscator's theatre. Burian, influenced by the stage designs of Adolph Appia and Edward Gordon Craig, envisaged a stage where the live actor and the projected image reached a synthesis. He tried to achieve this by using transparent screens to break the traditional four-sided projection surface and was able to surround actors in light and image, using projection to enhance the dramatic text in several stage productions in the latter half of the 1930s.

Burian's work was continued by the next generation of Czech scenographers, with the founding of the *Laterna Magika* by Joseph Svoboda and Alfred Radok in 1958. In keeping with Burian's approach, the two developed their own technological stage system for integrating the live actor with the projected image. This system was made up of several projection screens moving on conveyer belts showing slides and film footage. The screens could be arranged in almost any configuration and allowed for a more dynamic interaction between actors and the projection surface.



Figure 1.3 Josef Svoboda's *Laterna Magika* (1958)

However, this flexibility did not initially extend to the footage itself: in needing to be shot and edited several weeks or months ahead of the production, it left little room for changes in script (and performers) in rehearsal and hampered the spontaneity and natural evolution of the live performance on stage. It was only in the mid 60s that

Svoboda began to experiment with live video feed technology in order to overcome this limitation.

Svoboda's problems in working with pre-recorded footage are one's which I have experienced in my own work and which, I believe, lie at the core of the interaction between the live performer and the projected image. While the live video feed which he used to begin to overcome this problem and current technologies which allow for video to be triggered by motion sensors are the most obvious solutions, they are ones which I have resisted employing in my own work. My reasons for this are varied and are ones which I will go into greater depth explaining in the final chapter of this report.

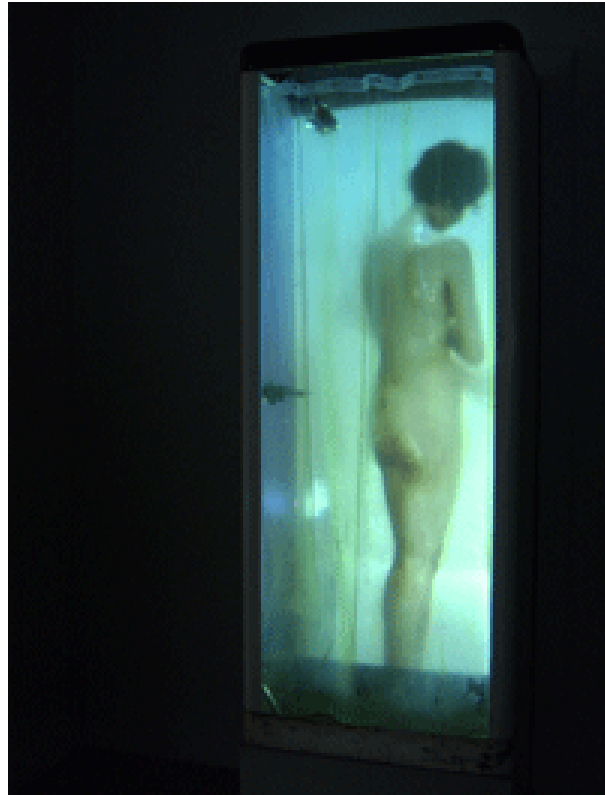
The 60s Revolution

The 1960s in America marked a new era in live performance's use of the projected image, as many artists – including Robert Blossom, Allan Kaprow, Robert Whitman and composer John Cage - began employing film and video in performance and installation. This was part of the broader cultural shift in the West at the time and, as Dixon points out, theatre itself perhaps led by example, with the work of Grotowski, Brook, The Living Theatre and Fluxus (to name but a few) redefining the forms and roles that performance could take. Chrissie Iles, in her essay *Between the Still and Moving Image*, defines the contribution of this group of artists as the bringing together of the cinema screen and the gallery space. Quoting Roland Barthes, she says that:

...in the closed space of the cinema there is no circulation, no movement, and no exchange. In the darkness, spectators sink into their seats as though slipping into bed. The cinema becomes a cocoon, inside which a crowd of relaxed, idle bodies is fixed, hypnotized by simulations of reality projected onto a single screen. This model is broken apart by the folding of the dark space of cinema into the white cube of the gallery (Iles, 2001: 33).

Robert Whitman's installation (or film sculpture), *Shower*, typifies this approach. One of a series of four works created by Whitman between 1963 and 1964 (the others being *Window*, *Dressing Table* and *Sink*) which merged everyday domestic objects and environments with projection, *Shower* comprises a shower stall, complete with running water, with a drawn shower curtain onto which is projected the life-size image of a woman performing her ablutions. To quote Salter: "...Whitman's installation-performance events toyed with the line between real performance and its filmic, projected representation, one of the central avant-garde tropes of the 1960s that would become an essential element of experimental performance's technological-dramaturgical toolbox" (Salter, 2010: 155). While no physical, living performer is present in this work, the illusory play of the projected life-size body in a three dimensional environment presages Dixon's notion of the digital double and calls into question the corporeal performer's exclusive claim to 'liveness' (perhaps compounded by the hesitancy of the gallery audience to step out of their voyeuristic role and pull back the curtain to see if there is indeed a living body behind it). Whitman's work also included experiments with live performers and their projected counterparts – early examples of the digital double – as in his 1965 production *Prune Flat*, where a performer had pre-shot, to-scale footage of her own image projected onto her body. The live performer mimicked the movements of her projected double, including a striptease, which left the (clothed) performer with her own naked image covering her body.

Whitman's break away from the conventional projection screen, both in his installation and stage work, is of particular interest to me. While I still believe that the screen can act as a powerful signifier – evoking the ubiquitous presence of televisual media in our culture (to the point of it almost being a conscious entity) – Whitman's experiments are some of the most aesthetically convincing examples of work which steps out of this screen-based mould and the possibilities that this offers for the integration of live performer and projection. Again, this is an avenue which I have not explored in my own work and will be reflecting on in the final chapter of this report.



Figures 1.4 and 1.5 Robert Whitman's *Shower*, (1964)

Photo: Howard Agriesti

Much of the 60s film and video art movement came as a reaction to what they perceived as the negative traits of television culture. This attitude is exemplified in the work of the Korean-born video artist, Nam June Paik who - with a background in classical music and with a good deal of humour - tore the television down from its hallowed pedestal (the TV tray) and engaged with it in a highly physical manner. *Concerto for TV Cello and Video Tape* (1971) - a collaboration with avant-garde cellist Charlotte Moorman - involved Moorman 'playing' a cello-shaped instrument which Paik had constructed from three television monitors, clear Perspex and electronic pickups, with each drawing of the bow over the 'strings' triggering a change in the content of the TV monitors. This physical interaction between live performer and television monitor had been made even more intimate in one of their earlier collaborations, *Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969), for which Paik had strapped two miniature monitors to Moorman's

breasts (a decision which he justified as his desire to humanise technology) (Salter, 2010: 154).

Paik's humour and his fetishist approach to hardware – particularly as regards television sets – are qualities of his work which I admire. The use of television sets in both *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Heaven and Hell* were probably based to some extent on my enjoyment and admiration of Paik's very hands-on relationship to these technologies, as well as a shared belief in the power of the television as a unique signifier, quite distinct from the more generalised denotative function of the projection screen (more on this in Chapters 3 and 4).



Figures 1.6 and 1.7 Charlotte Moorman in *Concerto for TV Cello and Video Tape* (1971) and *Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969)

The Intermedia(te) Years

Performance using the projected image continued its development from the 60s through to the 70s and 80s. The availability of commercial portable video recorders from the mid-60s, augmented by the introduction of home editing equipment in the following decade, made it easier for performers to experiment with the projected

image, to the extent that, by the 80s, projected media on the theatre stage had almost become the rule rather than the exception in experimental theatre. Some of the artists and performance groups of this era included: Billy Klüver, who collaborated with John Cage and Merce Cunningham, and experimented with early interactive performance technologies in the late 60s; Moving Being, whom Dixon describes as “...the foremost British multimedia theater group of the ‘60s and ‘70s, bringing together actors, dancers, musicians, film and video to create intensely dramatic, complex, and at times sublimely beautiful stage works” (Dixon, 2007: 100); The Wooster Group, who used television monitors as part of the *mise en scène* to deconstruct dramatic texts perhaps most famously in *Route 1 & 9* (1981) and *LSD...Just The High Points* (1984) (Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town* and Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*, respectively). However, in a recent interview, Elizabeth LeCompte stated that she never intends to deconstruct the texts she works with, but rather tries make the texts “live” and to “put them on their feet” (Accidental TV, c.2010).

As with the work of Nam June Paik, part of my interest in the Wooster Group stems from their use of the television set as a projection medium and their acknowledgment of it acting as a signifier distinct from the projection screen. In addition to the associations which it carries, the material nature of the TV set means that it co-inhabits the physical space of the live actors and allows for direct physical manipulation of itself by the actors.

Laurie Anderson – as a musician and performer/storyteller working since the early 1970s and gaining prominence in the 80s – utilised a range of experimental technologies and large-scale media presentations to explore her concerns with language and human relationship to technology, becoming one of the most prominent figures in intermedia performance during this era. Salter acknowledges her unique contribution to the field when he says:

In the popularization of projected media in live performance... arguably no one had a more widespread impact than artist/musician Laurie Anderson... Anderson's mammoth *United States I-IV*, which premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) in 1983, was a watershed event, bringing projected media out of downtown lofts and into high-profile international performance venues (Salter, 2010: 156).

The Digital Revolution

The 90s marked a turning point in intermedia performance, as what has come to be known as 'the digital revolution' introduced the World Wide Web and a proliferation of (relatively) inexpensive home computers, digital cameras and highly sophisticated and user-friendly software. In the field of live performance, the availability and accessibility of these new technologies introduced a new range of tools and techniques: high-definition digital projection; the ability for precise editing of sound and video, allowing for the exploration of temporality as never before; sophisticated motion sensors and interactive software; real-time compositing of live performers into projected digital environments and the possibility of using the World Wide Web to link performers in different physical locations – something which could previously only be done via the practically inaccessible means of satellite link.

Many of the productions of the post- digital revolution era (1990s – 2000s) have utilised aesthetic and conceptual breakthroughs made in the preceding decades of practice and research done in intermedia productions, right back to the early experiments of Piscator and the Futurists. In response to virtual reality, cybersex, cyborg culture and the growing possibility of real artificial intelligence, performers have expressed a gamut of attitudes and approaches, ranging from a fetishisation of technology to a re-examining of the organic body and its relationship to the machine and the digital.

It would be difficult to try and enumerate all the various avenues that have been explored in intermedia performance over the past two decades and to list all of the contributions made by different artists and performers. However, I will note one performance company whom Dixon makes extensive mention of: The Builder's Association, a leading exemplar of "cool" postmodern theatre, using the projected image in tandem with techniques of pastiche and irony. In analysing the group's take on the legend of Faust, *Jump Cut (Faust)* (1997), Dixon observes that:

Like the Wooster Group, the Builders Association's use of media is quintessentially Brechtian in highlighting its technological artificiality, in forever revealing itself *as* media. Projections are distinctly framed and separated from the actors, and although there is live mixing to conjoin the screen-videated actors with computer effects, there is no attempt to merge the live and the mediatized into an illusionistic visual composite. Rather, the live action and the projections are dialectical: they undertake an intellectual dialogue, making mutual connections and commentaries between and about one another (Dixon, 2007: 347).

The above quote perfectly encapsulates what I was hoping to achieve in my staging of *Heaven and Hell*. What Phaedra Bell describes as the dialogic exchange between projection and live performer is, to my understanding, not related to the illusionistic 'physical' exchange of the two parties, nor does it necessarily preclude an acknowledgment of the one by the other – it is left up to the audience to make the connections between the words and actions of the live performer and the images on the screen. The satisfaction for the audience lies in making these connections and being able to draw their own conclusions from them.

Their 2003 production *Alladeen*, in collaboration with motirori, "a London-based international arts organisation" (motiroti, 2011), uses high-end multimedia technology in

combination with live actors for a tale exploring globalisation, capitalism, consumer culture and technology, set in a Bangalore call-centre, New York and London. *Alladeen* continued The Builders Association's visual aesthetic of separating live actors and projected image, where the technology 'performs' as technology. A giant projection screen was situated above the stage and web cams were used to capture live images of the onstage actors, sitting at their computers as call-centre operators. Other live stage footage was captured by two more cameras and all of it was relayed to the giant projection screen. The production utilised digital manipulation of the live footage, animation, as well as pre-recorded interview footage of real Asian call-centre workers. In keeping with the media-saturated times from which it emerged, the stage production was created in tandem with a music video and an independent Web project. As stated on the project website: "As a whole, the *Alladeen* project explores how we all function as "global souls" caught up in circuits of technology, how our voices and images travel from one culture to another, and the ways in which these cultures continually reinterpret each other's signs and stories." (www.alladeen.com/content.html). The show's director, Marianne Weens, says that "... Alladeen addressed how the technology of fiber-optic phone lines gives the illusion of bringing people closer together when, in the case of corporate outsourcing, it's driving them further apart." (YBCA, c.2005). It is a good example of one of the ways in which intermedia performance has been used to address current concerns about the role of technology in relationship to identity and communication in the post- digital revolution world.



Figures 1.8 A scene from *Alladeen* (2003), showing the stage and projection screen.

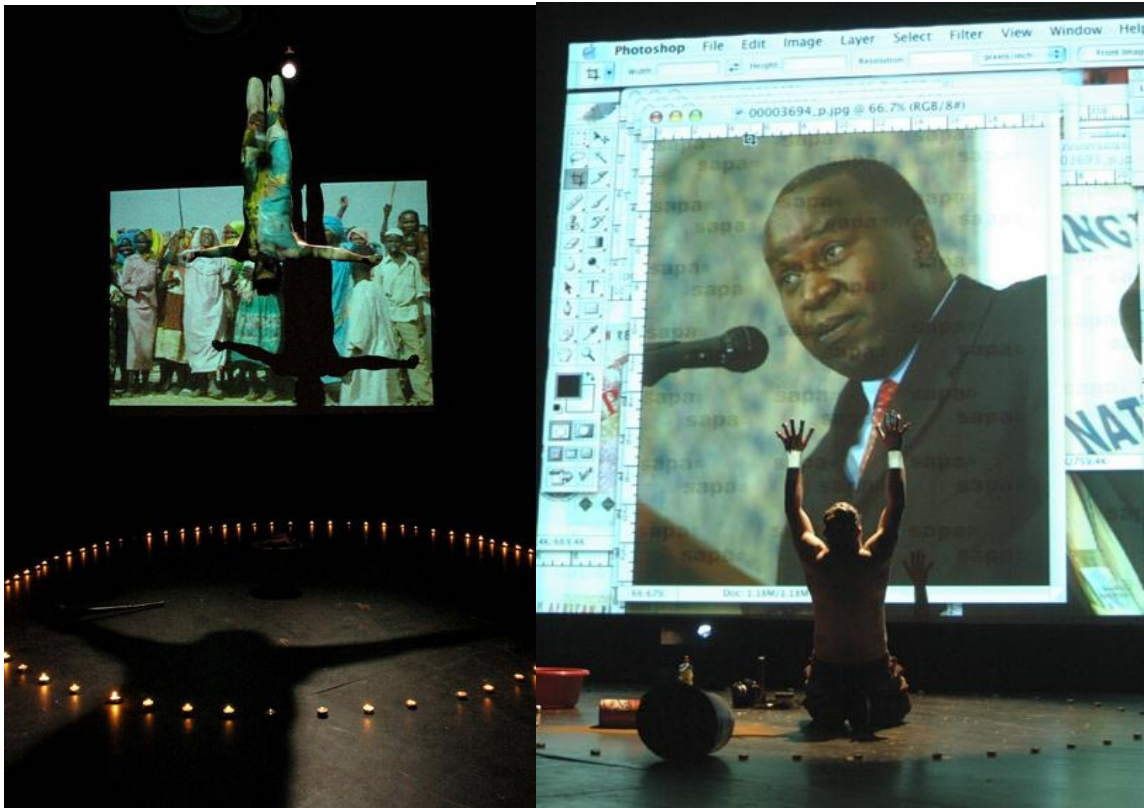
Having looked at the projected image in live performance in global context, I will close this chapter with a brief consideration on the history – or rather lack thereof – and current status of this field in South Africa.

Going Local

In our local context, live performance – particularly as regards theatre – has remained hesitant in its embracing of digital media and the projected image. While it may be difficult to pinpoint all of the reasons for this, I would suggest that it may be in part due to some of the repressive policies of the former government (which only allowed television into the country in 1976) and the subsequent political and cultural sanctions which the country experienced in the 1980s. This, coupled with the dominance of a highly political poor theatre aimed at resisting and subverting government ideology, may have meant that there was simply no room to pay attention to intermedia performance. While all of these factors could possibly account for some of the reasons

that the projected image was, to the best of my knowledge, mostly excluded from live performance before the 1990s, it is more difficult to account for its absence since the subsequent relaxing of policy and eventual change of government in 1994 led to the opening up of the country to global trends and influences. One explanation might be the country's small gallery- and theatre-going demographic. In a population where sport and politics are the dominant forms of entertainment, artists' and performers' budgets are limited and for the most part cannot accommodate the often high costs of staging media-rich productions. The other might be a local theatre tradition which is still – perhaps unconsciously – rooted in the notion of the purity of the exclusively 'live' performance.

Whatever the case, there have certainly been South African artists and performers who have explored the avenue of intermedia performance, but they have been the exception to the rule. One notable example in recent years has been Catherine Henegan's *Shooting Gallery* (2006), inspired by Joao Silva and Greg Marinovich's book *The Bang Bang Club*, chronicling their experiences – along with Ken Oosterbroek and Kevin Carter – as photographers working in conflict areas in South Africa and the other parts of Africa in the late 80s and early 90s. The production explored the role of media in manufacturing news and juxtaposed a highly physical and self-abusive performance by Aryan Kaganof as a war photographer against images culled live from the Word Wide Web, edited into a newspaper format and projected onto a massive screen that formed the backdrop of the stage. Although it received mixed reviews and polarised audiences, *The Shooting Gallery* did present a type of production rarely seen on the local theatre circuit and was at least an attempt at using the projected image as a *subject* of theatrical performance. In Kaganof's words: "The whole world of media is a stage and that's why it's so brilliant doing this piece *on* a stage, because that's a perfect metaphor for how the media works. It isn't a reflection of a true, naked, honest world – it's actually a stage set up on a stage, on a stage, on a stage infinitely reflecting... like a hall of mirrors" (Cue TV, c. 2006).



Figures 1.9 and 1.10 Aryan Kaganof as a war photographer strung up before images of war and confronted with the manufacturing of news in *The Shooting Gallery* (2006).

A more widely-recognised example of intermedia work in South African theatre has been the series of collaborations between William Kentridge and the Handspring Puppet Company, each dealing with different aspects and stages of South Africa's colonial and apartheid past through adaptations of various literary texts and characters from European literature. Their six joint productions – *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (1992), *Faustus in Africa* (1994), *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1998), *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse* (1999), *Zeno at 4 AM* (2001) and *Confessions of Zeno* (2002) – each of which Kentridge has directed – have been highly successful integrations of live actors, carved wooden puppets and projections of Kentridge's modified-base stop-frame charcoal animations. Part of the success of the productions has, in my opinion, been the selection and nature of the particular media in which the artists have chosen to work in: Handspring's eerily

life-like and expressive carved wooden puppets act as a bridging mechanism between Kentridge's stylised, atmospheric animations and the live actors who manipulate and interact with the puppets, creating an integrated whole that balances a strong graphic sensibility with the physical presence and immediacy of live performance. In reference to his role as both director and visual artist, Kentridge has said: "For me, the projection and what's happening onstage are part of the same thinking. It seems hard to ask someone else to do the one I am going to use. I would find it very odd to make a projection for someone else" (Haden-Guest, 2010). There is some irony in the fact that Kentridge, in coming from a country where intermedia performance is hugely underdeveloped – and in arguably being the country's most widely internationally recognised living artist – has risen to this position by working – at least in part – in *that* very field and has used his position to create ever larger productions of this nature, as in the 2007 staging of *The Magic Flute* and his more recent, large-scale production of Shostakovich's *The Nose* for the Metropolitan New York Opera in 2010.



Figure 1.11 William Kentridge's animated projection for *The Confessions of Zeno* (2002)



Figures 1.12 and 1.13 Puppets and projection share the stage in William Kentridge and Handspring puppet Company's *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (1992)

Both the work of Henegan/Kaganof and Kentridge/Handspring Puppet Company – despite being relatively low-key on a global scale (and quite late in arriving at the intermedia party) – are important for me to include in this history of intermedia performance, perhaps more so than the other works mentioned in this chapter. The reason is that – even though I never had the occasion to witness any of these local performances in the flesh (although I have seen fragments of recordings and attended a talk given by Henegan/Kaganof on the subject and at the time of their performing *The Shooting Gallery*) – having them originate in a society and a city in which I live has made them hugely relevant, in that it made the attempting of this kind of work seem more possible and desirable. Seeing Kentridge's *Faustus in Africa* on TV in the late 90s was my first exposure to intermedia performance and the mix of live actors, puppets and

projections was thrilling, most likely planting the seeds for my current interest in this field.

Chapter 2 / The Digital Double

Seeing Double

Black!...White? began life as a commission by the Centre de Développement Chorégraphique Toulouse/Midi-Pyrénées in France, an organisation promoting dance and interdisciplinary work, in late 2007. It was a collaborative work between myself, dancer/choreographer Nelisiwe Xaba, clothing and set designer Carlo Gibson, Toni Morkel, sound designer Mocke J Van Veuren, actors Rob van Vuuren and Stacey Sacks. It was conceived as a comment on the fears which permeate contemporary South African society and traces the story of Grey: a young, white, middle-class woman, as she manifests the characters Black and White - representations of repressed aspects of her psyche - and moves through a three-act psychological journey which touches on race, sexuality, faith and the desire for freedom. She progresses from fear of these repressed aspects of herself – which manifest as obsessive-compulsive behaviours - to an eventual degree of resolution and self-acceptance.



Figures 2.1 and 2.2 *The Bug Show*, detail of stage projection and as seen in relationship to the performers

The projections for *Black!...White?* are divided into two categories: the first consists of digitally hand-drawn animation sequences which can again be sub-divided into two parts. The first of these is *The Bug Show* - a farcical send-up of television comedy shows – which is made up of endless loops of beetles crawling on treadmill-like structures, accompanied by canned audience laughter and an upbeat jazz soundtrack. Grey watches the show obsessively. The second is a sequence in act three which depicts all three characters – Black, White and Grey – morphing into one another and each attempting to take flight, finally becoming abstract marks and re-emerging as a hybrid of one another. The second category of projection consists of images captured via live feed from a camera suspended above the stage and then projected onto a hanging screen backdrop. The camera films Black and White as they perform a series of complex actions while lying down on stage. When the images are projected onto the vertical surface of the screen, they now show those same actions being performed as if the two performers were standing. The effect of this is to create a dream-like sequence where the apparent chaos of the physical performers' actions is transformed into the two characters moving gracefully through a zero-gravity environment, floating freely through space, time and a host of shifting identities. Here the doubles of the live actors are their direct reflections, but are transformed through the projection technique to take on an animated, toy-like quality.⁴

While the two categories of projection are distinct in that they differ both in technique and aesthetic, they tally in that both are clear examples of what Steve Dixon terms *The Digital Double*. The double is a notion which I only came across in readings subsequent to my involvement with *Black!...White?*, but which immediately resonated and helped me to verbalise how I saw the role of projection in this performance. Dixon begins his explication of this category of projection by making extensive reference to Antonin

⁴ I was responsible for the animated sequences while Carlo Gibson conceptualised the live-feed suspended camera technique.

Artaud's *The Theatre and Its Double* and to Artaud's belief in the vital power of what contemporary psychologists might refer to as 'the shadow self' – those drives which are too threatening to the socio-centric conscious mind and are therefore repressed, remaining buried in the subconscious. Artaud speaks of bringing back this shadow self to the theatre which, Dixon claims, he saw as its "true and magical self, stirring other dark and potent shadows which rail against a fossilized, shadowless culture "as empty as it is saccharined"." (Dixon, 2007: 241). Dixon believes that cyberculture has "reinscribe(d) this Artaudian dialectic" and that the shadow world can now be seen as manifest in digital virtual reality. He states that in digital performance, the double is related to the *doppelgänger* - a concept found in German folklore, denoting a wraith or an apparition of a living person, the meeting of which signals one's imminent death – as well as Freud's notion of the Id and the *uncanny* - a double reality where "the familiar becomes frighteningly unfamiliar" (Dixon, 2007: 242). The concept of the uncanny, as it can be traced through the writings of Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Derrida, relates to a sense of alienation and not belonging, not feeling at home in any place. Dixon makes mention of the double being related to Jaques Lacan's concept of the 'mirror stage' of psychological development, as well as its "ancient and global lineage within religious, occult, and folkloric traditions" (Dixon, 2007: 244).

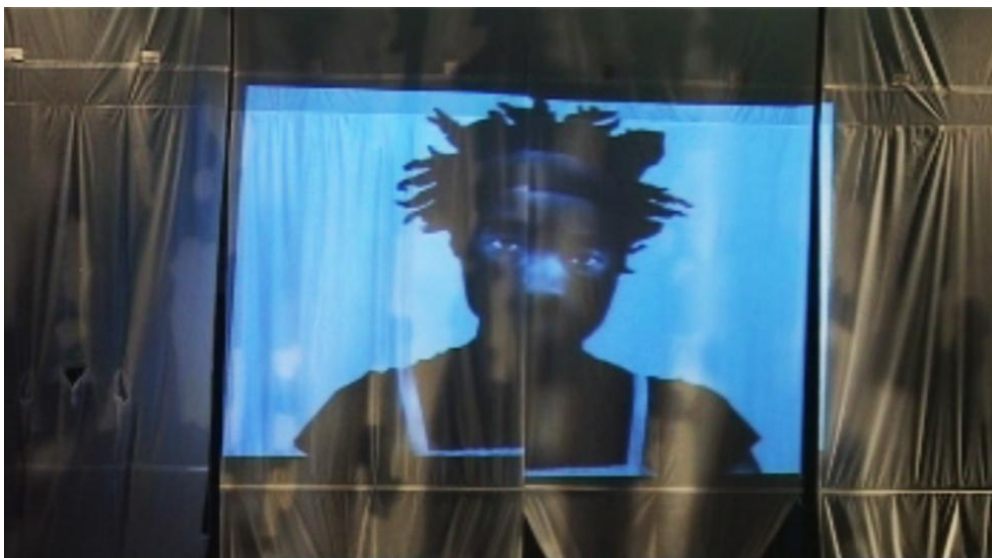


Figure 2.3 Nelisiwe Xaba's digital double in *Black!...White*

Dixon classifies the double as existing within four categories: as reflection, as alter-ego, as spiritual emanation and as manipulable mannequin (Dixon, 2007: 244). Any instance of the double may be classified as belonging to one or more of the categories. The reflection refers to instances where the double directly mirrors the actions of its live counterpart; the alter-ego most closely resembles the *doppelgänger* or the shadow-self of the performer, a splitting of the analogue self into multiple selves; the double as spiritual emanation becomes a manifestation of the performer's astral body or soul, drawing on mystical and shamanic traditions and lastly, the category of manipulable mannequin can be seen as a descendent of traditional puppetry, with its contemporary equivalents of online avatars and animated characters whose movements are created by mimicking those of their live counterparts via motion capture technology.



Figures 2.4 and 2.5 The 'floor sequence' in the second act – the dancers on the floor and as seen projected vertically

The doubles in *Black!...White?* would fit most comfortably under the categories of alter-ego and spiritual emanation. They represent that which has been repressed in Grey's psyche – that which is dark, wild and threatening – but also that which longs for a transcendence of her limitations and an aspiration towards an integrated being. This is

most evident in the performance's final animated sequence, where the animated versions of Grey, Black and White all attempt flight while morphing into one another, then breaking up into abstract shapes and finally re-emerging as a single but multi-faceted being.

Rewind to the 1800s

While *Black!...White?* was the first large-scale exploration of the digital double which I undertook, my first actual experience of working with it was on an earlier and smaller (but perhaps more focused) collaborative project with Nelisiwe Xaba and Carlo Gibson. The work – titled *They Look at Me and That's All They Think* (2006) – was an exploration of the perceptions of the female body as the exotic 'other', using the biography of Sara Baartman as a conceptual vehicle.

A Khoisan woman, Baartman was lured to England in 1810, where she was treated as a sexual curiosity and exhibited as 'The Hottentot Venus', being made to publicly display her sexual organs and buttocks. She was later moved to France, where the displays continued. On her death in 1815, her body was dissected by Napoleon's surgeon, with her genitals and brain preserved and her skeleton placed on public exhibit in the Musée de L'Homme in Paris, where it remained until 1976. Due to pressure from the South African government, her remains were returned to home soil in February 2002 for burial (McGreal, 2002).

With the first performance coinciding with the fourth anniversary of the return of Baartman's remains to South Africa, *They Look at Me and That's All They Think* traced the story of Sara's life from her journey across the seas to Europe to her public displays and final return home. The two films which accompanied the physical dance performance alluded to the 'blacksploitation' style of 1930s cartoons and featured an animated character acting as Xaba/Baartman's double. Projected onto Xaba's dress - which bursts open mid-performance to become a projection screen - the first film is a

faux-TV advertisement, rendered in black and white with a 30s-style jazz score, addressing the difficulties that a black woman might experience in trying to straighten her hair. The second shows our heroine visiting a hair salon, where her now-straight locks are violently shorn by a maniacal barber and placed on display as a wig in the shop window.

It would be difficult to place this projected character within Dixon's schema, as it does not easily fit into any of his four categories of double. By virtue of being animated in a cartoon style, the character can be read as the representation of an idea and as a metaphor for both Baartman and the perception of the 'exotic' performing female body, with the cartoon style also acting as a visual reference to the representation of negative stereotypes and the inhumane gaze with which 'the other' can be viewed – not as a conscious and emotional being, but as a performing monkey, a cartoon which we don't hesitate to hurt, knowing it can survive exploding dynamite and falling anvils. The animated style allows the projections to sit outside of the biographical paradigm established in the live dance performance, but with their connections to it maintained by the (general) physical likeness of the protagonist to the live performer. In their running order, the two films act as a kind of parallel biography to one being performed live on stage – with the first film, which deals with issues around the perception of beauty followed by the violence of the 'dissection' in the second film and its closing image of a character's body part (her hair) on public display behind glass. Again, not knowing that this would form part of a larger research project, I was using this work to explore both the notion of the projected double and how it can be used in the context of biography.

The Psychology of the Double

Having explored some aspects of the digital double in *They Look at Me* and *Black!...White?*, I was keen to continue with this line of enquiry. My next performance was the first which fell within the course structure my MA degree. Thus, knowing it to

be part of a series of projects which could be built upon over a period of two years, it was treated as an experiment - rather than a full production - and took the form of an adaptation of an excerpt from Athol Fugard's *Master Harold...and the Boys*. The scene I used was one where Sam - a middle-aged black waiter in an Apartheid-era Port Elizabeth tea house - is practising for a ballroom dancing competition with his younger co-worker, Willie. The son of the owner of the establishment - a white teenage boy named Hally - watches them practise. Sam then uses ballroom dancing as a metaphor to espouse a utopian vision of how nations might find a way of living together in peace. The reverie is ended by a phone call from Hally's mother. Although the excerpt I used ends here, the rest of the play goes on to reveal that Hally's mother tells him that his father is returning home from hospital - news which precipitates a series of events that reveal Hally's latent racism based on his desperate need for his father's withheld affection and approval.

This being a remediation⁵ of the original text, I billed it as '*MC Hally...and da Boyz*', in reference to the cultures of sampling and remix associated with hip-hop⁶. The concept here was to have an actor playing Hally in the flesh and interacting with pre-recorded projections of him portraying both Sam and Willie. This decision was initially based on the logistical convenience of working with a single actor, but in looking at Dixon's notion

⁵ Remediation is a theory put forward by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin to explain new media. It refers to the borrowing from, incorporation, referencing and re-mixing of content from previous media by new media. Although this practise is evident in digital media, it follows on from a tradition of each new medium entering into dialogue with its predecessors, as in the case of photography drawing on painting. Not only does the new medium draw on and extend from previous media, but the introduction of the new medium causes the previous media to re-position themselves in relation it.

⁶ The term 'MC' is an abbreviation of 'Master of Ceremonies', used as slang to denote a rap artist in hip hop culture.

of the digital double and how it could be applied to this text, an interesting conceptual approach began to emerge.

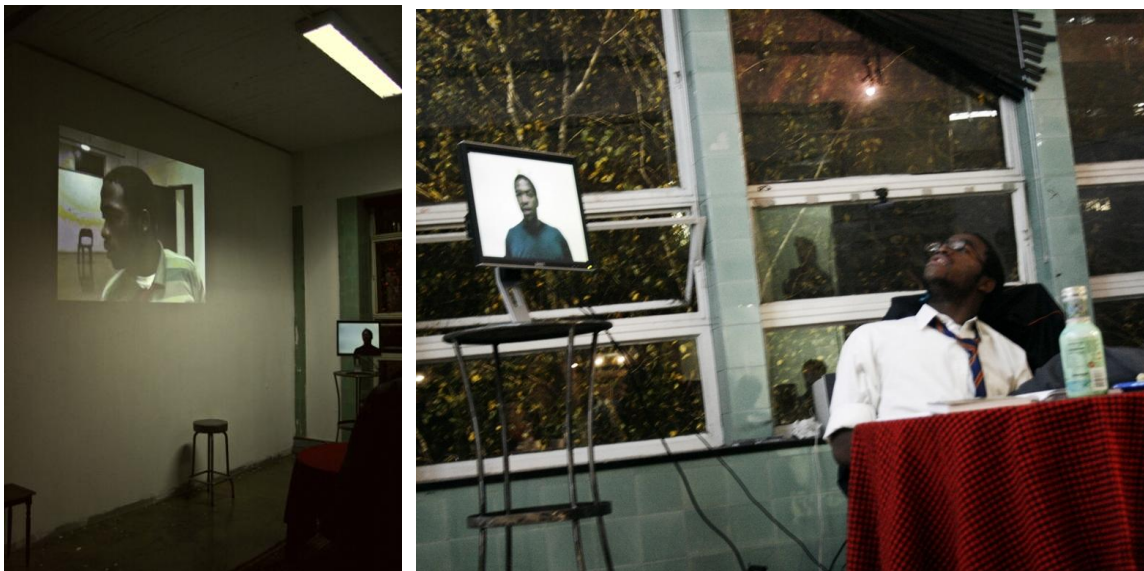
Among a number of other interpretations mentioned above, Dixon relates the digital double to psychoanalyst Jaques Lacan's concept of the 'mirror stage' – a developmental stage where one apprehends one's own reflection, identifies with it and this then becomes the basis of one's ego (Dixon, 2007: 242). By identifying with this external image of one's self, one feels a sense of order, a 'wholeness', which allows one to buy in to the concept of the fidelity of a fixed identity as an escape from the fragmentation of inner drives. In looking at the psychological relevance of the mirror and mirroring, I also considered Sigmund Freud's notion of *projection* (with a name like that, how could I not?). Ian Craib, in *Psychoanalysis: A Critical Introduction*, gives the following explanation of this phenomenon:

Projection... is a matter of putting something that is actually within oneself outside, on to some other person (or object). It is one, if not the, basis of communication, a matter of seeing a part of ourselves in another person. Projection defends the ego in a number of ways. First it is a way of protecting against external dangers by investing another person with the qualities we feel we don't have ourselves... The more familiar form of projection is that of a threatening or anxiety-provoking desire or internal object on to the outside world, where it can become more easily dealt with. Although they might have other causes in the wider society, projection is the principal psychological mechanism involved in such phenomena as racism and homophobia, and the hatred of the opposite sex... (Craib, 2001: 41).

In light of this passage, I could see how the use of digital projections could help make visible the underlying thematic content of the play (and could also be applied to a reading of the animated projections in *They Look at Me*). Having the two projections

‘mirror’ the live actor alluded to the fact that Hally does not see Sam and Willie objectively as individuals, but rather as the *projection* of his own needs and fantasies. The actor ‘speaking to himself’ becomes a visual metaphor for the act of this projection.

Even though the staging of *‘MC Hally’* was a fruitful experience in terms of research, one of the criticisms which was levelled against it was the projection of Sam was far too large, dwarfing and overwhelming the live actor. This was particularly evident where I had cut to head-and-shoulder close-ups of Sam, which made him a massive, looming presence when projected. This was not an intentional aesthetic choice, but rather an oversight, which resulted in a degree of confusion as to what the image was supposed to signify and how it was read by the audience. This - combined with the fact that the projections played as one long sequence and could not be triggered manually in relation to the live actor’s pace – meant that the physical actor ended up playing ‘to’ the projections, rather than with them. So, while the performance may have had a sound conceptual and theoretical basis, it was compromised through a lack of clarity and foresight in its execution.



Figures 2.6 and 2.7 Puthetso Thibedi as Sam, Willie and Hally in *‘MC Hally’... and da Boyz*

Dublin' Up With Beckett

The final performance which I will be referring to in this chapter is one where I felt that my use of the double resulted in the effect which I had set out to achieve – a synthesis between the live performer and the projected image, with each being indispensable to an understanding of the role of the other.



Figure 2.8 and 2.9 Stills from *Krapp's Last Tape* (2009), showing the position of the projection in its relationship to the live actor and the staged environment.

The performance in question, an adaptation of Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, was based on a simple premise: where in Beckett's original play, the actor accesses his past via old audio recordings, this version would replace the audio equipment with a VHS machine and an audio-visual recording. The pitfalls of this were obvious: part of the effectiveness of the traditional *Krapp* is in *not* having the image of the younger Krapp

present, but in allowing the audience to visualise in their mind's eye a young, cocksure man, transformed over the years into the bitter and defeated person they see before them, as embodied by the actor. However, what could have robbed the play of its power instead resulted in a remediation of the theatre text for an audience belonging to a culture where the 'televisual' has become the dominant idiom.

The design of the projection for *Krapp's Last Tape* was spartan: a single screen situated directly above the desk and bookcase that formed the bulk of the staged environment. The live actor playing the part of Krapp spent most of the duration of the performance sitting behind the desk, watching a television screen situated to his left with its back to the audience, operated from a VHS machine on the desk. The television 'relayed' its image to the projection screen so that the audience could see what Krapp was watching. The key to the success of the *mise en scène* was in having the projected Krapp be almost life-size and situated directly above - but be removed from - the live actor. This created an almost literal 'mirroring', with Krapp at thirty-nine and Krapp at sixty-nine inhabiting the same space. However, it remained clear that it was a mirroring across time, as it were: the screen - while physically part of the staged environment - became, by virtue of its elevation, a signifier of more than just the contents of the television, but also an entity in its own right, a physical manifestation of memory and its concomitant regret and desire. The digital double here becomes for the old Krapp both the reflection and the projection of a younger self that could potentially break the mould and choose a different path than he himself did. The tragedy lies in watching the projected self make the same choices that led the corporeal Krapp to where he ends up: alone, bitter and dying.

The juxtaposition of the projected image with the corporeal actor in this version of *Krapp* also helped illustrate a theme which I saw as being central to the understanding of the play: the conflict which Krapp experiences between his intellectual ideals and his bodily urges. This conflict is humorously depicted by Krapp's craving for bananas (surely

a metaphor for sexual craving). As they cause him constipation, he locks them away in an effort to avoid this temptation, only to repeatedly give in to it. More substantially however, we learn that Krapp gave up the love of a woman in order to work on his literary *magnum opus*, which ultimately never materialised. Seen in this light, the projected image becomes a signifier of Krapp as the intellectual ideal he believes he wishes himself to be, pure and unsullied by physical appetites (and belonging to the class of Dixon's Double as Spiritual Emanation), in stark contrast to the dishevelled, ridiculous and pathetic body which sits below it.

Out of all the intermedia performances which I had staged or been involved in up to that time, *Krapp's Last Tape* was the one where the physical actor interacted most literally with the projected image. Tefo Paya – the actor playing Krapp – interacted with the image from his VHS machine and remote control, fast-forwarding, pausing and rewinding the recording⁷. Later, he hauls out a DV camera in an attempt to make a new recording of himself. For Krapp, the physical forms of technology become not only a means to record and review, but a medium between his world and what is for him the very real world of fantasy and memory. What was for me the most poignant moment in the performance was Krapp's final and literal embrace of the VHS machine, the closest he could get to touching that other world⁸. Krapp's interaction with the corporeal forms of technology gave the projected image a grounding in the physical – so that while we read the projection as a manifestation of Krapp's memory and desire, we simultaneously see its connection to a piece of hardware. The hardware becomes as much the physical counterpart of the projected image as the live actor. This kind of double logic can be likened to Kentridge's work with the Handspring Puppet Company, where one is openly

⁷ This was, in fact a deception. The equipment on stage was nothing more than props and what looked like Tefo controlling the recording, never actually happened. The 'television' was really a broadcast monitor not connected to the VHS. Tefo turned the monitor on and off but watched a blank screen, taking his cues from the audio recording coming through the house speakers. The recording on the projection screen came from a DVD player which I operated from the projection booth and had pre-comped and pre-recorded VHS static, fast-forwards and pauses.

⁸ See Figure 2.10

shown the ‘mechanics’ of the puppet’s performance (the puppeteers operating it) but can simultaneously believe in the illusion of its autonomy. The presence of the hardware of projection also echoes the kind of televisual fetishism that can be seen in the work of Nam June Paik. It is an element that was already present in *MC Hally*, where the laptop and projector generating the image of Sam were left in plain view of the audience. The relationship of the projection hardware in tandem with the projected image to the live performer was something which I again subsequently addressed in *Heaven and Hell*.

Beyond the Double

In staging *Heaven and Hell: The Life of Aldous Huxley* – having explored various aspects of the double in the performances detailed in this chapter – I began to look further afield for other perspectives on the relationship between the live performer and the projected image which could inform my creative practice. Although Dixon does, in discussing the various aspects of the digital double, present a nuanced relationship between the live and the projected, his notion of the digital double – by its very name – seems to clearly demarcate the corporeal body as the primary mover in this relationship. In his terms, the digital always remains *the double* - always needing the living performer as its referent. His model is based on the relationship between the live and the projected, occupying the same physical and temporal space, with the live being the dominant partner, in that - whatever dynamics may be at play – it is the live that is ultimately the initiator of this exchange. Although this is certainly a reductionist view - in that his chapter on the double needs to be seen in the context of his entire book, which presents a wide-ranging study of digital performance in its many permutations – I felt it worthwhile to look to other theorists to access different perspectives on the dynamics of intermedia performance. In doing this, my intention was not to abandon the use of the projected double, but expand my own definition of it and further my understanding of how to make best use of it.

Chapter 3 / Other Paradigms

Heaven and Hell: The Life of Aldous Huxley was the last in the series of intermedia performances which began with *They Look at Me* in 2006. As such, it was to some extent intended as a summation of all that I had learned about the projected image in live performance up till that point. My aim in staging this production was to achieve a degree of integration and balance between the projected image, the live performer and the staged environment, where each of these elements supported one another in the creation of meaning and each played a key role in the understanding of the work.

This chapter will begin by introducing the notion of *liveness* and Phaedra Bell's *dialogic media*. It will then go on to discuss the staging of *Heaven and Hell* both in light of these theories and Dixon's digital double, assessing the production's successes and failures, in light of my stated aim of achieving an integration of the live and projected elements.

The Issue of Liveness

Although the debate over the authenticity of the photographic image – and here I would include both the still and moving photographic image – probably goes back as far as the genesis of photography itself, its origins have become associated with an essay written by Walter Benjamin in 1936, titled *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. In this seminal text, Benjamin claimed that the mechanically reproduced photographic image lacks authenticity in that it is no longer the original spacio-temporal event which it represents, but merely a record of it, without the presence or 'aura' of its original subject. However, as Dixon points out in *Digital Performance*, Benjamin was also aware that the photographic image could claim a different kind of aura to that of its live counterpart. He also attributed the power and appeal of a reproduction as a result of the desire of "...the contemporary masses to bring things "closer", spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of

every reality by accepting its reproduction” (Benjamin, cited in Auslander, 1999: 35). Indeed, this does seem to be a symptom of our era, where reproductions – and I include here digitally-enhanced and digitally-generated ‘reproductions’ – are available at the touch of a button, so much safer, more easily attainable and more easily controlled than the physical realities from which they spring.

Almost fifty years after the publication of Benjamin’s essay, this issue of the auratic power of the photographic image was picked up by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* – a book which Dixon refers to as “stubborn and unashamedly subjective”, but which he says “provides a more compelling and arguably ontologically advanced critique of the reproducible photographic image than Benjamin’s...” (Dixon, 2007: 118). Barthes’ view is that, rather than a reproduction, the photograph is an *emanation* from its subject, captured and retained on the surface of the photographic paper, the photo negative or – as is more often the case today – existing as digital data. In this way it is an “umbilical cord” connecting the referent (the subject) to the viewer. He says “...what I see is not a memory, an imagination, a reconstitution, a piece of Maya, such as art lavishes on us, but reality in a past state: at once the past and real” (Barthes, 1981: 82). Thus, according to Barthes, the photographic image is an entity in its own right and can claim its own presence and authenticity. Barthes also sees Death in each photograph (a type of aura in itself), as the images are of the past, its subjects ageing or dead already – a concept which I might relate to *Krapp’s Last Tape*, where the image of the young Krapp makes the imminent death of the physically present Krapp that much more evident. In referring to Barthes’ notion of the nature of the photographic image, Dixon makes this very interesting statement:

If we relate his work to digital performance, the contention implies that the photographic image ultimately becomes a more telling and profound presence than the live performer, at least in a philosophical sense. It opens an explanation (or at least a perspective) as to why in digital theater it is

often the media projection rather than the live performer that wields the real power, the sense of (aesthetic, semiotic) reality (Dixon, 2007: 122).

In his book, *Liveness: Performance in Mediatized Culture*, Philip Auslander sees most societies as having been mediatized to the point where television (and, by extension, other projected media) is no longer a discourse within an environment, but has become the environment itself. In this context, the clear-cut distinctions between live performance and the mediatized image have become blurred and the previously privileged position of the live over the mediatized is called into question. Moreover, he states that the categories of the live and the recorded (mediatized) only exist in relationship to one another: the existence of the category of 'live' being predicated on the absence of the 'recorded' – an argument which he extends to contesting whether in fact the 'live' ever preceded the 'recorded'. His claim is that the corporeal does not necessarily hold the privileged position in live performance and goes on to present a series of arguments that support the notion of what he terms the *mediatized* – synonymous with what I have termed the projected image – has as much of a claim to the quality of liveness as the living, breathing body.

I would support Auslander's claim of the boundaries between the live and mediated becoming blurred, as this can be seen in instances where the projected image has taken on an iconic quality, as in the 8mm film footage of President John. F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 or the footage of Neil Armstrong taking his first steps on the surface of the Moon. Such images become embedded in a particular group's consciousness (in this case, this would be most of the world's population that own televisions) to the degree that these images *become* the event itself. Not having witnessed these events first hand makes little difference, as the recorded images of the events – through the status initially imbued on them by the events themselves and later through thousands of screenings – take on a life of their own which eventually eclipses the original, live event. Each time the footage is replayed, it re-animates the event and is

perceived as both a document of the event and as the event itself. This situation may to some extent differ in live performance, as the images which are screened are often new to an audience and haven't accrued the kind of 'historical capital' mentioned above. However – if I may indulge in a generalisation – I would venture to say that an audience brings with it a degree of conditioning – a result of a lifetime's worth of film and television viewing – which colours their perception of the projected image and pre-disposes them to blur the boundaries between the live and the mediated and causing the projection to become more 'real' than the live performer. This blurring of boundaries may even be wilful on the part of the audience – a wanting to 'buy into' the illusion that the projection screen offers. I would even argue that unless various means are used to draw the audience's attention back to the mediated nature of the projected image, the sense of it being a living entity – belonging to the same ontological class as the live performer – may always be unconsciously present.

From the Double to the Dialogic

Phaedra Bell tackles the issue of liveness and proposes a resolution to the integration of the live and the projected in her essay, *Dialogic Media Productions and Inter-media Exchange*. In it, she begins by identifying a fundamental discrepancy between the signifiers of the physical or live elements of the performance (which she terms the *theatrical signifiers*) and those of the projected image (*cinematic signifiers*), with the two sets of signifiers unable to "access" one another. While film and theatre have much in common – narrative, actors, props and the staged environment – the integration of these media is hampered by the differences in their relationships to their "production and reception equipment" (Bell, 2000: 42). The production equipment of theatre – a text, a director, actors, technicians, props, a physical space – is almost identical to its reception equipment, in that most of these things will be physically present during the reception of the live performance. The production equipment of the projected image, on the other hand, while being similar to that of theatre, is no longer present at reception – what the audience witnesses is the recording of the production equipment

and not the equipment itself. Thus, according to Bell, the fundamental difference between the two media is one of *presence* and *absence* – the signifying elements of theatre are present, while those of the projected image are apprehended by their absence (Bell, 2000: 43).

Bell then divides intermedia productions into three groups: those where the projected image 'decorates' or comments on live performance; those where live performance serves to comment on or 'decorate' the projection; and finally those which she classifies as *dialogic media productions*, where the projection and the live performer "merge into a single image", through *inter-media exchange*, which she defines as "the mutual acknowledgement of images produced by separate media and their accompanying interchange of dialogue, glance, attribute, equipment or other currency such that the images cohere and appear to coincide in the same time and space" (Bell, 2000: 44).

She then goes on to state that:

...dialogic media productions do not, as a rule, attempt to disguise the images' "recordedness". Far from helping conceal the recorded imagery's illusionistic mechanisms, dialogic media foregrounds [the] materiality of the filmic medium by juxtaposing its monitors and screens with the flesh-and-blood of the live performer(s). The spectator may forget [the] recorded images' machinery from time to time when in the movie theatre or on the couch in front of the T.V., but in a dialogic media production, the immediate contrast of the live "intelligent agent" serves as a stark reminder of the recorded imagery's lack of such "intelligence." Inter-media exchange simultaneously builds and destroys its own illusion (Bell, 2000: 45).

Apart from the acknowledgement of the projected image as being a mediated one, Bell also states that inter-media exchange is built on the "diffusing" of one image across

different “apparati” – what I have understood as the reproduction or capturing of the live performer in the pre-recorded projection and, in turn, the mimicking or reflection of the projection by the live performer. The genre also has an in-built dissonance and a suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience, wherein the projected image is understood to not have “agency”, but its interaction with the live performer is nonetheless accepted as legitimate (Bell, 2000: 45).

Staging Huxley

The dramatic text of *Heaven and Hell* was constructed from a recorded audio interview which Aldous Huxley gave to John Chandos in 1961, a television interview on the Mike Wallace Show from that same year, and excerpts from Huxley’s books (*Island* and *The Doors of Perception*), with original bits of dialogue added in rehearsal. The performance showed an actor portraying Huxley in his study / den, responding to the questions asked by the disembodied voice of Chandos. Although never explicated, my idea was for this to be a kind of ‘afterlife waiting lounge’ which Huxley finds himself in and is there given the opportunity to review his life before ‘moving on’.

The production utilised three projection screens: one disguised as a mirror (all of its content was, in fact, pre-recorded), ‘reflecting’ the staged environment and its missing ‘fourth wall’; a large screen situated above a bookcase, modelled on the screen from *Krapp’s Last Tape*, whose content was to signify Huxley’s subjective memories and fantasies (which I will hereafter refer to as the ‘bookcase screen’); and a television set.

The design of both the staged environment and the projections in *Heaven and Hell* were based in great part on those in *Krapp’s Last Tape*, with the dominant screen being placed above a similar bookcase. Although the semiotic function of the screens in both productions were similar, the main screen in *Heaven and Hell* differed from the one in *Krapp* in that, where the latter signified both the content of the television screen and an

almost autonomous vision of the past, the former was meant as a point-of-view window into Huxley's memories and fantasies. It depicted no 'digital double'-type image of the protagonist, instead showing a subjective vision of the world through his eyes.



Figure 3.1 A three-quarter side view of the staged environment of *Heaven and Hell*, showing all three projection screens. Huxley speaks about the power of propaganda on TV, while the top screen shows the Flintstones selling cigarettes. The actor portraying Huxley sips on a Coke.

The bulk of the interaction between the projected and the live in *Heaven and Hell* could be classified under Bell's first two categories of intermedia performance: the projected image commenting on the words and actions of the live performer, and vice versa. Moreover, while the audience constantly witnessed this dialogue taking place, the live character remained mostly unaware of it. It was left up to the audience to realise that the dialogue was taking place and to decipher its content. This was facilitated through visual and spoken 'clues'. The function of the top projection screen, situated above the bookcase, was to illustrate, interpret, explain and at times juxtapose what was being said or done on the stage below. When Huxley began relating how he went blind as a teenager and slowly regained his sight, the image on the screen was black and white

and very blurred. Later it showed an old medical documentary on how the eyes see. When Huxley spoke of the writers that influenced him and about his contemporaries, the screen showed short animations of Mallarmé, Rimbaud and Proust, documentary footage of Hemingway and Joyce, as well as a sequence showing footage of Dublin overlaid with nonsensical animated typography (alluding to Joyce's stream of consciousness writing style). When the actor turned on the television set to watch an interview with the real, historical Huxley, the dynamic of the projections shifted. The top screen now commented on the TV-Huxley's discourse on dictatorships and propaganda by showing a series of quick edits of American television adverts from the 50s and 60s (including one of the Flintstones selling cigarettes). The connection was an easy one for the audience to make. In the final scene, the screen shows a fictitious film adaptation of Huxley's *Island*, with the film acting as a metaphor for Huxley's own death, which the live performer acted out on stage while the film played above.

An instance of Bell's *inter-media exchange* was really only evident in one scene from *Heaven and Hell*. While speaking about modern art – Cubism, Post Impressionism – the actor portraying Huxley walked towards the 'mirror' screen. However, instead of their being a 'regular' reflection, his reflected self walked into the frame from the opposite end of the mirror. Both the actor and his reflection then turned their backs to the audience (a reference to René Magritte's painting *La reproduction interdite*'), before looking back over their shoulders and walking back from where they had come.

As mentioned, the mirror screen was meant to signify both an actual mirror which was physically present in the staged environment and the inner world of Huxley. I feel that it was one of the more successful aspects of the production, as the screen was fully integrated into the environment and its content did not in any way detract from the live actor – rather, in an unconscious adherence to the rules of inter-media exchange, the actor's image was "diffused" across the two media, combining with the actor to create a instance of Bell's "single image". It was also the only instance in the entire performance

where the projected image directly acknowledged the audience and, while the interaction of the actor and his double may have been brief, the two became united in their regard of the those who were standing outside of their world, the observed becoming the observers.



Figure 3.2 The live actor and his digital double regard the audience.

In this silent interaction, there was a sense of the uncanny, a moment of uncertainty about what is real and unreal, which was almost entirely lacking in the rest of the performance. Given that the performance was about a kind of afterlife, it seems a missed opportunity to have not fully exploited the facility of the double in evoking this sense of the uncanny to a greater degree.

And the Dead Shall Walk the Earth

In staging *Heaven and Hell*, the issues that both Dixon, in referring to Barthes, and Auslander raise – the power of the projected image over the live performer and the blurring of the boundaries between the corporeal and the mediated – became more pertinent for me than in my previous productions as, along with a live actor portraying

Huxley, the performance utilised archival audio and video recordings of the authentic, historical Huxley. While the audio recordings raised similar issues to the audio/visual ones, in keeping with the subject of this report I will mainly focus on the effect of utilising the visual material.

The scene in question is one where James Reynolds, the actor portraying Huxley, turns on the television to watch an interview with the historical Huxley, recorded in the early 1960s. The television, situated around chest-height, mostly showed the slightly larger than life-size head of Huxley, which became level with the actor's head once he'd sat down in a chair to view the interview. With the actor and the projected image of Huxley facing one another, what became clear was that – in a reversal of Dixon's schema – the actor had become the double of the projection. The reasons for this are quite obvious: while the actor may have been physically present and quite proximal to the audience, his presence was upstaged by the fact that the 'real' Huxley was on TV – which, in a mediatized culture, acts like a magnet to pull the attention of the audience away from anything but the image it projects out, while automatically authenticating that image – and being shown in the context of an authentic-looking historical document, with its attendant, authenticating signifiers (black and white footage with a green-tinged grade, slightly muffled sound quality). The actor, in only pretending to be the real Huxley, was not only competing against the authentic historical image of Huxley, but also against the mystique of historical footage – images flickering back at us from the mists of the past. Moreover, if we subscribe to Barthes' contention that the photographic image is "reality in a past state: at once past and real" (Barthes, 1981: 82) then the actor portraying Huxley was in effect competing against Huxley *himself*, summoned from the grave, as it were, and forced to re-enact the past on television. It was a struggle in which the odds were stacked decidedly against the actor.



Figure 3.3 The live actor up against Huxley

The power of the archival footage of the authentic Huxley over the live actor became even more overwhelming in the final minutes of the performance. Here the live actor, having just enacted Huxley's death, lies on the table as the lights dim and the staged environment fades to darkness. After a moment's silence, the bookcase screen is reactivated and the looming, giant image of the authentic Huxley appears in all of its archival, black and white glory. He speaks of "love and intelligence" and the screen fades to black, signifying the end of the performance. While my intention was to have this footage 'bookend' the performance and act as a counterpoint to the opening Huxley sound-bite, the actual effect was quite different, based on criticism which I received post-performance. In light of this feedback, it occurred to me that this scene, far from being a fitting end to a performance intended as an integration of the live and the projected, in fact signified the final 'triumph' of the projected and the 'death' of the live. The image appeared on a screen glowing alone in the darkness, unmoored now completely from the rest of the staged environment and no longer needing to relate to any live element at all; showing a massive, head-and-shoulder shot of Huxley, bigger than life and, if there was any doubt left as to what it signified, appeared immediately

after the live actor had 'died' on stage, prostrated below the screen in question. I realised too late that my intermedia performance had culminated in becoming cinema.

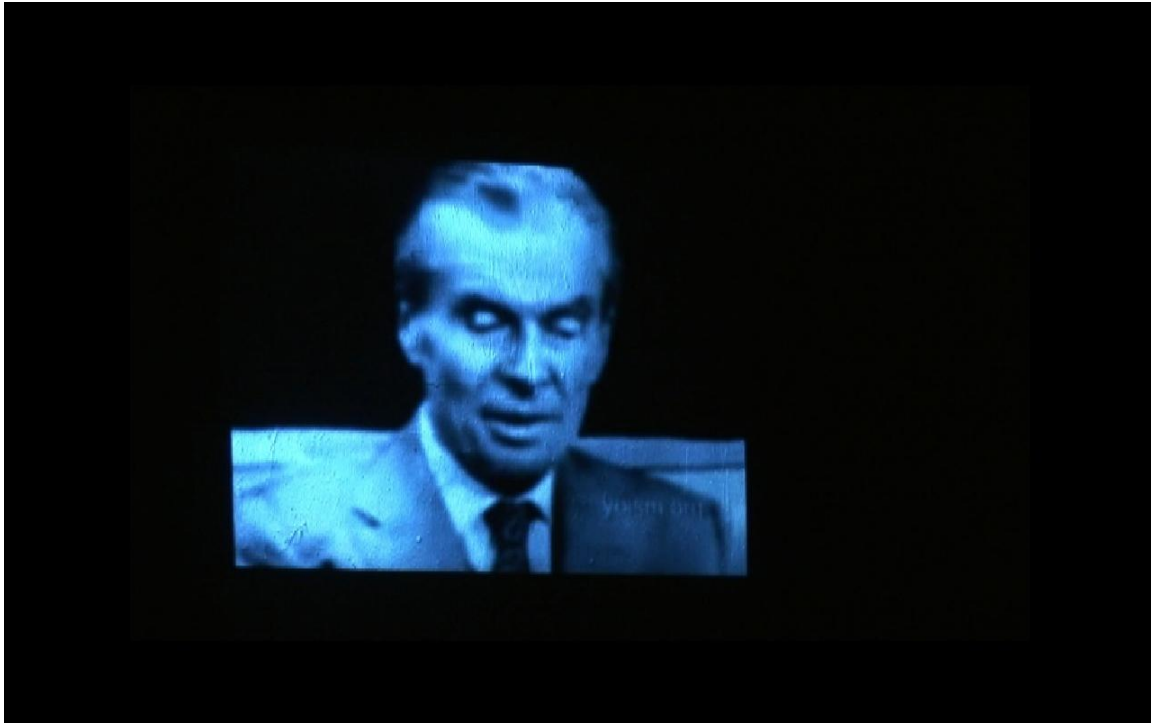


Figure 3.4 The final image of Huxley, projected at the close of the performance

Mea Culpa

Considering *Heaven and Hell* from the point of view of my intention to create an integrated intermedia work, what the production suffered from most acutely was the overwhelming of the live performer by the projections. This they did in two ways: through design-related factors (size, placement and lighting), as well as in their control of the temporality or pacing of the performance.

In attempting to combine a number of different types of projection – each with a particular and distinct sign function – *Heaven and Hell* was the most ambitious of the performances which I had staged to date. However, in spite of – or perhaps due to – this ambition, it fell short of what it may have achieved. Where *Krapp's Last Tape* had a

singular vision supported by a spartan projection design, *Heaven and Hell* struggled to realise too many disparate elements and mistakes were made which compromised the impact that the production may have had. The key error, I believe, was in transplanting the broad stroke of what I thought had worked to good effect in *Krapp* – the large projection screen situated at a remove from the rest of the staged environment – but ignoring its details. Where the screen in *Krapp* presented an image that was a life-size mirror double of the live actor, in *Heaven and Hell* it showed an array of documentary footage and pre-shot film. The form may have been the same, but the function was entirely different. The single shot of the ‘younger’ *Krapp*, placed at a remove from the rest of the staged environment, signified two things: that as an image it did not exist where it was positioned in space but was a window to Krapp’s TV monitor and – more importantly – that it was an image of a past and a youth that Krapp could never re-live, an image that had become timeless by being committed to tape, but which would nonetheless remain disconnected and out of reach for the time-bound. This second point was made more poignant by the fact that the image was directly above the live actor – *right there*, but out of reach – presenting the audience with the image of the young, cocksure Krapp constantly juxtaposed against his old, decrepit and broken self sitting below, in the flesh. In contrast to this simple and direct statement, the screen in *Heaven and Hell* showed a vast succession of images which – while (I believe) successfully (re)creating the ‘texture’ of Huxley’s life – did not combine with the live actor to form a single, unified image. Even the moment where the actor and the projected image were to mirror one another (the death scene in *Island*) was dominated by the screen – both by it being the brightest object on a dimly-lit stage and by the editing of the footage, which at times caused the slightly-less-than-life-size actors to become massive looming heads.

Another design issue was that, in the staged environment, I placed all three screens – the ‘mirror’, the television and the top screen – in a row behind the table which served as the centrepiece of the environment. This was a failure to utilise the three-

dimensionality of the stage and, in doing so, to bring the projection screens *into* the space with the live performer. In particular, the television set may have been better placed on the table (which is where I originally intended for it to be), as this would have allowed for more of the kind of physical interaction with the projection hardware as seen in *Krapp*. This failure also resulted in the live performer being limited in his movement to, for the most part, the area demarcated by the linear, 'flat' arrangement of the screens. As such, the performer was robbed of the opportunity to inhabit and move through the three-dimensional stage environment, which negatively impacted on his presence or 'liveness'.

The final design factor to be considered is lighting. While attempts were made to use lighting to frame and accentuate the live actor – particularly and successfully during his reading from *Island* – in the final reckoning the actor was again overwhelmed by the projections which, whatever their shape, size or content become essentially light-emitting and light-reflecting surfaces. As such, I've realised that any intermedia work needs to carefully consider the lighting of the live performers at all times during a performance, allowing them to both hold their own against the projections and to become foregrounded and to recede when necessary.

As regards the temporal dominance of the projections over the live actor, this is a problem as old as intermedia performance itself. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Josef Svoboda came across the same issue in his early *Laterna Magika* experiments, where the use of pre-recorded footage restricted the timing of the live actors to very specific beats and stifled any kind of spontaneity – a large part of what makes live performance so appealing and stands it in contrast to film and television.

On one of the performance evenings, the one time where the live actor managed to break free of the tyranny of the projection screens was due to an accident. While Huxley spoke on the TV and the top projection screen flashed Coca Cola adverts, the live actor

sat down and cracked open a tin of Coke, so as to mirror the projection and become part of the complete picture on stage. However, in trying to rotate the tin to allow the audience to better see its logo, the liquid spilled out of his mouth and all over the floor. In an attempt to recover from the accident and stay in character, he then picked up a copy of *The Doors of Perception* and used it to mop up the mess. The audience's attention immediately went from the projections to the real and spontaneous live action that was playing out stage left. Standing up in the projection booth, I could feel a shift in the vibration of the room, with – pardon the cliché – almost a type of electric current passing through the audience. The live actor later returned to and 'completed' the joke by picking the fallen book up off the floor and wiping it before reading from it in answer to a question by the disembodied voice of Chandos – a perfect 'save', but also one of the few moments where the actor took on real presence and was able to hold his own against – even surpass – the images that surrounded him.

Conclusion / Findings and Reflections

Looking back at the decisions which were made in the staging of *Heaven and Hell*, it becomes clear that most of them could be traced back to my background as a student of and practitioner in graphic design and screen-based media. My propensity for screen-based and two-dimensional could clearly be seen in my conceptualisation of the staged environment, which resulted in a failure to utilise the three-dimensions of the performance space, and my lack of formal live performance training would certainly account for the emphasis on the content of the projections, with less attention paid to the actor's performance in relationship to them. While I could claim some experience in working in the live performance environment, many of the productions I was involved in – such as *They Look at Me* and *Black!...White?* – were done in collaboration with directors, choreographers and performers at home in this idiom. The later productions – *MC Hally* and *Krapp's Last Tape* – were experimental works, and while both taught me much in working with projection in the live environment, I hadn't sufficiently processed this knowledge in approaching the staging of *Heaven and Hell*.

On the whole, there were too few 'theatrical' moments to drive the performance along and engage the audience on a visceral level. The relationship between the live actor and the projections was, for the most part, built on an often too-subtle mirroring. While this was, I still feel, an approach that had much merit, it needed to be supplemented with moments that required the audience to do less intellectual puzzle-solving and instead delivered strong and immediate visual links between the staged environment, the live actor and the projections. Much of this could have been done without having to deviate too far from the existent format of the performance. For instance, the relationship of the actor, the environment and the projections could have been made more explicit by more attention being paid to the lighting design, using colour as a mirroring device.

Looking beyond just visual design, the second major problem of the production, as mentioned in Chapter 3, was the temporal restrictions placed on the live performer by the projections. Taking into consideration theoretical models like Dixon's digital double and Bell's dialogic media, both are dependent on a dynamic relationship between the live performer and the projected image. The kind of strict temporal parameters that traditional (temporally linear) video imposes on the live performer, can only result in an interaction which is heavily biased towards the former. It seems to me that one of the most promising means of overcoming this problem is the emerging field of physical computing, which utilises motion sensors in the performance environment to trigger video projections and sound. The sensors work on the basis of using a performer's physical movements, or even their voice, to trigger particular content and can vary in type, from sensors which are attached to an infra-red beam which, when crossed by the performer, activates an event, to one's that are connected to video cameras which capture the performer's movements and use them as a triggering mechanism. While the minutiae of these technologies are not important to this discussion, the notion that the live performer can become the agent triggering and manipulating the projected image completely changes the type of intermedia performance paradigm that I have been operating in up to this time. In this order of things, the projected image no longer dictates the timing of the performance, but is dependent on the pace set by the sentient partner in the relationship – the live performer. To add complexity, the content triggered by the sensors can also be randomised according to various patterns, which introduces an element of improvisation to the interaction of the performer and the projection. All of this adds a much-needed degree of freedom for the live performer and an unpredictability which, I now believe, should be one of the hallmarks of live performance.

Remix, Remediate

While I have identified the use of physical computing in the live performer/projected image relationship as one of the ways to drive my practice forward, another area worth

exploring further is one which I have already engaged with but have not placed much conscious focus on. I refer to the facility of the projected image in remixing or remediating existing texts and live performance itself.

Remix, according to new media theorist Lev Manovich “originally had a precise and a narrow meaning that gradually became diffused... today referring to any reworking of already existing cultural work(s)” (Manovich, 2007). *They Look at Me*, *MC Hally*, *Krapp* and *Heaven and Hell* were all, to some extent, remixes of existing texts. Here, in the case of *MC Hally* and *Krapp*, I refer to Elam’s performance text, as the dramatic texts were, in each case, faithfully reproduced. The dramatic text of *Heaven and Hell* was pieced together from existing sources, thus it qualifies as a remix, while the performance text, as least as far as the projections were concerned, was also to a great extent a remix of existing sources.

Remediation refers to the intrusion of a new medium into an existing mediatic paradigm. The new medium behaves as a kind of parasite and develops its language by mimicking the medium which it has usurped. This, in turn, causes the older medium to reposition itself in relationship to the newer medium. This phenomenon can be illustrated by the advent of photography in the late 1800s: where up to that time painting had been the dominant form of documentation, photography usurped this role while initially modelling itself on painting; painting in turn absorbed the traits of photography, such as informal composition and a concern with light as a subject, as seen in the work of the Impressionists (Bolter and Grusin, 2000: 21). The texts I refer to above each qualify as remdiations, as the intrusion of the projected image caused each of them to reposition themselves in relationship to this ‘foreign’ medium – or, to put it more poetically, this foreign *body*. Whatever the themes or concerns of each of the texts may have originally been, they were now placed in relationship to the nature of the projected image, the Media (capital M) and technology itself as subjects of enquiry.

There seem to me to be two dominant 'streams' in intermedia performance. The first is one where every attempt is made to disguise the technological 'back end', attempting to create a *trompe l'oeil* –type effect, an illusion that has the audience guessing at what is 'real' and what is projected (to borrow a term from Bolter and Grusin, the medium attempts to be transparent, or *immediate*). This stream's success is measured by the degree to which the projected image appears to be something other than itself, in much the same way that Dutch oil painting attempted to disguise itself as being other than oil paint on the surface of a canvas. The second stream is one where the technology itself becomes the subject of the performance. Here, regardless of its content, the projected image doesn't pretend to be anything other than what it is. The projection is always apprehended as being just that – a projection (Bolter and Grusin refer to this as the medium being opaque, or *hypermediate*).

This opaqueness is seen in Bell's dialogic media and its foregrounding of "materiality of the filmic medium" (Bell, 2000: 45). In this kind of performance, the audience engages not only with the content of the projection – the images themselves – but also with its *form* – the fact that it is a projection – which acts a signifier in and of itself. Here the projection becomes analogous to the live performer: as the performer has a form (the physical body) which produces content (actions, words), so too does the projection have form (technological hardware) which produces content (the projected image). Just as, irrespective of what the live performer says or does, the audience never ceases to see him as a human body with all of its attendant signifiers, so too is the projected image never divorced from its identity as technology and its relationship to Media with a capital 'M'. It is with this identity that it is then enabled to act as a remediating agent, taking existing texts and, to quote Elizabeth LeCompte, "giving them legs" (Le Compte, c. 2010) – making them relevant and restoring their vitality in a media-saturated society, caught in the throes of a love affair with the virtual. While I certainly do not champion the remix as the sole means of expression, I do acknowledge its ubiquity in our society,

informed by postmodern notions of pastiche and facilitated by the 'cut-and-paste' capabilities of digital software. Again to quote Manovich:

It is a truism today that we live in a "remix culture." Today, many of [sic] cultural and lifestyle arenas - music, fashion, design, art, web applications, user created media, food - are governed by remixes, fusions, collages, or mash-ups. If post-modernism defined 1980s, remix definitely dominates 2000s, and it will probably continue to rule the next decade as well (Manovich, 2007).

In Closing

I end this report having identified what I believe have been both the successes and the shortcomings of my practice up to this point, gleaning from it that which I believe has been worthwhile and looking at possible ways forward. Dixon's digital double, Bell's dialogic media and the issue of liveness have all served as valuable tools to understanding the possible roles of the projected image in live performance. In turning towards physical computing as a technical solution to a more dynamic relationship between live performer and the projected image and in acknowledging intermedia performance as a site for remix and remediation, I believe that I have identified possible stratagems for any possible future practice which I may undertake in this field. Having gone through this research process, I feel better equipped to taking a better informed approach to intermedia performance and exploring further possibilities in this field of practice.

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