Cyclic repetition and transferred temporalities: Video installation as performative matrix

Dr Yuji Sone (Macquarie University)

This essay raises questions about mediated presence within performance studies, based on a research project’s nexus of theoretical investigations and practical exploration. I will elucidate the theoretical underpinnings for my recent video installation project, Cadences (7 May – 16 June 2009, Macquarie University Art Gallery).

Image 1, Two agents in Cadences (2009), Video installation, Performer: Ros Crisp, Photographed by Effy Alexakis

The exhibition project recomposed separate art components — video footage of two different dancers (Ros Crisp and Dean Walsh, performing for a video camera), recorded vocal performance (Ruarke Lewis’s reading of a poem by Nathaniel Tarn), and digital images of an installation work (Ruarke Lewis’s public art work) — in a new context, a video installation. The installation aimed to suggest a new way of conceiving artistic interdisciplinarity, focusing on the transference of live performance to mediated forms and the particular
temporal and textural repetitiveness of video installation. It aimed to generate a tension between video and
dance, between sound art and oral poetry, and between animation and digital photography. While video art —
looping video on a LCD monitor or through a data projector — was a closed system in the sense that it was
non-interactive, it permitted a ‘playing out’ of repetitive modes that resonated within the spectator,
highlighting the opposition between the live and the mediated. Similarly, digital effects operated between
the original and the ‘photoshopped’.

Image 2, Three agents in Cadences (2009), Video installation, Performer: Dean Walsh, Photographed by Effy Alexakis
This video installation project aimed to stress the interconnectedness of these divides. The digital flows of components in the installation context established their own pulses, which resonated or interfered with each other. The materiality of the immaterial (video, audio recordings, and photographs) was manifest through digital translation and a rhythm that was both cyclic and a pulsation or wave that inheres in media themselves. Part of the attraction of the digitised image or voice was predicated upon the power of the original performance. The spectator was presented with a multiple layering of experience: the pulse of digital media, the recognition of live forms that still bodied forth their own rhythms, and the visual and spatial matrix in which these were offered. The idea of presence and representation as interconnected in a repetitive video installation developed concurrently during this exhibition project. In this essay I will discuss this question of the interconnectedness of presence and representation in video installation, and the role of repetition, within the context of debates on performance and mediation in performance studies.

In recent years, there have been numerous studies on performance practices that actively utilise digital technology (Dodds 2004 [17], Carver and Beardon 2004 [11], Berghaus 2005 [6], Dixon 2007 [16], Causey 2006 [12], Chapple and Kattenbelt 2006 [13], Giannachi 2004 [19] and 2007 [20], Broardhurst and Machon 2006 [9], Giesekam 2007 [21], Kaye 2007 [27], Broadhurst 2007 [8]). Contemporary mediatised and digital performances are situated within the context of the 20th-century avant-garde, particularly performance art and experimental theatre and dance. Scholars and practitioners have developed expanded notions of theatre or dance through the innovative use of various digital technologies in theatre spaces. Technologies that have been brought into experimental performance include the Internet, digital video, and interactive or motion capture technologies, as well as robot engineering. These works tend to highlight multi-modal expressions and their mutual relationships in contemporary performance practices, rather than focusing on single elements, such as the body or texts. Mediatised performances are often discussed in terms of interactions of different art media, not merely the creating of a seamless mixture of varied art forms with the live performer’s body as the central focus. In this wider approach to performance, the transformative and affective nature of video installation works, which do not constitute ‘performance’ in the traditional sense of
the performing arts, has begun to be discussed. In this essay, I will elaborate and develop the discussion of video installation in terms of the interrelationship between video, installation, and performance. An underlying theoretical issue that I’ll explore from this perspective is to do with the relationship of performer and presence.

**Performer and performance**

The term ‘performance’ is very open-ended. The term has been used not only in the arts, but also in social sciences in relation to critical theories. Because of this wide usage of the term, discussion of what performance is can be very complex. Marvin Carlson, for example, analyses uses of the term outside of the arts in relation to anthropological, ethnographic, sociological, psychological, and linguistic approaches (1996) [10]. In a general sense, however, the term is associated with performing arts forms such as theatre and dance. For the purposes of this essay, I locate ‘performance’ not within the traditional performing arts, but in the context of performance art. I understand the term ‘performance art’ as a reference to art that encompasses any practices outside the traditional forms of theatre, dance, literature, and so on, following RoseLee Goldberg’s discussion of twentieth-century experimental art’s genesis. In her survey, Goldberg
suggests that ‘performance defies precise or easy definition beyond the simple declaration that it is live art by artists’ ([1979] 2001: 9) [23]. But does performance need to be performed by human artists, and does it need to be live?

In this context of performance art, performances of non-human agents can be considered, but complicated questions arise. Who is the performer? Where is ‘performance,’ as such, manifest? Performance theorist Philip Auslander, for example, discusses artistic machine performance, problematising a generally held human-centric view that a performer in art terms can only be a human who is able to react in real time (2006) [3]. Auslander exposes indeterminacies in the binary thinking in traditional performing arts between a human performer and a non-human performer. He discusses examples of performance art in which there would be no difference in general artistic intention whether tasks are conducted by a human agent or a robot agent. Auslander provocatively asks whether the actions of a human or a robot can be considered equally as art performances. In Auslander’s view, an autonomous artistic machine agent or a machine agency in an interactive installation can be regarded as ‘a live performer because it responds to its environment and make real-time decisions’ (Auslander 2006: 102, n24) [3].

For Auslander, autonomy and real-time responses are the two conditions for non-human agents to be regarded as performers. David Z. Saltz, on the other hand, highlights a structural aspect of technology-led interactive installation. Saltz distinguishes works of interactive installation from those of the performing arts. The latter is ‘the class of art forms in which one group of people, i.e., performers, perform live before a second group, i.e., an audience’ ([1997] 2003: 399) and in which ‘performers perform works’ (404, original emphasis) [32]. For Saltz, to engage with interactive installations is instead ‘to perform with the works’ and the interactive installation works only provide ‘interactive performance environments’ for participatory spectators ([1997] 2003: 405, original emphasis) [32].
Passive viewers of a non-interactive video installation in a gallery, however, would not be the same as Saltz’s participatory and conscious players of interactive installation environments. We need to ask, instead, if a non-interactive video installation could provide spectators with an affective environment nonetheless, and how this might be done. I suggest that the concept of ‘performance environment’ can be applied to discussion of video installation, where it operates with iterative effects. To discuss video installation in terms of performance, I will appropriate a traditional theatre term, mise-en-scène. This term helps us to see that a video installation can constitute a kind of transformative theatrical space. Indeed, Dutch cultural theorist and critic Mieke Bal uses mise-en-scène to illustrate the performative effects on viewers experiencing video installation works.

As an artistic practice, mise en scène is one of many techniques that engage the viewer in an aesthetic experience. As a concept, it refers to something more adequately indicated as a cultural practice. This practice involves us every day, but more acutely so in confrontation with situations that frame-freeze, so to speak, the mise en scène itself as a cultural moment in which routine is slowed down, self-awareness is increased, and satisfaction is gained from going outside ourselves. (Bal 2009: 178)
Performance theorist Nick Kaye identifies a similar reflexive quality in Krzysztof Wodiczko’s large-scale video projections onto cityscapes, and argues that, in the artist’s works, ‘the “pedestrian” becomes aware of their own performance in and of the built environment’ (2005: 279, original emphasis) [26]. This kind of reflective and reflexive effect on viewers in a particular artistic environment is the key to this notion of iterative performance. I’ll take this up shortly in relation to video installation that uses iterative effects. First, we will need to explore the meaning of presence in order to consider if a non-interactive programmed agent, that is to say, repetitive video, can be regarded as a performer. I will examine the effect of ‘mediated presence’ that video loops can generate in an installation environment.

**Presence**

Qualifying a long-standing debate within performance studies, I suggest image and voice of live performance that involves mediatised elements can be understood on the basis of the tension between absence and presence.

The discussion on performer’s presence has a long history in theatre and performance studies, and the debate continues to the present, dividing both scholars and practitioners. In the history of 20th century avant-garde and experimental performance, the issue of presence was debated in relation to theatrical representation. Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud set up two different performance strategies in critiquing representation. Brecht’s strategy was to alienate the audience by exposing the gap between the real presence of the actor and the character that the actor represents in order to criticize the illusionary aspect of bourgeois naturalistic theatre. This strategy was adopted by radical feminist performance artists of the 1990s, in order to highlight gaps between the body or presence of the female artist and the socially constructed idea of the feminine. Artaud, on the other hand, calls for an immediacy of the performer, a pure presence that exceeds
representation. Artaud attacks language and representation themselves, observing that, in the Western theatre of his time, theatre was dominated by the text. Artaud seeks a theatre outside the influence of words, using oral explorations such as incantation or glossolalia, to reveal the actor’s force and energy. Artaud’s idea of highlighting the actor’s presence to critique representation was taken up by Jerzy Grotowski in the late 1960s, privileging a pure state of the self and grounding the self in physical presence. Eugenio Barba, too, analyses the physical techniques of Eastern theatre traditions, through which he believes the performer’s direct presence is generated. Erika Fischer-Lichte uses the term ‘the radical concept of presence’ (2008: 99, original emphasis) to describe this kind of energetically embodied presence [18]. Michael Vanden Heuvel summarises this relationship between presence, physicality, and performer: ‘the disciplined performing body is exhibited as the empowered source whose physical aura can capture and guarantee Presence [with a capital ‘P’] and once again recuperate reality in all its spatial, temporal, and physical fullness’ (quoted in Shepherd and Wallis 2004: 233) [34]. So, presence in the sense of the Artaudian legacy is a power emanating from the body, as an aura that approaches the ‘real’.

With reference to Jacques Derrida’s critique of the metaphysics of presence, Auslander, on the other hand, critiques theories and practices of Brecht, Grotowski, and Stanislavski for their dependence on ideas of the
unified self and its presence (1997) [1]. Theatre theorist Chantal Pontbriand, writing in the early 1980s, further complicates these debates. Pontbriand argues for a new concept of presence and situation that presents ‘a here/now which has no other referent except itself’ (1982: 157) [29], even when it is reproduced through mediation. This point – that presence is a ‘here-and-now’ that has no referent outside itself, and does not need to be live, or even human – is relevant to my question of the kind of presence, and performance, that might be available in a video installation. This way of regarding presence remains contentious, as it goes the heart of debates on performance, representation, and mediation.

Before I develop this point, I will return for a moment to the idea of ‘aura’ as a special and uniquely human quality. Presence in performance studies has also been discussed with terms concerned with the idea of the performer’s ‘aura’, such as ‘charisma’, ‘radiance’, ‘magnetism’ or ‘it’ to name a few. Joseph Roach’s recent book titled *it*, for example, seeks to explain a certain attractive and commanding quality of what he calls ‘abnormally interesting people’ (2007: 4) [31]. The so-called ‘It-Effect’ (Roach 2007: 3) [31] emerges when cultural fantasy and compelling figures meet through inflated economies of appreciation and reception. Performance historian and theorist Jane Goodall explores the power of the actor’s presence as a ‘dialogue’ between ‘the performing arts and the energy sciences’, showing that metaphoric terms from science have often been used to explain compelling performers’ personas, such as the actor’s ‘magnetism’ and ‘electricity’ on the stage (2008: 23) [24].

Those who argue for the singularity of the performer’s presence often refer to Walter Benjamin as the guardian of the performer’s aura. Steve Dixon, a performance theorist who argues for digital performance, however, points out that, while Benjamin critiques the dilution of aura in an artwork that had been mechanical reproduced, ‘[Benjamin also] describes how a different aura is manifest, a permanent imprint from the ghostly representation’ (2007: 117, original emphasis) [16]. Pontbriand, drawing also Benjamin’s thesis, argues that ‘[t]he repetition which characterizes reproduction actualizes, restores its presence, its
present time’ (1982: 157) [29]. Indeed, other quotes of Benjamin’s suggest the possibility of the emergence of a different kind of aura under mechanical reproduction, not its destruction. Benjamin argues that ‘technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself’ ([1973] 1992: 214); ‘[a]nd in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or the listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced’ (215) [5]. Media theorist Samuel Weber develops this secondary effect of aura further. He states that:

‘auratic flashes and shadows that are not just produced and reproduced by the media but which are themselves the media, since they come to pass in places that are literally inter-mediary, in the interstices of a process of reproduction and of recording – Aufnahme – that is above all a mass movement of collection and dispersion, of banding together and of disbanding. In this movement, different elements collide with and glance off one another’ (Weber 1996: 106, original emphasis) [36].

Dixon also supports this idea of a different aura by referring to Roland Barthes, who suggests the photograph as a live phenomenon, though paradoxically generating a sense of the past and the dead (2007: 118-9) [16].
Video and audio recordings, in the same way as the photograph, contain a double movement between the live and the mediatised, disappearance and memory. And a recorded image or voice can create a particular real-time effect for the viewer. Moreover, digital manipulation of the recorded adds another layer of meaning and differentiation, the opposition between the original and the artificially modified. Theatre theorist Herbert Blau articulates this relationship between the original and the mediatised, in saying ‘the dematerialized figures are unthinkable without the bodily presence presumably vanished, nothing occurring in cyberspace that isn’t contingent on that which, seemingly, it made obsolete’ (2007: 544) [7]. The mediated image and voice perform extra-temporally through their residues, echoes, and traces. And these re-performances may reinfuse the originals. Recent technology allows the subtle alteration of the originally recorded, which, in turn, may paradoxically evoke the original past more vividly.

Responding to cultural determinants in discussion of auratic effects and with recognition of the way mediatised reproductions complicate what is ‘original’ and what is reproduced, what is considered real and what is not, Auslander has added the term ‘liveness’ to debates on presence, suggesting a new understanding of ‘live’ performance (1999) [2]. Auslander’s core argument is that the concept of live performance is highly culturally contingent. He challenges the implicit privileging over the live presence against the non-live.

Taking cues from Auslander, recent studies on digital mediation in performance speculate on the interrelationship between the body and technology in an increasingly mediatised environment. Interactions between two types of reality – the mediated and the physical – are essential elements in media-based performances. A mediatised performance engages with virtual ‘bodies’ through technological mediation. In that sense, media-based performance evokes new aspects of performance ‘presence’, such as telepresence. Telepresence usually describes a person experiencing two distant places at once through a digital communication network. Eduardo Kac, internationally known for his interactive Internet installations and bio art, illustrates that ‘[t]elecommunications and robotics can bring together the transmission and reception of
motion-control signals with audiovisual, haptic, and force feedback’ and ‘[t]elepresence virtualizes what in actuality has physical, tangible existence’ (2005: 155) [25]. The coupling of robotics with tele-conference technologies in performance makes this aspect of telepresence most apparent. Alison McMahan describes another form of telepresence as ‘“We are together,” in which two or more communicators are transported to a common space, such as in immersive video conferencing’ (2003: 77) [28].

Although this broadening of ideas of presence is necessary for mediatised performance, a discussion of presence in video installation, however, also needs a reconsideration of what performance is, a different theoretical approach to mediated presence that allows for the effects of recorded media. Often, performance studies scholars treat video art as a historical footnote, such as the 1960s and ’70s video work of artist Bruce Nauman, or as a specific genre of contemporary filmic art such as ‘video dance’. However, it is informative to have a closer look at the interconnections between video, installation, and performance. Kac provides a useful point for shifting our perspective on mediatised presence. He states that ‘[u]nder specific circumstances digital or synthetic worlds may become “equivalent” to tangible realities, since both telepresence and virtual reality technologies can project human performance beyond its ordinary, immediate reach’ (2005: 156) [25]. Digital images are formed on a screen without a referent. Kac discusses artworks
that utilise these digital effects, calling them ‘immaterial art’: ‘Immaterial art does not mean art without any physical substances; rather, it signifies the exploration of televirtual domains and the foregrounding of the participant’s experience’ (Kac 2005: 156) [25]. In the following sections, I will examine video installation as a kind of ‘immaterial art’, focusing on the viewer’s reception in a localised, specific temporality and spatiality.

Repetition and mediated presence

Firstly, it is necessary to be reminded of the broader notion of performance that historically forms the foundation for performance studies. The ideas of sociologist Erving Goffman have shaped central concepts in performance studies. Goffman illustrates that '[a] "performance" may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants' ([1959] 2003: 106) [22]. For Richard Schechner, regarded as one of the founders of performance studies, a performance 'takes place as action, interaction, and relation... Performance isn’t "in" anything, but "between"' (2006: 30) [33]. So, we can see performance as an influencing relation, as a relational ‘in between’ rather than a production. Secondly, it is also important to realise that the term 'performance' is from the Old French word parfournir - par ('thoroughly') plus fournir ('to furnish'). It refers to a sense of 'bringing to completion' or 'accomplishing' (OED Online). It does not specifically designate human actions. On this point, Pontbriand usefully argues for the essential connection between mediation as a process of change and performance: in this sense, '[m]ediation is essentially transformation, or displacement of energy and succession of intensities. It is an inscription in present time: performance actualizes material within present time.’ (1982: 157) [29]. This idea of mediation as to do with translation, transformation, and process complements an understanding of performance as relational and contingent, as simply ‘something that happens’ in a given socio-temporal situation.
From this point of view, it is possible to develop an idea of a ‘performance’ as occurring in the mediation process itself. Performance that highlights its own processes, its own media and changeability, would become conceptual performance of a kind. Repetition, as a literally self-reflexive modality, may be useful in such a performance, to highlight process. An exemplary manifestation of such a performance might be something like a video loop installed in a gallery space, where spectators are called upon, in that space-time of their viewing relation, to experience its repetitive rhythms.

The problem with shifting performance to something about process rather than product is that, as long as the live human body is contrasted against the represented, the representation is only understood as a marker of presentness that lacks the actual body. From this traditional perspective, Fischer-Lichte, for example, argues that, while media might ‘simulate effects of presence, they are unable to generate presence itself’ (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 100) [18]. This performer-centric view of presence can be seen in the performance structure of mainstream naturalistic theatre.
I suggest that there is a structural reason why a live, embodied performer is at the centre of the naturalistic theatre’s expectations. I will elucidate this point by considering Gilles Deleuze’s well-known notion of the ‘movement-image’. Deleuze discusses the relationship between scenes and cuts in the filmic structure of what he terms classic cinema. There are logical connections between scenes. Each scene is linked through the filmic narrative. Deleuze describes the ‘movement-image’ in the work of director Sergei Eisenstein:

‘The so-called classical cinema works above all through linkage of images, and subordinates cuts to this linkage. On the mathematical analogy, the cuts which divide up two series of images are rational, in the sense that they constitute either the final image of the first series, or the first image of the second.’ (Deleuze 1989: 213) [14]

For our discussion on performance and presence in a live context, I’ll appropriate this notion of the ‘movement-image’ and rename it the ‘movement-performer’ and the ‘narrative-performer’. Performers are the central focus of certain forms of dance and theatre, inducing a sense of the fullness of their presence. The ‘movement-performer’ concept would mean that a performer becomes a medium to move the show forward. I think of the dancers in a classical ballet as a form of movement-performer. Similarly, the term ‘narrative-performer’ may explain the presence of the actor in traditional plays. The following observation by Jiří Veltruský, Czech Structuralist scholar, elucidates how the actor receives the attention of the audience:

‘The actor’s body … enters into the dramatic situation with all of its properties. … The spectator of course understands even … nonpurposive components of the actor’s performance as signs. This is what makes the figure of the actor more complex and richer, we are tempted to say more concrete, as compared to the other sign carriers. It has in addition to its sign character also the character of reality. And the latter is precisely that force which forces all the meanings to be centered upon the actor.’ (Veltrusky [1940] 1964, 84-85) [35]
To consider the decentring of the live performer in mediatised works, I refer to Deleuze’s second concept regarding film, the ‘time-image’, in which the image is not naturalistic, as it decouples cause and effect. For Deleuze, in films such as those by Alain Resnais:

‘[T]he image is unlinked and the cut begins to have an importance in itself. The cut, or interstice, between two series of image no longer forms part of either of the two series: it is the equivalent of an irrational cut, which determines the non-commensurable relations between images.’ (1989: 213) [14]

It is possible to say that video art works often appear in the form of the ‘time-image’. They bring attention to the image itself as the film’s focus, not a narrative it represents, which must be interpreted.

This awareness of the viewer’s reception, as a localised, specific temporality and spatiality, is essential for identifying the special repetitive and sequential possibilities of the video installation, which can present a real-time performance of rhythm, pulse, texture, and patterns. This becomes clear if one consider the
audience’s viewing condition as one of duration and experience. Its very iteration over time becomes the essential element of the video art work, generating a mode of rhythmic performance for the spectator willing to stay with the work long enough to perceive it. Derrida’s discussion on repetition is useful here. Arguing for mutual inscription and re-inscription between original and copy in a philosophical context, Derrida discusses that ‘[o]nce the circle turns, once the volume rolls itself up, once the book is repeated, its identification with itself gathers an imperceptible difference which permits us efficaciously, rigorously, that is, discretely, to exit from closure’ (1978: 295) [15]. For Derrida, repetitive inscription is not ‘absence instead of presence’, but should be seen in itself as an ‘origin’ (1978: 295) [15]. Each iteration is itself new, and reinvests the previous moment of viewing.

The video installation’s ‘performance’ may not likely be limited to a video loop. Multiple projection/monitor video installations in a three-dimensional setting make spatial linkages, setting up obscure relations between unrelated images. This collage aesthetic is paralleled in the nature of the digital media themselves. Digital objects are themselves collections of discrete units, which can be modified and combined with others without losing their independence. Digital technology turns photographic image, video image, and sound into codes, allowing algorithmic reprogramming and manipulation. Video and sound files generated for a video installation operate in the same sequential manner. These modular units can be freely installed to compose a gallery space as a totality. In this sense, a digital video installation, as ‘hypermedia’, operates in a similar manner as the traditional forms of theatre, dance, and opera. These performing arts practices routinely incorporate other arts and media, though more traditionally accepted forms: literature, music, visual arts, or film. The different practices converge into one. The modules of the video installation, however, are independent ‘agencies’. They repeat themselves in their own time, their rhythms interacting, like the interference patterns of sine waves. Whatever convergences may be detected are perceptible in a similar manner to the Cagean ‘chance’ operation, allowing new temporal connections between art components via digital media. This view of the video installation as a constellation echoes Pontbriand’s discussion of
contemporary performance: ‘Performance appears much more as disarticulation of the whole than as
signifying totality’ (Pontbriand 1982: 156) [29].

Conclusion

My essay has traversed established concepts of presence and performance, and the challenges posed to them
by digital incursions, in order to rethink them in relation to video installation, a form more often treated in
the contexts of art theory. Digital video installation can provide various modes of implicit presence enacted
through interactions between the original and the recorded, between the original and the digitally altered.
Presence and representation, form and content are inextricably linked in the video installation. A digital video
installation can be understood as a conceptual performance of the space between the original and the trans-
coded, which allows a new dialogue between different art practices. Iterative video installation can also offer
real-time interactions between separate modules and their repeating patterns, to engage beholders in an art
gallery environment that, in effect, ‘performs’ temporarily, for that specific moment and encounter with the
viewer. It is a spatial performance of rhythm, pulse, texture, and pattern through its repetitions.
The video installation, far from being an unimportant footnote for performance studies, articulates the complex interdisciplinary interdependence between performance, mediation, and technology. It also presents us with the pathos of endless, tireless repetition. The spectator must share, even if just for the moment, the predicament of non-human digital agents who, like Sisyphus, must keep on performing.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Meredith Morse for her critical insights and constructive comments that have greatly assisted the development of this essay.

Dr Yuji Sone is a lecturer in the Department of Media, Music, Communication, and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University. He is a Sydney-based artist who has produced numerous media-based performances and installations. His academic research focuses on mediated performance and performance of the body in conjunction with objects, space, and technology, especially from cross-cultural perspectives, such as Japanese culture and performance. Dr Sone has published in performance studies and cultural studies journals.

References:


This paper expands upon a preliminary investigation discussed in the exhibition catalogue and at a seminar related to the exhibition.

Nick Kaye, for example, examines the performer’s ‘oblique presence [on video] that disrupts, contradicts or displaces attention’ (2007: 118, original emphasis) in Vito Acconci’s video and video installation works. By leaving the viewer ambiguously between performer and audience, the mediated and the live, and on and off screen, Acconci’s works press ‘toward the “real” time and space of the viewer’s encounter’ (Kaye 2007: 118). Both presence and absence are felt through the beholder’s temporal and spatial awareness when viewing Acconci’s video installation. My intention is to expand this idea of ‘oblique presence’ in relation to repetition.

Although it is not a commonly used term, ‘tele-audio presence’ can be discussed in relation to mediatised performance practices. For example, in Home of the Brave in 1986, Laurie Anderson exploited the disjunction between William Burroughs’s recorded voice and his presence. Anderson used a violin bow on which Burroughs’s voice was recorded. When Anderson ran it across the violin bridge, it played Burroughs’s voice.

Matthew Reason, in the context of the performing arts, points out the generally held view of difference between live repetition and mechanical reproduction that ‘live events are re-performed while non-live performances are re-played’ (2006: 20). While the dynamic process of the original continues in a re-performance in its singularity, it is thought to cease to be dynamic in re-playing of non-live media. As long as the recorded is contrasted against the live, the idea of the live original persists.