



Media rhythm doesn't have the time for in-depth examinations

MA Thesis into the resemblance of cognitive effects of mediatized
communication in contemporary performance dramaturgy

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Summary

Digital media are omnipresent within contemporary Western society. The use of these digital media and their integration into our daily lives does not leave the users untouched. Nicholas Carr in his work *The Shallows. What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (2011) examines exactly this topic, by looking at how the Internet influences the cognitive abilities of its frequent users from the perspective of contemporary neuroscience. So when digital media influence the way users perceive and process information on a neurological level, how does theatre as a medium relate to that? How can the dramaturgy of contemporary performances resemble qualities of mediatized communication?

By looking at the examples of Carr and others, I am able to define common qualities of textual digital media that are relevant in the discussion around media influence on cognition. By making a translation of these qualities to term applicable to performance analysis, I argue that the qualities of textual digital media Carr and others discuss can be categorized within the three categories of media fragmentation, media rhythm and media audience that I specify. These three terms used for the categories already refer back to aspects and elements of performances and performance analyses and thereby indicate parameters of aspects or elements within which the resemblance of a performance to qualities of textual digital media can be observed. In the analyses of the performance *Jandergrouwd* where I exemplify the translation I made by looking more closely at the dramaturgy's rhythm, I follow the development of the rhythm within the dramaturgy exactly to illustrate to development of this rhythm in first complying to media rhythm, to then disavow this rhythm and open up the possibilities for performance rhythm.

Within the analyses I first argue the performance's fragmentary character and the related media rhythm that stems from it. Then I argue how the use of interruptions within the performance leads to the dramaturgy's rhythm closely related to the media rhythm I discussed, to then argue how the dramaturgy within the 'endless discussion' section of the performance disavows this complying rhythm, thereby opening up the rhythm of the audience for the final scene. *Jandergrouwd* illustrates how a contemporary postdramatic performance can resemble media rhythm both in complying with it as well as in going beyond this media rhythm the audience is familiar with. I argue that resemblance of dramaturgy to media qualities does not necessarily have to be found within

complying. The thesis therefore ends with posing the question of positioning. How does the performance observed position itself in relation to the familiarized ways of perceiving and processing of information of the media influenced spectator?

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Introduction

The Shallows. What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains. The provocative title of the well-known work by Nicholas Carr strikes a resonating chord. The omnipresence of media in our contemporary society for the past decade or so has not gone by without having its effect on us. Carr and many scholars like him are of the opinion that the frequent access to the Internet and digital media has decreased our cognitive abilities, our thinking and processing capabilities and our attention spans. In the same discourse there are scholars that occupy the opposite field, stating that the influence of media on our cognitive abilities are not just negative but have enriched us with being able to more efficiently process different information streams at once and to more quickly survey a field of literature. Whatever side of the table you are on, one thing all scholars agree on. The omnipresence of media in our contemporary Western society has changed current and future generations' ways of processing information and approaching media.

In some fields, as a result of these changes in ways of processing and thinking, the media have changed accordingly. Research on the reading of digital text by using devices that track eye movement has indicated that contemporary digital readers read in a 'F pattern' (Hayles, 2012, 61). The subjects read the first few lines of a webpage fully, but the lower they get on the page, the shorter the part of the lines they read become. Accordingly, websites have changed their layout to provide the most important, interesting (or money-making) information within this F-pattern of reading. Newspapers and magazines can follow in this concept as well. Movies and television however follow different changes in our minds. The Internet has made us more prone to short pieces of information and therefore it is no surprise how movies and television make use of fast switching of camera angles and short durations of shots. Yet, do all media follow in these changes? Does theatre for example change according to the alterations in its audience?

In Brussels I attended the dance performance *Zeit* choreographed by Marc Vanrunxt. Taking the concept of time as a starting point, the performance used a lot of repetition, acceleration and deceleration of movement and elongated moments of darkness and silence to create an experience or awareness of time. Time, however, did not seem to fly by. Though this might have been exactly the aim of the performance, it led my mind more to wander off than to contemplate how the passing of time is never experienced as thus, to name just a possible reflection. It seemed that the repetition of already familiar movements contrast with what I have gotten used to from contemporary media: a constant supply of refreshing new stimuli. Within the field of theatre performance, *Children of the Sun* performed by Dutch theatre group Toneelgroep Amsterdam used slow progression and a somewhat archaic, academic language that as a result gave an inside look in the lives of academics and philosophers. The slow pace of the performance, combined with an uncommon use of language

did not comply with the more 'natural' way of processing media and information I have gotten used to – which is swift and vernacular – leaving me wishing for the intermission.

The first interpretation that came into my mind following these observations was that the way these performances communicate is somewhat old-fashioned. Why, in this contemporary society, where media are omnipresent and the use of them has been integrated into our everyday lives, does theatre as a medium communicate in such a dated way? Changes in everyday media have developed our contemporary generation's minds to perceive and process differently, making the way theatre communicates older and apparently unfitting for current generations. Despite this first observation, looking more broadly at the range of performances available to us, I realized that there are quite some examples of theatre performances that do in some peculiar way seem to resemble the mediatized communication so present in our contemporary society. For example, the work by Dutch theatre collective De Warme Winkel, with its rapid tempo, use of vernacular and most importantly its format of 'research on stage', seems to in some way resemble our contemporary communicative media. *Mystery Magnet* by performance maker Miet Warlop seems to align with the dominance of the visual and the presence of fragmentation and need for fresh stimuli within media with its use of bright colours, paint explosions and at first glance unrelated events within the performance. My first interpretation of theatre being an older, unfitting medium in this contemporary society appears to be false as a general claim. So, instead of looking at how theatre is out of place in the current times, I wanted to examine the ways in which specific contemporary performances relate to contemporary mediatized ways of communication.

Research question

The main topic of this thesis is how contemporary performances resemble mediatized communication. But before we can examine how performances resemble mediatized communication, it first needs to be clear what mediatized communication entails.

When asking the question what mediatized communication is, one arrives at the answer that there are many different forms, technologies and aspects involved. Mediatized communication can be found within forms of video, audio, text and most often in a multimedia variant of all these. These different forms of communication can again be observed within different technologies – such as the personal computer, the tablet, the smartphone or even the Google-glass – and all these technologies have their own distinct effects on how the forms of communication are being employed and given shape. Lastly, mediatized communication has its own address of the user that again differs in every different combination of form of communication and technology. Examining the entire breadth of mediatized communication is far beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, I specify myself to

examine the qualities of one combination of form and technology that is one of the most prominent forms of mediatized communication we regularly engage with: textual digital media. Within this term I refer to both digital documents, such as pdf-files, as well as the broader medium of the Internet, that though it can be considered as having a very strong multimedia aspect, is largely based around textual digital media. Other forms of mediatized communication that could be examined are for example Internet podcasts, the use of images and visuals on Facebook or the many video blogs and video channels on YouTube. With textual digital media as the specified form of mediatized communication, I am able to more closely examine what qualities of mediatized communication are at play within these media.

So what qualities of textual digital media are at play, in relation to the observation that theatre engages people so different from mediatized communication? Here we arrive at the user and most specifically, to those qualities of textual digital media that influence the user. The form and the technologies of textual digital media invite a specific manner of interaction or usage of the user. Examining what the position is that the user is given by textual digital media, as well as what qualities of textual digital media have given him this position, becomes a key concern.

The resemblance of qualities of textual digital media (and more broadly mediatized communication) can be observed within the form of a performance, as well as in its dramaturgy.

There are many theatrical forms and aspects of theatrical forms that can in a way resemble qualities of textual digital media. A specific scenography, a particular manner of acting, the use of language and vernacular, the presence of simultaneity and the use of media, the use of lighting and other technologies, music, movement, use of space and time; all these can be employed in a way that they resemble qualities of textual digital media. But how can qualities of textual digital media be resembled within for example visual elements of a performance? To find an answer to that question, we need to look at the way that these visual elements provide the spectator a similar position towards the medium as the spectator has when being a user of textual digital media.

Here we arrive at the performance's dramaturgy. A specific structuring of a performance, its build-up, the rhythm it establishes, as well as the measure and manner of cohesion or fragmentation that the performance employs can resemble qualities of mediatized communication. And within the context of dramaturgy, the manner in which the performance positions its audience, the stance it invites the audience to take towards the presented and the measure of inclusion or exclusion that the performance's dramaturgy evokes are also important aspects of contemporary performance especially when looking at the resemblance with mediatized communication. How does the performance's dramaturgy provide the audience with the qualities of textual digital media?

The above description of the many elements of performance's form and dramaturgy indicates also the impossibility to discuss all these elements in-depth within one work. Therefore, the

focus of this thesis is on the dramaturgy of contemporary performances. The reason why the dramaturgy of the performance is my focus is that I believe that the structure of the performance, more than its form, is influential on the way the medium is perceived and processed. When a performance maker wishes to relate their performance to a way of mediatized communication, it is in the specific use of the above aspects of dramaturgy that I believe this can be achieved. Uncovering how aspects of the dramaturgy can resemble the qualities of mediatized communication, and textual digital media in particular, is the focus of the thesis.

One last specification is required before I arrive at my definite research question. Within contemporary performances, there is quite a large range of varieties. There is musical, cabaret, dramatic repertoire, postdramatic performance, performance lectures, experimental work, Community Art and I haven't even mentioned all the varieties present within dance. The focus of this thesis is on contemporary postdramatic theatre performances, for it is in the non-dramatic forms and structures that these performances can employ that it is more easily for a postdramatic performance to resemble qualities of mediatized communication.

So finally, how the dramaturgy of a contemporary postdramatic performance resembles qualities of textual digital media is the main concern for this thesis.

Method

My research consists out of two components: a literary research and an analysis component. The literary research component provides my research with an objective formulation of qualities of textual digital media by discussing two scholar's perspective on the matter and at the same time, the literary research provides my thesis a discussion of the discourse around media influence on cognition. After having examined the possible qualities of textual digital media and having formulated the common denominators, the analyses component applies this theoretical approach to practical examples.

To formulate qualities of textual digital media related to the Internet, I discuss *The Shallow. What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains* (2011) by Nicholas Carr. *The Shallows* is a prominent work in the discourse around the influence of Internet and media on their users. *The Shallows* serves as a starting point to explore what qualities of the Internet are influential on the shaping of cognitive abilities of current generations and more importantly what qualities of the Internet can be considered common amongst other textual digital media. Special attention is paid to Carr's discussion of neuroscience and how repeated use of media establishes neurological pathways.

In this work, Carr examines the influence of the Internet on our current generation's reading and deep thinking abilities. Carr does so by taking us on what you might call 'a trip down memory

lane', where he discusses the various stages of development in the tools of the mind, ranging from the hand drawn map and clockwork towards computers and smartphones. At each stage of development, Carr discusses how the tool of the mind is not only a product of the mind, but shapes the mind itself. He substantiates these examinations with more recent work in neuroscience, where it becomes clear that the brain changes according to experiences. As such, Carr claims, heavy use of media can reroute neurological pathways. By discussing the identity Carr ascribes to the Internet, I am able to formulate some signifying qualities of the Internet from a more cultural neurological perspective.

Carr's work can however be critiqued on his implementation of the neurological research to his ends. Therefore it is beneficial to supplement his work with others from similar angles in defining qualities of textual digital media. N. Katherine Hayles is a scholar with special interest in digital literature, as can be seen in the works *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis* (2012) and "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes" (2007). Hayles' work takes a literary approach on digital texts and highlights the influence specific forms of texts can have on their readers. Seeing as near to all contemporary mediatized communication is textual communication, discussing how the specific form of a digital text influences the way readers approach it allows me to further formulate qualities of textual digital media and in extent mediatized communication.

In *How We Think* and "Hyper and Deep Attention" Hayles discusses how digital texts through frequent use change the ways of reading and paying attention, especially for younger generations according to Hayles' own observations of her students. The quick scanning of texts and the skimming of information is not only becoming more common place, but younger generations are also becoming more adept at it. At the same time, Hayles observes a decrease in the ability to perform close reading and to pay deep attention, rather letting one be drifted away by various stimuli. Therefore Hayles advocates a change in the ways students are being educated at the moment. Rather than enforcing only close reading and deep attention, it might be more beneficial if the educational system incorporates both the positive quick scanning qualities of what Hayles terms hyper reading and hyper attention, supplemented with training in close reading and deep attention. By examining what qualities of digital text Hayles formulates in her work, I am able to more precisely formulate or supplement the qualities of textual digital media formulated according to Carr's work.

At the end of the literary component of my research, I have formulated three qualities of textual digital media: rhythm, fragmentation and audience. The following step within the research is a translation from the qualities defined in the literary component to terms applicable to performance analysis. For that I introduce various scholars, amongst others Simon Shepherd (2006), Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) and Susan Bennett (1997) in how they discuss the qualities of rhythm,

fragmentation and audience in theatrical terms. Using their perspectives, the translation defines the specific aspects of performance in how they could resemble textual digital media. In the analyses within this thesis I take a closer look at one of them, namely rhythm. With the focus of the analyses being on rhythm it becomes clear how the other two qualities of fragmentation and audience are nevertheless interrelated. As such, the analyses also pay minor attention to the use of fragmentation and audience within the performance. When looking at the resemblance between qualities of textual digital media and performance dramaturgy, the rhythm of the performance, as well as fragmentation within performance are the two most influential aspects on whether a dramaturgy resembles textual digital media or not.

To have a perspective on the use of rhythm within the dramaturgy I use the work *Theatre, Body and Pleasure* by Simon Shepherd. In this work, Shepherd discusses the concept of rhythm of action. He states that perceiving is a bodily activity, and that theatre is the art of bodies. Every body is culturally imbued in the ways that it perceives, and Shepherd claims that every body is cultivated to have a specific rhythm. Supplementing this concept with the discussion on media's influence on cognition as I discussed during the literary research, Shepherd's discussion of Bernard Beckerman allows us to closely examine the use of rhythm within performance through intensification and deconstruction.

By using analyses I am able to indicate the presence of qualities of textual digital media in the dramaturgy of contemporary performances, specifically regarding rhythm. Another use of the analyses is that it provides a practical value to my research. By going beyond a mere theoretical discussion of textual digital media within performance dramaturgy, the analyses are able to create an awareness of the contemporary audience within theatre makers. Lastly, the analyses are able to show in detail the relationship between textual digital media and performance dramaturgy. Because the audience of theatre performance consists of the same people as those that use textual digital media on a daily basis (and therefore their cognition has been influenced by it, as will become clear in the first chapter) it becomes interesting to see in detail how the dramaturgy of performance and textual digital media relate to one another in a specific example.

The analyses focus on the performance *Jandergrouwd* by Dutch theatre collective De Warme Winkel. One of the key aspects of performances by the theatre collective De Warme Winkel is their concept of 'research on stage'. Departing from a common interest within the group – in the case of *Jandergrouwd* the censoring of artists in Russia during the 1970's-80's – they set out to examine a topic and turn their research into theatrical material, resulting in a touring performance. This format in its use of rhythm, fragmentation and audience address seems at first glance to resemble the qualities of textual digital media. However, at some moments during the performance,

it appears to be inconsistent in the resemblance. The analysis looks at how the dramaturgy makes use of rhythm related to the qualities of textual digital media formulated earlier.

Structure

The structure of this thesis follows a line of four subsequent questions. In chapter 1 I start the thesis with the question what qualities of textual digital media we can formulate. To provide the answer to that question, I discuss Carr and Hayles in light of one another to define qualities of textual digital media. In this chapter I also pay attention to the influence of media on the user's cognition. The second chapter concerns with the question on how to make the qualities of textual digital media useful for performance analyses. In this chapter I make a translation from the defined qualities of textual digital media of chapter 1 to terms applicable to performance analyses. At this point I am able to analyse performances on their resemblance to qualities of textual digital media, and the question of how we can observe this resemblance within performance dramaturgy becomes the main concern for chapter 3. This chapter presents my analyses where I look at the use of rhythm in the dramaturgy of *Jandergrouwnd* using the perspective of rhythm of action by Shepherd and the concept of intensification and decrease of Beckerman. The analyses illustrate how media rhythm can be resembled within performance dramaturgy, but the second part of the third chapter raises another question. Is media rhythm always resembled in a performance's dramaturgy by complying with it? Using the perspective of Shepherd, I examine how the media rhythm can still be resembled within performance dramaturgy, but exactly by disavowing the audience this rhythm. In concluding my thesis, I look back at the steps the research has taken and what perspectives and methods the thesis provides us with. Returning to the contemporary society of the omnipresence of digital media, I roundup this thesis by handing over some questions that this thesis gives rise to in relation to performance within this media heavy environment.

1. Qualities of textual digital media

What qualities of textual digital media can we define? Nicholas Carr in *The Shallows. What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (2011) and Katherine Hayles in *How We Think. Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis* (2012) discuss various uses and especially influences that textual digital media have on their users. By paying attention to the signifying qualities that define textual digital media that Carr's and Hayles' examples illustrate, in this chapter I formulate some of the defining qualities of textual digital media that can be used in the analyses of performance dramaturgy in examining how the dramaturgy of a performance resembles qualities of textual digital media. The following chapter expands on these findings by paying attention to in what way these qualities can be examined within performance dramaturgy.

First in this chapter, I discuss the work of Nicholas Carr where he examines the influence of the Internet through neurological pathways to get a better understanding of the relationship between qualities of media and their influence on the way information is processed by its user. This specific way of processing information by textual digital media becomes familiarized within the person using textual digital media and this way of processing is also taken along when an audience attends a performance. Therefore, understanding how qualities of media influence our way of processing information illustrates the relevance of examining how qualities of textual digital media are resembled within performance – whether to smoothen the way the performance allows information to be processed, or to question or challenge this familiarized way. In discussing *The Shallows* I pay attention to Carr's discussion of defining qualities of textual digital media when looking at the Internet, namely the bidirectional aspect of the Internet and the rhythm of information flow, as well as the qualities of the Internet when remediating traditional media: hyperlinking, searchability and multimedia. The purpose here is to examine and formulate what these defining qualities of textual digital media are and make a brief reflection on how they can be observed within performance dramaturgy.

Following from the discussion of the Internet, I discuss the work of Katherine Hayles on the activities of hyper and close reading following from the remediation of print to digital text to examine and formulate the defining qualities of textual digital media at play in Hayles' work. Of special interest here are the technologies that facilitate hyper reading and the engagement with a text that hyper reading promotes, for in these technologies and manners of engagement the defining qualities of textual digital media can be found. Examples of these activities illustrate what qualities are related to digital texts.

As will become clear in this chapter, Carr and Hayles discuss closely related fields but have different and at times opposing perspectives on the influence of digital media on human cognition.

Together Carr and Hayles cover both the underlying subliminal influences incorporated within textual digital media as well as the beneficial navigational opportunities they create.

By discussing the way neurological pathways function, it becomes clear how the cognitive effects of textual digital media are familiarized within our brains. These familiarized effects a person takes with himself when attending a performance, where he notes the difference between what he has familiarized and what he is presented with. In the discussion of the qualities of textual digital media it becomes clear how the general qualities of the Internet – its speed of information supply and its bidirectional aspect – and the qualities of the Internet in its remediation of traditional media – through hyperlinking, searchability of texts and multimedia – have their specific cognitive effects influence our address and expectations of media. To illustrate the negative impact that is so present in Carr’s work, I briefly discuss the cognitive load and the effects of multimedia on it that stress the cognitive load leading to poorer comprehension of new information. When a performance directly resembles the qualities of textual digital media as discussed in this chapter, it can lead to poor comprehension with the audience. Therefore, careful configuration of a performance’s dramaturgy in resembling textual digital media is required. To that end, I discuss Hayles’ work on hyper reading to illustrate how hyper attention and rhythm of a performance can supplement each other and forego poor comprehension.

1.1 The Internet as ‘ecosystem of interruption’.

1.1.1 Flexible pathways

At the beginning of *The Shallows. What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (2011), Carr uses a number of anecdotes from himself as well as from other scholars to illustrate changes in patterns of reading, paying attention and studying behaviour that he has noticed over the past few decades. For example he finds it increasingly difficult to remain immersed while reading for longer stretches of time, finding himself searching for something else to do (Carr, 5). Carr connects these changes in his behaviour to an increasing amount of time spent on the Internet during the same period. The anecdotes Carr mentions are the thoughts and observations that led him to wonder about the relationship between our time spent surfing the Internet and our cognitive abilities. As such, Carr delved into neurological research.

In his chapter ‘The Vital Paths’, Carr discusses various researches within the field of neuroscience revolving around the topic of media influence on human cognition. The main stance of contemporary neuroscience is that the brain is flexible rather than a fixed network of neurological pathways as the brain was considered as before (Carr, 26, 29). In neuroscience this flexibility is termed neuroplasticity. The synapses within our brain are the cause of this. When we perform a task

or experience a sensation, whether physical or mental, a set of neurons is fired that, if in proximity, can join together through the exchange of synaptic neurotransmitters. If the same task or experience is repeated, the link between these neurons is strengthened both anatomically with the growth of new synaptic terminals and physiologically with the release of higher concentrations of neurotransmitters (Carr, 27). Examining the neurological pathways of people rehabilitating after an accident shows how new neurological pathways can be formed to replace the old and damaged ones (Carr, 30). Research performed by Eric Kandel in the early 1970's illustrates how neurological pathways can be weakened by looking at the reflex of a sea slug. When you touch a sea slug's gill, it will immediately and reflexively recoil. But after touching the gill repeatedly without harming the creature, the recoiling instinct will diminish (Carr, 27).

The above examples illustrate how the brain can be trained to reroute, strengthen or weaken existing neurological pathways. The brain becomes more familiar with a particular link and starts to develop itself to be able to perform it more easily. The brain will become better at taking the road most travelled (Carr, 35). This neuroplasticity is strongest at early ages, and diminishes over time. At first it was believed that at the age of twenty the brain would set into its final shape, but various researches have shown that the brain does not lose its plasticity entirely, always retaining some measure of flexibility and possibility to change (Carr, 26-27).

1.1.2 Rhythm of the Internet

Having explained in general lines how these 'vital paths' works, Carr starts his discussion of the Internet and how it influences our neurological pathways. Here Carr mentions that the Internet has been modelled according to the invention of Alan Turing in the 1930's. This 'Turing machine' was a digital calculator that could read, write and erase symbols and could be programmed to perform any task (Carr, 82). The only limiting factor of this invention was the speed at which it could perform the task (Carr, 83). Carr points out that while the Turing machine in the days of its invention (mid 1930's-50's) was theoretically capable of rendering a photograph, it would take so long that it was faster to just have the photograph developed.

Carr connects the model of the Turing machine to the structure of the Internet today. The Turing machine can perform any task digitally, and the Internet in Carr's consideration is a medium capable of doing the same. The Internet can search for items, organize data, display imagery and video and even perform tasks that make the Internet function like our post office or bank (Carr, 82-83). As was the case with the Turing Machine, one of the limiting factors to perform any task is the speed at which the Internet can perform it. Throughout the development of digital computation and the Internet, advances in technology allow computers (and the Internet as an extent of it) to become

more faster with each development. For example, some years ago an Internet connection with the speed of 10MB per second was almost excessively fast, whereas at the moment anything below 30MB per second is hard to find at Internet providers. Now if we take the consideration that the Internet at a certain moment in time functions with a specific speed that is common amongst all Internet users in a particular area and connect it with the neuroplasticity of the brain as Carr discussed in 'The Vital Paths', we can say that our brain when repeatedly interacting with the Internet becomes accustomed to a particular speed or rhythm in which we are given our information. Our brains familiarize with what I would like to call here the rhythm of the Internet.

Using the Internet familiarizes our brains with a specific rhythm of information supply, and as such we become aware when engaging with another medium whether or not the way in which this medium provides us with information 'fits' with the rhythm of the Internet familiar to us. So when a user of the Internet attends a performance we can assume that his brain unconsciously compares the rhythm in which he receives information from the performance with the rhythm of the Internet the brain is familiarized with. For example, if using the Internet promotes a fast supply of short fragments of different pieces of information, the user while observing a slow paced monologue where one subject is being unwrapped sliver by sliver will – consciously or not – notice the difference in rhythm of the performance to what he is used to.

1.1.3 Bidirectional

When the Internet is capable of performing any task digitally, it can (and does) entail other traditional media. But absorbing these media into the digital form of the Internet does not go without changes to these traditional media. When traditional media are remediated into the digital form of the Internet, Carr points out that these media become bidirectional (Carr, 90). Where a book can only be read as it is, the Internet allows a user to read a text and comment on it, sometimes for others (and perhaps even the writer) to see. We download as well as upload.

Here we can consider how repeated experiences with the Internet strengthen neurological pathways within our brains that are related to interactivity and active engagement through the bidirectional aspect of digital media. Our brains become more apt at processing a two-way traffic of information, as well as possibly start to expect this when engaging with any kind of media. Our brains will familiarize with a manner of address where the user is interactively engaged and involved in the action.

This bidirectional aspect of the Internet stands at the core of its relationship with the users, bringing to the fore not only that the users exist, but are interactively engaged with the information on the Internet. The user does not only consume what is there before him (one-way communication),

but with the Internet can himself control what is there for him to consume. This bidirectional aspect of the Internet is not apparent when looking at theatre. When attending a theatre performance, other than the selection of which performance to attend, the user from the moment he enters the auditorium becomes an audience member. In most cases this means that he is no longer in a controlling or influential position. Though the audience member can choose to doze off during a performance or leave the auditorium, the audience member cannot influence the performance in the same way the bidirectional aspect of the Internet allows him to skip segments of a text, fast forward an audio file or look back in an image gallery. The user loses his central controlling position that he has familiarized through using the Internet in his engagement with the medium theatre.

1.1.4 Navigating distraction and fragmentation

Keeping the general bidirectional aspect of the Internet in mind, Carr discusses three qualities as a result of the remediation that the Internet applies to the media absorbed: hyperlinking, searchability and multimedia (Carr, 90).

You can read a book and you can read a webpage. Though at first glance they may appear to be similar activities, the manners of navigating through a book and a digital text are quite different from each other and have very different effects on the cognition. Of importance for Carr here is the influence of the material on the degree of attention we devote to it and the measure of immersion we have in it (Carr, 90).

The shift in material from traditional book to digital text allows the digital text to be imbued with hyperlinks to facilitate navigation. The hyperlink can be considered as a new implementation of the footnotes, indexes, headings and other literary 'tools' that help us navigate a text. However, the effect of the hyperlink is far more intrusive than a heading or a footnote. It not only refers to another bit of information, but thrusts us towards it by opening a whole new page with new and fresh information (Carr, 90). As a result, the cognitive effect is that the hyperlink 'encourages us to dip in and out of a series of texts rather than devote sustained attention to any one of them' (Carr, 90).

Implementing something that resembles the function of a hyperlink into performance, propelling us to a new, separate piece of information can be identified for example within a performance's use of intertextuality. Imagine for example a performance of a Shakespeare play that overtly makes an aside to *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare* to point to the context within which the play was written. The effect on the dramaturgy of the performance would be that such an example would pull the audience out of the flow of the story, propelling us to a new and different piece of information. If we look more closely at the cognitive effect of the hyperlink, encouraging dipping into bits of information rather than paying sustained attention, we can argue that when a

performance's dramaturgy steers the audience's attention to dip into several shorter scenes with different but related information or topics, the dramaturgy of the performance would comply with the way of processing information the audience has familiarized with through repeated experience with hyperlinks.

The searchability of digital texts is, like the hyperlink, a variation of traditional print navigational tools. Its effects differ from the hyperlink (Carr, 90). The searchability of a digital text creates the opportunity to more easily and more swiftly be directed to a specific section within a text according to the terms one searches for. This is different from the hyperlink, where the hyperlink leaves the text at hand for additional information somewhere else. A result of searchability is that it fragments the digital text in those pieces related to the search topic, stripping these sections from the whole they belong to (Carr, 91). The bidirectional aspect of the Internet is very apparent here, in the centrality of the user using the searchability of a digital text. Rather than having to consume the entirety of the text (one-way communication), the bidirectional aspect of the Internet apparent within the searchability of a digital text allows the user to control himself what desired sections of a text he consumes.

Carr draws attention here to the relationship between the reader and the text, stating that searchability promotes a more tenuous and superficial engagement, stimulating jumping from one section of a text to another rather than immersing into one text as a whole (Carr, 90-91). With the searchability of digital texts the user is at the centre of the activity, providing input that leads to the desired output. The search results are considered as separate fragments rather than as a piece within a whole. Like the hyperlink, the searchability of a digital text can result in fragmentation of a text. The main difference here is the prominent position of the user that engages with a text through searchability in a consumer directed manner. It extracts from the text those pieces that fit his intentions with the text. In contrast, the hyperlink presents itself regardless of the reader's desires or intentions, turning the hyperlink more into a distractive tool while the searchability of a digital text is more a consumer directed tool.

The fragmentation as a result of the searchability can be found within performance as separate autonomous scenes that, while a part of the entire performance, can function as smaller wholes on their own. Such scenes would comply with the cognitive effect of searchability by not requiring deep immersion and allowing the audience the superficial engagement searchability has familiarized them with. However, the centrality of the user in using searchability as a consumer directed tool is harder to define or observe within performance. In general, the contemporary audience has no control over what it consumes when it has entered the auditorium. It is however possible for theatre makers to develop a format of performance where such centrality of and control by the audience member is possible, by for example having a performance function much more like a

museum. The audience member not only decides which 'museum' he will attend, but upon entering is still in control of what exhibitions or pieces he will observe. Theatre festivals might be the most fitting examples of performances functioning in a way fitting the consumer directed centrality the audience may have familiarized with through the searchability of digital texts.¹

Lastly, Carr discusses the multimedia aspect of the Internet. Not surprisingly, he notes that the possibility of the Internet to display multiple and different media simultaneously on the same screen further fragments content and demands our divided attention (Carr, 91). Despite that Carr points to the obvious examples we all know – such as early hypertext websites that use every possible media they can embed within the page just because it is possible, resulting in images, gifs, banners, video's and audio all playing at once – he also points to more subtle examples, such as the indication of a new email in our inbox or a new post being announced through a RSS-feed (Carr, 132). These notifications are just a simple example of the many various stimuli that vie for our attention within the Internet. Other examples include flashing banners, pop-ups, search bars, drop down menu's, advertisements, tabs and hyperlinks which are all common aspects of the average website. Adding to the division of attention through the multimedia aspect of the Internet, Carr draws our attention to the fact that we use the Internet mostly on our computers which have their own various buttons, options, menu's and programs that also wish to be engaged, adding a new layer of media simultaneously present when using the Internet (Carr, 91). As blogger and science-fiction writer Cory Doctorow terms it, Carr considers the Internet (and our computers) as an "'ecosystem of interruption technologies'" (Carr, 91). The multimedia aspect of the Internet distorts our sustained attention.

Multimedia is also a common aspect within theatre performance. There are many examples that include video, music or text in the performance that as an effect can have a division of attention. However, even without the implementation of various media within the performance, a performance can steer the attention in a similar manner as the multimedia aspect of the Internet does. The main driving force of the division of attention as Carr discusses it in relation to the Internet is the presence of simultaneity. Several various stimuli are present at the same time and are all vying for our attention. Even without implementing other media into performance, a performance can make use of simultaneity, when for example the ensemble is preparing for a festivity while at the front the main characters are in dialogue. Such a scene, accompanied by music and integrating comical actions by some of the ensemble players, divides the attention of an audience in much the same way as the multimedia aspect of the Internet. The difference then can be found in the strength of these 'distractions'. A flashing banner advertising a new product is far more intrusive (and purposefully so)

¹ In this regard, the text "Shuffling the Deck, Shifting Positions. Curating as Environmentalism" (2010) by Elke van Camphout is an interesting discussion on how curating can create an 'environment' for performance, within which the attending audiences can stroll around and decide where, when and what they will pay attention to.

than an angry baker about a stolen loaf of bread in the background of a performance. Whatever the specific effect, simultaneity in performance can steer audience's attention in a similar manner as the website.

1.1.5 The cognitive load

In his chapter 'The Juggler's Brain' Carr further discusses the influence of multimedia on our cognition and attention (Carr, 129-130). Here he pays attention to the relationship between hypermedia – those media that contain several other media within themselves – and the cognitive load. The cognitive load is a term used within cognitive psychology and refers to an amount of information a person can process in his working memory. When the cognitive load is overloaded, not all information gets processed into the long term memory of the person, leading to less information learned (Paas, 2004, 1-8).² As such, the multimedia aspect of the Internet can overload the cognitive load, leading to less information processed.

Carr discusses a research performed by Steven C. Rockwell and Loy A. Singleton printed in *Media Psychology* in 2007 that revolved around the topic that multimedia 'would deepen comprehension and strengthen learning' (Carr, 129).³ In this research, volunteers were asked to view a presentation about Mali in a web-browser, divided into two groups. One group watched the video stream supplemented with only a series of text pages, while the other group watched the video stream, the series of text pages and another video stream with additional information about the first video stream that they could start and pause as they wished. The latter group had a worse understanding of the topic of the video stream. The researchers concluded that the multimedia technologies so common within the Internet "would seem to limit, rather than enhance, information acquisition" (Rockwell and Singleton in Carr, 130). Another research supplements this negative effect of multimedia on information acquisition. Conducted by Lori Bergen, Tom Grimes and Deborah Potter of Kansas State University this research, using edited CNN footage where all the multimedia aspects were stripped out, showed that the viewers of the bare version remembered significantly more facts about the stories than the multimedia viewers (Carr, 131). "It appears," wrote the researchers, "that this multimessage format exceeded viewer's attentional capacity" (Berger et. al. in Carr, 131). So, despite the fact that our brains are becoming more configured by these multimedia

² For a more detailed discussion on the cognitive load, see: Paas, F., Renkel, A., & Sweller, J. (2004). "Cognitive Load Theory: Instructional Implications of the Interaction between Information Structures and Cognitive Architecture". *Instructional Science* 32: 1–8.

³ Carr refers here to the article "The Effect of the Modality of Presentation of Streaming Multimedia on Information Acquisition" printed in *Media Psychology* nr. 9, 2007.

streams of information to process them more efficiently, we are not expanding in our cognitive load. Rather, the multimedia aspect of the Internet only stresses our cognitive load even more.

So let us consider a performance that functions in the same multimedia way as the examples discussed above do. A performer is having a monologue, directly addressing the audience, resembling the function of the newscaster. At the same time a video projection at the back of the wall is displaying related imagery, in the same way as footage of a riot can function within a newscast. Other performers on stage use language, text and physical actions that are unrelated to the topic of the monologue or the video, resembling the informational reel at the bottom of the television screen. The result can be a cacophony of various stimuli that stress the cognitive load of the audience to the point where there occurs a decline in comprehension. The configuration of the performance keeps the audience from fully grasping any one element of the performance. When the use of multimedia within theatre performance is not carefully thought out, like the research into newscasts show, the use of multimedia can lead to poorer comprehension of the topics and details discussed. Of course we can assume that theatre makers are well aware of the elements and how they use them within their performance. Even their use of distractions is purposeful and fitting into the whole of the performance. How specifically these distractions are implemented becomes the main concern.

1.1.6 Careful configuration

When I look in what way the qualities of textual digital media are resembled within the dramaturgy of contemporary performances, following from the above it may appear that when a performance closely resembles these defining qualities of the Internet discussed by Carr, it will result in poor comprehension of the performance by the audience. However, with the current awareness of what qualities of the Internet are the source of these negative effects of fragmentation and distraction, as well as how these qualities are causing them, performance dramaturgy can resemble qualities of textual digital media while bypassing the negative effects. This awareness allows careful configuration of future performances, as well as other media.

Despite the observation that multimedia aspects of the Internet stress our cognitive load to the point where we process less information and less efficiently, Carr does mention that multimedia aspects can be applied in a positive, supporting manner. The key here, according to Carr, is careful configuration of the multimedia aspect (Carr, 132). He refers here to the combination of audio and visuals within a presentation. The positive effect of this 'multimedia' example comes through the fact that we process what we see and what we hear through separate channels (Carr, 131). As such, using both channels – audio and visuals – in a supplementary way to discuss one subject can actually

facilitate learning (Carr, 131). This use of multimedia differs from the CNN broadcast discussed above in that the news broadcast uses various channels for several bits of information. The objective information of the newscaster is obscured by the graphic impact of the videos of war crimes and attention is distracted by the newsreel with entirely different and new information. To facilitate learning, using several media to discuss one topic or detail will promote deepening of knowledge by for example exemplification. In extent, the careful configuration of qualities of digital media within theatre dramaturgy might achieve the same supplementary effect.

In theatre performance careful configuration of the music for example can help to set a scene, aiding in bringing across the atmosphere of a moment in a plot by using two stimuli (music and a dialogue) to illustrate one thing (a love declaration). Video or scenography can in a similar way be supplementing stimuli to bring across one plot point, when for example a calm performer is surrounded by a deserted and trashed stage, video displaying his inner turmoil. The entirety of the scene, the various stimuli carefully configured and combined, illustrate the performer's character's loss and loneliness.

When the brains of an audience have familiarized with a specific way of processing information, if the dramaturgy of a performance complies with this way of processing information there can be less stress on the cognitive load. So, other than elements of a performance supplementing each other, the dramaturgy of a performance can comply with a specific rhythm of providing information and specific sizes or duration of information as familiarized in the brains of the audience. Because the audience will not have to adapt to an entirely new or different manner of processing information, there will be less stress on the cognitive load that can lead to good comprehension of the performance.

1.2 Skimming, scanning and switching

1.2.1 Comparative Media Studies

Like the work of Carr, Katherine Hayles in her book *How We Think. Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis* (2012) discusses the changes when print media are remediated or absorbed into digital forms. Of specific interest for her is the change this remediation entails for the reading skills. The activity of reading digital texts and reading on the Internet Hayles terms as hyper reading, and this hyper reading has distinct differences and influences from the reading of print text which is related to close reading. Close reading is the activity of thorough textual analysis commonly found within literary studies and involves immersion into a text and long stretches of sustained attention to one particular object. Hayles notices a decline in reading skills amongst her students (whom are students of literature no less) and relates this, just as Carr does in his anecdotes, to increased time

spent reading digital texts.⁴ Hayles sets out to examine what the relation is between the time spent reading digital text and the decline in reading skills, as well as how to overcome this. In *How We Think* Hayles has an educational and pedagogical interest in the subject, coming from her position as a professor at the Duke University, and she wishes to examine the subject of media's influence on reading skills from the perspective of Comparative Media Studies to explain how this approach can aid in improving reading skills again.

The concept of Comparative Media Studies is, as the name suggest, concerned with comparisons between different media cultures, such as manuscript versus print cultures, oral versus literature cultures and letterpress versus offset printing (Hayles, 7). Because of the current shift from print to digital culture, Hayles considers the concept of Comparative Media Studies particularly beneficial in examining the effects of the remediation of print to digital texts (Hayles, 7). With the approach of Comparative Media Studies, Hayles wishes to stimulate the exploration of synergies between print and digital cultures (Hayles, 7). In other words, Hayles sets out to advocate how the combination of training in both hyper reading and close reading within the educational system can benefit both reading skills supplementary. Other than cultural comparison, Hayles draws attention to the use of concepts or methods from one field in the approach of a subject from another field, as for example is the case when close reading practices are being applied to code and video display (Hayles, 8). Later on in this chapter it becomes clear that Hayles uses the perspective of Comparative Media Studies to combine the concepts or methods of hyper reading with the activity of close reading in an attempt to have both activities supplement one another. In other words, Hayles advocates a careful configuration of hyper reading and close reading skills within education.

1.2.2 Hyper reading

So, how can we define hyper reading? Hayles refers to James Sosnoski introducing the concept of hyper reading in 1999 as "reader-directed, screen-based, computer-assisted reading" (Sosnoski in Hayles, 61). To illustrate what Sosnoski is referring to, Hayles names a list of examples of technologies that facilitate hyper reading: search queries such as Google and Yahoo, filtering by keywords the user can think of on his own and hyperlinking (Hayles, 61). The filtering of keywords sounds very like what Carr terms 'searchability'. Like Carr, Hayles here draws attention to the broader possibility of filtering both digital texts and digital search results for specific keywords. These technologies allow users to engage in new activities, such as "skimming", getting a quick general understanding of a text, and "pecking", extracting sections from a larger text and fragmenting

⁴ Carr of course discusses the broader subject of spending time using the Internet, of which reading of digital texts is only a part.

(Hayles, 61). These activities revolve around the intentions of the reader and most importantly, are made much easier through the help of computer software and digitization. Hayles wishes to add to Sosnoski's definition juxtaposing, which she explains in this context as having access to several different windows displaying information simultaneously, and scanning, where we read through a text rapidly to identify items of interest (Hayles, 61). One observation that we can make about what all these activities do, is that they refrain from approaching a text as a whole, rather fragmenting it into smaller specific pieces more fit for the desired consumption. Here becomes apparent in Sosnoski's definition the prominent position of the reader, engaging the text through his intentions with it (indicating Carr's bidirectional aspect of the Internet). Hyper reading turns the engagement of a reader with the digital text into a consumer directed one of swift and precise consumption.

In the reflection in the previous chapter on how hyperlinking can be observed within a performance, I explored how a performance's dramaturgy can steer the audience's attention to dip into several shorter scenes with different but related information or topics. As with complying with the cognitive effect of the hyperlink, the familiarizing of the brain with the activity of hyper reading would benefit from a careful configuration of such a 'hyperlink dramaturgy', resulting in less stress on the cognitive load.

An example by Jakob Nielson illustrates the above definition of hyper reading. Hayles briefly discusses a usability research on webpage design performed by Nielson and his team in 2006. Test subjects were asked to provide running commentary as they encountered a webpage. This commentary was documented by an observer and the eye-movements of the test subjects were registered using tracking devices. The result of this research was that web users usually read a webpage in an F pattern, reading the first few lines fully, but as they get lower on the page the length of the lines they read shortens, as well as some lines are skipped entirely (Hayles, 61). Mark Bauerlein, a scholar who is negatively predisposed to the influence of digital media on cognitive abilities takes the research done by Nielson as evidence that hyper reading is hasty and sloppy at best (Hayles, 61).⁵ Hayles however wishes to point out the research that Bauerlein did not refer to where scholars indicate the various positive navigational skills that the F pattern of hyper reading promotes, such as identifying items of interest from irrelevant pages (Hayles, 61). Bauerlein is correct in that the hyper reading of digital texts encourages a superficial engagement of the reader, glancing and sifting through the information rather than qualitatively processing it (as we saw with Carr's discussion of searchability). Hyper reading leads to less time spent on one piece of information and more time on fast jumping between multiple different bits. However, Hayles wishes to stress that

⁵ Bauerlein's negative predisposition becomes very clear in the title of his book, *The Dumbest Generation. How The Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future* (2009).

hyper reading has unique positive navigational qualities, and these qualities can be very beneficial for and supplementing to close reading.

1.2.3 Rhythm and attention

The prominence of hyper reading is not just a result of the remediation of print text to digital text. Hayles draws attention to the fact that hyper reading is also a strategic response to the information intensive environment of current day societies (Hayles, 12). As strategic response, hyper reading aims 'to conserve attention by quickly identifying relevant information, so that only relatively few portions of a given text are actually read' (Hayles, 12). Here Hayles makes the connection between hyper reading and hyper attention, another term related to the reading of digital texts that she discusses more closely in her article "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes". In *How We Think* Hayles describes hyper attention – cultivated by the information intensive environment – as 'a cognitive mode that has a low threshold for boredom, alternates flexibly between different information streams and prefers high levels of stimulation' (Hayles, 12). Hayles, while acknowledging the underlying danger of distraction, wishes to point out that hyper attention enables us to cope more efficiently with multiple information streams simultaneously as well as to switch between different streams of information more easily. However true, hyper attention by preferring high levels of stimulation does lead to only cursory attention to one subject before switching to another. There is only a short amount of time spent on any given subject, and as such we can say that the brain, through hyper attention, has developed a specific rhythm of information flow that allows it to keep interest and its attention focused. When we keep this in mind, we can understand how a one hour monologue at first glance does not comply with the rhythm of information supply that hyper reading makes familiar. The audience's familiarity with hyper attention can demand for a higher level of stimulation than a monologue might provide. However, if the dramaturgy of the performance is structured in such a way that it can resemble the rhythm of information flow that hyper attention prefers, even a monologue should be able to keep the attention of its audience. Careful configuration of various visual and audial changes, all with a specific (shorter) duration, can induce the performance with the rhythm of hyper attention.

1.2.4 Configuring beneficial navigational skills

As mentioned earlier, Hayles pays attention to the positive qualities and skills that hyper reading and hyper attention promote. These skills mostly refer to navigational skills, being able to efficiently and swiftly orientate oneself in the contemporary information intensive environments we dwell in. This is especially true within the academic world of scholars and students, where people need to process a

large quantity of material swiftly, resulting in scanning and skimming (Hayles, 61). Hyper reading allows us to 'quickly [...] construct landscapes of associated research fields and subfields; it shows ranges of possibilities, it identifies texts and passages most relevant to a given query; and it easily juxtaposes many different texts and passages' (Hayles, 62). These activities are a great boon in addition to close reading skills that lack the efficient orienting capabilities of hyper reading according to Hayles. However, as we have seen discussed with Carr, repeated experience of performing specific tasks strengthens the rigid neurological pathways associated with it. Also, the swift jumping between different information streams that hyper reading facilitates stresses the cognitive load, possibly leading to a decreased understanding of any one piece of information (Carr, 131). As Hayles wishes to stress, when hyper reading is the only way in which (young) people engage with texts, they will find it increasingly harder to closely engage with a text to get a deeper understanding of it. That is why Hayles advocates a combination of training hyper reading and close reading skills within the educational system.

Following Hayles' argument we can understand how it would not be beneficial for theatre performance to blindly take over the defining qualities of textual digital media as discussed in the previous chapter to comply with the way the brain has familiarized itself with a specific way of processing information. If it were to do so, the audience might be supplied with all kinds of refreshing stimuli without the performance really bringing anything across. Rather, performance can steer the audience according to the familiar manners of processing information, such as the specific rhythm of information, to then ease the audience into other forms of communicating and processing information more closely related to performance. As a medium, theatre has the possibility to exhibit a medium on stage, questioning and examining it. Like a scout can observe the structure of a landscape from atop a high mountaintop, the audience can observe a medium's structure on stage from its seat in the auditorium. But if a performance jettisons the audience on top of the high mountain, the audience is more likely to be disoriented. By having a performance's dramaturgy steer the audience according to familiar manners of processing information, the audience members can be guided towards to the top of the mountain, opening up their rigid ways of processing information.

1.3 Fragmentation, audience, timing

In the above, I discussed several defining qualities of the Internet and reading digital texts. I discussed how the speed at which a medium can operate results into a specific rhythm of information supply that a user's brain through repetition familiarizes into himself and that strengthen that particular neurological pathway. When engaging other media, such as theatre, the user will be aware whether that rhythm complies or contrasts with the rhythm he has familiarized.

The bidirectional aspect of the Internet places the user in a controlling consuming position, a position the user mostly loses when entering an auditorium. Having come to expect his controlling consuming position through repeated experience, the user can be expected to note the difference of his position towards the medium theatre in the auditorium.

The three qualities of the remediation that the Internet entails all have in common that they lead to fragmentation. For theatre the cognitive effect of the hyperlink, dipping in and out of a series of text leading to shorter attention spans, can be observed within theatre dramaturgy in the use of shorter autonomous scenes. The searchability of digital texts and hyper reading follow in this same line of effects, through the related hyper attention that will prefer new and fresh stimuli. The searchability however also familiarizes the user with a central consuming position, as is apparent in the general bidirectional aspect of the Internet. This possibility for a central consuming position of the audience can best be observed within broader performance settings, such as festival or museums. The multimedia qualities of the Internet lead to fragmentation by dividing attention, which can be observed within theatre in the use of simultaneity.

In discussing the multimedia quality of the Internet I paid attention to Carr's discussion of the cognitive load. The several various stimuli within one medium stress the cognitive load to the point where it processes information less efficiently leading to poorer comprehension of the topic and details. So rather than that repeated experience with multimedia would lead to a better understanding of and engagement with simultaneity in media, the brain has a certain limit on what it can process efficiently. Blindly incorporating all the qualities of digital textual media in theatre performance or dramaturgy to comply with a familiarized way of processing information would most likely lead to even poorer comprehension of the performance. Rather, careful configuration of these qualities is key. Following the rhythm of the Internet and hyper reading, related to the attention spans they have familiarized within the user's brain, a performance's dramaturgy can ease the audience into the rhythm of the performance. With this base established, a performance becomes free to for example continue along with this rhythm, exhibit its structure or question it.

Having formulated these defining qualities of textual digital media, in the next chapter I translate the brief reflections made in the above chapter on how these qualities can be observed within theatre performance to terms applicable to dramaturgical analyses. I get into more detail how the cognitive effects of the above qualities can be observed within performance dramaturgy, thereby discussing these effects within the three general categories they can be ascribed to: fragmentation, audience, and rhythm.

2. Translating qualities to performance analysis

Now we are aware of qualities of textual digital media through the preceding chapter, we arrive at the question on how we can make these qualities useful for performance analysis. In this chapter I perform a translation from those defining qualities of textual digital media to categories applicable to performance analysis. To do that, I first organize the defining qualities of textual digital media into three categories: fragmentation, rhythm and audience. The beginning of this chapter sets out to argue how the defining qualities of textual digital media can be understood within these three categories. Later on in the chapter, I set out to explain how these three categories can be translated for performance analysis.

Within this chapter, two scholars serve as references within this translation. First of all, the work *Postdramatic Theatre* (1999, English edition 2006) by Hans-Thies Lehmann serves as a solid point of reference within theatre studies that aids in formulating the relationship between fragmentation in performance and media fragmentation. In a broader sense, Lehmann's work aids in understanding how the defining qualities of textual digital media can be resembled within mostly postdramatic performance and, more importantly, how the cognitive effects of the qualities of textual digital media appear to prefer a specific use of these elements of performance. The second scholar, Simon Shepherd with his work *Theatre, Body and Pleasure* (2006), serves as a perspective onto the translation, mostly to help define the category of rhythm. His work engages with theatre as an art of bodies taking into account the body of the audience as well. *Theatre, Body and Pleasure* sets out the argument that an audience perceives bodily, but also perceive a performance in relation to the rhythm of daily life that this body has become familiar with.

The general line of argumentation within this chapter is as follows. The cognitive effects of textual digital media influence the way in which audience members perceive. The perceiving of rhythm is according to Shepherd mainly done through the body. This body of the audience member has prior to attending a performance already familiarized itself with a specific rhythm of daily life. The contemporary audience member's rhythm of daily life is greatly influenced by the textual digital media he frequently engages with. When attending a performance, the audience member will, consciously or not, note the relationship between the rhythm of the performance and the rhythm of his own daily life. The translation made in this chapter argues that following the categories set out in this chapter, the aspects of the specific rhythm of daily life shaped by textual digital media can be found within a performance's use of fragmentation, rhythm and position of the audience.

2.1 Categories and definitions

What do the defining qualities of textual digital media have in common and how can we categorize them to be applied for performance analysis? This question resulted into three categories: fragmentation, rhythm and audience. Following is a short summarizing of the qualities of textual digital media within the three categories depicted. In these summaries, a distinction occurs between the cognitive effects as found within the textual digital media and the resembling categories within performance dramaturgy. The specifics of the latter are discussed in more detail later on in this chapter. The distinction I make serves as a clarification of the terms used. The term fragmentation in performance for example is a much broader term than fragmentation resembling the cognitive effects of textual digital media. Therefore I use media fragmentation, media rhythm and media audience to indicate the use of the categories while referring to the specific qualities of the cognitive effects of textual digital media as listed below as separate from fragmentation, rhythm and media which are the terms I use when discussing the broader performance aspects.

2.1.1 Media Fragmentation

As I discussed earlier in the preceding chapter, hyperlinking, searchability, multimedia and hyper reading all result into a fragmentation of the medium. Hyperlinking takes the user away from the medium at hand and thrusts him towards a new bit of information, fragmenting the entirety of the information the user engages with. Searchability allows a user to pinpoint the information he desires within a medium, thereby fragmenting the information into handpicked little chunks. Multimedia evokes a hyper attention within the user, all the separate bits of media vying for his attention and by that leads to distraction and fragmentation of any one medium or piece of information. Hyper reading as an activity engages with a medium in a superficial way, scanning and skimming through information with an effect similar to searchability: only fragmented chunks of information are engaged superficially.

Through repeated encounters with the above qualities of textual digital media, neurological pathways form resolving around fragmentation. Having established these pathways, our brain will prefer the fragmented chunks over the coherent wholes. This closely resembles what Hayles termed hyper attention, where the user has a low threshold for boredom and prefers high levels of stimulation. The cognitive effect of what I call here media fragmentation creates in our brains hyper attention, preferring fragmented shards over larger wholes.

2.1.2 Media Rhythm

The category of rhythm can be found within the qualities of textual digital media in the speed of the Internet and in Hayles' hyper attention. Through repeated experience with the Internet, our brain familiarizes with the speed at which it is provided with information, or in other words, it becomes familiar with a specific rhythm of the Internet. The cognitive effect here is that the established neurological pathway will prefer this rhythm of information supply. Hyper reading is connected to this, in the superficial scanning manner with which it engages with a medium. The short orientating amount of time given to any piece of information whilst scanning or skimming becomes a norm that is repeated and that the brain wishes to repeat. This superficial engagement results in a rhythm of shorter amounts of time spent on any piece of information before the threshold of boredom is reached and there arises the desire for a different bit of information.⁶ This rhythm of the constant stream of short pieces of information I refer to here as media rhythm.

2.1.3 Media Audience

When categorising the cognitive effects of textual digital media into a category called audience, I identify different positions herein. First, the manner in which the textual digital media address the audience (communication flowing from the medium towards the user), and second, the central controlling consuming position of the user of textual digital media (communication starting at the user engaging with the medium). Where media are often considered as there to be consumed, the technologies of textual digital media invite their users to engage and control not only the medium but also the information held within. The bidirectional aspect of the Internet invites users to consume the content that is already present as well as create and upload their own content. The navigational tools of searchability and the hyperlink encourage a control of and influence on a text, as is the main philosophy behind hyper reading. This activity is tailored for a user's directed and specific engagement with a text departing from his own desires with it. Textual digital media promote a direct yet superficial engagement of the user. The cognitive effect here is that the user comes to expect and prefer a centrality of his own position when engaging with a medium. These are the expectations and resulting attention span of the spectator familiarized with textual digital media.

⁶ To a lesser extent, the manner in which hyperlinking, searchability and multimedia promote an engagement with a medium falls in line with this rhythm of a short amount of time spent per fragment of information.

2.2 From media qualities to performance analysis

Now that we have set out the definitions of the above three categories, we arrive at the next step in translating these to performance analysis. How can we observe the cognitive effects of these categories in performance dramaturgy? In the following I discuss the three categories in translation to performance analysis. The following discussion is a preliminary exploration of the ways cognitive effects of textual digital media can be resembled within performance aspects, and therefore pays limited but directed attention to only the three categories as defined above. Of course, there are more aspects of performance that can resemble the cognitive effects of the Internet and digital mediated communication, such as sound, language and visuals. However, these are not as strongly observed within textual digital media as they can be observed within for example website design. The translation therefore is a limited one that pays most focus to media rhythm that is further illustrated by the following analysis. Considering the thesis as a first step between translating cognitive effects to terms applicable to performance analysis, further research is possible into those digital media not discussed here, as well as into the aspects of performance left unspoken.

2.2.1 Media fragmentation and contemporaneity

Media fragmentation can be found in performance when looking at scene duration, transition between scenes, the topics discussed within scenes, the use of interruption and in simultaneity.

As I noted in the above description of fragmentation, the cognitive effect of fragmentation in textual digital media entails a preference for fragmented shards over the larger wholes through the related hyper attention. This can be connected to scene duration. When a performance is organized with a set of scenes which all have a longer duration, a performance is less likely to be considered as being composed of separate fragments. Of importance here is the transition between those scenes marking the fragments. When a performance makes use of very fluent transitions, it facilitates an understanding of a performance as a unity. Greek tragedy, with its careful build-up of plot, serves as an example of this way of organizing performance with fluent transitions that aims towards unity. Fragmentation within performance then can be found in the use of shorter scene duration and explicit transitions, where a scene is not provided with the space and time to undergo a deep development and a scene transition is set to obstruct a fluent flowing over between different scenes. The cognitive effect of fragmentation prefers a dramaturgy according to the latter (postdramatic) way of organizing.

Another way in which a performance dramaturgy can resemble media fragmentation is in its use of topics. Obstructing a unity within theatre can be achieved when the topics addressed in different scenes are fragments of related information. An associative manner of organizing

performance, or in other words a performance with a dramaturgy of association, can serve as an example of such resemblance of media fragmentation in performance. Where the hyperlink on the webpage encourages the user to dip into a related new piece of information, the associative jumping between topics within or in between scenes can provide performance with a similar engagement with information. In this way, the dramaturgy of performance entails a unity that the audience is invited to follow, establishing themselves the associative link between the topics of the scenes through their own engagement and use of imagination.⁷

Of a possible contrast to the associative links between topics within the unity of a performance is the use of interruption. Carr already indicated the presence of interruption where he referred to Doctorow's understanding of the Internet as an 'ecosystem of interruption technologies' (Carr, 91). Complying with the desire of hyper attention for high levels of stimulation can be observed within performance dramaturgy when it makes use of interruption. A topic or scene is being cut off and obstructed by the sudden appearance of something different. Interruption can be in the form of a stark transition between scenes, but interruption can also be applied as a dramaturgical strategy within scenes. Here we can identify two uses of interruption within a scene: disruptive and supplementary. Interruption within a scene can be used to disrupt the flow of the scene, shift attention or introduce a new topic. The unanticipated gunshot or the sudden arrival of a new character can function as an example. This use of interruption is fragmenting the flow of the scene and steers towards a new course. The other use of interruption within a scene is not disruptive, but supplementary. When a certain topic is discussed, various characters can interrupt another, adding to the discussion new pieces of information. This use of interruption, where the flow of the scene is disrupted but not the unity, is an example of how media fragmentation can be observed within performance for it fragments the scene without breaking the unity. Such a use of interruption would illustrate both Carr's discussion of the supplementary use of multimedia (Carr, 131) and Hayles' approach of Comparative Media Studies (Hayles, 7).⁸

Lastly, media fragmentation can be observed in simultaneity within performance. Here I wish to introduce Hans-Thies Lehmann into this chapter with his famous work *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006) where he discusses this aspect of postdramatic performance. Simultaneity strains the perception. When several elements are perceived simultaneously full perception or comprehension of all is impossible and strains perception regardless of comprehension (Lehmann, 87). We might say

⁷ This statement is supported by Lehmann's statement about the invitation of simultaneity to an audience to form their own connections between the different signs present simultaneously. I get into this in more detail on page 30.

⁸ I want to refer back here to paragraph 1.1.6, where I discuss Carr's supplementary use of multimedia, and paragraph and paragraph 1.2.1 on Hayles promoting the combination of hyper and close reading to supplement one another.

the simultaneity places more stress of the cognitive load of the spectator, providing him with more stimuli than he can process. The result of simultaneity is the 'parceling of perception' (Lehmann, 88), or in other words it leads to a fragmentation of a performance into smaller chunks of information. Here Lehmann appears to indicate that to be able to cope with simultaneity, the spectator has to turn the simultaneous stimuli into several smaller parcels to be able to perceive anything. This leads to a total obstruction of synthesis of the elements presented simultaneously (Lehmann, 88). Lehmann here is particularly concerned with the different elements or signs simultaneously present, rather than with the position of simultaneity within the broader scope of the performance.

Despite being unable to observe all simultaneous signs fully, the spectator attempts to give meaning. Lehmann notes that simultaneity leaves open the question for connection between elements or contemporaneity (the 'happening at the same time') without connection (Lehmann, 88). Being unable to observe all signs within simultaneity fully, establishing a connection between the signs remains unclear. As a result of the open question between connections or contemporaneity a double bind appears: there is attention to both the concrete example as well as the totality of signs in simultaneity (Lehmann, 88). It is here that we arrive at the connection between Lehmann's postdramatic theatre and the manner of perceiving by contemporary audiences. The dramatic theatre complies with the desire for orientation of the spectator by presenting a structured whole. Postdramatic theatre deliberately does not fulfill this desire, exhibiting through experiencing how fragmentary perception actually is (Lehmann, 88). However, after having discussed the influence of textual digital media on the perceiving and desires of the user, can we say that the media influenced spectator has a desire for orientation? Yes, but this orientation is in current days of a very different nature than the structured whole of dramatic theatre. Having familiarized with the fragmented structures of textual digital media, can the desire for orientation of the spectator be fulfilled with simultaneity? Lehmann is right that simultaneity always renders explicit both the fragmentary character of perception as well as the limits of perception and comprehension of simultaneity. The spectator is free to choose what to pay attention to, but frustrated because he is not able to perceive all fully (Lehmann, 88). As we have seen discussed by Carr and Hayles, multimedia and simultaneity when poorly configured lead to poorer comprehension. But the attention of the media influenced spectator desires more stimuli, more distraction than a mere dramatic performance can comply with. So some measure of simultaneity will fit the desire for stimulation cultivated by the hyper attention of the media influenced spectator.

Here a nuancing of Lehmann is in order. The way in which Lehmann discusses simultaneity appears to closely resemble a clash of signs, a cacophony and a chaos on stage. However, simultaneity can also occur in much less extreme measures. The performance *Oedipus* performed by Ro Theater in 2013 serves as a fitting example here. In this performance, we are presented with a

black raised stage, a clutter of lamps on the front right of the stage and a large hanging structure resembling a baby mobile adorned with tingling instruments on the back left of the stage. Simultaneity in this set up can be observed when Oedipus holds a monologue, 'haunted' by a performer resembling Oedipus' younger self, and another performer at the mobile leisurely 'playing' the huge instrument. At the same time, that clutter of lamps is raised higher and sets a change in lighting in motion. Simultaneity here is best understood with the other term Lehmann mentioned: contemporaneity. There is a co-occurring of elements with no necessary connection between them. Where Lehmann is more concerned with the simultaneously present signs and the inability to perceive them all fully, simultaneity in the form of contemporaneity is a way in which the dramaturgy of performance can resemble the cognitive effect of the fragmentary quality of textual digital media, to resemble the desire for stimulation of hyper attention. In the example of *Oedipus* we can argue that the simultaneity actually, rather than obstructing synthesis, allows for a fulfilling of the desire for orientation of the media influenced audience.

2.2.2 Media rhythm and intensification and decresece

To examine the category of media rhythm in performance, I wish to use the perspective of Simon Shepherd on rhythm of body action as set out in his work *Theatre, Body and Pleasure* (2006). Shepherd begins his work by drawing our attention to his understanding of theatre as an art-form that exhibits the body (Shepherd, 1). Here, the body Shepherd is concerned with is both the body of the performer and that of the audience. Shepherd's perspective herein is that every body is culturally cultivated, both the body of the performer and that of the audience member, through experiences and tasks in their daily lives.

The rhythm of daily life

Before we get to the discussion of Shepherd's concept of rhythm of body action, I first wish to discuss his perspective on the culturally cultivated body. Shepherd considers that the training of the body by daily life – through work behavior for example, like typewriting or factory work – has its influence on the body (Shepherd, 5). Shepherd cites Walter Benjamin (1939) when discussing the bodily response of audience: 'technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training. [...] That which determines the rhythm of production on a conveyor belt is the basis of the rhythm of reception in a film.' (Benjamin in Shepherd, 7). Here Benjamin already notes the phenomenological connection of the audience with the medium they observe. What I wish to draw attention to here is that Benjamin links daily activities – work on the conveyor belt – to a specific

rhythm people are familiar with that is present within the film as well. People use the rhythm of their daily life as a basis in approaching the rhythm of the medium.

In the chapter 'Just at that very moment' Shepherd notes that an audience attends a performance with a body structured and physically engaged by its culture (Shepherd, 94). The audience comes to a performance with a body rhythm of its own, shaped by the rhythm or rhythmicity of his daily life (Shepherd, 94). Think for example how working on a conveyor belt will influence the rhythm of the one working. This rhythm becomes familiar for the factory worker and can be considered as a part of his rhythm of daily life, supplemented by his regulated getting up, going to work, attending lunch and returning home. Though some may argue that contemporary life is structured in a much less rigid manner, it is clear that the rhythm with which one lives its life becomes ingrained. Shepherd expands on this by mentioning Michael Polanyi with *The Tacit Dimension* (1967). According to Polanyi the way in which the body engages with the world around it shapes the way we think (Shepherd, 75). This is done consciously by attending to our environments as well as unconsciously by being 'tacitly' aware of our surroundings (Shepherd, 75). Eventually, 'we incorporate it in our body [...] so that we come to dwell in it' (Polanyi in Shepherd, 75). In that sense we can understand how living our lives has its influence on the way we are tacitly aware of our everyday (or not) surroundings. Here we can see a relation between Polanyi's kinaesthetic and Carr's and Hayles' understanding of the influence new digital media have on our understanding and perceiving. The contemporary 'environment' we dwell in can be considered as the virtual world of the Internet and digital media. By attending to this every day environment, whether consciously or unconsciously, we incorporate it into our bodies.

The everyday environment as influenced by the textual digital media discussed in the previous chapter has its own media rhythm. As I discussed in the categorisation earlier this chapter (paragraph 2.1.2), this media rhythm is a rhythm of a constant stream of short pieces of information, providing the media influenced spectator with refreshing new stimuli before his threshold for boredom due to its hyper attention is reached. This rhythm, following Polanyi's statements, is incorporated within the bodies of the media influenced spectators and serves as the base to which the rhythm of other media is compared when engaging with them. This resembles the statements made by Carr on the cognitive influence of the Internet and digital media, although Polanyi places the focus on the tacit awareness of rhythm and differences in rhythm. Both perspectives agree however on the sublime influence of everyday actions.

Shepherd connects the bodily effects of performances to the way these performances are organised within the rhythm of daily life. He names a list of examples, ranging from an annual attendance of a civic event of the English medieval town to the one-off play seen after a visit to the restaurant (Shepherd, 94). These different occasions of performance take with them different

regimes, such as dress code, formalities and behavioural rules and entail different activities surrounding the theatrical event (Shepherd, 94). The body receives and expects different bodily approaches. Shepherd concludes that because these events stand out from the daily lives, the body of the audience members arrives with a certain openness to rhythmic possibility, and that within this openness the audience member can be confronted with the rhythm of the performance different from his rhythm of daily life (Shepherd, 94-95). In this Shepherd implies a possibility for a performance to break open a rigid rhythm of daily life and exhibit it through performance. In the analysis in the following chapter, the performance dramaturgy's use of rhythm will be examined in how it opens up the media rhythm to the rhythm of the performance, illustrating how a performance can resemble media rhythm without having to comply with it.

Analysing media rhythm in performance

To understand how the spectator perceives rhythm within performance, I briefly discuss Shepherd on empathetic parallelism as used by Beckerman. Beckerman arrives at empathetic parallelism after describing the way in which our bodies pay attention to dramatic action:

leaning forward in one's seat ...mirrors the forward thrust of the dramatic action.
...Imaginatively we follow a path that runs parallel, not to the events themselves, but to the shifts of tension either between characters or between ourselves and the performers.
(Beckerman in Shepherd, 8-9)

Here Beckerman specifically draws attention away from the sequence of events of a performance, rather focussing on the shift in tension between the characters (or performers) and the bodily responses they have on the audience member in the form of empathetic parallelism. Empathetic parallelism Beckerman defines as 'a kinesthetic, isomorphic response to dramatic action, by means of which the patterns and rhythms of tension find their immediate echo in the imaginative response of the audience' (Beckerman in Shepherd, 9). The audience member 'feels' in his own body the intensity of the performance, without necessarily acting it out.⁹ Moreover, the audience member does not need to be aware of 'the structural patterns of action' to experience them isomorphically within their bodies (Shepherd, 9). It does not require a trained or active brain for a body to pick up on the structural patterns of action within a performance.

Shepherd also discusses Beckerman's attempt at explaining how drama works on audience where Beckerman proposes to use intensification and decrease to examine performance rhythm.

⁹ The way in which Beckerman formulates it here leaves open to opportunity to approach a performance through this perspective, rather than just the characters and the shifts in tension between them.

By manipulating the processes whereby audiences attend to a performance, a rhythm of involvement and disengagement is set up (Shepherd, 79). This rhythm, Shepherd argues, is established through the sequence and intensities of the segments of which a performance consists (Shepherd, 79). Beckerman notes that for an audience to be engaged, a performance needs to have an organic rhythmic character. By this, Beckerman explicitly refers to Aristotelian drama with its begin, middle and end, stating that according to him this is not so much the core of an organic rhythm (Shepherd, 79-80). Rather, a shifting between intensification and decrease can provide performance with an organic rhythmic character. Shepherd notes that rhythm understood thus derives more from physical processes rather than representational ones and interacts with the bodily process of watching (Shepherd, 80).

To exemplify how to understand rhythm according to the term intensification and decrease, Beckerman refers to the acrobatic act (Shepherd, 80). The lead in is the intensification of the theatrical segment, the summersault the crux, and the relaxation into bowing the decrease. These terms I later apply to the analysis of rhythm in the following chapter to aid in examining how the intensities of the performance establish the rhythm of the performance and whether this rhythm can be understood as resembling media rhythm.

2.2.3 Media audience and fictionality and humanization

The qualities of media audience can be observed within performance in its use of distance. The distance that a performance employs is of influence to the position the audience member perceives himself in and can promote different stances by the audience. Distance related to the expected or preferred position of the media influenced spectator can be established through audience address and inclusion or exclusion.

Susan Bennett in her work *Theatre Audiences* (2006) discusses the distance of an audience to the fictional world on stage. In her discussion she refers to Daphna Ben Chaim's work *Distance in the Theatre: The Aesthetics of Audience Response* (1984) where Ben Chaim looks at film theorists (such as Christian Metz and André Bazin) to examine the involvement of an audience to a fictional world (Bennett, 15). The difference of the use of distance within film and theatre can be found in the real signifiers that theatre employs to refer to a fiction. These real signifiers restrict a theatre audience's imaginary involvement with the stage world (Ben Chaim in Bennett, 15). For an elaboration on this matter, one should delve into work within the theatre studies that make use of the theories by Ferdinand de Saussure, which I will not do here. What is important for Ben Chaim and this thesis here is that the measure of distance is of influence on the position of the audience member. Ben Chaim identifies the following parameters for distance.

‘The combination... of unreality with recognizable human characteristics seems to be the minimum requirements for identification, and both of these conditions are variable and provide the borders within which distance operates. Those qualities that make the object seem like ourselves (humanization) pull the object toward us; those aspects which distinguish the objects from ourselves and our real world (an awareness of fictionality) push the object away from us. The aesthetic tension between these two opposing tendencies constitutes distance and provides the conditions for the variability of distance’

(Ben Chaim in Bennett, 16).

The above parameters set the border within which distance operates. A ‘low distance’ can be found within a realistic play, where humanization of the object is strong and the awareness of fictionality is low. The effect of such a ‘low distance’ is a more intense personal relationship with the theatrical object (Bennett, 16) ‘High distance’ can be found in low humanization and a high awareness of fictionality and is most commonly attributed to farce (Ben Chaim in Bennett, 16). A varying combination of both extremes can be found within Brecht’s performance and can result in a critical stance by the audience towards the theatrical object, exactly through their humanization of the object while remaining aware of the fictionality of it.

The relation the parameters for distance that Ben Chaim formulates have with audience address, is that the effects of humanization and awareness of functionality provide a performance with a measure of inclusion or exclusion of the audience. A performance can portray a fictional world where the performance addresses the audience in a metaphorical manner. In this sense, the performance would employ high humanization and a low awareness of fictionality to retain the fictive world. This fictive world can only exist with the exclusion of the audience, who are not a part of that fictive world. The media influenced spectator, with its expectations of centrality and control, might feel excluded from such a performance. The performing of the fictive performance at a particular venue or within certain political times invites the audience to relate the theatrical events to their contemporary environment in a manner of what you might call indirect address. Within this manner of address, the audience member is not explicitly invited or engaged and the performance’s address is hidden.

Inclusion stands at the other end of the scale of performance address. A performer can face the audience during the entire of the performance and might even directly converse with them. The most obvious examples here are cabaret and stand-up comedy, where engagement with and inclusion of the spectator is a key aspect of this genre’s success. In this genre a high awareness of fictionality is paired with a measure of humanization that provides the genre with its recognition and

resulting humoristic qualities. Following the central controlling consuming position of the user as found within the qualities of textual digital media, performance that entail a manner of address more close situated towards this latter end of the scale can be said to resemble the manner of audience address found within textual digital media. Key aspects of this manner of address in performance are direct engagement and inclusion. With the direct address of the audience within performance through high awareness of fictionality paired with a measure of humanization, the media influenced spectator becomes included and the centre of the medium's focus.

There are many shapes and forms of audience address that influence the measures of awareness of fictionality and humanization, such as direct physical address, scenography and use of media. Direct physical address – facing the audience, posing them questions and acknowledging their presence – employs a high awareness of fictionality combined with a low humanization. By being included, the audience's attention is drawn to the here and now of the performance and any fictive references disappear. A result here is a critical stance, for the performance's physical address of the audience does not allow immersion. Scenography can also be quite influential on a performance's audience address. The proscenium arch and the perspectival backdrop for example promote an exclusion of the audience by affirming its position outside of the fictive world. Here a low awareness of fictionality because of the audience's exclusion allows for high humanization with the theatrical objects. Though complying with the centrality of the media influenced spectator's expectation, the total lack of acknowledgement of the spectator's existence does not resemble a media audience. A stage setup that entails pop-culture references for example does. Here we can observe a high awareness of fictionality through the reference to a commonly shared world, exhibiting how what is on stage is staged and intended to be recognized by the audience attending. In this example, the audience is included in the fact that its existence is acknowledged through the employing of pop-culture references. The use of media within performance can also have its influence on the measure of awareness of fictionality and humanization by the way in which it channels communication. Media can for example be employed within performance through embedding or exhibition, both manners of employment having different effects on audience address. Embedding of media, such as the television within the naturalistic living room creates a low awareness of fictionality and a higher measure of humanization, whereas the use of video to stream an act already taking place on the stage actually exhibits the medium, raising a high awareness of fictionality and low humanization. Either way, employing media within performance can play with distance between the theatrical objects as well as with the positions between audience and what is on stage. The way these media are employed will result in different stances an audience can have through the measure of awareness of fictionality and humanization the use of media addresses the audience with. The above are just some examples of aspects of performance that through their configuration in measures of

awareness of fictionality and humanization evoke a certain address that can resemble media audience where the central controlling consuming position of the media user or audience member can be observed.

A last aspect of manners of address that I wish to discuss here is again simultaneity. Simultaneity in performance, as we have seen in the discussion by Lehmann, presents on stage several signs and elements simultaneously, making it impossible to observe all fully. At the same time, this simultaneously being present opens up a freedom for the audience to decide themselves what draws their attention. In this sense I argue that simultaneity within performance can introduce into performance the central consuming position that the media influence spectator has familiarized with through the use of textual digital media. At this point I wish to highlight the limit of this freedom that Lehmann discusses. When observing simultaneity, we are unable to observe all fully. Knowing this, use of simultaneity is often purposeful and structured. A performance maker can select and carefully orchestrate the simultaneity, thereby creating an illusion of freedom to observe for the media influenced spectator, whilst steering his attention regardless of its freedom. In such uses of simultaneity, a performance's dramaturgy can comply with the central controlling consuming position of the media influenced spectator while at the same time open up opportunities to lift the audience member out of its rigid way of perceiving.

2.3 Interrelated

In the above I have discussed how we can observe the cognitive effects of textual digital media in the dramaturgy of performance separated into the three categories of media fragmentation, media rhythm and media audience. In this discussion, I already paid some attention to the relationships these categories have with each other. For example, I noted how both the cognitive effects of media fragmentation and media rhythm can be observed within a performance's scene duration and transitions. And all throughout the discussion the position the audience has towards this material, has been implicitly present, in for example being included or excluded which provides or disables the audience member to perceive the fragmentary character or a specific rhythm of a performance. In short, if we wish to look at any one of these categories within a performance's dramaturgy, we would find out that these are more interrelated than the categorisation makes them appear to be.

In the following chapter, I analyse the dramaturgy of the performance *Jandergrouwnd* on its resemblance to media rhythm. Within this analysis it becomes clear how, to examine the performance's rhythm, I must also discuss the fragmentary character of the performance as well as the position the audience has towards the use of rhythm. The analysis therefore serves as an

illustration of how the categories of media fragmentation, media rhythm and media audience are interrelated.

3. Analysis of Rhythm

By analysing a performance on its use of rhythm, I exemplify the translation made in the previous chapter. In this way I illustrate in the concrete example of the performance *Jandergrouwnd* – though limited to this one example – how what I defined as media rhythm can be observed in a contemporary postdramatic performance. Although the focus of the analysis is on rhythm, the analysis also illustrates how the categories of media fragmentation, media rhythm and media audience are interrelated and require a minor discussion of all three to understand how the rhythm occurs within the performance's dramaturgy.

To analyse the rhythm of the dramaturgy of *Jandergrouwnd* on its resemblance to media rhythm, I look at the following aspects of the performance. I first illustrate how we can understand the dramaturgy of *Jandergrouwnd* as having a fragmentary character. Having observed what elements of the performance's dramaturgy are the causes of this, I connect the observations related to scene transitions, duration and intensities to the qualities of media rhythm as discussed in the chapter above, namely shorter duration of scenes and the presence of refreshing new stimuli. Using the concept of intensification and decrease of Beckerman, I analyse the observations on what rhythm they provide the performance with.

To understand the development of the rhythm of the performance's dramaturgy, the analyses follow in the line of development of the performance. In a way, the analyses take us along in the exploration that the performance invites the audience to follow. In its form, the analyses attempt to illustrate the rhythm of the discussed scenes. Though the analyses do not cover the entirety of the performance, they do highlight important moments of establishment or change within the rhythm of the performance in the order of appearance.

In short, this chapter analyses the specific dramaturgical concept of *Jandergrouwnd* – research performed on stage – in its resemblance to media rhythm. In this chapter I argue that the dramaturgical concept of research on stage leads to the performance's fragmentary character through an associative exploration of the topic at hand – in the case of *Jandergrouwnd*, censorship of Russian artists during the 1970's – and that within this fragmentary character, the resemblance to media rhythm can be observed.

3.1 De Warme Winkel and *Jandergrouwnd*

De Warme Winkel is a Dutch theatre collective consisting out of four actors: Jeroen De Man, Vincent Rietveld, Mara van Vlijmen and Ward Weemhoff. Though the collective develops projects according to their own personal interests in a topic, they frequently collaborate with directors for the final editing and with guest actors outside of the collective. The guest actors within the collaborations

have an equal saying in the topic and the development of the work they are working on to ensure an equal engagement with the material. The result of this setup is shifting additions to a consistent artistic core.¹⁰

A key aspect of their work the collective itself defines as 'energetic, performative and visual. [...] Departing from a firm footing in the content, a tightly orchestrated mess of theatrical means is being employed, to raise a paradox, to sharpen a dilemma or to laurel a subject'.¹¹ In short I wish to formulate this as research on stage. Departing from their interest in a topic, they begin an associative exploration of that topic, and the resulting performance appears to be a theatrical presentation, or re-enactment in a way, of the journey they have ventured.¹² However, the performance is not an exact re-enactment of the associative exploration, but as indicated above, a tightly orchestrated mess of theatrical means that drives towards a specific stance or question about the topic at hand. In the following analyses it become clearer how we can understand the format of *De Warme Winkel* and *Jandergrouwnd* in particular as research on stage, and more importantly, how this is connected to the performance's fragmentary character and resemblance of media rhythm.

The topic that served as the starting point for the performance of *Jandergrouwnd* is censorship in Russia during the 1970's and '80's. In this time period freedom of speech did not exist and artists are only allowed to create art that lauded the Russian civilisation. Whenever art even ever so slightly appeared to be critical, the artist would be prosecuted. As a result, artist went *Jandergrouwnd*, as the Russian pronunciation would sound like. The topic is fitting within the oeuvre of the collective. Previous performances by this collective more often focusses on Eastern European literature and Russian poets in particular. For example, the performance *Poets and Bandits* can be understood as an exploration of the mind and life of Russian poet Boris Ryzhy, and *Kokoschka Live!* about Oskar Kokoschka, an Austrian artist, poet and playwright. *Jandergrouwnd* was performed during the winter of 2012 in coproduction with Toneelgroep Oostpool.

3.2 Fragmentary character

To begin the analysis, I first wish to indicate how the performance has a fragmentary character. The elements of the performance that establish the fragmentary character are the elements of performance that I discussed in the previous chapter as belonging to media fragmentation and media rhythm, namely scene duration and scene transition.

¹⁰ More information can be found on the Dutch webpage <http://www.dewarmewinkel.nl/people/index/?page=wie-zijn-wij>. Last visited: 6-06-13.

¹¹ Translated from: http://www.fondspodiumkunsten.nl/toekenningen/meerjarige_activiteitensubsidies_2013-2016/theater/de_warme_winkel/. Last visited: 6-06-13. Webpage in Dutch.

¹² A small insight look into the process of development can be found on the Dutch webpage: <http://www.dewarmewinkel.nl/products/index/?page=adopteer-een-rekwisiet>. Last visited: 6-06-13.

3.2.1 Painting the picture with the material

The first scene of the performance introduces the audience with the topic at hand and the material that will be the audience's point of departure. Taking centre 'stage' in a cluttered thrift shop, one of the performers raises a book into the air and introduces us to the work. *Underground* was written by Vladimir Makanin and discusses the illegal art scene in Russia during the late 1960's into the 1980's under the regime of Leonid Brezhnev. He sketches a picture of the situation during that time, stating how Brezhnev's repressive regime led to artists not even attempting to publicize their work anymore. These underground artists lived as strays, but were regarded as heroes by the entirety of the art scene, especially by the 'uppergrounders', whose work was allowed to be made public by conforming to the many restrictions imposed by the Russian government. At this point, another performer steps forward, again raising a book in the air, while having several others pressed to her chest. Presenting title after title, she introduces the work and the writer and tells us what conviction they had received from the Russian government, such as exile and revoked citizenship. The performer concludes every short list of facts about a work with the verdict: forbidden.

A notable shift from this astute spewing of short pieces of information occurs when a third performer approaches centre stage and tells to the audience that they had an interview with a Russian underground artist who has lived in the Netherlands for the last 20 years. The performer switches accent to an almost believable Russian-Dutch blend, and represents the statements of the underground artist as they could have been made during the conversation they had with him. These statements again paint a picture of what it must have been like to work and live within the art scene under the repressive regime at the time. Artists would often come together and exchange photocopies of written work that they would have to read and destroy to prevent the KGB from finding out.

In this first scene, the audience is introduced to various materials that are the starting point for the associative exploration to follow. First of all, there is a direct connection made between the performance title and the first work to be discussed, *Underground*. The statements within this book about the repressive regime are being confirmed by the second performer, who introduces the audience to a list of Russian works during the same time period that were all forbidden. Secondly, the performer representing the conversation with the underground artist in the Netherlands introduces us with more direct material 'from the field'. The different ways in which this material is introduced sets the stage for the exploration to come. In this scene, we can already identify the three different forms described above: A sole performer introducing the knowledge he has acquired, and doing so in address to the audience, a second performer interruptedly supplementing the argument of the first, and a third performer representing the material they have directly encountered themselves. The function of these three forms within this scene is to set the frame and paint the

picture of the topic within this performance: censorship and underground artists in Russia during the 1970's and 80'.



Image 1: Performer introducing *Underground* by Makanin



Image 2: Female performer interrupting, with changing of clothes by other performers



Image 3: Performer representing underground Russian artist telling about illegal work distributed as photocopies

3.2.2 The fragmentary setting

This first scene takes roughly six minutes and within this time employs three different theatrical forms: an inclusive introduction, an interruption and a representation. Though the central position of the first performer where he begins introducing *Underground* and the topic of the performance appears at first hand to be somewhat of a lecture, its position within the scene prevents it from becoming so. The setting of the thrift shop provides the audience with many stimuli. All different shapes and colours of couches can be seen, as well as cupboards, tables and other furniture, and even various accessories, such as all manners of plants and lamps, bookstands, telephones and discarded computers. This non-educational setting helps in preventing the introduction becoming like a lecture. Supplementing the stimuli and ordered messiness of the thrift shop are the other performers, who though situated at the sides and the back of the room, are clearly visible and draw attention when they move furniture and accessories around, as well as start to change clothes themselves, just as the performer speaking is. This aspect of simultaneity within the scene, found in both the setting of the thrift shop as well as the actions of the performers, prevent the central position of the first performer to become the sole centre of attention. This scene's use of setting and performers steers it specifically away from becoming an orderly unity. Add to this the three different theatrical forms within the one scene and the scene can be understood as organized and supplementing fragments.



Image 4: Thrift shop with performers, seated at the front the first row of spectators

3.2.3 In the fragmented mouldy cellars of Moscow

After the fragmentary character of the first scene introduces both the topic of the performance as well as the manner in which the performance will engage with the material through three theatrical

forms, the transition towards the second scene occurs. The first performer retakes centre stage and continues his introduction, summarizing the information presented by all three performers. A blackout follows. With the thrift shop darkened the audience notices several smaller candles having been lit. The sound of a typewriter can be heard coming from the back of the stage. After a short moment, a small lamp is switched on, set atop a desk where a performer is writing on a typewriter. Then he raises his head looking startled and listens for a moment, before continuing on with his work. His lamp switches off, and another switches on. We are now presented with another setting, one of the other performers slouching in a chair, downing a glass of vodka. Again, the light switches off and another switches on presenting us with yet another setting. This switching on and off of lights keeps presenting us with small barely lit settings, until we return back to the first performer at the typewriter, finishing his writing and folding the document into a letter. His light switches off and another at the front of the stage switches on. We observe a performer sitting on one of the couches, in front of him a small wooden table with various little jars and pots on it. He is polishing them, with slow movements, yet little attention to detail. The performer appears calm, like a man who has time to kill. Another performer approaches this setting and calls 'Vladimir' from the dark. The performer sitting shoots upright, listening and replying with a questioning yes. Then he moves to turn on the radio and the audience hears a Russian pop-rock song. While the song is playing, the first performer steps out of the dark and into the setting, seating himself next to the second performer and handing him the letter. The second performer opens it and reads it in a glancing manner, then hastily grabs his writing materials and starts copying. The first performer leaves, while the second continues copying and the switching on and off of lights continues. This rhythm of the scene is disrupted when a telephone, situated at the front of the setting clearly visible to the audience, starts to ring. All performers direct their attention to the telephone, and at this point several of the separate lights are on, illuminating all performers barely. One of the performers slowly approaches the phone and with a slight shrug towards the others indicates that he does not know what the telephone call might be about. He picks up the phone and without saying anything listens. He grows increasingly shaken, unto the point where he is visibly shaking, and puts the phone down. Even before the performer starts to place the horn down, the other performers started a bustle of action, making slight hurried noises while they are gathering their documents and copies. They gather at the centre of the setting, one of the performers carrying a tin cooking pot, and they dispose of their documents and copies by setting them on fire and dropping them into the pot. One of the performers starts to recite the burning poem in his hand. The poem tells of a butterfly's fragile life and sudden disappearance. Juggling the piece of paper as to not burn his hand, the performer continues reciting the poem until he is physically unable to do so and drops the smouldering last fragment of the poem into the pot. After a short silence, where all performers but one gaze down into the pot where the poem about

the butterfly is disappearing, one performer breaks the silence. 'Isn't this just a sweet little poem about a butterfly?'. The other performers look at him, before returning their gaze to the pot. Another performer breaks the silence and asks: 'Is this really underground?'. Slowly the performers engage into a discussion about the poem's supposed underground qualities.



Image 5: One light barely presenting a setting of two performers, reading and copying illegal work

Before we move on to this discussion, I first want to pay attention to this scene's setting. Where the first scene's theatrical forms were employed to introduce us to the topic of the performance, this second scene can be understood as a representation of the setting in Russia described earlier. With the picture painted in the first scene, the second scene presents the audience with a fictive world, where the performers turn into the Russian underground artist that exchange their work in secluded environments. These secluded narrow spaces are given form within the thrift shop by the second hand furniture and most importantly by the restricted use of lighting. Every secluded 'household' in this scene has only one lamp that shines just barely enough to illuminate the performer and his setting. This use of lighting also provides the setting with very narrow boundaries. These fictive rooms only exist in as far as the dimmed lighting will go. By this use of lighting creating a fictive world it also divides the entirety of the room into small fragments. No light is bright enough to connect with any of the other lights in this setting, and no more than two lights are on at any given moment. At the start of this scene, the switching on and off of the lights clearly marks separate areas and activities within the setting of the stage.

Within this scene, we can observe the media rhythm preferred by hyper attention. The audience is presented with small fragments of limited information that they are only allowed to engage with in a glance, before the switching on and off of lights steers the attention away to a new setting with fresh new stimuli. This repeated pattern creates within the scene a small rhythm where the audience comes to expect a new setting to be presented any moment. Here we can observe how

this scene employs a slow and long intensification of the intensity of the scene. In the beginning the audience is literally left in the dark about what is going, and slowly the fictive representation becomes clear. The startled reactions of the performers supplement the intensification, providing the scene with a sense of danger to come. The telephone call becomes the harbinger that accelerates the intensification into the burning of the poems. In this use of intensification combined with the separate fragments the scene consists of, the rhythm of this scene's theatrical form complies with the preference for high levels of stimulation of hyper attention.

3.2.4 What would it have been like?

At this point in the analysis, I want to return to the transition between the first and second scene. Though media rhythm can be observed within scenes, of much greater interest for me is how media rhythm can be observed in the way a performance's scenes are organized in its dramaturgy.

As noted before, the end of the first scene is indicated by a blackout and from this blackout the second scene of representing the underground Russian artists begins. There is a clear cut between the first and the second scene, established through the use of the blackout. This is supplemented by the use of voice by the first performer in the first scene, who has the last words before the blackout. Like a host or a circus ringleader, the performer declares that the 'uppergrounders' could sleep soundly at night for they knew the artistic morals were held high by the underground artists working secluded somewhere in Moscow. The rise of his voice draws our attention to the location of Moscow (also the last word before the blackout), and followed by the blackout it becomes clear that the following scene is a portrayal of what the performers described in the first scene. Underlying the second scene appears to be the question what would it have been like to live in such a time. Though the connection between the two scenes is clear, within this clarity becomes apparent how separated the two scenes are from each other in form. It is not an organic flowing into one another one can expect from a dramatic performance, but rather a clear associative connection between two distinct fragments.

3.2.5 No rhythm for in-depth discussions

Here I return to the discussion at the end of the second scene where I want to examine the transition between the second and the third scene. After the poem about the butterfly has been burned up in the pot, the performers in an explorative manner, trying to grasp the question at hand, start to discuss the 'underground' value of the poem and what aspects or references within this poem would contribute to its underground character. At a certain point within this discussion, interrupting but not disrupting the discussion, a performer calls out for the lights of the room to be turned back on.

Noting this action, but not being distracted by it, the performer currently bringing in a new argument for why this poem can be considered underground continues the discussion. When the white TL-lights of the thrift shop flicker back on, all representative qualities of the previous scene become lost, the clothing of the performers and the smouldering pot being the only remaining fragments of the fictive representation of the Russian artists. The performer finishes her argument, and while the other performers ponder about her statement, one of them proclaims loudly that he thinks this poem is fantastic.

The fluent transition, both in content and form nevertheless marks a clear distinction between the second and the third scene. The switching on of the light and the performer voicing his appreciation of the poem are clear indicators that we are no longer engaging with a representation but instead have followed an associative connection between the discussed material (the poem) and the questions it gives rise to within the performance. This transition within the performance illustrates to the audience an associative exploring of material and provides the performance with a fragmentary character because it does not neatly round up subjects or topics, but jumps along wherever a new question or stimulus arises.

This manner of associative exploration entails a specific use of decrescence. Where above I argued that the fictive representation of the scene employs a slow and long intensification of the scene, the transition between the second scene and the third employs a swift decrescence. The burning of the poems can be understood as the crux of the scene's rhythm. The intensification accelerated to this action. There, the rhythm stagnates when the burning poem is being recited, like the performance slowing down to the speed of the burning paper. After the short silence during which the documents are burning that provides a first small sense of decrescence because the documents are disappearing, the question about the poem's sweetness shatters the slow decrescence of the scene and accelerates it. The second following question whether the poem is underground brings the decrescence of the scene to its swift end and initiates a new intensification in the form of a discussion. In this sense we can understand how this associative exploration within the performance's dramaturgy gives rise to a rhythm of performance that strays away from in-depth discussions and close readings of material by not providing the scene with the time for an equally long decrescence as intensification and instead prefers to follow the high levels of stimulation where they arise. In other words, the rhythm in dramaturgy resembles the media rhythm described previously.

3.2.6 Duration and rhythm

The last aspect I wish to discuss in relation to the fragmentary character of the performance is the scene duration. The duration of the first scene is between 6-7 minutes, and the second scene 7-8 minutes. These somewhat short and compact scenes can be understood as a result of the associative exploration that follows along with a new topic when it arises. We can also understand it as an applied dramaturgical strategy. Not only are the first two scenes of compact duration, the first hour of the performance (the entire performance takes one and a half hour) consist out of these shorter scenes – most of which only last between 1 and 3 minutes – that use all different kinds of forms, ranging from fictive representation, to parody like re-enactments and reflective discussions.¹³ Repeatedly encountering the short fragments the scenes can be understood as results, as indicated in the scene transitions between the first three scenes, in a specific rhythm in the performance of rapid decrease. For *Jandergrouwnd* this rhythm consists of short fragments with large differences in intensities between the fragments, and in this form complies with the hyper attention of the user-spectator.

3.2.7 The rhythm of associative exploration

The dramaturgical concept of research on stage and the associative exploration it exhibits on stage provides the performance with its fragmentary character. This associative exploration leads to a specific dramaturgy consisting of more compact scenes functioning as separate fragments within the topic and shifting intensities with rapid decrease. Through the reappearance of this specific scene format, a rhythm emerges that resembles media rhythm in its shorter amount of time spent on any piece of information and the associative following of new stimuli where they arise.

3.3 Disavowing media rhythm

In the discussion about the concept of rhythm as used by Shepherd I paid attention to the possibility that Shepherd points out for a spectator to open up to the rhythm of the performance that is different from the rhythm of his everyday life. Now that in the above analysis I argued how the fragmentary character of the performance results in a complying rhythm of performance to the media rhythm of the media influenced spectator, I want to pay more attention to how *Jandergrouwnd* can steer the audience's rhythm away from the rhythm of their daily lives and open up the possibility for the performance rhythm. So how does *Jandergrouwnd* do this?

¹³ For a full list of scenes and duration, see the Attachment.

One hour into the performance, the last of the shorter scenes ends with a hard cut. This scene presented a parody-like representation of an actual prosecution of underground artist Andrei Amalrik ending with an overly dramatic video close-up of the performer's face, enlarging in extreme measures the anger and despair of the prosecuted. The hard cut here comes with a performer literally calling out 'Cut!' and the performer playing the prosecuted standing up from his seat and saying 'Nailed it' while walking away from the camera. A clear distinction between the two scenes and another illustration of the rapid decrease associated with media rhythm. The scene that follows is the only one whose duration far exceeds the 5-10 minute mark of the earlier scenes and last about 30 minutes. Already in this observation becomes clear how this scene would not comply with the rhythm that was established earlier in the performance. Therefore, here I would like to examine the rhythm as we can observe it within the scene, in an attempt to find a resemblance to media rhythm despite its long duration. To do that, I look more closely at the use of interruptions within the scene and how these lead to fragmentation. Then I argue that though the interruptions provide the scene with fragments and new stimuli, this scene's use of interruptions does not resemble media rhythm. Another aspect of the scene I take a closer look at is its intensities. In shifting intensities of a scene a rhythm can be observed, but within the fluent use of intensities within this scene there is no resemblance to media rhythm. From the analyses of these two aspects within the scene, it becomes clear how the use of media rhythm in this scene opens up the performance rhythm of the audience for the final scene.

3.3.1 Arguing in repeated spikes

The subject of this scene is a return to the discussion posed in the third scene: what is underground? At the beginning of this scene, a female performer is elaborating on the previous scene where the audience witnessed in a parody representation the prosecution of Andrei Amalrik who was convicted for 'parasitism' while in actuality the Russian government did not approve of the supposedly anti-Russian plays he had written. She provides the audience with more information, such as the background of prosecutions based on 'parasitism' that the government used as an excuse. From this elaboration the scene fluently shifts its subject past punishment and labour camps to heralding Russian books and poets, such as Iosef Brodsky. It is when arriving at an elaboration of Brodsky's work that a discussion arises. The international fame and various awards Brodsky has acquired, ensures that he is no longer an underground artists according to several of the performers. What defines the underground has become the centre of discussion again.

As clear cut as the above description makes the subject appear to be, in this scene's setting nothing provides a clear cut answer. The form of the scene is as mentioned a flowing over from an

elaboration towards a discussion. When arriving at the topic of Brodsky's work the discussion starts with the exchanging of agreeing or disagreeing arguments. For example, one of the performers makes the statement that Brodsky is appreciated by all and can therefore be considered the 'everyman's undergrounder'. Though most performers agree, one of the performers interrupts by stating that though he agrees with Brodsky being all appreciated, he cannot be considered as being an undergrounder. The other performers roar their disagreement, almost out voicing the lone performer, but the lone performer is provided the opportunity to support his statement. Brodsky later on came to be an internationally acclaimed poet, and international acclaim cannot be considered as underground. The other performers softly agree. This small form within the scene – a statement, being countered, roaring disagreement and then room for elaboration – is a repeating form within the discussion of this scene. Here, the use of intensification and decrease differs from the first section of the performance. Rather than having a long period of intensification through the use of fragments, this scene employs a rapid intensification in the roaring disagreement and a short decrease in the soft agreeing after the elaboration on the statement. The discussion therefore develops in spikes. The performers follow the line of discussion in what appears to be an associative manner, discussing a new aspect of what can be considered as underground or not at the moment it is encountered within the discussion. When an associative finding leads to the disagreement of others, the discussion erupts in a spike of action – rapid intensification – in voices and body language that roar disagreement, that quickly subsides to provide room for elaboration (decrease).

3.3.2 Interrupting supplementary and argumentative

In the above the word interruption has already been briefly mentioned. The scene makes use of interruption in two ways: supplementary and argumentative.

In the beginning of the scene, where the female performer is elaborating on the prosecution, interruption is applied in a supplementary manner, when for example one of the performers jumps in to explain in little more detail what 'parasitism' means. This interruption provides the audience with needed information to better understand what is being discussed and provides the female performer the tools to continue her elaboration, by expanding on how 'parasitism' is linked to the prosecution. As was the case in the first scene where the subject of performance was being introduced, this supplementary way of interruption disrupts what would otherwise be a sole performer spewing information and provides the setting with new stimuli and shifts of attention for the audience.

Another way in which interruptions function supplementary within this scene is in the use of illustrative material. This varies from a performer holding up the book being discussed, to a performer illustrating mental torture or a reciting of a poem being broadcasted over the speakers.

Though the holding up of a book is only a small stimulus for the audience, it does enrich the setting and shifts attention between performer speaking and performer holding the book, without disturbing the topic being discussed. The other examples are much larger shifts in attention in that they physically disrupt the performer speaking. For example, when one of the performers shouts and stamps while singing a Russian song in the ears of another performer, he makes it impossible for the other performer to make himself heard. At the same time, he is illustrating exactly what is being discussed: the mental torture of the prosecuted by using extremely loud songs making communication between the prosecuted impossible. The broadcasted reciting of a poem functions in the same way. The performer who is reciting a poem by Iosef Brodsky in Dutch is being interrupted by the audio recording of that same poem in Russian that was suddenly started by one of the other performers. These supplementary illustrative interruptions provide the scene with various stimuli that shift the attention within the scene without disrupting the flow of the topics discussed and in this sense, the interruptions comply with the rhythm preferred by hyper attention.

The above interruptions all apply to the beginning elaborating part of the scene, which takes about 8 minutes. The argumentative interruptions apply to the remaining 22 minutes of this scene and occur during the discussion on what defines underground. The above repeated form discussed – a statement, being countered, roaring disagreement and then room for elaboration – is an example of this use of argumentative interruption. Through voice and body performers interrupt one another when they agree or disagree with the statement being made at the moment. Like the supplementary use of interruptions, these as well provide the scene with stimuli that shift attention. The key difference with the supplementary interruption here is that the argumentative interruption is repeated much more often. During the 22 minutes of this section of the scene, various arguments are being introduced, such as underground being a measure that is determined based on the number of convictions of the artist, underground can only occur when it is forbidden and even bold claims like repression makes a good underground artist and is a ‘cool’ subject for art. All these arguments are being treated in the same form mentioned above, and in that sense can be considered to produce a steady rhythm of rapid intensification followed by a short decrease.

The arguments are all engaged with in a superficial manner. Though the form provides room for elaboration, most of the time even these elaboration remain on a superficial level. For example, noting how underground artists are not interested in being publicised is being associatively compared with performing without an audience. Without delving deeply into the consequences of performing without an audience, all manners of public relations and funding are being mentioned that need to disappear within the work of subsidized theatre makers to be considered as underground. The performers never bring their arguments home, they never round out their

argumentation. This is where the scene's use of short decrecence never provides room for a clear answer to the question what underground is.

In this scene, I discussed how argumentative interruption provides stimuli in a repeated form that can be considered as producing a steady rhythm. At the same time the arguments being discussed are only done so superficially, refraining from delving deeply into any argument. These aspects of this scene appear to comply with the hyper attention related to media rhythm in superficial engagement and short amount of time spent on one topic. However, the effect that these aspects of the scene have point towards the opposite. Instead of being provided fresh stimuli to keep the attention of the audience, this scene's form wears the audience down.

3.3.3 Elaboration, discussion, hammered philosophy

To illustrate how the above discussed form of the scene wears the audience down instead of complies with the hyper attention of the audience, I take a closer look here at the overarching intensities of the discussion section of the scene.

Where in the difference between the first and the second scene we could observe a clear distinction between the introducing of the topic and the fictive representation of the underground artists, the use of intensities in the long scene does not provide the scene with distinct fragments or sections that break up the rhythm of the performance. In the first hour of the performance, the audience was presented with all manner of fragments with all their own intensities, allowing the audience to engage with different uses of tension and directing of attention. In the 30 minutes scene, the use of intensities is much more fluent.

Beginning with the elaboration, the scene makes a return to the form of the introducing scene at the beginning of the performance. In a clear way a topic is being exhibited and the use of interruption ensures little shifts in attention that makes the elaborating section refrain from becoming one performer spewing information. There we observe a fluent shift towards the beginning of the discussion section of the scene, where a comment about Brodsky's work instigates the discussion on defining underground. Here the intensity becomes a little more tense and shifting, rapid intensification arising whenever a roaring disagreement occurs, but after that a short decrecence turns the scene to a calmer back and forth of associative arguments. Throughout the scene we can observe a slow overarching intensification, the discussion becoming more heated, arguments turning more personal and the spikes of tension become more intense. From here the scene fluently falls back to a calmer atmosphere. After a personal outburst from one of the performers (which we can consider as the peak of intensification within this scene), another takes centre stage and appears to want to summarize the discussion about freedom. However, through

some stuttering, he ends up telling about the free fall by Felix Baumgartner, jumping out of a plane from 120,000 feet. His calm use of voice and the use of his body language almost seem to disregard the personal outburst from having occurred, illustrating a short decrease of the action. During this performer speaking, the first fluent changes of the lighting can be observed and with that starts a slower decrease of the scene, the personal outburst having been the long awaited crux. The TL-lights are being slowly replaced by a cold blue light from behind the audience, and when the change of lighting is complete, most of the back of the room is dark and all furniture and the performers are lit from the front by the cold blue light. A short time after the change in lighting occurs, the audience begins to hear a soft buzzing. When this noise rises in volume it remains unclear what this noise is, but a recurring buzzing drill of a machine starts to swell until the moment that it overpowers the performers and they can no longer be heard.

During the change in lighting and sound the performers have fluently dropped the arguments and spread out throughout the room, holding furniture to stand upright and appearing hammered from the vodka shots they have been drinking during the discussion. Slightly shaking due to their stupor, the performers appear to be speaking lines from poems or other works discussed within the performance, all having a philosophical flair to them and seemingly instigating action and glorifying an unmentioned artist. The cold lighting along with their drunken body language strips the performers from any argumentative strength however and rather seems to portray a delusional ritualised brainstorm amongst artists and philosophers. Here the decrease from the heated discussion picks up in an intensification of a different tension, the feeling something is about to erupt. The performers get up on the furniture and scream their lines towards the audience, being overpowered by the loud buzzing drill from the speakers.

3.3.4 Fluent rhythm of slow intensification and decrease

In the above description of the latter 22 minutes of the scene, we can observe a fluent transition between the different intensities within the scene. Not only are these transitions fluent, they also progress rather slow, especially when compared to the swift and dynamic transitions between the shorter fragmented scenes of the first section of the performance. I argue that the duration of this scene combined with the slow progression and the fluent transition in intensity withhold the scene from becoming fragmented. Only in appearance through the use of interruption does the scene appear to be fragmented, but the repeated use of the argumentative interruptions develops to become a norm or steady rhythm within the performance that exactly through its continued repetition does not provide the scene with new stimuli. The scene is understood as being one near to endlessly long discussion between associative arguments on what can be considered underground,

without providing the audience with any clear answers. The scene makes use of a 25 minutes long slow intensification, followed by a shorter but not rapid 5 minutes of decrease.

The result is that the scene wears the audience down. Once a certain threshold is reached, the repeated form of the discussion despite the fluent change in intensity makes the discussion wear the audience down by not providing new stimuli. The intensification of a scene builds the attention up to a certain point where it delivers its crux. The hyper attention of the media influenced spectator expects a faster intensification with a rapid decrease, two things that this scene does not supply. The audience comes to wish for either an end of this discussion or a moving beyond this unresolved question. Though the scene makes use of interruptions, the use of intensification and decrease that the 30 minute duration and the repeated argumentative interruptions employ ensures that the scene's rhythm does not resemble media rhythm.

3.3.5 Opening up to performance rhythm

Now that I have illustrated how the 30 minute scene does not resemble media rhythm, I wish to argue how exactly this disavowing of the media rhythm results in the audience opening up to the rhythm of the performance. I do so by one last analysis of the last scene of the performance.

3.3.6 Intimacy and relief

The buzzing drill suddenly stops, the cold blue light is turned off and the TL-lights are being turned back on. One of the performers approaches from the back of the room carrying clothes and grabs a chair in the centre of the stage. He begins to tell a story from the perspective of the underground Russian in the Netherlands. He tells the audience about his home back in Russia, where he lived with eight other families, amongst them writers and philosophers. They would gather and discuss art and literature – though no politics – while enjoying one port but mostly tea. No drugs at all. Having recently returned to Russia, he tells us how the situation does not seem to have changed or even worsened. The atmosphere in Russia remains as suspicious and unpleasant as before and he was fearful. Capitalism reigns and if you have no money, you cannot get anything done.

The form in which this subject is exhibited is very calm and intimate. The performer using a Russian-Dutch blend of sentences and a slight accent represents the underground artist telling his story to the audience personally. Referring back to Ben Chaim, though this scene employs quite a high awareness of fictionality, for we know the performer is not the Russian underground artist he is representing, the scene does employ a high measure of humanization. This is established in contrast with the end of the previous scene. The buzzing drill and the performers shaking on top of furniture have a high but dubious awareness of fictionality where it becomes unclear whether they are drunk

or not. Despite the awareness of fictionality, the intensification of the end through the use of sound and the screaming of the performers ensure a low measure of humanization, being unable to understand the scene as representing something real that one can sympathize with.

The use of intensification and decrecence that wears the audience down in the previous scene is also in contrast with the use of intensification and decrecence in the last scene. The last scene discusses two subjects: the pleasant life with the other families and his return to Russia. The beginning of this scene can be considered as the much needed decrecence of the end of the previous scene. The audience is provided a moment to gather themselves. His return to Russia sets in a new, slow and small intensification. Combined with the high measure of humanization, the recounting of the terrible situation in Russia is the only scene within the performance that employs intimacy and direct inclusion into the performance.¹⁴ Though the audience wishes for the Russian artist to end his story on a hopeful note, his story ends with him telling about his hope beyond hope, that in Russia there only remains deaths by communism and that even the underground artists, working secluded in Moscow, cannot change that. This ending of the scene entails a small and short decrecence, and its high measure of humanization portrays this scene as the reality. Where the previous scene and the first hour of the performance might be considered as how we imagine the Russian underground artists to be, drugged out and all philosophising and glorifying in dark basements, the last scene provides as with a glimpse of the reality of the underground artists. Through this contrast – in rhythm, content and measure of humanization – this message becomes clear. The contrast opens up the media rhythm of the media influenced spectator's daily life to take a moment to listen to this man's story, a story the hyper attention of the media influenced spectator would otherwise have not paid long enough attention to.

3.4 Complying and opening up

The analyses indicate how through looking at the use of intensification and decrecence we can examine the rhythm of both a performance's scene and its dramaturgy. To examine the rhythm of the dramaturgy, the analyses illustrate how an overarching reflection on the different uses of rhythm within the scenes brings this rhythm forth. The performance of *Jandergrouwnd* within this thesis indicates how a specific use of intensification and decrecence complies with the media rhythm of the media influenced spectator. Especially rapid decrecence of a scene's intensities complies with the media rhythm related to hyper attention that provides a constant stream of fresh stimuli and no room for in-depth exploration.

¹⁴ See here my earlier discussion in paragraph 2.2.3 on a 'low distance' use of awareness of fictionality and measure of humanization leading to an intimate personal relationship as discussed by Bennett.

The format of research on stage as employed in most of De Warme Winkel's work, and *Jandergrouwnd* specifically, complies with the media rhythm of the media influenced spectator through the associative exploration of the topic it entails that relates to the manner of engagement the spectator has familiarized with through hyper reading and hyper attention.

But what the example of *Jandergrouwnd* mostly illustrates is how a performance's dramaturgy can establish a rhythm that complies with media rhythm, providing the performance with the opportunity to disavow this rhythm. The endless discussion, by disavowing the media rhythm, opens up the audience to the rhythm of performance, exactly because they crave a change in rhythm they are no longer provided with. Within this openness to the rhythmic possibilities of the performance, *Jandergrouwnd* establishes the rhythm for the last scene where the audience can take the time to take in the non-glorified real story of the underground artist.

Now, the above analyses have restricted themselves to the examination of the dramaturgy's resemblance to media rhythm. Thereby, the analyses have illustrated how, to examine this resemblance, attention also needs to be paid to the resemblance to media fragmentation and the media influenced spectator's expectations. Though the analyses indicate how these latter two terms are interrelated with media rhythm, the analyses did not closely examine the resemblance of the dramaturgy to media fragmentation and media audience that are at play within *Jandergrouwnd*. Other media related aspects of the performance, such as the use of video and audio within the dramaturgy, and even less directly media related aspects, such as use of language and styles of acting, are left unspoken within this thesis, but are nevertheless important aspects of a performance's dramaturgy to be examined on their resemblance to qualities of mediatized communication. By limiting the analyses to the examination of media rhythm, I have however performed a close examination of the relationship between the rhythm familiarized within the media influenced spectator's brain and the rhythm of performance, illustrating that contemporary performance can comply to this rhythm, disavow this rhythm and open up the media rhythm of the media influenced spectator. The analyses illustrate how the awareness of the media rhythm of the audience opens up possibilities and challenges for theatre makers to deal with. From these analyses comes a question of positional awareness for theatre practitioners. How do I position my performance in relation to the media rhythm of today and tomorrow's media influenced spectator?

Positioning performance in relation to media influences

All manners of digital media are omnipresent within our contemporary societies. And with each progression, with each release of a new Apple product, more of the influential machines are being sold. Innovation and the increased ease of use, combined with the economic forces behind the commercial distribution of these products and the lifestyles they promote, ensure that media integration into our lives will not, if ever, cease to be. Therefore, the digital media will continue to influence our neurological pathways, whether negatively or positively, and an awareness of the changes these media make provides innovators in technology and theatre alike with the knowledge to tailor their media accordingly. Whether to ease the way of processing information, or exactly to challenge the established rigid behaviours.

By looking at the examples of Carr and Hayles, I was able to define common qualities of textual digital media that are relevant in the discussion around media influence on cognition. By making a translation of these qualities, I argued that the qualities of textual digital media Carr and Hayles discuss can be categorized within the three categories of fragmentation, rhythm and audience. These three terms used for the categories already refer back to aspects and elements of performances and performance analyses and thereby indicate parameters of aspects or elements where the resemblance of a performance to qualities of textual digital media can be observed. In the analyses of the performance *Jandergrouwnd* I followed the development of the rhythm within the dramaturgy exactly to illustrate to development of this rhythm in first complying with media rhythm, to then disavow this rhythm and open up the possibilities for performance rhythm.

The performance *Jandergrouwnd* serves as a fitting example of how a contemporary postdramatic performance can entail a dramaturgy that complies with the media rhythm and the hyper attention of the media influenced spectator through its fragmentary sequence of scenes and specific use of rapid decrease. At the same time, *Jandergrouwnd* illustrates how a contemporary postdramatic performance can also employ the media rhythm familiarized within the brains of the audience to open up a new performance rhythm that does not comply. The endless discussion, exactly through a fluent build-up of the scene in contrast to the explicit fragmentary character of the first hour of the performance, disavows the audience the comfort of the media rhythm and drives the audience to the point where they crave any shift in intensity, providing room and attention for the intimate story of the last scene.

Jandergrouwnd also illustrates that theatre as a medium has the ability to exhibit and break open the rigid structures and behaviours of the media influenced spectator that has come to prefer its media rhythm. Theatre does not only show its audience these structures and behaviours but has the ability to make them felt through empathetic parallelism. Because theatre can break open the

rigid behaviours, more research is needed that delves into other cases of contemporary postdramatic performances and performances outside the postdramatic subfield that expand on the analyses performed within this thesis. Though *Jandergrouwd* is very exemplary, the casus here can only be understood as a first explorative step of the possibilities of examining the intricate relationships between the cognitive effects of digital media that the audience member is engaged with near all his waking hours and the manner in which dramaturgies of contemporary performances resemble or relate to this changed manner of perceiving and processing information. As such, further research can focus on other digital media, such as social media and video streaming services like YouTube and Vimeo, as well as to other aspects of performance, such as more focus on the position of the audience within dramaturgy resembling the user, the resemblance of visuals in performance to cognitive effects of visuals within digital media, and a similar case for the cognitive effects of audio in digital media. More research within these topics as an extent of the overarching topic of resembling cognitive effects of mediatized communication within performance dramaturgy will examine in further detail and richness how a performance's dramaturgy can, by going beyond mere complying, break open and exhibit the sublime influences of digital media ever present in our daily lives.

Within the approach of this thesis in examining the resemblance of performance dramaturgy to qualities of mediatized communication, I have linked (in a manner similar to Comparative Media Studies) concepts of neurological research and digital media to performance and theatre studies. In the current environment, where the spectator of today and tomorrow will keep engaging with ever evolving digital media – and more importantly continue to be influenced by it – I believe the approach of this thesis in combining the fields of digital media, neuroscience and theatre studies is a good first explorative step that needs to be expanded on to better understand the close relationships between contemporary media influenced audiences and contemporary performance. Questions towards the function and relevance of theatre as a medium within the contemporary media enmeshed society arise when occupying oneself with this field of research. What does theatre as a specific medium contribute in relation to other digital media of everyday use? What is the value of theatre in the contemporary digital society?

Besides the approach where I combine different fields of research, this thesis also provides a translation between these fields to performance analysis. I believe that, though this translation has proven to be useful to more closely examine a dramaturgy's resemblance to media rhythm, this translation can be expanded upon more in-depth, both within the parameters of (media) fragmentation and (media) audience as only briefly discussed here, as well as in other yet to be defined categories that follow from examinations of other means of mediatized communication. What other qualities of mediatized communication are there to be defined, and what theories or perspectives from theatre studies can aid in translating these for performance analysis?

Most of all, my thesis provides a perspective on contemporary performances that highlights the relationships between contemporary performances and contemporary media. This perspective allows a positioning of a performance in relation to the subliminal influential media of everyday life. This thesis has argued through the example of *Jandergrouwnd* that media rhythm can be complied to and disavowed. But I believe that resemblance to qualities of mediatized communication does not necessarily have to be found within complying or disavowing. Rather I wish to pose the question of positioning. What does this performance's dramaturgy do with regards to the ways of perceiving and processing information cultivated by digital media? What effort does this performance's dramaturgy ask of the audience? And what are the consequences of this effort on the audience's stance towards the performance? Whether you are a theatre maker, a dramaturg or a theatre scholar, I believe that the questions that the perspective of this thesis gives rise to are very important in the contemporary theatre environment, which is only a small speck within the large media environment of all manners of increasingly digital stimuli. When technology is all around us, Internet at all times accessible and digital stimuli so easy and pleasant to use, and when our brains continue to be shaped to live efficiently within this environment, an awareness of the position that a theatre performance takes within this media influenced rich environment becomes a key concern. I hope that this thesis has aided in creating an awareness of the importance to examine the relationship between the media influenced spectator and contemporary performances and provides the reader with relevant questions to position the work he is observing in this media enmeshed society.

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Attachment

Following is a list of scene duration within the performance *Jandergrouwnd*. This list serves to illustrate in numbers and imagery how the dramaturgical strategy of scene duration provides the performance with a fragmentary character. This list is supplementing the argument made within the thesis. The images below each scene and its duration illustrate the scene.

Scene 1

Duration: 6 minutes



Image 6: Female performer interrupting.

Scene 2

Duration: 8 minutes



Image 7: One light barely presenting a setting of two performers, reading and copying illegal work.

Scene 3

Duration: 5 minutes



Image 8: Performer arguing underground qualities of the burned poem.

Scene 4

Duration: 1 minutes (elongated transition)



Image 9: Sirens while performers rush chaotically.

Scene 5

Duration: 2,5 minutes



Image 10: Live video streaming of an art bulletin parody, indicating what art is forbidden.

Scene 6

Duration: 2 minutes



Image 11: Video recording of backstage footage of Leonid Brezhnev. Subtitles: 'I can't see shit'.

Scene 7

Duration: 1 minute



Image 12: Live video streaming of praising Russians parody. Sticker on leg: 'USSR'.

Scene 8

Duration: 2 minutes



Image 13: Live video streaming of Russian communist ideals parody.

Scene 9

Duration: 4 minutes



Image 14: Live video streaming of Russian praising supporting the war effort.

Scene 10

Duration: 1 minute



Image 15: Live video streaming of Russian men referencing American culture.

Scene 11

Duration: 2 minutes



Image 16: Live video streaming of Russian underground party.

Scene 12

Duration: 2 minutes



Image 17: Recording of a speech by Brezhnev about housing Russian citizens. Subtitles: '...the relationship between men and animals has shifted', related to housing taming the individual.

Scene 13

Duration: 2 minutes



Image 18: Live video streaming of reaction on Brezhnev's speech.

Scene 14

Duration: 1 minutes



Image 19: Accompanied by rock music, live video streaming of power to the people.

Scene 15

Duration: 2 minutes



Image 20: Live video streaming of clown telling bad jokes, criticizing the Russian government.

Scene 16

Duration: 11 minutes

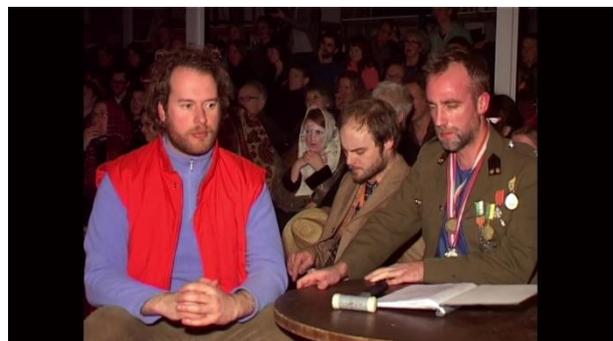


Image 21: Live video streaming of parody representation of prosecution Andrei Amalrik, interrupted by parody expert reflections.

Scene 17

Duration: 30 minutes



Image 22: Endless discussion drinking shots and 'smoking' pickles.

Scene 18

Duration: 5 minutes



Image 23: Sole performer representing underground artist, telling of the bad state of Russia today.