

Dialogic Media Productions and Inter-media Exchange

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Critics and historians tend to place productions that combine theatre and film into one loose category. Most often they call them all “multi-media” or “performance art” or sometimes “plays that use video.”¹ They may use these terms interchangeably or choose a favorite. Either way all the terms refer to the same, single class of productions. Upon close examination, however, combinations of film and theatre appear more heterogeneous than this single class implies. Some theatre histories have distinguished between certain types of combined media productions based on the function of the film in the production (e.g. using it as a backdrop versus using it to advance the plot) or based on the type of film used (e.g. found footage versus film shot explicitly for that production).² The limitation of such distinctions lies in the onus they place on the cinematic element of the combination. These typologies intuitively assume theatre as the *a priori* medium into which film is inserted and formulate categories based on the theatre’s “use” of film.³

Although this assumption seems to make sense given the productions these historical works choose to examine, not all combinations of theatre and film lend themselves to such an interpretation.⁴ Some combinations of theatre and film would be better described as films using performance. Milton Cohen’s space theatre productions, for example, consist of various films projected on a range of surfaces that the artist manipulates over the course of the production. The film is the primary medium, the performance secondary. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is another combined media production in which the film uses the performance rather than vice versa. Live actors often accompany this low-budget feature film by performing in front of the screen, but again, the film is the primary medium, the performance secondary.⁵ Although performance frequently dominates in combinations of theatre and film, it is also sometimes subordinate.

Rather than creating categories based upon the kind and/or function of the production or even upon the kind and/or function of performance around the film, I will focus on the nature of the combination itself without preconception regarding which medium uses the other. All combined media productions must

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come to terms with issues raised by the specificities of the two media they incorporate. However, not all of them choose the same strategies. Productions combining theatre and film respond differently, for example, to the impossibility of the seamless coincidence of theatrical and cinematic apparatus in the same event. The cinematic and theatrical apparatus cannot seamlessly coincide in the same event because the cinematic signifier is always partly missing whereas the theatrical signifier is always right there. In film, all that remains for the audience is a two-dimensional shadow of the actors, their actions, and their environments. Filmed actions may seem very “real” to an audience because of perspective and the photographic nature of the image. However, the audience is always just out of the range of the filmic signifier whose trace on the screen makes reference to a time and place that the spectator cannot access physically in the moment of viewing — they cannot reach out and touch it.⁶ On stage the actors, their actions, and their environments present themselves “in the flesh,” in the same space and moment with the audience. During the reception of a combined media production, then, the theatrical signifiers cannot access the cinematic signifiers any more than the audience can.

This odd image of one signifier trying to “access” another signifier points to an area of conflict in combining film and theatre that the language of semiotics does not effectively address. Theatre and film have a lot in common. They both often tell stories. They both frequently use actors and props to tell those stories. All their similarities can disguise the primary obstacle to their combination: the divergent relationships each apparatus maintains between production and reception equipment. Both theatre and film involve two categories of events: production events and reception events.⁷ That is to say, each medium requires events that must take place in the absence of the audience as well as events that must take place in the presence of the audience. Each set of events requires specific, although not necessarily different, equipment.⁸ In theatre, production equipment and reception equipment are largely identical. Theatrical production equipment requires actors and a space and might include a text, a director, designers, props, lights, and/or costumes. Nearly all of those things will also appear during reception. The few “pieces of equipment” that will not appear during theatrical reception consist primarily in creative “support staff,” directors or designers, for instance. All the signifying elements, however, do present themselves “in the flesh.” In film, on the other hand, production and reception share hardly any equipment at all. Like theatre production, film production often requires actors and a space and might include any of the optional materials from theatre production as well.⁹ In addition, however, film production also requires a camera, a camera operator, film or tape, and usually an editor and editing equipment. In film reception, the only production equipment that also functions as reception equipment is the print (film) or the master (video). Unlike theatrical reception, cinematic reception requires a

completely different set of equipment from that of production: a screen or monitor, a projector or tape player, and a projectionist or video technician. None of cinema's signifying elements present themselves "in the flesh" during reception. They present themselves only through their absence.¹⁰ Therefore, although not all of the theatrical apparatus is necessarily present during reception, all of the signifying elements indeed are, whereas none of the cinematic signifying elements are present. Furthermore, the lone ambassador from cinematic production to cinematic reception, the print or master, signifies nothing but itself on its own and even hides itself deep within the other cinematic reception equipment.¹¹ Theatre and film share so much in production equipment — actors, space, etc. — but the only reception equipment they share is the one defining piece: the audience.¹²

Productions that combine theatre and film must confront the discrepancies between the relationships each apparatus maintains to signification production, and reception.¹³ The issues that the two media's divergent reception equipment bring to light revolve around presence, absence, time, and space. The here-and-now of theatre and the there-and-then of film confront one another. The signifiers in performance (actors, props, etc.) are present during this moment of reception, part of the reception equipment itself. The signifiers (actors, props, etc.) recorded on film projected during that performance are absent, not part of the reception equipment. At the moment the live actors perform their actions, the recorded actors' actions have already been performed and fixed in time and space. Even if the film were shot right in the performance's stage space (thus uniting the space of film production with the space of film reception), the two-dimensional plane of the screen would still not function as the equivalent of the three-dimensional space of the stage. The space on film simply is not there. No matter what, the moments recorded are not the same moments playing on stage with the live performers.¹⁴ The theatrical apparatus and the cinematic apparatus share the same reception event in combined media productions, but the specificities of their reception equipment remain and conflict.

Combined media productions approach these and other related issues in one of two ways. Either they avoid them by minimizing interactions between the cinematic and separate from theatrical images, or they confront the issues directly by insisting that the images interact. Productions that use the former approach establish either film or theatre as the dominant medium and use the other, secondary medium to comment upon or to decorate the first. The possible combinations of media of this sort fall into two broad categories: performances commented upon or decorated by film and films commented upon or decorated by live action. The first category, performances punctuated by film, includes much of Peter Sellar's work with operas and plays (e.g. his productions of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Brecht and Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins*, Debussy's *Pelleas and Melisande*, Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, etc.). Here, the dominant medium, the performance,

carries the narrative line while the secondary medium, the video, decorates the scene with aesthetically pleasing images or with images that make some commentary on the live action. Another means of keeping the filmic images separate from the dominant theatrical images involves switching back and forth from one medium to the other, moving from a live action scene to a filmed scene and back again. This technique was popular in early Japanese and American combined media productions.¹⁵ Works that would fall under the other category, films commented on or decorated by live action, include the ONCE group's 1965 *Unmarked Interchange* in which live actors perform in front of small sections of a gigantic screen on which Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers' *Top Hat* is projected. Here the dominant medium, the film, carries the narrative line while the secondary medium, the performance, comments on that narrative.

Other combined media productions approach the problems that arise in combining theatrical and cinematic reception events more directly. The cinematic and theatrical images in these productions neither disrupt nor enhance one another, but rather merge into a single image through an event impossible in either apparatus alone: inter-media exchange. Inter-media exchange is 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. I call productions that engage in inter-media exchange "**dialogic media productions.**"

Inter-media exchange functions as an illusion that disrupts its own mechanisms. Recorded images cannot exchange words, glances, or anything else with a live human being of course, because they do not have agency. They do not qualify as what computer scientists call "intelligent agents." The recorded images in dialogic media productions do appear to have agency, however. The live performers, clearly intelligent agents themselves, interact with the recorded images, treating them as though they too had agency. The recorded images appear to respond in turn. Sometimes they even appear to initiate the interaction. Like any illusion, inter-media exchange requires a collective effort on the part of artist and spectator. The illusionist creates a certain set of conditions and performs certain actions, but the spectator must ultimately cooperate with the illusionist's tactics, of distraction for example, for the trick to work. The dialogic media artist sets up a specific configuration of live and recorded imagery, yet inter-media exchange depends upon the spectator's interpretation of that configuration for the two types of images to appear to interact. Inter-media exchange is created as much in the mind of the perceiver as on the stage.

Inter-media exchange does not depend on the tactic of distraction, however, as do many classic magic tricks. But rather it depends on the illusionistic qualities of its cinematic component. Film and video engage a broad range of mechanisms, including perspective and the photographic nature of the image, to

create an illusion of reality. Cinematic images may consequently seem in some ways more “real” to an audience than do theatrical images.

Dialogic media productions disrupt those very devices, however. They could try to naturalize the furniture of the images’ presentation through the theatrical element’s illusionistic mechanisms by, for example, treating the screen as a window in order to create an illusion of another live performer addressing the other member(s) of the cast. Yet 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 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.

Herein lies the specificity of the genre. The spectator observes an exchange between recorded image and live performer. Simultaneously, the spectator recognizes that one of the partners in that exchange, the recorded image, does not have agency. The dissonance between the observed interaction and the knowledge of its impossibility is one of the defining characteristics of dialogic media.

Inter-media exchange operates both as a reception event and as a production event. That is, it is both created in the audience’s absence as well as performed in their presence. The two apparati collectively create images in production by shooting the video in such a way that, when played in rehearsal (and here this reception event becomes a production event), the recorded performer(s) leave room for the live performer(s) to interact with it. The live performer(s) reciprocally incorporate the filmic images into their actions. In production as well as in reception, neither the cinematic nor the theatrical apparatus contains this image exclusively. Rather, the image diffuses itself through them both, leaving no question of one medium serving another. These traditionally separate filmic and theatrical apparati interact in a complex merger to deliver only one single image — albeit one very complicated, certainly divisible, highly unstable single image. Despite the impossibility of the seamless coincidence of filmic and theatrical signifiers and equipment in a single event, filmic and theatrical images in dialogic media productions recognize one another’s presence and interact with one another to build a new image and a new apparatus defined by the act of production and reception called inter-media exchange.

Examining Laura Farabough’s exemplary dialogic media production, *Bodily Concessions*, will illuminate different forms of inter-media exchange that productions can use to connect theatrical and filmic images. Farabough’s work

has consistently performed a vital role in American experimental theatre for the past twenty-five years. Critics often cite her pioneering site-specific productions with Beggar's Theatre and Snake Theatre during the seventies as primary examples of environmental theatre. She began working with video as early as 1976. Farabough continues to experiment with video and performance to this day. A number of these experiments have taken the form of dialogic media productions, and *Bodily Concessions* stands among the most intricate and fully developed examples of her dialogic oeuvre.¹⁶

Although *Bodily Concessions* provides an excellent opportunity for the illustration of dialogic media, it is by no means the only example of this form. Winsor McCay created the earliest recorded dialogic media production. In 1914 McCay toured the United States presenting live audiences with a series of his animated films including his most recent work, *Gertie the Dinosaur*. Decked out in pith helmet and riding boots and brandishing a whip, McCay's performance with this piece consisted of his introducing the on-screen Gertie, issuing her commands which she appears to obey, and asking her questions that she appears to answer by nodding or shaking her head. As a grand finale, just as McCay exits behind the screen he simultaneously appears animated on screen, riding away on Gertie's back.¹⁷ Other notable examples of dialogic media include some of Erwin Piscator's works such as his 1927 *Hoppla, Wir Leben!*, Franz Ludwig Hoerth's 1930 production of Paul Claudel's *Christophe Colomb*, portions of director Peter Sellar's oeuvre including his 1991 production of *Klinghoffer*, and parts of the work of The Wooster Group including their 1991 piece, *Brace Up!* More recent examples of dialogic media include Lee Bruer's 1998 revival of *Haji*, in which Ruth Maleczech interacts with her own image on video, and the Flying Karamazov Brothers' collaboration with the M.I.T. Media Lab, *L'Universe* (2000). Farabough's work is an extremely useful example of dialogic media, but hardly the only one.

In contrast with many works that include merely a few sequences of dialogic combined media, *Bodily Concessions* boasts one single actor appearing live and recorded on video throughout the entire piece. In fact, she appears three times simultaneously: live on stage, recorded on one tape projected on a screen, and recorded on another tape playing on a monitor. The theatrical and cinematic images in this production participate in a variety of forms of inter-media exchange rather than merely a few. In addition, *Bodily Concessions* plays with the specificities of the members of its tripartite apparatus and does not try to hide them as some productions do. It therefore presents the opportunity not only to examine the forms of inter-media exchange through which these apparatus combine, but also to examine the seams of this combination that mark the inescapable discrepancies between theatrical and cinematic signification, production and reception.

Farabough wrote *Bodily Concessions* for a small stage, approximately 20' by 15'. A video projector suspended overhead in the audience projected images

onto a 12' by 9' screen placed upstage center. A television monitor sat downstage left. *Bodily Concessions* takes as its subject a woman, first introduced to us through her image on the monitor, who has discovered that she has been sleep walking. Deeply troubled by what she learns of her unconscious behavior in what she has learned is called, "a state of being abnormally awake," the monitor woman explains to us that she finds she must distinguish herself from her sleepwalking self by referring to it in the third person. Despite the monitor woman's adamant insistence on this grammatical distinction that jams a linguistic and psychological wedge between her and her sleepwalking identity, she ardently wishes to make contact with this sleepwalking other-self. Through references in her opening monologue, the monitor woman establishes herself as the conscious ("normally awake") self; the body as "her," the sleepwalking self; and the screen as the dream-image itself. In other words, the tripartite apparatus creates an imaginary space of sleep and dreams, and the woman is the dream's divided subject. From the outset, the production sets up the notion that a single image — that of one woman — has dispersed itself through the different apparati in this reception event.

Bodily Concessions immediately establishes an equal footing between the live performer and the video imagery by granting the monitor the function of narrator. Opening with a monologue falls well within the tradition of American solo performance. Farabough tricks the code of earlier "ecstatic" performance and its emphasis on the raw presence of human flesh, however, by having the monitor's video image of the woman deliver this introductory passage. As the narrator, the monitor establishes the base reality for the piece, working against any notion that the video's job on stage consists of illustration or decoration. Also, the narrative she tells indicates that the live performance doesn't serve merely to illustrate or decorate the video imagery either. She indicates that the body is in fact the sleepwalking portion of the woman that the monitor woman, the conscious portion of the woman, wants to recuperate. Clearly this is neither a performance commented upon or decorated by film nor a film commented upon or decorated by live action.

After examining the dialogic mechanisms that connect the theatrical image with each filmic image in *Bodily Concessions*, I will turn to those that join the monitor-image and the screen-image. The essay will conclude with an examination of how the members of this tripartite apparatus poke fun at themselves and at one another as they foreground the fragility of their unity. For convenience, I will refer to the theatrical image by its dynamic element, the live actor, heretofore called "the body." The video monitor-image shall be known as "the monitor" and the projection screen-image as "the screen." "The member apparati" will signify all three apparati collectively: the monitor-displayed video, the projected video, and the live performance.

In Farabough's production, the three potentially separate images join together through inter-media exchanges of gaze, language, movement, and/or light. The monitor and the body merge through gaze and language. They connect by looking at one another, by associating their gazes into a collective spectatorial gaze, and eventually by conversing with one another. The monitor woman "watches" the body woman as she narrates and partially acts out two dream sequences shown on the screen. The close-up shot of the woman on the monitor remains static throughout the production, but the monitor woman turns her head within the static frame as though she were watching the screen and the body right through monitor frame. During these dream sequences the body and the monitor periodically join their gazes to watch the screen, and "together" they form a second audience. Toward the end of the piece, the body returns the monitor's gaze and the two women converse with one another as the monitor picks up one speaker's role from an inquisition scene the body performed alone through free indirect discourse earlier in the piece. By seeing one another, watching a third party together, and talking to one another, the body woman and the monitor woman establish themselves as present in the same time and space. Despite the impossible coincidence of the single actor recorded on video and live on stage, the two characters look at one another, watch a movie together, and even have a chat.

Although they share no conversation, the body and the screen also form a single image. Like the body and the monitor, the body and the screen connect through gaze, but also through movement and light. The gaze connection has two operations: the one-way spectatorial gaze and the associative gaze. As mentioned before, the body, along with the monitor, periodically watches the screen. Here the member-apparati collectively enact the unreturned gaze of the traditional cinematic apparatus often characterized by psychoanalytic film theorists as "scopophilic." The body, the monitor, and the audience all watch the big movie, the dream. Reminiscent of so many scenes in Ibsen's *Master Builder*, the audience does watch, but they also watch the others watch. Only this time the machine that replicates and exceeds human perception simultaneously shows us what they see.

An associative gaze also connects these two member apparati. The body woman, as the sleepwalking segment of the divided subject of the dream, not only watches the imaginary space of the dream, she also participates in it. One of the more dramatic associative gazes occurs in the first dream sequence, "The Twelve Stations of the Latrine." Both the screen woman and the body woman suddenly hear soldiers approaching the latrine. The audience hears nothing either from off-stage, from the screen's sound source, or from any other amplified sound source. Only the screen and body women appear to react to the sound of their approach. They react simultaneously and identically — by turning their heads abruptly to look to the right and then crawling quickly to the left in unison. But where is the source of this sound? Where are the screen woman and the body woman looking?

Whence exactly do these soldiers approach? In filmic terms they approach from the diegetic out-of-field; in theatrical terms they approach from off-stage-left. Here, however, the soldiers approach from both, or rather from neither. The out-of-field and the off-stage merge into one single other-scene. The soldiers approach from just outside the perceptive field collectively formed by both apparati.

As I mentioned before, the body and the screen also connect through movement, as shown by their synchronized crawling in this segment. In another segment of this same dream sequence, the screen woman steps from one urinal to the next as though they were stepping stones. The body woman also steps across the bare stage in front of the screen. The body and the screen images move simultaneously and identically, only in opposite directions: the screen image steps to the left, the body to the right. Each walking image displays a material absence of urinals upon which to walk. The entire screen image, like any filmic apparatus, inherently lacks any 3-dimensional material presence — of urinals or anything else. And, although the corporeal actor is materially present in the body image, it too lacks the material presence of urinals on which to walk. The audience, however, understands that the body woman and the screen woman are doing the same thing: walking on urinals. Here the inherently present theatrical signifier borrows the absent cinematic signifier and the two figures connect in a single action.

The screen and the body also connect through light.¹⁸ The cinematic image and the theatrical image exchange light equipment in such a way as to combine into a single image. Several times, the screen woman and the body woman seem to cast shadows from a single light source. The two light sources are in fact miles apart. The light source in the screen image, a part of the production equipment of the cinematic apparatus was on location in a latrine. The light source onstage; produced by a part of the cinematic apparatus's reception equipment, the video projector, and by a part of the theatrical apparatus's reception equipment, other light sources in the theatre; is in the theatre space itself. However, they appear as one in the collective imaginary space.

This example of the connection between the screen-image and the body-image also shows a material manifestation of the melding of the theatrical and filmic apparati. The light from the projector illuminates the body when it stands in front of the screen. This piece of cinematic reception equipment also functions as a piece of theatrical reception equipment. It may not have been designed as a theatrical fixture, but it functions as such here. Likewise, the body, when between the projector and the screen, reflects that projection (especially in the light-colored costume worn during the second dream sequence). This piece of theatrical reception equipment, this body, also functions as a piece of cinematic reception equipment. It may not have been designed as a movie screen, but it functions as such here. Furthermore, at certain moments throughout the production, the light cast by the video projector engulfs the body, erasing the perception of separate spaces all

together. In one sequence the light of the projected image incorporates the body into its imaginary space to such an extent that the body seems to fill a container (a piece of theatrical reception equipment) with liquid poured by a figure on the screen (a piece of cinematic production equipment).

In another sequence, the body woman and the screen woman appear to cast a single shadow. The screen woman, back-lit and shot from behind as she approaches the wall of the latrine, creates a large shadow on that wall that grows smaller as she approaches. The body woman walks in unison with the screen woman and in the same direction, in other words, toward the points in the perspective image projected on the screen that indicate the wall. As the body woman approaches the screen on which the image of the wall and the screen woman is projected, she blocks the light cast by the projector and creates a shadow on the screen that falls within the projected image of the screen woman's shadow. The spectator cannot discern the outline of the body woman's shadow on the screen within the projected image of the screen woman's shadow on the screen wall. As the recorded shadow and the live shadow conflate, the screen and the screen wall come strangely together. The absent cinematic imaginary signifier, wall, and the mechanism that reflects its absence meld into one. Here the piece of cinematic production equipment known as the wall and the piece of cinematic reception equipment known as the screen show a single shadow for both a piece of cinematic production equipment known as the screen woman and a piece of theatrical production/reception equipment known as the body. At the same time, the body and the screen woman join together in time and space through their simultaneous casting of what appears as a single shadow. The body and the screen, then, form a single image not only through gaze and movement, but also through light.

The last connection, between the monitor and the screen, operates through movement, language, and gaze as the others do. However, the connection between the two filmic media, despite their common relationship between production and reception equipment, seems oddly more remote than either filmic apparatus's connection with the body. Like the body, the monitor connects with the screen through movement. However, it moves not with the screen, as do the body and the screen woman during the synchronized crawling sequence, but rather in reaction to it. The talking head of the monitor periodically leans back and closes her eyes in ecstatic sensual experience of the screen events. Alternatively, through language, the monitor does not converse with the screen, but rather frames, contextualizes, interprets, explains: "Interesting," the monitor woman muses after the first dream sequence, "Interesting. Quite, . . . quite a lot to think about."¹⁹ The monitor and the screen connect, in the three sound sources' own words, through "perception, reaction, and interpretation"²⁰— specific, unidirectional versions of gaze, movement, and language respectively whose manifestations span the distance between the sensual and the symbolic.

The one exception to this remote, purely spectatorial connection occurs during the second dream sequence. As mentioned before, the monitor woman watches the screen as a spectator along with the body. The monitor woman, we remember, functions in this narrative as the conscious subject attempting to contact and discover the estranged, sleepwalking other-subject. However, as with all conscious subjects in the psychoanalytic schema that *Bodily Concessions* simultaneously parodies and enacts, this estrangement was never as complete as the monitor had hoped to believe. The conscious subject doesn't "just" watch any more than the divided subject of the dream (here represented by the body) "just" watches. At one point in the second dream sequence, the screen directly implicates the monitor by including its image in the dream image. The screen woman approaches a wall of monitors, each of which displays the head of the same performer who plays the monitor woman, the screen woman, and the body woman. The woman's head in these on-screen monitors wears bandages identical to those worn by both the screen woman and the body woman during this sequence. The monitor woman, however, wears no bandages. The screen image thus implies a connection not only between the monitor woman and the screen woman (the conscious subject and the dream-image), but also between the monitor woman and the body woman (the conscious subject and the sleepwalking subject). In other words, one piece of cinematic reception equipment (monitor) serves as a piece of another cinematic apparatus's production equipment (object of projected video's camera's gaze) and then shows up on that apparatus's reception equipment (the screen). This attempted collapse of cinematic production and reception equipment evokes the theatrical apparatus in which nearly all the production equipment indeed functions as reception equipment and vice versa.

Although the three member-apparati collectively render the single image of a space of sleep and dreams, each one maintains the specificities of its apparatus. The shared image easily fragments back into the three images that constitute it, and *Bodily Concessions* takes advantage of this instability. Rather than insisting on hiding all the seams, the work allows them to emerge, disappear, and reemerge in a playful rhythm. The member-apparati play with their respective relationships to time and space and exchange techniques.

In one sequence the body and the screen contrast theatrical and filmic time and space by performing the same task, the removal of an undergarment, each in its own spatio-temporal language. The screen goes first. It requires 3 shots: first, a medium shot shows the woman wearing the undergarment and exiting the frame; next, a close shot shows the undergarment handed from one person to another; last, a medium shot shows the woman, presumably naked, in the bathtub. Then, the body removes the undergarment in theatrical (i.e. continuous) time. This takes over a minute longer.

Another sequence plays at reversing the typical notion of the greater efficiency of discontinuous filmic time and space by transporting the body through the screen space faster than the screen woman can go. Here the body stands in front of the screen on which a shot of the screen woman is projected. She stands directly in front of the screen woman's projected figure. The body does not move as the screen camera pans to another figure leaving the body as a marker of the screen woman. The screen woman then enters the frame with the second screen figure, lining up with the body in the same formation as the pre-pan still shot. The screen woman essentially catches up to the theatrical body that got there much faster.

Several times in *Bodily Concessions* the body woman makes a joke of joining theatrical and filmic spaces by literally trying to enter the screen space, flouting and thereby foregrounding their contrasting dimensionality. She reaches into the screen — but only when the projected image provides a passage way. She touches the screen three different times, reaching into three different potential orifices: a door, an elevator, and a toilet bowl. The joke suggests that the body can enter the screen space (that is not there), if only she finds the proper entryway.

This dialogic media production does combine its cinematic and theatrical apparati, but it also shows off the scars from this suture by playing with the specificities of its member apparati. By playing with theatrical and cinematic time, space, presence, and absence, *Bodily Concessions* questions traditional observations about the nature of each medium.

Despite the difficulties in combining theatrical and cinematic reception events, dialogic media productions combine these apparati through inter-media exchange in order to produce a series of images that diffuse themselves throughout the member apparati. As Laura Farabough's *Bodily Concessions* illustrates, the currencies of exchange can include gaze, movement, language, and light. These simple mechanisms can both overcome and foreground the divergent relationships cinematic and theatrical apparati maintain to signification, production, and reception. Further investigation should examine the effects each constituent medium has upon the other in this compound apparatus. Examining whether or not constituent apparati in dialogic media productions meet the expectations for theatre and for film constructed by their respective ontologies will uncover the extent to which the dialogic apparatus equals more or other than the sum of its parts. Distinguishing between dialogic and non-dialogic combined media productions is crucial to understanding the increasingly pervasive aesthetic strategy of combining theatre and film. Dialogic media productions, treated separately, raise fundamental questions about the nature of each constituent medium. They also constitute one part of a larger movement toward mixing the physically and technologically present that increasingly affects all aspects of our lives. As such, now that dialogic media productions have been isolated as one sub-group of possible

combinations of theatre and film, subsequent study of these works can reveal more information not only about these two known media but also about this cultural moment's constructions of time, space, presence, and absence.

Notes

1. For convenience, I will use "film" and "video" interchangeably in this essay. *Video Culture*, ed. John G. Hanhardt, (Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1986) and *Illuminating Video*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, (New York: Aperture, 1991) provide accounts of the differences between these two apparati.

2. Gwendolyn Waltz's *Projection and performance*, diss., Tufts University, 1991, (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1991) makes distinctions based on the film's function and Jeffrey B. Embler's *A Historical Study of the Use of Film to Provide Additional Content to Theatrical Productions on the Legitimate Stage*, diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1971, (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1971) makes distinctions based both on the film's function and on the type of film employed.

3. Mimi McGurl points out that this tendency to assume theatre as the receptacle for film may derive in part from a spatial understanding based on the cultural phenomenon of having televisions *in* the home and movie screens *in* a space that is also called a theatre — a movie theatre. Although we may discuss *gathering around* the television and *going to* the movies, we may not think of those activities as performative.

4. Furthermore, if, as Heidegger proposes in *The Question Concerning Technology*, human beings serve as standing reserve for the challenging-forth known as technology, the idea that the human endeavor of performance "uses" the technological tools of film and video would be a nostalgic reversal of the process through which film and video use performance. See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1977).

5. Mimi McGurl notes that to some extent the primacy of performance or film in the case of *Rocky Horror* may be in the eye of the beholder. A performance theorist attending a showing of *Rocky Horror* may see the performance as precisely the primary medium. These performances do take place in cinemas, however, to which the film is distributed through the mechanisms of the greater film industry. What we call films and what we call plays depends in great measure on their mode of production and distribution.

6. I do not mean to suggest that the audience is necessarily more intimate with the theatrical image than with the filmic one. Cinema can use the close-up, for example, to bring its spectators into a much tighter intimacy with its subjects than the theatre ever could. Literal, not figurative, proximity is at issue for combined media productions as the following discussion of production and reception equipment explains.

7. "Reception events" here refers not only to the specific acts of reception performed by the spectators but also to the acts performed by others in the spectators' presence that allow reception to occur — the act of projection in cinema, for example, or the act of performing in the

theatre. Reception events include all the acts performed by and/or in the presence of the audience.

8. This diagram may be of some assistance.

EQUIPMENT

	Theatre	CINEMA
PRODUCTION (in the absence of the audience)	<i>space, performers, (directors, designers, texts, sets, lights, costumes, props, etc.)</i>	camera, camera operator, <i>film/tape</i> , editing equipment, editors, space, performers, (texts, directors, designers, sets, lights, costumes, props, etc.)
RECEPTION (in the presence of the audience)	audience, space, performers, (texts, lights, sets, costumes, props, etc.)	audience, space, film/tape , projector/tape player, screen/monitor, projectionist/video technician

Figure 1: Production and Reception Equipment for Theatre and Cinema

Bold face indicates equipment shared by both theatre and cinema. Italics indicate equipment used in both production and reception within the same medium.

9. To simplify, I will limit the discussion of film and video to narrative, fictional film in the classical sense, although not necessarily in the classical mode of production. Christian Metz pointed out that all film is in fact fiction film in that every film involves the fiction of the presence of the objects filmed which are indeed absent. Our definition of fiction film here is more narrow and includes only those films that announce themselves as portraying fictional narratives, but that are not necessarily produced in Hollywood itself or, for that matter, in the tradition of classical Hollywood. See Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982).

10. Lacan would point out that everything perceived or imagined is already present to us only through its absence — including performance. Yet, as Christian Metz points out in his *Imaginary Signifier*, film thrusts perceptions one dimension further into the imaginary by relegating even the signifier to an inaccessible elsewhere. See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977) and Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982).

11. Jean-Louis Baudry analyses how the cinematic apparatus conceals work and imposes an idealistic ideology through its illusion of temporal succession and continuous movement. One might also consider the more literal concealing of the only piece of equipment from the production or “work” events that survives the transition into the reception events as another mechanism of the cinema’s ideological effects. See Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effect of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” *Film Quarterly* 28.2 (Winter 1974-75) 39-47.

12. Space also serves in both production and reception for film, but the spaces of production (studio, location, editing room) very rarely serve as the space of reception (normally a movie theatre or living room).

13. Christian Metz outlines another way of thinking about this difference, based on semiotics and Lacanian psychoanalysis, in his *Imaginary Signifier*. In this construct the essential difference between the cinematic and the theatrical apparatus lies in the signifier. Every signified is ultimately inaccessible and present only in the mode of absence. Signifiers, in general, are not. In theatre, as in life, we can reach out and touch that actor or go sit in that chair, whether that actor pretends to be some character or not, whether that chair pretends to be a throne or not. These signifiers are present, despite the fact that their respective signifieds can never be. In the cinema, however, actors, chairs, signifiers of all kinds, are just as inaccessible to the audience as their signifieds. Not only are the signifieds in the realm of the imaginary in the cinema, the signifiers are as well. In these terms, combined media productions must negotiate the coincidence of normal and imaginary signifiers. See Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982).

14. In live-feed video, these conflicts do not arise.

15. Gwendolyn Waltz, "Alternating Film and Stage Action," *Projection and performance*, diss., Tufts University, 1991, (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1991) 94-128.

16. Laura Farabough's plays have been published in *Theatre Forum* and in *West Coast Plays*. Literature about her work includes a section in Theodore Shank, *American Alternative Theatre* (New York: Grove Press, 1982) and Jim Carmody "Poets of Bohemia and Suburbia: the post-literary dramaturgies of Farabough, Harrington, and Shank," *Contemporary American Theater*, ed. Bruce King (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991) 245-26.

17. Waltz 170-175.

18. This issues forth a certain irony given that their respective required light conditions conflict so drastically and pose one of the central challenges to their combination.

19. Laura Farabough, "Bodily Concessions," *Theatreforum* 3 (1993) 29.

20. 34.

