

**REPEAT REPEAT: RETURNS OF PERFORMANCE**

by

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## Abstract

Repetition – of speech, of movement and in structure – raises questions about the experience of performance. This thesis accounts for certain pleasures experienced in contemporary performance by means of repetition. It uses examples drawn from dance-theatre (Pina Bausch and Rosas), avant-garde theatre (Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett) and contemporary performance and writing (Lone Twin Theatre and Sophie Calle). It examines repetition as constitutive of performance and explores the ways in which repetition structures our experience of performance as well as the representations of this experience. This project investigates the enjoyment that derives from repeating, as an enjoyment that is central to the practices of performing and writing.

Writing, as a process during which repetition can be experienced again and again, is significant to this project. Roland Barthes's notions of *plaisir* and *jouissance* are central to this thesis, enabling me to examine the viewer's experience of repetition. Drawing on critical and literary theory, performance studies, art history and visual studies, I examine examples of performance from modernism and after in order to contribute to thinking about the experience of repetition in contemporary performance. While the first chapter is a survey of historical examples that illustrate specific aspects of this project, the following chapters offer four different answers to the question of pleasure: pleasure may arise in the experiences of repetition as *jouissance*, in the experience of synchronicity or *presence*, in the process of returning to performance and the process of repetition's ending. These four modes are valued as means of (re)experiencing performance in a space within which the desire to repeat is perpetually nurtured, but never fully satisfied. In this space, repetition becomes generative of new modes of watching and making performance.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	4
Introduction	5
1 <b>Repeat Repeat: Precursors</b>	19
Repetition in Beckett through Connor	21
The Postmodern and Repetition	30
2 <b>Repeat Repeat: After Roland Barthes</b>	45
<i>Formerly Performance</i>	50
<i>Plaisir and Jouissance</i>	69
Steve Reich/ <i>The Auditory/ Piano Phase</i>	83
Conclusion	87
3 <b>Repeat Repeat: After Gertrude Stein</b>	89
Feeling, Time and Repetition	90
Gertrude Stein	100
Repetition and <i>Presence</i>	105
<i>Pommes et Parapluies: Time and the Performer</i>	125
Conclusion	139
4 <b>Repeat Repeat: Returns of Performance</b>	141
<i>Daniel Hit by A Train</i>	150
Bluebeard and Krapp	163
‘I could hardly believe that each day there were new things to see’	167
Something of Desire	172
Conclusion	177
Bibliography	198

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## Introduction

### Repeat Repeat: Beginnings

This project begins with a passion for repetition. In my performance practice I observe an excitement to do with the experience of performing repetitive phrases or movement. In some cases, I repeat the same movement again and again without knowing why, persisting though in repeating. I start without knowing what will occur from repetition yet I am convinced that there is a ‘destination’. This interesting quality of repetition, which excites me and convinces me and keeps me going, also appears in one way or another in the experience of watching. In this experience, I know now, ‘something strange has happened to time’<sup>1</sup>, something that has triggered my desire to repeat.

The experience of watching Pina Bausch’s frenzied repetitive dance sequences next to the obsessive lists and structures of *Forced Entertainment* and the repetitive gestures of *La Ribot* have affected the way I watch, write about and make theatre work. In Bausch’s *Palermo Palermo*, a woman pleads insistently to two men: ‘Throw tomatoes on my face! Throw tomatoes on my face! Throw tomatoes on my face!’ In *Forced Entertainment*’s *Bloody Mess*, Wendy Houston, towards the end of the piece, shouts: ‘Get us to the end, John, just get us to the end. Finish it up John, finish the story. Finish it up John.’ Similarly, in *Panoramic*, *La Ribot* ‘wears’ a chair and creates a specific repetitive rhythm by opening and closing the chair, while sliding down a wall. The excitement I experience during these pieces bears some similar qualities: I do not want these repetitions to end, I take pleasure in them, I remember them for a very long time after, I feel the desire to write about them, or write through them, or because of them. When I cannot write about them, I re-experience them again and again in memory. I am stuck with them. I am enthusiastic, excited, awake. I am something I cannot explain. This something has to do with a different temporality of performance, which invites me to explore and pose questions; it is a lure that will not leave me alone, unless followed, explored, and partially answered, an unresolved feeling, which although not fulfilled through this process of writing, it is at least nurtured and perhaps momentarily satisfied.

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Etchells, *Certain Fragments: Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 42.

This project argues that repetition in contemporary performance and dance-theatre is a source of some possible pleasures for both spectators and performers. What are these pleasures? This thesis proposes four different answers to this question, by using examples from dance-theatre practitioners Bausch and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, avant-garde theatre writers Gertrude Stein and Samuel Beckett and contemporary performance and writing: Lone Twin Theatre, Sophie Calle and T. J. Clark. It suggests that pleasure may arise in the experiences of repetition as *jouissance* (Chapter Two), in the experience of a sense of being *in the present moment* (Chapter Three), in the process of returning to performance (Chapter Four) and the process of repetition's ending (Conclusion). This thesis does not attempt to give an account of what performance *is* or *is not*; its aim is not to apply an ontological perspective to contemporary performance and dance but to shed some light on the ways in which repetition may be experienced in certain cases and the pleasures this experience might invoke. Ontological instability, Adrian Heathfield argues, can be an important dynamic of specific practices of writing and performance.<sup>2</sup> This thesis does not claim to have found all kinds of pleasures experienced in the performance of repetition, but rather to give an account of certain pleasures by way of repetition.

Within performance studies repetition is often thought of as the enemy of liveness or live presence. Performance acquires its value, precisely because it cannot be reproduced or mimicked. Peggy Phelan defines performance as that which 'becomes itself through disappearance'<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, Rebecca Schneider suggests that performance can be approached not as that which disappears, but 'as both the *act* of remaining and a means of reappearance.'<sup>4</sup> In this case, performance is constituted by repetition or reappearance, or, in Schneider's words, 'performance becomes itself through messy and eruptive reappearance.'<sup>5</sup> Performance, in this light, becomes itself not through disappearance, but in fact, through repetition. Disappearance, however, is not antithetical to remains, Schneider proposes, giving the following example: 'Death appears to result in the paradoxical production of both disappearance *and* remains.'<sup>6</sup> Similarly, performance both 'becomes itself through disappearance' *and* remains. In a sense, then, this thesis is an exploration of the pleasures produced by this contradictory quality of performance. The memory of it, the going back cannot, in any case, take the

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<sup>2</sup> Adrian Heathfield < <http://www.adrianheathfield.com/> > [accessed 10 February 2010]

<sup>3</sup> Phelan, 'The Ontology of Performance', p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Schneider, 'Performance Remains', p. 102.

<sup>5</sup> Schneider, p. 103.

<sup>6</sup> Schneider, p. 104.

place of performance or pretend to repeat it as such. This project values repetition within performance precisely because it has the ability, in certain cases, to create an experience of *presence*. This experience is produced through the operations of repetition, but is not experienced as repetitive. Furthermore, this thesis attends to the repetition of performance as a whole in the process of returning to it to re-experience it again and again in memory and writing. This process of return is valued as one that holds some of the qualities of the live, but also allows for a new experience of repetition each time. In that sense, live presence is of course unrepeatable; yet, it can be re-experienced, in some cases *in repetition*, again and again in a time yet to come, as an experience of pleasure.

This thesis uses Bausch's *Bluebeard*, De Keersmaeker's *Piano Phase*, Calle's *Exquisite Pain*, Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, selected writings by Stein and Clark's *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing*. All of the above writers and practitioners seem to write or create in a moment when repetition is seen as a creative possibility, rather than something to be avoided. As I suggest in Chapter One, they all seem to emerge at or near a cusp either side of which sit historical sensibilities often constituted as modernist and postmodernist. However, my aim is not to draw a distinction between the two, but rather to avoid this distinction and suggest that repetition, which might be announced with postmodernity, here acts in the interests of postmodern experiences – presence, 'nowness' – yet given in modernist language. I have chosen the above writers as they all use repetition in creative ways to explore and make use of its potential. All this happens both within modernism (as part of modernism's obsession with the new) and *after* modernism. The sensibility of all these artists in the late modernist cusp makes the interrelation of the ideas they articulate crucial for this thesis. Situating them *after* modernism, rather than post modernism, this project gestures towards a double interpretation: these artists and thinkers are *after* modernism, in a temporal sense, but also their work is in search of modernism, in pursuit of it, continually going back and exploring the possibilities of repetition as necessary and foundational.

The above examples of work I have chosen to discuss have been produced within different historical, aesthetic and cultural contexts and for different audiences. They all significantly differ in form and exemplify different possibilities in the production of music, painting, dance or writing. Examples from expressionistic dance (Pina Bausch), minimalistic music and seriality (Steve Reich) and contemporary dance with an

investment both in minimalism and expressionism (Rosas) are brought together despite their dissimilarities in form, context and objectives. This thesis acknowledges and appreciates the differences amongst the artworks employed for the purposes of the discussion of repetition, arguing that there are certain remarkable aspects that connect these examples together. These connections constitute the reasons why these artworks are offered here in co-consideration. Firstly, all of the chosen examples of practice make their own compositional principles the subject matter of the work. They not only use repetition, but also draw attention to the specific way repetition is used within them, inviting reflection of it. They all therefore involve a degree of self-reflexivity, which, at the extreme end of the spectrum, not only invites a consideration of repetition, but also uses the practice of repetition as research. T. J. Clark, for example, uses the practice of writing in order to explore what repetition does to the experience of the artwork and the writing process itself. Secondly, all of these examples evoke a certain kind of pleasure, which resembles the Barthesian *jouissance* (see Chapter Two) and which will play a significant role throughout this thesis. Finally, all of the above examples of performance, dance, painting or writing return to the memory of the viewer and persist in recurrence, to use Adrian Heathfield's phrase, 'haunting our memories, documents and critical frameworks.'<sup>7</sup> Being aware of the differences of the historical, cultural and aesthetic contexts of the work of Bausch, De Keersmaeker, Calle, Beckett, Stein, Reich and Clark, this thesis proposes a co-consideration of these examples of artwork in the examination of repetition in speech, movement, rhythm and writing.

My methodology is informed by the combination of critical theory and the subjective experience of performance offered through writing. Two different types of writing seem important: critical writing and writing *of* the return,<sup>8</sup> which is the kind of writing through which the experience of performance takes place at a later time. My performance practice is also encountered through writing. Rather than offering examples of the documented live moment, I encounter my practice through writing and offer the reader of this thesis an encounter by means of the returns performed by that writing. Thus, this thesis encounters performance not only as a live event, but also as an

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<sup>7</sup> Adrian Heathfield, 'End Time Now', in *Small Acts: Performance, the Millennium and the Marking of Time*, ed. by Adrian Heathfield (London: Black Dog, 2000), p. 106.

<sup>8</sup> I borrow and change for the purposes of this study Adrian Heathfield's phrase 'writing *of* the event', which I will be using later on in this thesis. Adrian Heathfield, 'Writing of the Event', in *A Performance Cosmology: Testimony from the Future, Evidence of the Past*, ed. by Judie Christie, Richard Gough and Daniel Peter Watt (London: Routledge, 2006).



event that crucially affects the spectator's memory and *remains* in our writings.<sup>9</sup> Performance happens in those writings again and again, since repetition, this project argues, invites returns to performance and the re-experience of it through writing. The term 'performative writing' is often used to define such practice. Della Pollock suggests that performative writing 'has come to carry its own *faux* referents: stylish, trendy, clever, avant-garde'.<sup>10</sup> However, performative writing can also be a way to address difficult, complicated sensations that cannot be encountered otherwise. It is a way of encountering performance again, without necessarily describing it, critiquing or analyzing it. It offers a way of evoking or triggering feelings in the act of reading, or addressing the reader in this shared experience of reading and writing: 'Entanglement, ravishment, love, writing: what I want to call performative writing does not project a self, even a radically destabilized one, as much as a relation of being and knowing that cuts back and forth across multiple "divisions" among selves, contexts, affiliations [...].'<sup>11</sup> Following Elspeth Probyn, Pollock suggests that writing is a process in which the self is reworked in its enunciation, 'shifting from documenting "me" to reconstituting an operative, possible "we"'.<sup>12</sup> This kind of writing therefore performs a number of relations: 'the relation of the self to the work, the relation of the self to the artist who made the work, and the relation of the self to the other person who also encounters or speaks of the work',<sup>13</sup> as Heathfield suggests. Performative writing carries something of all those relations, which might or might not be directly experienced by the writer or reader.

Performative writing is also in some cases affective. Without attempting to assume a common experience of repetition, this project deals with experience and feeling as individuated and therefore uses the terms 'feeling' or 'emotion', as terms tied to subjectivity. It is interested in the ways in which writing or performance can affect the spectator and performer. In *Touching Feeling*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick connects affect with sensations like touch. The title of her book 'records the intuition that a particular intimacy seems to subsist between textures and emotions', concluding that 'even to talk about affect virtually amounts to cutaneous contact'.<sup>14</sup> To write about an experience of

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<sup>9</sup> Rebecca Schneider, 'Performance Remains', *Performance Research*, 6, 2 (2001), pp. 100-108 (p. 102).

<sup>10</sup> Della Pollock, 'Performing Writing', in *The Ends of Performance*, ed. by Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> Pollock, p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> Pollock, p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> Heathfield, 'Writing of the Event,' p. 179.

<sup>14</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 17.

pleasure could also then amount to experiencing pleasure, intriguing excitement or boredom, similar perhaps to the experience of the event and that of writing. As Roland Barthes suggests, the act of reading, like that of writing can be pleasurable to the point of *jouissance*; the Barthesian discourse, crucial to this project, underlines all understanding of pleasure. Barthes suggests that it is the ‘possibility of a dialectics of desire, of an *unpredictability* of bliss’<sup>15</sup> that is important. Writing might or might not be affective, like performance, which might or might not be exciting, moving or touching, boring, or, in some cases, demanding of some extra time to have an impact upon us, it might demand that the spectator returns to the performance and re-experiences how the encounter with it might have changed, how it might not anymore be experienced as exciting, or moving or touching or boring.

In this thesis I use two examples from my own performance practice. The discussion of performance practice raises certain questions: how can I examine and usefully incorporate my practice into my research? Practice as research seems to be an opportunity for critical reflection on the processes of developing performance material. For the purposes of this project, I use the experience of my practice in writing, in order to enrich my understanding of repetition in performance, as this project focuses on writing processes and returns to experiences. I offer examples of writing as the experience of performance itself and reflect on those and the experience of writing. Performance practice is therefore offered here through writing. Of course, the live moment of performance is hugely important and irreplaceable; yet, the return to moments of repeating in performance seems extremely valuable to this project. Writing seems to be the only form of documentation in agreement with the ways this project deals with performance and repetition. By raising a series of research questions addressed through performance practice and writing, I explore specific uses of repetition in order to engage with the functions of repetition in a personal and exploratory way, combining theoretical questions and findings with aspects of my own practical investigations.

In what follows I discuss the use of my own practice and the particular perspective and critical contribution this enables me to bring to the analytical work of this thesis. Contrary to other modes of practice, my performance practice given here in two

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<sup>15</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1975), p. 4.

examples of work, *A Valediction on a Falling Microphone* and *Pommes et Parapluies*, constitutes the intellectual and creative background of the project. Specifically, performance practice aims to fulfil three different purposes: it serves as a useful means by which some of the central questions regarding repetition are to be investigated, it helps towards an understanding of the quality of performing and spectating, employed in the discussion of the *performerly* and *spectatory*, and finally it attempts to test ideas that might occur in theory through practice. It appears therefore as the background on which the construction of this thesis is built upon, as it does not only make possible certain questions about performance and repetition, but it also attests to the fascination with repetition, which has functioned as the principal incentive of this project. In that sense, my creative research does not serve the same function as the examples of performance works of others. On the contrary, it unveils the differences between approaching repetition as a compositional/dramaturgical creative research tool and spectating the structures of repetition in the performance works of others.

Having been making performance work for almost a decade, I have always been drawn to repetitive narratives, stories that never end, situations that never quite resolve themselves. My performance work deals with a body *in repetition*, that is a body that attempts to defeat or master desire, however aimlessly, always failing and always trying again. I use improvisation, creative writing and movement to experiment with unusual types of storytelling based on the endless repetitions of the body. My performance practice deals with questions of identity and personal politics, alluding to subjects such as intimacy, gender and sexuality. As a practitioner I am departing from Pina Bausch's theatricality, Goat Island's fragmented narratives and La Ribot's use of simple, everyday objects, to create performances that use repetitive storytelling, usually experimenting with the delivery of poetic texts and with an interest in stories that remain unresolved in their narratives or that never *really* end. My work combines monologue-based performance with pedestrian dance-theatre movement. In the discussion of performance practice, repetition is investigated as a creative research tool in the making of performance, or performing repetition, rather than in its spectating. This discussion becomes therefore significant in allowing the space within which making or performing can be observed closely. The question of the differences between spectating and performing will be addressed throughout this thesis. My performance practice therefore allows for certain questions to occur that the analytical approach of performance works of others does not, underlining the differences and/or similarities

between performing and spectating. For the purposes of this project, I have collaborated with choreographer Dagmara Bilon in *A Valediction on a Falling Microphone*, which has also been presented in the Experimental Theatre Festival in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, and visual artist David Paredes in *Pommes et Parapluies*, presented in the Biennale of Lyon.

The writing practices of Adrian Heathfield are an example of the kind of performative writing interesting to this thesis. Not only does his writing often attend to subjects central to this thesis, but also the particular ways in which Heathfield uses language and writes about performance have been highly suggestive for my own work. Heathfield's writings deal with, amongst others, repetition in dance-theatre and performance, the experience of time and repetition in performances by Goat Island, repetition and death, modes of writing about or *of* performance and revisiting past performances. The writing about Tehching Hsieh has proven to be particularly interesting for two reasons: the return to a performance and the writing about the experience of performance constitutes another type of repetition, which might take place in order to replace the encounter with performance, which has never taken place. In this case, the performance is encountered through its traces: recording, images, re-tracing one's steps, etc. Performance, Heathfield suggests, 'persists in recurrence, it remains unresolved, haunting our memories, documents and critical frameworks.'<sup>16</sup> We keep returning to performance again and again in time, until perhaps we feel that we have fully experienced it or until it seems repaired in our memory.

Heathfield describes the experience of watching Bausch's *Café Müller* as an experience of dancing. There are three figures in his dance: 'He names his guide Time. His partner in the dance, well her name is Desire. Though he wishes he were both Time and Desire, because he longs for absolute fluidity, he knows that his name, his name is Memory.'<sup>17</sup> These three dance figures, time, desire and memory are important in the experience of performance and will accompany this journey and be taken into consideration in the encounter with repetition.

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<sup>16</sup> Adrian Heathfield, 'End Time Now', in *Small Acts: Performance, the Millennium and the Marking of Time* (London: Black Dog, 2000), p. 106

<sup>17</sup> Adrian Heathfield, 'After the Fall: Dance-Theatre and Dance-Performance', in *Contemporary Theatres in Europe: A Critical Companion*, ed. by Joe Kelleher and Nicholas Ridout (London: Routledge 2006), p. 194.

The ability of repetition to perpetuate desire and induce sentiments of *jouissance*, as I will show in Chapter Two, continues during the event of return to the performance. This return takes place as another attempt to fulfil desire. Yet, every reminiscence whether of a town or a woman according to Gilles Deleuze is erotic<sup>18</sup> and for that reason the reminiscence of the performance in its return intensifies desire. The process of return happens through writing; a writing, which desires to repeat the event of performance, to perform it in repetition, to create an erotic relationship between the event and the performer, reader or writer. Writing, in this case, ‘is not simply upon a subject or about it but, rather, is “of” it in the sense that it issues from it, is subject to its force and conditions,’ Heathfield argues, thinking of Maurice Blanchot’s *The Writing of the Disaster*.<sup>19</sup> The writing of the event, which might be a writing that desires to repeat the performance and resolve its repetitions, is a writing which establishes a sense of anticipation. My writing of the event or what I call writing of the return resonates with the Barthesian kind of writing in its attempt to fulfil a sense of desire or anticipation for that which has not yet taken place. Within that space of writing repetition takes place, once again, and is allowed to unfold, develop and change.

The desire to go back in time and revisit a performance in memory can happen through language. Heathfield argues: ‘How *outside* the writer’s language is in relation to the event; how lacking in that which would turn inside, make the thing flow and burn, touch and weigh again. How utterly significant, unique and unforgettable is the event. How lost it is now. All that one can do is proceed inside this tear, vibrate at the borders of memory.’<sup>20</sup> It is perhaps these vibrations at the borders of memory that I attempt to document here through writing. The ephemerality of the event and the failure of language to describe it make ‘the event’s recall in writing necessary, vibrant and continuous.’<sup>21</sup> I revisit the performances again and again, I *write* the performances in memory until I reach the end of that writing, the end of repetition.

Heathfield performs an attempt to *write* Bausch, to *write* the experience of watching in his ‘Interlude on Writing Bausch.’ He writes in order to prevent the event slipping through his hands, he admits; he writes ‘from necessity, to answer a call.’<sup>22</sup> It seems as though the fall demands from him this performance of *writing*, the dance sequence

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<sup>18</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum 2004), p. 107.

<sup>19</sup> Heathfield, ‘Writing of the Event’, p. 179.

<sup>20</sup> Heathfield, ‘Writing of the Event’, p. 179.

<sup>21</sup> Heathfield, ‘Writing of the Event’, p. 179.

<sup>22</sup> Heathfield, ‘After the Fall’, p. 194.

insisting on being retained in some way. This necessity does not allow him to take a distance from the event or leave it behind: ‘other agents return the event to him. [...] And so it begins again.’<sup>23</sup> Writing, in this case, re-stages the encounter with the artwork; it creates a dialogue with it, which ‘manifests a form of discourse that is within and partly about the present context of encounter.’<sup>24</sup> The context of the encounter with the work perpetually changes, creating new performances of memory that are documented through writing. Writing performs again and again a new performance, influenced by time passing and by the desire to retain the ephemeral event.

In the experience of Goat Island’s performance work, Heathfield identifies the particular quality of performance that invites the spectator to go back to it. Although having attended the work, unlike Hsieh’s work, it seems that the experience of performance, the being there once, is not enough: ‘Goat Island’s work holds you inside the duration of these experiences, then asks you to return to them again and again. It asks you to suspend your viewing habits and stall that inner voice, to linger openly in its moments, which are difficult to evaluate, identify and know.’<sup>25</sup> One returns to this work to experience it again and again, as there is no ideal place, Heathfield suggests, from which to look at the work.<sup>26</sup> For that reason, there are ‘fragments of a whole, that remain, no matter how many times you see the work, stubbornly out of reach.’<sup>27</sup> Performances such as Goat Island’s create such a need, the need to be retained and be re-experienced again and again. I will later argue that one of the reasons why this need is created is the use of repetition as a formal as well as constitutive element of performance. Heathfield argues that Goat Island enact ‘a radical form of commemoration: one that returns to phenomenal memories in order to undo and reform the memory found through thought, language and image.’<sup>28</sup> This ‘radical form of commemoration’ is documented in this project through writing and constitutes another type of repetition.

## Summaries of Chapters

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<sup>23</sup> Heathfield, ‘After the Fall’, p. 194.

<sup>24</sup> Heathfield, ‘Writing of the Event’, p. 179.

<sup>25</sup> Adrian Heathfield, ‘Coming Undone’ <<http://www.adrianheathfield.com>> [accessed 1 December 2008].

<sup>26</sup> Heathfield, ‘Coming Undone’, n.p.

<sup>27</sup> Heathfield, ‘Coming Undone’, n.p.

<sup>28</sup> Heathfield, ‘Coming Undone’, n.p.

Chapter One offers examples of developments in artistic and critical practice, such as minimalist music, the Judson Dance Theater and serial art, which seem to have influenced the way repetition is used in contemporary performance, offering at the same time an account of the particular historical time when the use of repetition as necessary and foundational, rather than secondary and parasitic becomes possible. It introduces the context within which certain questions about the use of movement or concepts of time, repetition and difference have been used in modernism and after, giving a selective approach to particular art movements and theorists, extending from the 1960s to now, which attempts to provide a theoretical and historical framework and permits each of the case studies to be understood in relation to one another. It does not however attempt to give a complete theorisation or a full survey or history of repetition. Rather, the purpose of the historical examples is to give an understanding of the conditions under which the works I deal with become possible.

Chapter Two is where pleasure becomes the central question. Drawing on ideas developed by Roland Barthes, which persist throughout this thesis, I consider the kinds of pleasures that emerge from the experience of repetition in performance, with particular reference to repetitive sequences in the dance-theatre of Bausch and De Keersmaeker. The encounter between the spectator and the performance seems to demonstrate similarities to the reader's encounter with the text. The reader of *The Pleasure of the Text* enjoys sentiments of excitement (*plaisir* and *jouissance*) in the act of reading. The Barthesian notion of excitement gestures towards an experience of the *writerly* and *readerly* as modes of reading. These two modes enable me to introduce two types of encountering repetition: the *performerly* and *spectatorly*, as spectatorial modes, which are at play throughout this project. The way repetition functions seems to invite the spectator to actively take part in the act of spectatorship, to the point that the act of watching acquires some of the qualities of the act of performing: an active engagement with the action on stage is therefore established. The viewer is not merely witnessing repetition happening, but rather taking part in it, by *performing* repetition, like the reader of the *writerly*, who is *writing* the text.

Chapter Three makes use of Stein's writings about repetition in order to discuss repetition, time and language. I mainly use Stein's literary rather than theatrical work as the former carries a double quality related to repetition: it explains some of the uses of repetition, performing at the same time that which it demonstrates. A similar quality

will be found in the writings of Beckett and Clark. Stein identifies a problematic situation occurring in relation to the spectator's emotion, which always arises in syncopated time with the action on stage. This problematic situation seems to be resolved through the use of language, which is based on repetition. Repetitive language seems to create a kind of temporality, which enables an attending to emotion. It offers a space within which emotion can occur, or create the impression, due to its intensity, that it occurs simultaneously to the action on stage, solving the problem of syncopation that Stein identifies in her encounter with theatre. In the encounter with a repetitive movement or text, only a 'very precise language'<sup>29</sup>, it seems, could manage to communicate the feelings that might occur. In this case, emotion is experienced in a state of becoming, rather than a finished product. This situation seems to resemble what Stein describes as *insistence*, the type of reiteration, which does not merely repeat, but gives emphasis to each moment experienced as a perpetual 'now', often referred to as *continuous present*.<sup>30</sup> This type of experience is interested in immediate consciousness and not in what sensations become when we *think* about them in retrospect (reflective consciousness), according to Henri Bergson, whose idea of duration offers a possible explanation for the experience of the Steinian *continuous presence*: both focus on an experience of temporal synthesis or a simultaneous 'listening and talking',<sup>31</sup> as Stein has it.

Chapter Four argues that the imperative of performances that use repetition as a structural element and constitutive of performance is that of return. Returning to a performance again and again in memory and writing appears both as a function of repetition as well as a condition for some repetitions or performances to *actually* take place. Return facilitates as a space within which one can observe the differences that occur through repetition. One of the reasons why such a return occurs might be the difficulty in experiencing the performance, which needs to be worked-through towards a sense of familiarity. A need to *perform* the performance and archive it in a vigorous way that requires the spectator to *do* something – to be active – is fulfilled within the space of return as a *writerly* performance. In some cases, repetition attempts to go against the experience of performance, which is often thought of as bound to disappear, by making performance retainable, i.e. repeatable. Return might thus occur as a space of

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<sup>29</sup> Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 73.

<sup>30</sup> Gertrude Stein, 'Lecture 3', *Narration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1935), p. 37.

<sup>31</sup> Gertrude Stein, 'Portraits and Repetition', *Lectures in America* (London: Virago Press, 1988), p. 174.



repair, re-experiencing the performance towards a sense of fulfilment. The memory of the event, often in need to be retained, is performed again in the form of writing, which preserves and communicates some of the qualities of the performance. Some of those attempts to *write* the performance might be failed attempts in their inability to reproduce those qualities. This happens because the writing *of return*, which attempts to communicate something from the experience of the *performerly*, may not function as a *performerly* performance itself: it only seems to work in the *doing*, the moment that is being written, and in fact, only for the writer. In the revisiting of it, it becomes something else. This might be happening precisely because each *performerly* repetition is a new repetition, and therefore, by the time we go back to read it, it has already changed. This problematic situation does not seem to occur with the returns to performance itself, since performance only exists in the viewer's memory, which is ever changeable through time.

The Conclusion of the thesis deals with writing and the end of repetition. An ending of repetition can be experienced as a time of loss or disappointment precisely because of the hope that repetition has nurtured in its process: in encountering repetition, although ceaselessly experiencing the unfulfilled, we do not seem to believe that it will continue this way. Something about the way repetition functions convinces us we can still anticipate that something will change, hoping that repetition will eventually produce that *something* that has triggered in us the desire to wait.<sup>32</sup> The return of that *something* that has initially attracted the viewer's interest could be a longing for discovery, or for change, for a sense of fulfilment or relief, always connected to desire. We return to restore, or repair, to take pleasure in, to resist the ephemeral, to feel the sorrow of what is gone and to come to terms with that sorrow. These processes may never end. Therefore, I may always return to the *Piano Phase* to resolve it, to understand the reason why I feel captivated and cannot escape. In a sense, then, I 'repeat forever'.<sup>33</sup> Repetition creates a space of illusion, and therefore pleasure, within which the viewer might momentarily forget about performance's (or life's) ephemerality. It may create the sentiment that it will go on forever, giving at the same time the space in which one can desire forever. In that sense, repetition does not really end, as one can perpetually

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<sup>32</sup> I refer here to Derrida's argument: 'the book has lived on this lure: to have given us to believe that passion, having originally been impassioned by *something*, could in the end be appeased by return of that something.' Jacques Derrida, 'Ellipsis', *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 296.

<sup>33</sup> Etchells writes: 'If you enter a birthday in my electronic diary you can tell it to repeat the reminder year after year. Once the date is entered the prompt comes: Repeat Forever?' Tim Etchells, 'Repeat Forever: Body, Death, Performance, Fiction', *Certain Fragments*, p. 124.

return to the memory of it, to the memory of the memory of it, and so on. Certain performances seem to haunt our memory for a very long time after they have ended. What can end, however, is the act of writing about the event, the returning to it through language. The archive of the event in writing, of course, always remains and can be read, or *written*, again and again, becoming ‘other than performance’<sup>34</sup>, yet the active process of *writing* repetition at some point has to end, giving the impression that repetition might have also reached an ending. Memory makes possible a repetition of repetition, a remaining of performance, which is always different from performance itself, yet, attempts to retain or produce anew some of the emotions performance has induced to the spectator. Repetition might reach a point when it does not have the ‘courage to end or the strength to go on’.<sup>35</sup> It is finished, nearly finished, it is nearly finished; it has to succumb to an inevitable finitude, which it longs for, and fights against.

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<sup>34</sup> Phelan, ‘The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction’, p. 146.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Beckett, *The End, First Love and Other Novellas*, ed. by Gerry Dukes (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 31.

## Repeat Repeat: Precursors

This project attends to repetition as constitutive element of contemporary Western performance and dance-theatre. It is concerned with repetitive movement and text and the ways in which repetition structures our experience of performance as well as the representations of that experience. The thesis is specifically interested in the kinds of pleasures related to the experience of repetition, valuing the enjoyment that derives from repeating. This enjoyment has not only to do with encountering repetition in performance, but also writing about repetition, or *writing repetition*, or writing *about writing repetition*, or *performing* repetition, or writing about performing repetition, or *writing about writing about performing repetition*. This project values all of the above processes, which have taken place during its course and have shaped it. It does not pathologise repetition; it does not deal with it as a problematic situation, but as a situation that has to do with a desire, rather than a compulsion to repeat. In that sense, this research is closer to Gilles Deleuze's investigation of repetition as representative of the contemporary way of being, than to the Freudian account of repetition, which deals with it as something that cannot be avoided. However, writers such as Adam Phillips, Jane Blocker and Leo Bersani are significant to this thesis, because they draw on psychoanalysis and share with this thesis a sense of repetition's pleasures. This first chapter will give an account of the kinds of repetition relevant to this project, attending to the duality of certain repetitions, a quality that will be important throughout this project. This chapter also draws a theoretical and historical framework through selected examples, within which practices of performance and writing are situated.

In addition to the distinction between repetition as pleasure and repetition as pathology, another key distinction may be made between repetition experienced as the same, and repetition through which a sense of novelty is experienced. Borrowing from Samuel Beckett, the first function could be described as follows: 'The sun shone having no

alternative on the nothing new.’<sup>1</sup> The Beckettian ‘nothing new,’ negated at times by Beckettian repetition itself, opposes T.J. Clark’s concept of repetition in his book *The Sight of Death*: ‘I could hardly believe that each morning there were new things to see.’<sup>2</sup> These experiences could be paralleled to Roland Barthes’ *readerly* and *writerly* practices, another distinction important to this project. Although I will later explain Barthes’ terms in detail (see Chapter Two, pp. 60-63), I would like here to draw a parallel between these and the kinds of repetition offered by Clark and Beckett: the *readerly* experience of repetition will be paralleled to the Beckettian ‘nothing new,’ since the Barthesian *readerly* text cannot be read in many different ways. In contrast, the *writerly* text can be read many times, producing new texts each time, like Nicolas Poussin’s paintings that each day seem to have something new to offer to Clark.

In Deleuzian terms, the first type of repetition is a mechanical, ‘naked’ or ‘bare’ repetition, or a repetition of the same, which simply reproduces its original. The second type includes difference; it is a dynamic repetition, evolving through time.<sup>3</sup> The differences emerging from repetition may be experienced imperceptibly, like a circle which is traced twice: ‘the same line is no longer exactly the same, the ring no longer has the same center’,<sup>4</sup> Jacques Derrida argues. And, he continues, ‘once 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, discreetly, to exit from closure.’<sup>5</sup> The exit from closure, as Derrida describes it, allows repetition to keep going and stimulates a desire concerned with a sense of satisfaction or closure. This sense of satisfaction is central to the experience of repetition. Derrida captures what seems to be one of the functions of repetition: ‘the book has lived on this lure: to have given us to believe that passion, having originally been impassioned by *something*, could in the end be appeased by return of that something.’<sup>6</sup> Repetition gives the impression that it will satisfy its promise and it is precisely on the grounds of that promise that repetition is able to continue. The return of

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> T. J. Clark, *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Ellipsis’, *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 296.

<sup>5</sup> Derrida, p. 295.

<sup>6</sup> Derrida, p. 295.

*that something*, which will be discussed at length in Chapter Four, may take place both within the performance event as well as after the performance has ended.

Having made a distinction, at least initially, amongst some kinds of repetition, I wish to use the rest of this chapter to review selected critical texts, which will help situate my own research in relation to existing critical literature. I begin with giving an account of Steven Connor's understanding of repetition developed in a book-length study of Beckett and continue with a discussion around postmodernity, repetition and the movements in dance, music and visual arts that have influenced the kinds of performance I am dealing with here.

### **Repetition in Beckett through Connor**

Connor's account of repetition in his book *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* is important to this project for two main reasons: it introduces the duality of repetition, central to this thesis, and it points out the ways in which repetition influences not only the experience of performance, but also the representations of this experience. Connor's discussion of the experience of the present moment and the sense of anticipation and closure established by repetition are also important here. Significantly, Connor argues: 'while to a large extent repetition determines and fixes our sense of our experience and representations of that experience, it is also the place where certain radical instabilities in these operations reveal themselves.'<sup>7</sup> This project attends to the ways in which the experience of performance is represented in memory and writing as well as the instabilities that occur during those representations.

In Connor's account, two functions of repetition seem to be at stake: the moment when 'some real novelty amid the nothing new' is achieved, as well as its opposite: sameness, which 'always inhabits or inhibits what may initially present itself as novelty.'<sup>8</sup> These two opposite functions of repetition manifest themselves in the experience of repetitive movement or text. I will later discuss these in relation to Pina Bausch's and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's movement, as well as Sophie Calle's text *Exquisite Pain*. Reading

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<sup>7</sup> Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Connor, p. 1.

Derrida, Connor develops his position on repetition and originality:

Repetition is at one and the same time that which stabilizes and guarantees the Platonic model of origin and copy and that, which threatens to undermine it. Repetition must always repeat originality, must always depend on some thing or idea, which is by definition pre-existing, autonomous and self-identical. Repetition is therefore subordinated to the idea of the original, as something secondary and inessential. For this reason, repetition is conventionally condemned in Western culture as parasitic, threatening and negative. But if repetition is dependent upon a pre-existing originality, it is also possible to turn this round and argue that originality is also dependent upon repetition. [...] The question 'How can you have a repetition without an original?' brings with it the less obvious question 'How can you have an original which it would be impossible to represent or duplicate?'"<sup>9</sup>

Connor recognizes the place repetition has been given in Western culture, especially in regards to the discussion around repetition and originality. However, here repetition becomes as important as originality, since the two cannot exist without each other. Modernism's obsessive search for originality is both employed and contradicted in Beckett's work. Repetition, which used to be considered as 'parasitic, threatening and negative'<sup>10</sup> has at modernism's wake, but also significantly even before that, as I will show below, acquired a different role: it is not only the necessary condition for originality, but is also appreciated in its own right. Repetition is used in visual arts, dance and music, similarly to the way Beckett uses it: in order to create an impression, to influence our sense of experience and to reveal its 'radical instabilities', to direct our attention towards similarity and allow us to discover what Michel Foucault terms the 'sudden illumination of multiplicity' within it.<sup>11</sup>

Repetition resists being *understood* in some cases and calls for the senses to take the place of processes of interpretation. It invites us to linger in its moments, to stay, to 'go slowly'.<sup>12</sup> Repetition thus seems to resist narrative and development, yet it also develops through stasis, it narrates its 'slow going':

Going slowly is at the heart of that process of delaying, holding back from immediate gratification, which is at the foundation of selfhood and of culture; the toleration of frustration in the interests of a greater yield of pleasure or value. [...] Going slowly is something we attempt to do to time; slow going is what time does to us, through us. [...]

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<sup>9</sup> Connor, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Connor, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, 'Theatre Philosophical', in *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. by Timothy Murray (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997), p. 232.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Connor, 'Slow Going' <<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/english/skc/slow.htm>> [accessed 22 May 2009].

Slow going is always the failure to be there, to have been there, in that condition of slow going that will have been going on, as we so serenely say, all the time.<sup>13</sup>

Repetition influences time experienced in contemporary performance. The spectator engages with both processes of ‘slow going’ and ‘going slowly’: repetition, in some cases, invites us to take part in a process of slowing down or persisting, a process based on the belief that something will occur through waiting. Repetition encourages such a ‘slow going’, which is ‘what time does to us, through us.’<sup>14</sup> In some cases we attempt to ‘go slowly’ simultaneously with ‘slow going’, so that we experience repetition, allowing for things to take place within its operations or instabilities. The difficulty of being there in that condition of *slow going* has as a result the return to the performance, an attempt to re-experience the performance in a different time, again and again (see Chapter Four).

Reading Foucault’s review of *Difference and Repetition*, Connor draws the reader’s attention to the double quality of repetition: it is simultaneously a point of weakness and of deconstructive strength. Connor recognizes, uncovers and demonstrates repetition’s double quality. In many cases the coupled qualities of repetition this project is dealing with connect to the aspects of repetition Connor discusses in his book. Other coupled qualities central to this project are the Barthesian ideas of *writerly* and *readerly*, pleasure and *jouissance* (see Chapter Two), Gertrude Stein’s concepts of *insistence* and *repetition* and ‘completion of’ and ‘relief from’ excitement (see Chapter Three). The complex intersections of the above qualities, when those bring about certain instabilities of the operations repetition seems to establish are the concern of this thesis.

The double quality of repetition, or ‘radical duality of repetition,’ as Connor describes it, has been shown not only through the work of Derrida, but also, significantly through that of Deleuze, who distinguishes two types of repetition: the first type of repetition is, as noted above, obedient to its original and reproduces it without addition or distortion. That is the type which Deleuze calls mechanical, ‘naked’ or ‘bare’ repetition, or a repetition of the same. The second type is called ‘clothed’ repetition and includes difference; it is a dynamic

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<sup>13</sup> Connor, ‘Slow Going’, n.p.

<sup>14</sup> Connor, ‘Slow Going’, n.p.

repetition, evolving through time, as mentioned above.<sup>15</sup> However, there cannot be such thing as pure or exact repetition and difference, for, as Connor writes, ‘Deleuze’s intention is to liberate philosophy from the grip of systematized and preconceived structures of difference, and to suggest to it ways of thinking “nomadic” difference, that is, difference unconstrained by the horizons of conceptual regulation.’<sup>16</sup> Repetition resists in that sense its subordination to regulated systems of difference. Søren Kierkegaard plays a vital role in Deleuze’s discussion about repetition and difference: ‘Kierkegaard specifies that it is not a matter of drawing something new from repetition [...]. It is rather a matter of acting, of making repetition as such a novelty.’<sup>17</sup> Kierkegaard’s concepts of repetition proper and the movement of repetition and recollection, significant to the Deleuzian thought, have also influenced this project, in which repetition is thought of as novel and original rather than secondary, as necessary and foundational, rather than parasitic. Connor draws our attention, for example, to the way repetition influences our experience of language:

It is at the moment when we recognise that a repetition has taken place that language begins to bulk in our apprehension as arbitrary, systematic and material. To hear or read the same word twice or more is to catch ourselves in the act of hearing or speaking, or to read ourselves reading.<sup>18</sup>

Repetition is the enabling principle of language, which is ‘defined and enabled by its capacity for reuse.’<sup>19</sup> Repetition in language intensifies our expectation for closure or culmination, an expectation that sometimes remains unrelieved. Of course there are different types of anticipation: a sense of anxiety or excess may be produced by repetition, but also a sense of familiarity. Being ‘apparently exhaustive’ repetition may create the need for more repetition or it might disappoint a desire for progression.<sup>20</sup> Connor points out a curious relationship between movement and stasis in his account of Beckett’s *Murphy*:

the repetition, along with the parasitic syntax, enforces a sense of remorseless onward movement, step by step, word by word. The reader seems condemned to an absolute linearity, incapable of detaching himself from the contingent series of words. But because every new thing that happens has already happened before, this absolute motion becomes an absolute stillness.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>17</sup> Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> Connor, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Connor, pp. 17-21.

<sup>21</sup> Connor, p. 29.



Within that absolute motion or stillness, the repetitive sequence may never really end and even if it does, it may give the impression that it is unfinished. This endeavour to move forward through language and its repetition can also function as an effective way of dealing with the emptiness of language, ‘the well-known draining of meaning from words, so that they do indeed become simply inert noises or shapes.’<sup>22</sup> In that sense repetition can sometimes involve ‘the attempt to efface the signifier, so as to collapse the distinction between it and the signified.’<sup>23</sup> Some of Stein’s writing (see Chapter Three) attempts precisely to make use of this power of repetition to challenge the reader’s ability to construct meaning. This function of repetition will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four in terms of movement and speech.

Connor also attends to the idea of presence in Beckett’s theatre. Although real presence as opposed to representation appears to be the value of performance art and modernism, as briefly mentioned in the Introduction (pp. 6-7), Alain Robbe-Grillet suggests that repetition produces a sense of presence through repetition, an idea which seems antithetical to theatre studies: ‘Vladimir and Estragon have nothing to repeat; everything is happening for the first and last time: “They are *there*; they must explain themselves. But they do not seem to have a text prepared beforehand and scrupulously learned by heart, to support them. They must invent. They are free.”’<sup>24</sup> *Waiting for Godot* focuses on ‘the sheer fact of being on stage in a way that had never before been experienced so unrelievedly.’<sup>25</sup> Nicholas Ridout suggests that ‘the antitheatricality of much of performance art, with its conventional insistence on the presentation of “realness” rather than the representation of the real (or anything else), finds a strong and contemporaneous echo in the seemingly antitheatrical theatre practices of Peter Handke, Richard Foreman or even the later works of Samuel Beckett.’<sup>26</sup> It seems that *Waiting for Godot* creates a sense of presence, which is liberating, Robbe-Grillet suggests, but also difficult to achieve, not only for Vladimir and Estragon, but also for the spectator, whose experience of presence is in search of a sense of resolution or closure nowhere to be

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<sup>22</sup> Connor, p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> Connor, p. 33.

<sup>24</sup> Connor, p. 118.

<sup>25</sup> Connor, p. 118.

<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Ridout, *Stage Fright, Animals and Other Theatrical Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2006), pp. 5-6.

seen: ‘The sense of absolute presence is itself dependent upon memory and anticipation’<sup>27</sup> and differs from the Steinian concept of *continuous presence* (see Chapter Three), which is based on each separate moment of the present, with no future and no past. It is not enough for Vladimir and Estragon to simply be there: they ‘must confirm this present tense by reference to an anticipated retrospect.’<sup>28</sup> Yet, Connor seems to identify the Steinian understanding of the temporality of emotion, as it will be discussed in Chapter Three (pp. 106-114): ‘the present tense can never simply “be”, because the “now” of the present tense can only be apprehended the split-second before it happens, or the split-second after. It is never itself, but always a representation of itself, anticipated or remembered, which is to say, non-present.’<sup>29</sup> Connor’s sense of presence is connected to the dancer’s inability to be in the present moment, as Heathfield describes it in his encounter with Bausch’s repetitive sequence in *Café Müller* (see Chapter Three, p. 125). Connor points towards that which, as I will argue, Stein’s repetitions attempt to achieve: the experience of the performance at the same time that the performance is taking place. Vladimir and Estragon can neither be fully in the present, like perhaps Bausch’s dancers in Heathfield’s experience of *Café Müller*, nor can they inhabit the future, which has not yet commenced. Their presence on stage complicates, therefore, the experience of time.

Derrida also discusses the idea of presence in his account of Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty:

the ‘grammar’ of the theatre of cruelty, of which he said that it is ‘to be found’, will always remain the inaccessible limit of a representation which is not repetition, of a *re*-presentation which is full presence, which does not carry its double within itself as its death, of a present which does not repeat itself, that is, of a present outside time, a non-present.’<sup>30</sup>

For Artaud, the distinction between repetition and representation is important: repetition, as Rosalind Krauss has also suggested, is discredited, whereas representation as ‘full presence’, like perhaps originality, for modernism, is valued.<sup>31</sup> Artaud longs for a theatre that has a unique language and does not repeat itself or the convention of theatre. *Re*-presentation is not the same as repetition, to represent for Artaud means to present and not

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<sup>27</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 119.

<sup>28</sup> Connor, p. 119.

<sup>29</sup> Connor, p. 120.

<sup>30</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘The Theatre of Cruelty or the Closure of Representation’, *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 248.

<sup>31</sup> Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1996), p. 160.

to repeat. Connor suggests that in Beckett's theatre a 'residual self-doubling' always persists: the stage is representing itself *as* stage, *as* performance.<sup>32</sup> The actor speaks the words of the play and the character, which the actor performs, repeats again and again her story. Recognising the difference between those two situations, we recognise resemblance as repetition rather than identity. And 'the closer the performance comes to an identity with its text, the more Derrida's obstinate "interior fold of its original repetition" reasserts itself.'<sup>33</sup>

Similar to the experience of presence, memory also, in a paradoxical sense, has an immediate effect. Beckett discusses Proust's distinction between what he calls 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' memory. 'Voluntary' memory is

the uniform memory of intelligence; and it can be relied on to reproduce for our gratified inspection those impressions of the past that were consciously and intelligently formed. It has no interest in the mysterious element of inattention that colours our most commonplace experiences. It presents the past in monochrome.<sup>34</sup>

'Voluntary' memory, Beckett continues, has been compared by Proust to the turning of the leaves of an album of pictures, as this action contains nothing of the past, only a blurred image of it. On the other hand, 'involuntary' memory is explosive, it is "an immediate, total and delicious deflagration." [...] But involuntary memory is an unruly magician and will not be importuned. It chooses its own time and place for the performance of its miracle. I do not know how often this miracle recurs in Proust. I think twelve or thirteen times.'<sup>35</sup> Involuntary memory seems to allow the possibility of retrieving the past, constituting the experience of the past 'at once imaginative and empirical, at once an evocation and a direct perception, real without being merely actual, ideal without being merely abstract, the ideal real, the essential, the extra-temporal.'<sup>36</sup> The particular connection between the experiential and the imaginative is significant: when revisiting a performance in memory we seem to recall parts of it, but also to construct anew other parts, or to imagine them. The performance functions therefore both as a stimulation as well as an actual experience that has already taken place. In that sense, the retrieving of the past, the

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<sup>32</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 124.

<sup>33</sup> Connor, p. 124.

<sup>34</sup> Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues With Georges Duthuit* (London: John Calder, 1965), p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> Proust cited in Beckett, *Proust*, p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> Beckett, *Proust*, pp. 74-75.

going back, is ‘real without being merely actual,’ it is, in Beckett’s words, ‘extra-temporal.’<sup>37</sup> A further duality of repetition arises from the distinction between voluntary and involuntary memory: there is the ‘comforting regularity of repetition-as-habit,’ which could be associated with the experience of Barthes’ *readerly* text (see Chapter Two) and the ‘involuntary and unpredictable merging of past and present, a merging which threatens the self’s structures of control’.<sup>38</sup>

Beckett also presents repetition as a means of control, regularity and routine. In *Molloy*, Moran’s desire to systematise his life and his addiction to routine ‘is threatened all the time by dissolution,’ and gradually ‘he begins to lose all sense of temporal progression.’<sup>39</sup> The inability of the Beckettian subject to ‘reconstitute itself from moment to moment, means that desire can never be satisfied; it is always the desire of some other, for another still.’<sup>40</sup> Moran seems to fail to establish his identity through time. Yet, repetition is important precisely for that reason: it creates the setting within which the character will fail. The objective of the character is made clear, it is to follow repetition, to stick to the routine established. Thus, when the objective is not achieved, it is very obvious to the spectator that the character has failed and his desire remains unfulfilled.

Connor also engages with the subject of repetition’s ending point, which will be discussed in the Conclusion. The two types of repetition discussed above, circular and linear, perform the exact opposite actions: circular repetition does not imply an ending, while linear repetition seems to promise one.<sup>41</sup> In Beckett’s work there is a perpetual attempt for repetition to cease and to give its place to a definite end, which does not seem possible, as the end is always deferred to the future. In *Endgame* Clov suggests a way out of repetition: ‘Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there’s a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap.’<sup>42</sup> This little heap features as the at times impossible ending of repetition. In Beckett’s work ‘every unfinished moment requires repetition to bring it to

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<sup>37</sup> Beckett, *Proust*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>38</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 54.

<sup>39</sup> Connor, p. 52.

<sup>40</sup> Connor, p. 52.

<sup>41</sup> Connor, p. 135.

<sup>42</sup> Connor, p. 123.

completeness.<sup>43</sup> Of course, repetition might not be able to stop, but it may decrease. An example of ‘repetition-with-decrease’ could be the gradual burying of Winnie in *Happy Days*, Connor suggests, or the reappearance of Pozzo in Act Two of *Waiting for Godot*: Pozzo appears for the second time on stage, blind and without his watch. As it will be discussed in Chapter Four and the Conclusion, two types of ending are significant to this thesis: the particular time chosen by the performer, choreographer or director to end the repetitive sequence of movement or speech within the performance itself and the ending of a series of returns to the performance that memory seems to perform in certain cases in an attempt to ‘complete’ a performance: ‘This time, then once more, I think, then perhaps a last time, then I think it’ll be over.’<sup>44</sup> The desire for an ending and the need for a sense of resolution will constitute part of this exploration.

In an attempt to trace repetition historically, Connor argues that ‘the modernist imperative to “make it new” has been superseded by a desire to recirculate the old or the already known.’<sup>45</sup> It is particularly since the 1960s that repetition seems to have been used more extensively as an attempt to shift values such as originality and unique expression and to explore the problematic relationship between originality and repetition.<sup>46</sup> The Judson Dance Theater, which uses repetition in innovative ways, seems to historically influence the theatrical work of two important directors: Robert Wilson and Richard Foreman, who are also inspired by the work of Stein. Repetition in post-modernism seems to question and partly solve the problem of ‘making it new.’ What this particular historical moment makes possible is the use of repetition in an interesting, unashamed, audacious way. In what follows, I will attempt to trace the artistic and critical developments that have influenced repetition as it is used today in contemporary performance. The material I trace below creates a particular set of conditions in thought and artistic practice within which my exploration of repetition in contemporary performance will be situated. I sketch out the set of elements that constitute the context in which repetition emerges as a subject of discourse and practice of art making. I will specifically look at Rosalind Krauss’ discussion of the grid and the concept of originality, post-modern choreographic practices of the 1960s and

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<sup>43</sup> Connor, p. 123.

<sup>44</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Molloy* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1959), p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Connor, p. 2.

1970s, Umberto Eco's concept of innovative repetition, John Cage's staging of Erik Satie's *Vexations*, 1970s disco music and 1960's minimalism and the remaking of art through repetition, with examples such as Mark Rothko, Dan Flavin and Piero Manzoni. Although there are of course other historical figures that have dealt with repetition, I particularly select those closer to some of this project's concerns: this chapter is interested in modernism's quest for originality, partly succeeded in the use of repetition. Rosalind Krauss is therefore significant in this discussion. Similarly, Robert Fink usefully connects music with movement, opening a discussion about pleasure and desire within a socio-economic context. These specific practices open interesting discussions about repetition and its experience. The above artists and thinkers extensively use the term 'postmodern' in their discussion of the art of this period. For this reason, before the attempt to trace historically specific practices of repetition, I will discuss postmodernism, particularly as a way of showing that a strict division between modern and postmodern causes certain tensions that this project can use as a way of refusing definition as such, being consistent with a modernist sensibility, while using material that transgresses those two categories.

### **The Postmodern and Repetition**

The term postmodern presents particular difficulties in the field of performance. Nick Kaye, for example, argues that the attempt to define the term 'post-modern' creates certain problems: 'If 'postmodernity' indicates a calling into question of the modernist faith in legitimacy, then it marks modernity as its *end* rather than a true *surpassing* of modernity.'<sup>47</sup> He continues:

Here the postmodern becomes complicated and multiple, occurring as phenomena which define, limit and subvert the cultural products, attitudes and assumptions of modernity. In this case the postmodern cannot be said to be properly 'free' of the modern, for the modern is the ground on which the postmodern stands, a ground with which it is in dispute and on which it is able to enter into dispute with itself.<sup>48</sup>

The postmodern seems to follow, but also to contradict the modern. Kaye suggests that 'the very idea of "theatre" is disruptive of the "modernist" attempt to entrench the work of art

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<sup>47</sup> Nick Kaye, *Postmodernism and Performance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan: 1994), p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Kaye, p. 2.

within a set of unique and exclusive terms, and that the” postmodern” occurs as unstable, “theatrical” and, in certain senses, “interdisciplinary” evasions of definition and foundation.<sup>49</sup> He concludes that

[T]o ‘use’ the postmodern, though, and so to deliberately ‘limit’ it, might not be, quite, to define it. Limiting the postmodern might be more like a local activity, one that tacitly acknowledges its own parameters as much as it strives to confine the postmodernism debate. Rather than seek to *totalise* and so *possess* the term, to hold it within a particular categorical and formal definition, such a limitation might look towards an interrogation of its own terms and assumptions.<sup>50</sup>

Kaye identifies a resistance to do with a categorisation of postmodernism and the tensions created when this categorisation is attempted. Acknowledging the impossibility of limiting the postmodern within specific terms might be more fruitful than attempting to give a precise definition of it and therefore *totalising* or *possessing* the term.

Kaye also engages in a conversation about American dance during the 1960s and its relation to the use of the term ‘postmodern’:

In performance theory and criticism the use of the term ‘postmodern’ has had its longest history in association with the changes in American dance of the early 1960s. Like the modern architectural styles against which Charles Jencks sets his description of the postmodern in art, the rejection of a self-consciously modern and stylised American dance by the dancers and artists associated with the Judson Dance Theater in New York has been taken to mark a radical departure from ‘modern’ modes of work.<sup>51</sup>

Artists that participated in the Judson Dance Theater during the 1960s, such as Yvonne Rainer, use terms analogous to those of Minimal Art. Rainer’s essay ‘A Quasi Survey of Some “Minimalist” Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of *Trio A*’ specifically is such an example. The work of Judson Dance Theater, it seems, ‘does not project itself toward the inherent and unique significance of dance-movement or attempt, after Cage, to produce its antithesis, a “work” which, free of “intention” and “purpose”, reaches toward another “truth”, to something quite beyond the claim to hierarchy or meaning.’<sup>52</sup> There is therefore a collapse of the hierarchy, Kaye suggests, and a denial to give meaning to the elements used in the work.

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<sup>49</sup> Kaye, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Kaye, p. 145.

<sup>51</sup> Kaye, p. 71.

<sup>52</sup> Kaye, p. 103.

Rainer's *Trio A*, for example, 'presents a critique of the nature and effect of conventional stylisation while exposing its own particular construction of movement-elements, its own "minimal style."'53 Kaye also points out that 'dance' like performance might be best thought of as 'a sequence of strategies or bids set in a negotiation over frame, form and content.'54 In this sense, dance can be thought of as fragmented and contingent rather than self-sufficient: 'Where such work comes to be shadowed and even disrupted by the event of its being read, then it reveals a latent instability, a penetration by its immediate circumstances, and in doing so it renders itself uncertain, liable to change.'55 This uncertainty and instability extends to the way in which dance or performance in that context evades definition. Postmodern dance, Kaye continues,

can be read as looking toward a postmodern event; an event which shadows and challenges the move toward conclusion, which forces an instability, a vacillation between definition and displacement, and which reveals events, contingencies and negotiations. It is in the context of this notion of a 'postmodern event', too, and of the variety of strategies that may provoke it, that one might most usefully return to that work which can be set directly against a 'postmodern style'.56

The 'vacillation between definition and displacement' seems significant in terms of the use of the term postmodern. The postmodern, Kaye proposes, 'is not the property of a particular form or vocabulary. In so far as the postmodern in art may be identified with an unstable "event" provoked by a questioning that casts doubt sharply upon even itself, then one characteristic of the postmodern would be its resistance to any simple circumscription of its means and forms.'57

During the 1960s Rainer used the term in order to refer to the work of the Judson Dance Theater merely in chronological terms. By the early 1970s a new aesthetic style occurs, which, as Michael Kirby suggests, does not apply visual standards to the work: 'movement is not preselected for its characteristics but results from certain decision, goals, plans, schemes, rules, concepts or problems.'58 Kirby's definition of postmodern dance seems far too limited for Sally Banes, who suggests that the term, not so common during the early

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<sup>53</sup> Kaye, p. 105.

<sup>54</sup> Kaye, p. 117.

<sup>55</sup> Kaye, p. 117.

<sup>56</sup> Kaye, p. 117.

<sup>57</sup> Kaye, p. 144.

<sup>58</sup> Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), p. xiv.



1970s, has been used in different ways in different contexts in the art world since then. The term 'postmodern' has been used, for example, to challenge values of originality and authenticity and to refer to new trends in architecture. In his book *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, written in 1977, Charles Jencks considered postmodernism as 'a doubly-coded aesthetic that has popular appeal, on the one hand, and esoteric historical significance for the cognoscenti, on the other.'<sup>59</sup> Famously Jameson also based his account on architecture. Banes explains how 'since "modern" in dance did not mean modernist, to be anti-modern was not at all to be anti-modernist. In fact, quite the opposite.'<sup>60</sup> Postmodern dance of the 1970s displayed modernist preoccupations such as the interest in process over product, the breakdown of boundaries between art forms, or new relationships between artist and audience. Banes suggests that the terms postmodern and postmodernist have different connotations and that although initially used by artists, were then used by critics in constricting ways. Yet, Banes argues that the term postmodern dance can actually embrace all three decades of avant-garde dance.

The modern criterion for artistic value was that of novelty, Umberto Eco suggests, whereas the pleasurable repetition of an already known pattern was considered typical of crafts and industry, but not art: 'This is the reason why modern aesthetics was so severe apropos the industrial-like products of the mass media. [...] Furthermore, this excess of pleasurability, repetition, lack of innovation, was felt as a commercial trick [...], not as the provocative proposal of a new (and difficult to accept) world vision.'<sup>61</sup> According to modern aesthetics, the products of mass media were equated with the products of industry and considered as non-artistic. Yet, Eco continues,

modern aesthetics frequently forgot that the classical theory of art, from Ancient Greece to Middle Ages, was not so eager to stress a distinction between arts and crafts. The same term (*techne, ars*) was used to designate both the performance of a barber or a ship-builder, the work of a painter or a poet. The classical aesthetic was not so anxious for innovation at any cost: on the contrary, it frequently appreciated as 'beautiful' the good tokens of an everlasting type.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Charles Jencks cited in Banes, p. xiv.

<sup>60</sup> Banes, p. xv.

<sup>61</sup> Umberto Eco, 'Innovation and Repetition: Between Modern and Post-modern Aesthetics', in *Reading Eco*, ed. by Rocco Capozzi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 14.

<sup>62</sup> Eco, 'Innovation and Repetition', p. 14.

The infinity of the process is, according to post-modern aesthetics, what must be enjoyed, Eco suggests.<sup>63</sup> In the past, ‘mass mediologists tried to save the dignity of repetition by recognizing in it the possibility of a traditional dialectic between scheme and innovation [...]. Now the emphasis must be placed on the inseparable knot of scheme-variation, where the variation is no longer more appreciable than the scheme.’ This for Eco is the birth of a new aesthetic sensibility, which is ‘much more archaic and truly post-post modern.’<sup>64</sup> Eco offers the context within which repetition seems to be possible in postmodernism. He defines postmodernism as the historical period when the concept of repetition is revisited under a different profile and dominates the whole world of artistic creativity. Much art has been and is repetitive, Eco argues, and since various types of repetition have been present in artistic and literary history, they can, therefore, be taken into account in order to establish criteria of artistic value, forming an aesthetics of repetition.<sup>65</sup>

Fredric Jameson considers repetition in the context of late capitalism, exploring the influence of the postmodern in architecture, music, film, visual arts and literature, considering postmodernism not only as a merely stylistic concept, but also a periodising, historical one. According to Jameson,

abstract expressionism in painting, existentialism in philosophy, the final forms of representation in the novel, the films of the great *auteurs*, or the modernist school of poetry [...] all are now seen as the final, extraordinary flowering of a high-modernist impulse which is spent and exhausted with them. The enumeration of what follows, then, at once becomes empirical, chaotic, and heterogeneous: Andy Warhol and pop art, but also photorealism, and beyond it, the “new expressionism”; the moment, in music, of John Cage, but also the synthesis of classical and “popular” styles found in composers like Phil Glass and Terry Riley, and also punk and new wave rock.<sup>66</sup>

The above movements in art and music are concerned with the use of repetition in their cultures. Repetition, it seems, starts to function as an aesthetics at a late modernist cusp and the beginnings of postmodernism. Umberto Eco has shown how repetition exists within a post post modernist context. Below, I will discuss Rosalind Krauss’ writing to show how a distinction between repetition in modern and postmodern repetition might not be useful or,

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<sup>63</sup> Eco, p. 29.

<sup>64</sup> Eco, p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> Eco, p. 29.

<sup>66</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 1.

in fact, possible, since the modernist grid seems to have appeared in visual arts at a very early stage and continued being used beyond modernism. I will refer to examples of repetition given by Bryony Fer in *Infinite Line* and the use of repetition in minimalist and popular music discussed by Fink in *Repeating Ourselves*. Finally, I will refer again to Judson Dance Theater, using the particular instance that Judson is creating work employing repetition as indicative of the way repetition was thought of in the 1960s and 1970s and influential of some of the practices I discuss here.

### Precursors

Rosalind Krauss' 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde' opens with a story about Rodin's largest exhibition at the National Gallery in Washington, 1981, which included a posthumous cast of Rodin's *The Gates of Hell*. Produced more than sixty years after the artist's death and placed next to Rodin's own casts, *The Gates of Hell* posed a question about originality. Krauss argues that the avant-gardist discourse, although having changed a lot over the first hundred years of its existence, held the theme of originality fairly constant: 'more than a rejection or dissolution of the past, avant-garde originality is conceived as a literal origin, a beginning, a ground zero, a birth. [...] The self as origin has the potential for continual acts of regeneration, a perpetual rebirth.'<sup>67</sup> The notion of the 'avant-garde', which can be seen as a function of the discourse of originality, 'tends to reveal that "originality" is a working assumption that itself emerges from a ground of repetition and recurrence.'<sup>68</sup> The grid provides an example of this in the art practices of the avant-garde.

One of the grid's structural properties, Krauss suggests, is its will to silence, its imperviousness to language: 'this silence is not due simply to the extreme effectiveness of the grid as a barricade against speech, but to the protectiveness of its mesh against all intrusions from outside. [...] And in this new-found quiet, what many artists thought they could hear was the beginning, the origins of Art.'<sup>69</sup> The grid also seemed to be emblematic of the artwork's purposelessness or disinterestedness. It also exhibits a double function: it is being paradoxically rediscovered again and again by the artist who has taken up the grid

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<sup>67</sup> Krauss, p. 157.

<sup>68</sup> Krauss, p. 157.

<sup>69</sup> Krauss, p. 158.

as the medium within which to work, always taking it up as though he were just discovering it, as though the origin he had found by peeling back layer after layer of representation to come at last to this schematised reduction, this graph-paper ground were *his* origin, and his finding it an act of originality.<sup>70</sup>

Simultaneously with this perpetually new, unique discovery, the grid also creates a prison in which the caged artist feels at liberty. Yet, Krauss asserts, the grid is difficult to be used in the service of invention. The artists who use the structure of the grid are involved in repetition and not originality. The term ‘repetition’ here seems to have a negative connotation, as Krauss goes on to justify her choice of word by saying that she is not suggesting a negative description of the artistic work: ‘these two terms seem bound together in a kind of aesthetic economy, interdependent and mutually sustaining, although the one – originality – is the valorised term and the other – repetition or copy or duplication – is discredited.’<sup>71</sup> Clearly, repetition is seen as a negative concept opposed to originality. Yet, a paradox occurs: the avant-garde artist enacts her originality in the form of repetition, the creation of grids: ‘Structurally, logically, axiomatically, the grid *can only be repeated*. And with an act of repetition or replication as the “original” occasion of its usage within the experience of a given artist, the extended life of the grid in the unfolding progression of his work will be one of still more repetition.’<sup>72</sup> Krauss argues that the fact that so many twentieth-century artists have placed themselves in a position where ‘they are condemned to repeating, as if by compulsion, the logically fraudulent original’ is compelling.<sup>73</sup> Although the artist attempts to express originality through the grid, this experience of it is a false one: the grid and the canvas surface do not fuse into an absolute unity, the grid follows the canvas surface, it doubles it, it veils the surface instead of revealing it, through repetition. In this way, the modernist grid is a system of reproduction without an original.

This is the perspective from which the real condition of one of the major vehicles of modernist aesthetic practice is seen to derive not from the valorised term of that couple I invoked earlier – the doublet, *originality/repetition* – but from the discredited half of the pair, the one that opposes the multiple to the singular, the reproducible of the unique, the fraudulent to the authentic, the copy to the original. But this is the negative half of the set of

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<sup>70</sup> Krauss, p. 160.

<sup>71</sup> Krauss argues specifically that the work of those artists ‘ceases to develop and becomes involved instead, in repetition.’ Krauss, p. 160.

<sup>72</sup> Krauss, p. 160.

<sup>73</sup> Krauss, p. 160.

terms that the critical practice of modernism seeks to repress, *has* repressed.<sup>74</sup>

Although it seems that within modernism artists use repetition in the form of the grid, modernism considers repetition discredited and attempts to repress it. Modernism and the avant-garde, Krauss shows, are functions of the discourse of originality, which preoccupies the thoughts and practices of the nineteenth and early twentieth century artist. Krauss begins the final section of 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde' with a question: 'What would it look like not to repress the concept of the copy? What would it look like to produce a work that acted out the discourse of reproduction without originals?'<sup>75</sup> In this way, Krauss questions what seems to be forming as a new discourse, the discourse of the copy, which deconstructs the modernist notion of origin, which could also be connected to Connor's argument about repetition and originality, mentioned above. Postmodernism, Krauss continues, establishes a schism between itself and the conceptual domain of the avant-garde. It is thus, she concludes, 'from a strange new perspective that we look back on the modernist origin and watch it splintering into endless replication.'<sup>76</sup>

The dominant tendency towards repetition and seriality that characterizes the innovative art of the late 1950s and 1960s is also discussed by Briony Fer in *The Infinite Line*. Repetition becomes generative of new modes and habits of making and looking and continues to shape much of the art today. Temporality and subjectivity are important in the encounter with the artwork. In her introduction, Fer refers to Borges' novel *Funes the Memorious*. The first sentence of the book is indicative of her argument: 'We are lost without repetition.'<sup>77</sup> The character in Borges' short story is capable of remembering everything and is, therefore, incapable of thinking. Absolute recall, Fer suggests, does not allow him to see recurrence: 'if there is nothing but unrepeatable difference, then there are no patterns of recognition.'<sup>78</sup> Reflecting on Deleuzian repetition, Fer argues that we might be lost without repetition, yet, 'we are also lost to it and in thrall to it'<sup>79</sup>, as repetition is a means of organizing the world, but also a means of disordering and undoing. In the wake of the exhaustion of the modernist aesthetic Fer asks what it is to remake art through repetition, similarly to Krauss.

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<sup>74</sup> Krauss, p. 162.

<sup>75</sup> Krauss, p. 168.

<sup>76</sup> Krauss, p. 170.

<sup>77</sup> Briony Fer, *The Infinite Line* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Fer, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Fer, p. 2.

She focuses on the moment of transition between modernism and postmodernism. Rather than positioning the crucial shift with American minimalism, Fer considers the end of the 1950s as the moment when an aesthetic of seriality or repetition replaces the collage aesthetic. She proposes an alternative model of series, which is connected to Manzoni's heterogeneous series. She points out the 'symptomatic as well as brilliantly diagnostic' preoccupation with repetition of Deleuze, whose book *Difference and Repetition* was published in 1968. Deleuze's proposition of many registers of repetition marks for Fer a significant shift from the way in which repetition was used and thought of within modernism. Repetition in the late 1960s seems to be generative of new aesthetic strategies, which have influenced the art world ever since. This shift to serial strategies involves a shift towards an interest in the problem of temporality. What is most compelling about repetition is the way in which it dramatises the temporal; it animates and transforms the most everyday and routine habits of looking.<sup>80</sup> 'The phenomenological encounter with the art object as it occurs in time is a starting point against which a range of temporal modes are set in play,'<sup>81</sup> Fer argues and continues to say that, for example, the development of installation as a genre 'brings with it a whole set of assumptions about the nature of aesthetic experience as direct and spontaneous' that seems deeply problematic, as repetition produces a certain intensity in its experience.<sup>82</sup> Fer wishes to counter a so-called 'emphatic model of aesthetic experience and consider instead the cuts and dislocations that are a *condition* of viewing. That is to say, the experience of art can be "serial" – understood as a series of disconnections – even if the artwork itself looks as though it is exempt.'<sup>83</sup> Fer's argument about the aesthetic experience of art as a repetitive one and the experience of the cuts and dislocations as a *condition* of art is significant to this project. Experiencing a performance may give rise to a number of occurrences of the performance in a later time. Therefore, the experience of performance is not (only) direct or spontaneous, but happens in a different time and space afterwards, repeatedly, transforming our routine habits of looking and our sense of temporality and generating new forms of experiencing performance. Repetition, in that respect, is, as Fer argues, generative; the new is a *form* of repetition and art is 'one of the very few places in culture that allows a margin of freedom

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<sup>80</sup> Fer, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Fer, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> Fer, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> Fer, p. 4.

*within* repetition,' an exhilarating space, precisely because of its provisional and temporary nature.<sup>84</sup>

Fer discusses Mark Rothko's paintings and their demand for attention through repetition, also referring to Carl Andre's minimalist art and grid format sculptures. Both artists seem to be saying the same thing: 'if a thing is worth doing once, it's worth doing again.'<sup>85</sup> One of the reasons why minimalism repeats is precisely in order to drain the content of the look, creating an infinity *ad infinitum*.<sup>86</sup> For Rothko, repetition functions as a means towards preservation and remembering. Dan Flavin's repetition of fluorescents, on the other hand, aims at disintegrating the space where his installations are placed. Those two functions of repetition are somehow for Fer symmetrical, the one not being a reaction to the other, but 'structurally its flip-side.'<sup>87</sup>

Referring to the work of the Italian artist Piero Manzoni, Fer argues: 'once unlocked, the logic of series transformed the field of art's operation, a fact clearly registered in the work of the younger generation of Italian artists that would go under the name "Arte Povera" from the mid-1960s.'<sup>88</sup> In 1957 Manzoni, following but also contradicting Yves Klein's monochrome paintings, coined the term 'achrome'. Manzoni wanted a white surface, which is 'unfinishable, repeated to infinity, and has a continuity that remains unresolved.'<sup>89</sup> Around the same time, the Russian historical avant-garde was rediscovered in Paris, where Malevich's 1918 *White on White* paintings are exhibited. Manzoni's use of white represented his attempt to *remake* white 'by removing its mystical and transcendental connotations.'<sup>90</sup> All series, Fer argues, are, just like repetition, retrospective: 'the series emerges only once as original has been not just superseded, but suppressed.'<sup>91</sup> Discussing Lucio Fontana's work and his slit paintings Fer comments on the fact that the gesture of slitting, however different the colours the artist used, always remains the same. This happens, according to Fer, not because the difference in colour is unimportant, but rather

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<sup>84</sup> Fer, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> Carl Andre cited in Fer, p. 10.

<sup>86</sup> Fer, p. 10.

<sup>87</sup> Fer, p. 16.

<sup>88</sup> Fer, p. 27.

<sup>89</sup> Piero Manzoni cited in Fer, p. 27.

<sup>90</sup> Fer, p. 28.

<sup>91</sup> Fer, p. 29.

because the gesture of slitting belongs to a different order, the order of repetition.<sup>92</sup> In 1959, the Azimut Gallery in Milan opened with an exhibition of Manzoni's *Linea*: 'The lines were drawn in ink on industrial rolls of paper and cut to various lengths. Manzoni pressed the bottle of ink to the roll of paper which was turned mechanically on a printing roller.'<sup>93</sup> Manzoni stipulated that the lines should be exhibited in cardboard tubes: 'Making the "object" invisible, making the packaging of the object to be looked at, revealed their place within a system of ritual commodity exchange,' Fer argues.<sup>94</sup>

A 'culture of repetition' seems to arise in industrialised societies during the long post-war period of the 1950s and 1960s, Fink suggests. In *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice*, Fink argues that a culture of repetition arises when 'the extremely high level of repetitive structuring necessary to sustain capitalist modernity becomes salient in its own right, experienced directly as constituent of subjectivity.'<sup>95</sup> It is in this sense that we are continually "repeating ourselves," fashioning and regulating our lived selves through manifold experiences of repetition.<sup>96</sup> Control of and by repetition has become, Fink argues, a 'familiar yet unacknowledged aesthetic of late modernity,' at times pleasurable and at times painfully excessive.<sup>97</sup> Discussing repetition's strange and unpredictable surges of intensity, Fink refers to Fluxus composer Dick Higgins, who noted that 'implicit within extreme boredom is extreme danger, and thus extreme excitement.'<sup>98</sup> Boredom bound with excitement has also been discussed and connected to the sentiment of *jouissance* by Barthes in his *Pleasure of the Text* (see Chapter Two). Other critics, Fink continues, have connected those fluctuations of intensity to Lacanian tendencies and the idea of *jouissance* as seen by French feminism and the 'libidinal philosophy' of Jean-François Lyotard and Deleuze. Although Fink finds psychoanalytical approaches to repetition suggestive, his attempt is to link repetitive music to specific historical formations of material culture, tracing the presence of Eros and Thanatos in music, yet seeing those

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<sup>92</sup> Fer, p. 34.

<sup>93</sup> Fer, p. 35.

<sup>94</sup> Fer, p. 35.

<sup>95</sup> Robert Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice* (Berkeley, Calif. and London: University of California Press, 2005), p. 4.

<sup>96</sup> Fink, p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> Fink, p. 4.

<sup>98</sup> Fink, p. 5.



terms as ‘metaphors for the bodily effects of material social constructions.’<sup>99</sup>

In the culture of Eros, repetition is a technique of *desire creation*: under the title ‘Do it (‘Till You’re Satisfied)’, Fink looks at popular music and the ways in which repetition structures culturally adaptive behaviours. Disco and minimalist music are for Fink ‘two linked instances of a new theoretical possibility in late-twentieth-century Western music: not the absence of desire, but the recombination of new experiences of desire [...] processed desire turns out to be the biggest thrill of all.’<sup>100</sup> The minimalist music of Terry Riley, Steve Reich and Phillip Glass uses the ‘incessant pulsed repetition of mass-media,’ Fink argues. Disco music during the seventies makes use of forms of sexual desire and consumer display.<sup>101</sup> Fink gives the example of Donna Summer and Giorgio Moroder’s ‘Love to Love you Baby,’ the first extended dance remix in disco history, as an example of disco music that can help ‘uncover in detail the libidinal realities of the rhythmic repetition and process it shares so obviously with minimalism.’<sup>102</sup> Both disco and minimalism use ‘large amounts of “hypnotic” repetition to reconfigure a fundamental phenomenological aspect of the Western listening experience: the sense that the music has a coherent *teleology*.’<sup>103</sup> Repetition in contemporary performance is used sometimes in very similar ways: De Keersmaeker’s *Piano Phase*, 1982, based on Reich’s music, challenges the Western music aesthetic of teleology (see Chapters Two and Three). Similarly, Leonard Meyer’s commentary on Cage’s music argues: ‘The music of the avant-garde directs us towards no points of culmination – establishes no goals toward which to move. It arouses no expectations, except presumably that it will stop.’<sup>104</sup> Connor in his account of Beckett identifies a similar use of repetition, arguing that, as I will show later, bound with the desire for repetition to stop, there is always a fear that it *will* stop.<sup>105</sup> Broadening the scope of Meyer’s argument, Michael Nyman suggests that experimental music replaces the teleology of the ‘time-object’ with the antiteleology of the process.<sup>106</sup> One of the reasons why, for John Rockwell, Western music has a teleological nature is because its paradigm is the

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<sup>99</sup> Fink, p. 7.

<sup>100</sup> Fink, p. 9.

<sup>101</sup> Fink, p. 9.

<sup>102</sup> Fink, p. 31.

<sup>103</sup> Fink, p. 31.

<sup>104</sup> Leonard Meyer, *Music, the Arts and Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 72.

<sup>105</sup> Connor, p. 32, (see Chapter Four, p. 152).

<sup>106</sup> Fink, p. 33.

sexual act. That is why climax, or orgasm, is so central to Western music, ‘since music is the art closest to the emotions and to sexuality.’<sup>107</sup> Minimalist music, such as that of Glass and Reich, Rockwell continues, follow a non-Western notion of musical stasis, yet adapted to the Western sensibility.<sup>108</sup> In investigating the ‘erotics’ of repetitive music, following Susan Sontag’s term, Fink argues that music such as rock music or Beethoven is usually seen as one of the ‘phallogentric narrative teleology,’ which could be compared to a musical text of *plaisir*. Respectively, minimalist music is interested in the sustained erotic pleasure and thus paralleled to the texts of *jouissance*.<sup>109</sup> The Barthesian terms *plaisir* and *jouissance* as sentiments that distinguish the theatrical experience are very useful in this project (see Chapter Two).

Although in general terms Fink agrees that minimalist or disco music resist an emphatic closure, he asks: if not a certain type of teleological pleasure, ‘what is the purpose of all that building up and breaking down?’ He argues that, in fact, disco music has a very carefully shaped teleological build up. The use of the Barthesian terms *plaisir* and *jouissance*, which draws a distinction between two kinds of experiencing of repetition, does not necessarily exclude teleological narrative aesthetics in the case of *jouissance* or confirms it in texts of pleasure. Experiencing a performance is different in each case as well as in each revisiting of repetition. It is precisely for this reason that I focus on the return to the performances I write about, a return that performs the differences between the experiences of *plaisir* and *jouissance*.

From the above it appears that not only has repetition been present in modernism all along, but it has also influenced art practices, which actively start exploring repetition as a valued element in the work. Certain knowledge about the embodied experience of repetition becomes important through experiencing consumerist production, which emerges as a subject matter and a methodology for art making. In *Against Interpretation* Susan Sontag suggests that ‘ours is a culture based on excess, on overproduction; the result is a steady

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<sup>107</sup> Fink, p. 34.

<sup>108</sup> John Rockwell cited in Fink, p. 35.

<sup>109</sup> Fink, p. 37.

loss of sharpness in our sensory experience.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, it is important, she concludes, to recover our senses and to replace hermeneutics with ‘an erotics of art’.<sup>111</sup>

Returning to Judson Dance Theater, it seems that a resistance is performed in terms of placing the work within a specific context. Nick Kaye suggests that

the resistance to category that underlies this notion of the post-modern might be set against the implicit privileging, here, of performance as a ‘primary postmodern mode’. If the postmodern occurs as a disruption of discourse and representation, then it cannot be associated in any exclusive way with a particular form or mode. If the ‘postmodern event’ occurs as a breaking away, a disruption of what is ‘given’, then ‘its’ forms cannot usefully be pinned down in any final or categorical way.<sup>112</sup>

Judson Dance Theater occupies an important space both as the precursor of some of the performance and dance-theatre I am dealing with here and as a group that is located in the passage from modernism to postmodernism. Some of the dancers of Judson Dance Theater incorporated in their practices elements of chance, indeterminacy and found movement. Judson was also interested in long durations and repetitive movement, which changed through time. For example, Yvonne Rainer writes about her use of repetition:

I have rarely used the kind of repetition that causes ‘one thing’ to go on for a very long time, as La Monte Young has done in music and David Gordon and Simone [Forti] Whitman have done in dancing. *We Shall Run* bordered on it. It was a 7-minute piece for 12 people with a very bombastic portion of Berlioz’ *Requiem*. The only movement was a steady trot, but the constantly shifting patterns and re-grouping of runners were as essential to the effect as the sameness of the movement. The object here was not repetition as a formal device but to produce an ironic interplay with the virtuosity and flamboyance of the music.<sup>113</sup>

Repetition is here used ‘not as a formal device’, but rather as a playful element, which aims to explore the choreographic possibilities of movement. This is perhaps the most important legacy of the Judson Dance Theater, as Banes suggests, that is the expansion and exploration of choreographic methods and the use of ‘so many different kinds of choreographic structures and devices that for the generations that have followed their

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<sup>110</sup> Susan Sontag, ‘Against Interpretation’, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966), p. 14.

<sup>111</sup> Sontag, ‘Against Interpretation’, p. 14.

<sup>112</sup> Kaye, *Postmodernism and Performance*, p. 144.

<sup>113</sup> Yvonne Rainer in Sally Banes, *Democracy’s Body: Judson Dance Theatre, 1962-1964* (Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 87

message was clear: not only any movement or any body, but also any method is permitted.<sup>114</sup> Within that space of freedom and exploration, Judson Dance Theatre used repetition of pedestrian or quotidian movement to examine the possibilities of choreography. The aims of this group of dancers, choreographers and musicians concerned the use of new methods and ways of thinking around dance, the breaking away from already given dance forms and the use of new, innovative creative strategies. As such Judson contributed to a slow development of a particular kind of spectatorship. Experimental dance performances such as the ones mentioned above positioned spectators in a different relationship to the performance ‘by making them actively read works and appreciate them from particular, embodied points of view’, as Ramsay Burt points out.<sup>115</sup> This shift in the role of the spectator is central to my argument, as it will become apparent later on. The Judson Dance Theater’s practices therefore are significant to this project for the following reasons: the difficulty in placing the Judson Dance Theater in either modernism or postmodernism shows that the particular cultural moment was a passage from one to the other, yet, it also enables me to suggest that the distinction between the two might not be useful in terms of this project, which also uses a selection of material which transgresses the categories or includes people that do so. Also, the innovative way in which they experimented with movement, repetition and durations have influenced the majority of the choreographic practices I am dealing with here.

Chapter One has offered examples of developments in artistic and critical practice, which seem to have influenced the way repetition is used in contemporary performance. Chapter Two will present an account of Bausch’s and De Keersmaeker’s dance-theatre and the ways in which repetitive movement is experienced in these cases by the spectator. The Barthesian discourse will be crucial in framing my argument. As it will become obvious, this thesis uses a wide range of practices which derive from different historical, cultural and aesthetic contexts, however they also share very distinct ways of dealing speech, rhythm, movement and time; their use of repetition becomes therefore the imperative of this thesis.

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<sup>114</sup> Sally Banes, ‘Choreographic Methods of the Judson Dance Theater’ in *Moving History / Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, ed. by Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), p. 350.

<sup>115</sup> Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 14.

## Repeat Repeat: After Roland Barthes

This chapter argues that the pleasure of repetition lies in the experience of *plaisir* and *jouissance* arising from an interplay between performance and spectatorship. The use of repetition as a structural means and constitutive element of performance raises questions such as: how does one encounter repetition? Are there different types of repetition used in performance? How might repetition influence the temporality of spectatorship? How can one write about the experience of repetition? This thesis attends to the particular ways in which repetitive movement, speech and structures affect spectatorship.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I examine Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's performance *Fase: Four Movements to the Music of Steve Reich* (1982) and Pina Bausch's *Bluebeard: Listening to a Tape-Recording of Béla Bartók's Opera: Bluebeard's Castle* (1977). The experience of repetition from the spectator's as well as the performer's perspective is discussed through the performance *A Valediction on a Falling Microphone*, the first of the two performances from my own performance practice discussed in this thesis. In what follows I give brief descriptions of *Bluebeard*, *Piano Phase* and *Valediction*.

Bausch directed *Bluebeard: Listening to a Tape-Recording of Béla Bartók's Opera: Bluebeard's Castle* for the Tanztheater Wuppertal in 1977. The performance is an adaption of Béla Bartók's opera and it takes place in a room, the floor of which is covered with dead leaves. Jan Minarik, Bluebeard, and Beatrice Libonati, Judith, are the principal dancers. The action begins when Bluebeard brings his new wife home. Bluebeard puts on a record of Bartók's music, and dances with Judith. At some point, Judith, facing the audience, attempts an embrace with Bluebeard, who, also facing the audience, refuses to hold her. Judith falls on the floor. Judith's attempt to be embraced by Bluebeard is repeated again and again. Judith is falling again and again in front of Bluebeard, until, eventually, he catches her falling body.

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<sup>1</sup> As I will show later in this chapter, spectatorship in some cases reveals some of the characteristics of performing.

*Fase: Four Movements to the Music of Steve Reich*, the 1982 debut of the dance ensemble Rosas, is directed by De Keersmaecker and has been performed internationally since. In *Piano Phase*, 2006, De Keersmaecker and Tale Dolven dance to the homonym music of Reich. The two women in white dresses and trainers start a seemingly endless rhythmic spinning around oneself. They are lit in such a way that their shadows reflected on the wall behind create a triple effect: one can see both of the dancers' shadows, as well as a third one, which is the result of both of them overlapping. The two dancers extend their arms, at times synchronously, at times out of synch with each other, continuously turning around. Their movement attempts to mirror Reich's effect of phase-shifting in music (see p. 84).

The performance *A Valediction on a Falling Microphone* was devised and performed by Dagmara Bilon and myself in 2006 for the Man-in-Fest Festival of Contemporary Theatre, which took place in the city of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. In the performance, Dagmara and I experiment with constellations of fragments consisting of repetitive phrases and movement, each phrase corresponding to a movement. In the first part of the piece we perform the phrases repetitively and in the second, the movements. In the third part we record the phrases on a tape-recorder. We then rewind and play the recording of the phrases, performing at the same time the movements to which the phrases correspond.

This chapter makes use of Roland Barthes' account of the pleasures of reading and writing. Drawing and expanding on the Barthesian notions of the *readerly* and *writerly*, I propose two modes of spectating: I suggest that the viewer can either create or *write* the *performerly* performance in the act of viewing, or simply watch or *read* the *spectatorly* one. Central to the development of this argument are the notions of Barthesian *plaisir* and *jouissance*, through which I examine the viewer's experience of repetition. In the subsection 'Why Roland Barthes' I set out the reasons why Barthes' mode of writing is crucial to this analysis. I continue by explaining Barthes' distinction between the *writerly* and *readerly* and by comparing my experience of the two performances in terms of the quality of the movement and its dramaturgy. I also make use of Barthes' 'drift' as a way of experiencing repetition as well as his idea of *punctum* as the hidden subject of the picture. As time influences the perception of the two performances, towards the end of this chapter I return to them through memory and give

a new account of the way repetition and the memory of it is experienced. The way repetition in contemporary performance causes such returns is the subject of Chapter Four and has formed the title of this thesis. Finally, I examine the impact Reich's phase shifting might have had on my experience of De Keersmaeker's *Fase*, addressing specifically the difficulties the minimalist music may produce in the listening act.

Why Roland Barthes?

Barthes' writing is significant to this thesis for two main reasons: it is a writing of eroticism related to pleasure and *jouissance* and it is a writing that *performs*. Barthes' language is a language of desire: 'the text you write must prove to me *that it desires me*. This proof exists: it is writing.'<sup>2</sup> Barthes' language 'seduces' or 'wounds' the reader. It carries an erotic force that establishes a sense of anticipation towards *plaisir* or *jouissance* and therefore *performs* an erotic encounter with the reader. In this encounter, the text appears 'as a body imbued with libidinal energy'<sup>3</sup> and the reader as the one that desires that body. It is, therefore, the pleasure of the process of writing or reading, and not so much the pleasure of the text itself, that is significant to my argument, a process during which writing functions as a space within which repetition takes place and is allowed to unfold again and again.

As already mentioned in Chapter One, the differences emerging from repetition could be experienced imperceptibly like a circle which is traced twice in Derrida's words.<sup>4</sup> The imperceptible differences experienced in this 'tracing twice', Derrida suggests, permit us 'to exit from closure.'<sup>5</sup> We therefore might experience difference in this gradual process of unfolding, in which we expect something to happen: 'the book has lived on this lure: to have given us to believe that passion, having originally been impassioned by *something*, could in the end be appeased by return of that *something*.'<sup>6</sup> In a way, what we expect is not only that *something*, but also the process of anticipating that *something*. Within the present thesis, the return of that *something* has also to do with the return of the desire to anticipate. Derrida's statement brilliantly articulates what

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<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1975), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Laurence D. Kritzman, 'Roland Barthes: The Discourse of Desire and the Question of Gender', *MLN*, 103, 4, (1988), 848-64 (p. 848).

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Ellipsis', *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 296.

<sup>5</sup> Derrida, p. 295.

<sup>6</sup> Derrida, p. 295.

seems to be the lure of this thesis: I return back to the performances again and again to re-experience not only *something*, but also what has triggered that *something*, the passion, or pleasure, or discomfort or *jouissance* experienced during the performance. My encounter with the performances invites me to return to it, having performed a certain quality, a lure, which insists on my re-performance of repetition. This encounter has made me trust that the passion experienced in the first place will return in a performance of the desire to re-live repetition, a desire fulfilled, in some cases, by the anticipation of that passion.

In his essay 'To Write: An Intransitive Verb?' Barthes suggests that the voice of the verb 'to write' is *always already* active and its person is the first one (*I*). To show this, Barthes quotes Emile Benveniste: *I* is nothing but 'the person who utters the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance *I*.'<sup>7</sup> Benveniste approaches, thus, J. L. Austin's idea of the performative, which, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has suggested, 'keeps going back to the formula 'first person, singular indicative active'<sup>8</sup> (I bet, I promise, etc.). Dissociating *writing* from its object, the verb is rendered intransitive and writing constitutes an *act* in itself: 'to write is today to make oneself the centre of the action of speech, it is to affect writing by affecting oneself, to make action and affection coincide, to leave the scriptor inside the writing [...], but as agent of the action.'<sup>9</sup> Writing for Barthes is an action of speech or a speech act, which affects the writer and reader. The coincidence of the action of reading or writing with the affection that this might provoke is an important aspect of the process of writing, which interests Barthes as well as Gertrude Stein, as I will show in Chapter Three. This kind of writing 'do[es] not "describe" or "report" or constate anything at all,' but instead 'is, or is part of, the *doing* of an action.'<sup>10</sup> This *doing* is what Barthes seeks through his writing and it is this quality of writing that interests me deeply, as, this is what repetitive text or repetitive writing *does* too, as I will show here.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Emile Benveniste cited in Roland Barthes, 'To Write: An Intransitive Verb?', *The Rustle of Language* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1986), p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*', *A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, 1, 1 (1993), 1-16 (p. 3-4).

<sup>9</sup> Barthes, 'To Write: An Intransitive Verb?', p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> In the following chapter, I will consider repetitive writing in Stein's text as a decisive means towards the coincidence of action and emotion, that Barthes discusses here. J. L. Austin, 'Lecture I', *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. by J. O. Urmson, (London: Clarendon Press, 1962).

<sup>11</sup> Peggy Phelan argues that Barthes' writing is a 'writing towards disappearance,' rather than a writing towards preservation. Phelan, following J. L. Austin, also suggests that performative utterances, like



Influenced by the French novelist, Barthes argues that Alain Robbe-Grillet's writing is one that does not reveal, but performs, it is not expressive, but creative, or performative: 'les constellations d'objets ne sont pas expressives, mais créatrices; elles ont à charge, non de révéler, mais d'accomplir'<sup>12</sup> ('the constellations of objects are not expressive, but creative; their purpose is not to reveal but to perform'<sup>13</sup>). Barthes encounters the words that Robbe-Grillet uses as objects, the constellations of which do not merely describe, but rather *do* or *perform* what they describe. This quality of language (its performativity) is significant, as one, amongst others, that repetition both acquires and deploys. Judith Butler uses similar vocabulary in order to describe gender's performativity: 'If gender attributes [...] are not expressive, but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal.'<sup>14</sup> In his translation of Barthes' text, Richard Howard conveys the meaning of the verb 'accomplir' with the English 'perform' and the adjective 'créatrices' as 'performative'. It seems that the specific choice of the word reveals, or rather *performs* a specific function: Robbe-Grillet's constellations accomplish their meaning in the act of reading or writing, which is a performative act. Both Butler and Barthes make the distinction between expressive and performative, yet Barthes clearly distinguishes 'reveal' from 'perform' or 'accomplish.' Barthes attributes this quality to Robbe-Grillet's writing, while at the same time it seems that it is a quality, which characterises his own particular use of language. Thus Barthes' discussion of pleasure and language is itself a theory of the performativity of language, which he applies through his own writing.

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performances, cannot be repeated. Although performative utterances in performance may not have the ability to be preserved, that is, repeated, I suggest that repetitive text or movement could perhaps generate performative utterances repetitively.

Peggy Phelan, 'The Ontology of Performance: Representation Without Reproduction', *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge 1993), pp. 148-49.

<sup>12</sup> Roland Barthes, *Essais critiques* (Paris: Éditions du seuil, 1964), p. 66. At the end of this section I explain the reasons why I have chosen to quote Barthes both in English and French.

<sup>13</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Literal Literature', *Critical Essays*, trans. by Ricgard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), p. 54. Henri Lefebvre refers to the rhythm that constellations might create: he quotes Julio Cortázar's *Les Gagnants*: 'When we look at a constellation, we are certain that a rhythm comes from the stars, a rhythm that we suppose because we think that there is "something" "up there" that coordinates these elements, which is more substantial than each star taken separately.'

Julio Cortázar, *Les Gagnants* cited in Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* (London: Continuum 2004), p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. by Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1990), p. 279.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to quote Barthes both in French and English, so as to attain the meaning of certain passages in French. Furthermore, in order to preserve the distinct quality of the word *jouissance*, a term which appears crucial to my argument, I have chosen to use the French word throughout this thesis. The usual translation of the word into English ('bliss') seems problematic, as it carries no connotations whatsoever of the feeling of difficulty that *jouissance* expresses and of the sexual 'jouir' (to ejaculate). In regards to translation, Richard Howard specifically argues: 'if we wish to speak of the kind of pleasure we take – the supreme pleasure, say, associated with sexuality at its most abrupt and ruthless pitch – we lack the terms acknowledged and allowed in polite French utterance; we lack *jouissance* and *jouir*, as Barthes uses them here.'<sup>15</sup> I will, for that reason, use both *plaisir* and *jouissance* (in italics), sometimes though still using the English noun or adjective when necessary.

### ***Formerly performance***

Having discussed the importance of Barthes' performative language and before engaging with his *writerly* text, I would like to refer to some examples of existing critical writing on the performance material I am addressing in this chapter, giving first a brief introduction of the practices of the two choreographers and the contexts of work within which they operated. I will then move on to illustrate the differences between the *writerly* and the *readerly* and to thus propose the *performerly* as a spectating mode.<sup>16</sup> Some of the critical material I address here refer to performances similar to those I contemplate. I discuss Ramsay Burt's essay on both De Keersmaeker's *Rosas Danst Rosas* (1983) and *Café Müller* (1978). I also discuss Adrian Heathfield's account of a performative instance of falling in Bausch's *Café Müller* (1978), which is similar to the one I discuss here. It is important to note that I watched *Bluebeard* on a videotape and *Piano Phase* live both at the Barbican Theatre and Sadler's Wells. The different orders of the initial encounters with these repetitions will be addressed later, when I return to these sequences to consider how my subsequent re-performance of them, in memory, has produced new differences in repetition. In addition to Burt's discussion of repetition

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Howard, 'A Note on the Text', in Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. v.

<sup>16</sup> Following Barthes' use of italics in both *writerly* and *readerly*, I italicise both *performerly* and *spectatorly*.

in his 'Repetition: Brown, Bausch and De Keersmaeker' in *Judson Dance Theater*, and Heathfield's essay 'After the Fall,' I also engage with Ciane Fernandes' *Pina Bausch and The Wuppertal Dance Theatre: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation* as well as Timothy Scheie's article 'Performing Degree Zero: Barthes, Body, Theatre' in *Theatre Journal* (also referring briefly to his book entitled *Performance Degree Zero: Roland Barthes and Theatre*) in order to gain an additional perspective on the relation between Barthes' writing and performance.

Pina Bausch was trained at the Folkwang School in Essen during the 1950's under influential choreographer Kurt Jooss, whose philosophy of movement rooted in German *Ausdruckstanz*. She then pursued further training at the Juilliard School of Music in New York, where she became aware of the innovative experiments in dance and music taking place in the US during the 1960's. She then became a soloist in Jooss Folkwang Ballet Company assisting him with many of its productions, before she choreographed her first dance piece in 1968. In her own practice, Bausch used the German tradition of *Ausdruckstanz* or 'expressionist dance', linked with artists such as Mary Wigman, Rudolph von Laban, Harald Kreutzberg and others, and the influence of the American modern dance to create a distinct dance genre of dance theatre in Wuppertal in the beginning of the 1970's. In working with the Wuppertal Dance Theatre, Bausch revived traditions of expressionism, interested in the expressing potential of the body next to an exploration of everyday movement and a physical vocabulary built on personal experience, autobiographical references and improvisation.<sup>17</sup> She used repetition in her physically demanding choreographies, as a means towards bodily and emotional exhaustion and in an attempt to reveal intrinsic human behaviours and their dysfunctions. Her work which is connected to expressionism and has been shown worldwide, has influenced all forms of contemporary dance ever since, revealing her ability to 'combine movement of shocking visceral intensity with stage visions of often hallucinogenic strangeness', as Judith Mackrell has written about Wuppertal Tanztheater's *Rite of Spring* at Sadler's Wells in 2008.<sup>18</sup> *Café Müller*, which will be discussed below through the accounts of both Heathfield and Burt, is one of her most well known and intimate works, which is based on the memories of her childhood. This

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<sup>17</sup> Norbert Servos, *Pina Bausch: Dance Theatre*, (Munich: Kieser, 2008), trans. by Stephen Morris, pp. 11-17.

<sup>18</sup> Judith Mackrell, Guardian online < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2008/feb/14/dance1> > [accessed 15 October 2010].

thesis however is concerned with Bausch's *Bluebeard* and particularly with a scene which exemplifies similarities to *Café Müller* in its use of repetitive falling.

During the 1980's De Keersmaecker created her first piece entitled *Asch* in New York. That was a very influential period of work for the choreographer, as it enabled her to create her second and most important work *Fase: Four Movements to the Music of Steve Reich* two years later. During her stay in the United States, De Keersmaecker had met and worked with members of Steve Reich's ensemble. Having choreographed *Violin Phase* and *Come out* in New York and *Piano Phase* and *Clapping Music* in Belgium, De Keersmaecker presented *Fase* for the first time in Brussels in 1982, which enabled her to create the company *Rosas*. The strong minimalist music of the piece has provided a strong basis for her choreographic ventures since then. More significantly, De Keersmaecker's investment in both minimalism and expressionist dance is of particular importance to this project. Martha Bremser writes:

De Keersmaecker's keen rhythmic sense and intelligence in structuring complex movement phrasing was realised in this compelling dance. Reich's pulsing music phrasing was not mirrored in her movement, but rather was played against her own unique configurations. The driving visual force and intense dramatic quality portrayed by these riveted women was a forecast of the tough expressionistic voice that was soon to emerge.<sup>19</sup>

Importantly then, although deriving from different dance practices, these two choreographers share an enthusiasm about repetition and expressionistic dance. However, the dissimilarities are also obvious. De Keersmaecker shows an investment in minimalism, whereas Bausch's musical choices range from Stravinsky to Béla Bartók, while their use of repetition has been influenced by the innovative American dance practices of the 1960's as well as their own traditions of work.

Burt compares three dance pieces: Trisha Brown's *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor*, De Keersmaecker's *Rosas Danst Rosas* and Bausch's *Café Müller*. Burt argues that these works use 'serial repetition' following a minimalist sensibility and creating a 'false problem,' to recall Rosalind Krauss's terms discussed in Chapter One (pp. 36-37). This 'problem' functions as the context or pretext for the performance, as it happens in some of minimal art. The use of repetition creates a sense of being

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<sup>19</sup> Martha Bremser, *Fifty Contemporary Choreographers* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 84.

suspended, or being in a world without a centre, an element also found in the minimalist choreographies of the 1960s. Burt argues that this indirect and disorienting quality of metonymy, a term he frequently uses, borrowing from Roman Jakobson, to denote the indirect associations between words and objects, produces through repetition ‘levels of meaning that exceed the explicit content of the material repeated.’<sup>20</sup> Burt proposes that this happens as a ‘symptom[s] of unresolved tensions within each of these pieces.’<sup>21</sup> He notes that repetition in *Café Müller* functions in a dramatic context with identifiable characters and events based on past experiences, whereas De Keersmaecker’s performance could be situated ‘on a continuum between dramaturgy and formal abstraction.’<sup>22</sup> Repetition in *Café Müller* expresses a repressed situation that ‘could not be remembered, but was nevertheless relived.’<sup>23</sup> The dancers express a resistance to ideological norms through repetition and its physicality. In *Bluebeard*, I will argue, there is also such an unresolved tension in experiencing Libonati’s falling. Libonati is resisting being caught in her repetitive fall: the fall itself exhibits and at the same time initiates resistance. In her resistance, Libonati appears autonomous, until the moment that she is caught. It is this possibility of losing the ability to resist that creates here the unresolved tension that Burt identifies in *Café Müller*. Similarly, in De Keersmaecker’s *Piano Phase*, the turning around of the two dancers generates, for the viewer, a sentiment of tension, which remains unresolved, as there is no ‘real’ closure in the dance sequence. Burt’s suggestion that Bausch is working with dramaturgy, whereas De Keersmaecker works with formal abstraction, could also be argued in relation to *Bluebeard* and *Piano Phase*: Libonati and Minarik clearly create a set of narratives connected to the myth of Bluebeard, being ‘identifiable characters’, as Burt says, which affects the way the viewer relates to the piece. On the other hand, *Piano Phase* does not communicate a story or a narrative as such, the dance’s quality is very abstract and repetition suspends time. In *Rosas Danst Rosas* De Keersmaecker’s dancers do not refuse their gendered repetitions, but perhaps deviate slightly from them, refusing to fully comply with them.<sup>24</sup> Although in my account of De Keersmaecker’s performance (*Piano Phase*) I am not directly engaging in a conversation about gender, it seems that De Keersmaecker’s and Tale Dolven’s spinning around feels more distant and formal

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<sup>20</sup> Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 144.

<sup>21</sup> Burt, p. 144.

<sup>22</sup> Burt, p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> Burt, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup> Burt, p. 156.

because of the way gender is not directly discussed through the dance, in opposition to Bausch's *Bluebeard*. For Burt, the structure of allegory that both Bausch and De Keersmaecker use is important as one that allows a plurality of meaning, through repetition, and resists the existence of a sole explanation.

Heathfield discusses the dynamics of gender, sex and sexuality in human relationships in connection with a certain kind of 'wounding,' which appears in the centre of the question posed by performances such as Bausch's. The performing body is a means through which one is able to articulate this wounding (and perhaps cure it). Heathfield argues that it is the attempt to articulate the wound that made the repetition of falling such a dominant motif in the choreography of dance:

[T]rusting in relation, in the will and flesh of others, dance-theatre's emblematic, sacrificial body fell again and again, subject to the violent disregard of the other. The other couldn't catch the fall. But the fall contained an imperative, like all sacrifices, for the social body (the audience): the imperative to recognise, remember and repair.<sup>25</sup>

As an example of falling, Heathfield uses a moment from Bausch's *Café Müller*, which exhibits obvious similarities to the moment I write about in *Bluebeard*. In *Café Müller*, Malou Airaudo falls repeatedly through the arms of Dominique Mercy to the floor. Jan Minarik places the two of them in a loving embrace. Airaudo falls and stands up and holds him tight. Minarik places her again on Mercy's arms, she falls on the floor and stands up to hold him tight. The sequence continues, but each time something changes in it: the movements are now danced in a more frenzied way, the dance becomes more urgent, the embrace fragile and necessary. Repetition both generates and underlines the dance's imperative. The spectator of *Café Müller*, it seems, is invited to recognise, remember the performance and repair it in memory. Next to his critical approach to Bausch's performance, Heathfield also offers, as suggested in the Introduction, a kind of writing of the event, following the performance's demand to be retained. Time, desire and memory are the three factors that interfere in order for this writing to take place and for the relationship between the spectator and writing to develop.<sup>26</sup> The performance happens again through writing, which takes place in and through time. Bausch's and De Keersmaecker's performances perform, it seems, the same demand. There is an urge or a

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<sup>25</sup> Adrian Heathfield, 'After the Fall: Dance-Theatre and Dance-Performance', in *Contemporary Theatres in Europe: A Critical Companion*, ed. by Joe Kelleher and Nicholas Ridout (London: Routledge 2006), p. 189.

<sup>26</sup> Heathfield, 'After the Fall', p. 194.

desire to *write* each performance and the experience of them as remembered, to write *them* more than once, as time makes an impression on memory in different ways and the new event demands to be re-written.

The incomplete play of social relations that Bausch's performance deals with, Heathfield argues, creates a longing for some kind of closure. Yet, one is asked to confront the space between 'self-knowledge and self-loss, remembrance and forgetting, desire and its realisation.'<sup>27</sup> The difficulty of dealing with the feelings of the incomplete that repetition generates connects to the way repetition influences perception of time. Heathfield argues:

The use of gestural repetition and difference, cyclical events and relations, creates suspensions and returns in our experience, problematises our tendency to rationalise time. The tempo of movement itself follows an errant order, an invisible dynamic, alternatively volatile and slow, persistent and inconsistent. [...] *Café Müller* seduces its spectator into a similar reverential temporality, where the predominant cultural orders of time – linear, progressive and accumulative – are suspended. These aesthetic manoeuvres plunge us into the suppressed orders of temporality in contemporary Western capitalist cultures: time as it is lived in felt experience, in the folds and flows of phenomenal relation.<sup>28</sup>

It is precisely this 'felt experience' of repetition in a 'lived time' that profoundly interests me and makes Heathfield's approach so useful. Heathfield's approach to performance demands from the viewer a logic based on the experiential and the sensual. Unlike Burt's account of the two choreographers, which prioritises ideological effects, my account of the two performances stresses their affective effects, following a logic of emotional development, closer to that offered in Heathfield's approach to Tanztheater. Performance's imperative that we 'remember and repair' as well as Heathfield's attempt to *write* the event will be significant in the discussion of repetition throughout the thesis.

In *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theatre: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation* Ciane Fernandes attempts to interpret Bausch's work in terms of the functions and implications of repetition. The use of everyday gestures and phrases, which are momentarily perceived as spontaneous, but then repeated again and again,

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<sup>27</sup> Heathfield, 'After the Fall', p. 191.

<sup>28</sup> Heathfield, 'After the Fall', pp. 192-93. I would like to note that like *Café Müller*, which seduces the spectator into a different temporality, Barthes' language also seduces the reader into a different type of experience and that Heathfield's text itself seduces its reader into a different type of encounter with language and performance.

influences the spectator's experience: a strong sense of the incomplete is developed, while repeated words obtain an abstract quality. Exhaustive repetition of the above affects both performers and audience. Bausch's theatre, according to Fernandes, has to do with the 'unrest' of the sign, its arbitrariness and ambiguity, as repetition 'initially provokes personal separation from the created form, and only later does it create meanings out of the form.'<sup>29</sup> Repetition generates infinite, unpredictable meanings at the same time that it discards them. Meaning can be attached to the form of dance at the same time that is detached from it or dissolved. Fernandes suggests that Bausch's work uses repetition and transformation in a play between signifier and signified. Using the example of the Moebius Strip, Fernandes suggests a categorisation of repetition could be as follows:

Formal Repetitions include: the exact repetition of a movement phrase – ('obsessive'); the repetition of a scene with subtle changes ('altered'); the repetition of the same event in different context ('intermittent'); the repetition of previously repeated events simultaneously in the same scene ('long-range'). Reconstructive Repetitions include the reconstruction of the dancers' past experiences (mainly from childhood) and the reconstruction of a traditional tale or opera. Such reconstructions do not necessarily include the formal repetition of movement and words in performance.<sup>30</sup>

Repetition explores and unsettles or '(de)constructs' ways of dancing and watching dance, Fernandes suggests. The meaning of movements and words is, therefore, constantly shifting, and this becomes the choreography's subject.<sup>31</sup> Difference is placed at the heart of this process. Repetition provokes a sensed need for completion, yet, meanings are always challenged and multiplied. Thus, identity is constructed on 'this constant search for outer completeness and recurring loss through and within language.'<sup>32</sup> Fernandes' use of Kristeva's definition of the sign as 'an open system of transformation and generation' in relation to repetitive movement and speech, which are perpetually generative of new meanings, seems to open a useful dialogue with the Barthesian idea of the *writerly*. Furthermore, the belated performance of meaning that Fernandes discusses, as well as the longing for a sentiment of fulfilment, will also be discussed below, as reasons why one might go back to re-experience performance and observe the differences repetition might generate.

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<sup>29</sup> Ciane Fernandes, *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theatre: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation* (New York and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 33.

<sup>30</sup> Fernandes, p. 80.

<sup>31</sup> Fernandes, p. 80.

<sup>32</sup> Fernandes, p. 79.



As I am seeking to restore a connection between Barthes' theoretical concepts of writing and performance, I should also address Scheie's discussion of Barthes' relationship with performance. In 'Performing Degree Zero: Barthes, Body, Theatre,' (which preceded his book), Scheie suggests that in Barthes' case writing appears as a performance in itself and presents Barthes as a theorist of performance. Scheie specifically engages with Barthes' inability to include the idea of the 'body' (le corps) in his discussion of theatre. More specifically, Scheie argues, it is not the body itself, but rather live performance practice that Barthes excluded from his writing after 1960.<sup>33</sup> Scheie refers to Barthes' call for a viable popular theatre in France through his writings in *Théâtre Populaire* during the 1950s and the sustained absence of live performance from the texts of his late career, once his interest in theatre inexplicably disappears. After this period, Barthes continues to use the term 'theatrical' only to refer to 'hysterical representations' or as a metaphor for theatre that denies connecting it to or discussing live performance. Scheie examines how this denial of the live performing body affected Barthes' writing. In order to understand the use of the 'body' as a concept, Scheie looks at the two different types of bodies that appear in Barthes' early writings: 'a clearly intelligible body-as-sign and a decidedly less articulate one that both intrigues and torments him.'<sup>34</sup>

In *Writing Degree Zero*, Barthes responds to Sartre's call for 'engagement in a clarity of expression through prose,' with his idea of *écriture*, the writer's sole possibility to exercise a sense of freedom. Barthes discusses style's secret as one that is 'locked within the body of the writer.'<sup>35</sup> Barthes realises that the 'corporeally manifested "zero degree" of meaning,' as Scheie puts it, might be an unattainable goal. Yet, *écriture* appears for him as a process closely related to the writer's body, delineated by its 'magical' corporeality. The second type of body is one that 'holds no secrets and performs no magic.'<sup>36</sup> Barthes discusses Ancient Greek Tragedy's use of mask as a way to communicate intelligible signs, underneath which 'there is no secret excess

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<sup>33</sup> Timothy Scheie, *Performance Degree Zero: Roland Barthes and Theatre* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> Timothy Scheie, 'Performing Degree Zero: Barthes, Body, Theatre', *Theatre Journal*, 52, 2 (2000), 161-81 (p. 165).

<sup>35</sup> Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill & Wang 1968), pp. 12-13.

<sup>36</sup> Scheie, 'Performing Degree Zero', p. 166.

analogous to a writer's style.<sup>37</sup> He argues the same for wrestling in his *Mythologies*, as this is for him the most intelligible of spectacles, where 'signs of emotion, more than emotion itself'<sup>38</sup> are of a particular importance. In 'The World of Wrestling' and the 'Folies-Bergère,' Barthes seems to be in favour of the pure intelligibility of the performing body, which can only be achieved through simple exterior signs:

Advocating a performance free of 'life,' Barthes challenges the importance and very existence of a performer's 'liveness' or 'presence' when he maintains that even an unmasked performer (the wrestler) can be an *écriture*, unencumbered by an occult or otherwise troubling excess.<sup>39</sup>

Barthes draws a parallel between *écriture*'s attempt to be neutral, transparent and, thus, intelligible and the performer's body, which needs to perform a similar role. The ideal of representation for Barthes may be summarised in 'Larvatus prodeo', which translates as 'I move forward, masked.' The spectator needs to observe or read the exterior signs of the performer's body, which bears 'no trace of reality outside language.'<sup>40</sup> Similarly, '[l] *écriture*] a pour charge de placer le masque et en même temps de signaler'<sup>41</sup> ('writing's task is to put the mask in place and to point at it'). The responsibility of the writer is to acknowledge the mask of the literary, since there is no neutral (or 'white') writing. Barthes' ideal for the French theatre of his age would be the zero degree of writing or performance. Yet, as the zero degree remains a utopia, Barthes attempts to bring to writing and performance the functional quality of Ancient Greek theatre's mask: exteriority of signs, signalling of the mask. It remains, though, unclear, as Scheie suggests, whether the zero degree of performance appears as a viable option for Barthes. However, Barthes expresses his admiration for Greta Garbo's ethereal face, which exhibits the utopian zero degree: 'here we have depth, a body stripped of its intelligible sociological double, the inaccessible lived (and living) experience of an individual's body, of the "thing itself": body degree zero.'<sup>42</sup> Both Barthes and Antonin Artaud, the latter having been influential for the former, strive towards an 'unmediated corporeality or the inanimate simulacrum, a purification of presence or its elimination, an inimitable

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<sup>37</sup> Scheie, 'Performing Degree Zero', p. 166.

<sup>38</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The World of Wrestling', *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> Scheie, 'Performing Degree Zero', p. 167

<sup>40</sup> Scheie, 169.

<sup>41</sup> Roland Barthes cited in Scheie, p. 157.

<sup>42</sup> Scheie, p. 75.

“here and now” or an iterable signifier.’<sup>43</sup> Following the Prague School linguists, to whom the term ‘zero degree’ belongs, Barthes imagines two ideal performing bodies: ‘one as pure signification, an inanimate mask, or a depthless body-as-sign that would satisfy the Prague School linguists’ principle of *semiosis*, and the other a troubling evacuation of social meaning and rational intelligibility characteristic of Artaud’s visceral here-and-now.’<sup>44</sup>

In recognising Barthes as a theorist of performance and of writing as a performance itself, Scheie’s account seems to sit well within the concept of the *performerly*, which I propose below. The absence of any significant engagement on Barthes’ part with live performance practice after the 1960s does not seem to prevent Barthes, in Scheie’s view, from adopting qualities of live performance in his writing. Interestingly, Barthes emphasises the role of the writer’s body, which seems to share similarities with the spectator’s body in the experience of repetition. It is precisely the live qualities of performance that writing exemplifies that I will also be engaging with in my encounter with repetition. According to Scheie, Barthes considers the live element in performance as an obstacle against the intelligibility of signs, which also has appeared to effect my encounter with performance. As I will show in Chapter Four, some performances seem to take place in the returns to them in memory and writing. On the other hand, it is precisely the live quality of performance that makes some qualities of repetition, such as *continuous presence* possible (See Chapter Three). However, Barthes longs for an Artaudian ‘purification of presence or its elimination, an inimitable “here and now”’, which seems to take place, in some form, in the experience of repetition. I will later engage with this possibility and argue that performance can become an occasion for an experience of the present as an immediate perception that purges future and past in favour of a perceptual ‘now’. Finally, in discussing the zero degree of writing, Barthes offers an example of the infinity of meanings that succeed one another in writing. A similar situation seems to emerge in the experience of repetition in performance, in which case repetition creates the context within which meaning is articulated in the perpetual doing and undoing of language.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Scheie, p. 66.

<sup>44</sup> Scheie, p. 80.

<sup>45</sup> I use here the Barthesian idea that text ‘undoes nomination’ in the dissection of language, which is a condition for the articulation of meaning. Barthes, *The Pleasure of The Text*, p. 45.

### *Writing the writerly*

Having given an account of some of the existing critical writing around repetition, writing and performance, particularly in relation to the dance-theatre of Bausch and De Keersmaeker, and having briefly sketched out how my research sits within the above, I now move on to explain the two notions of *writerly* and *readerly* in relation to performance. In *Le Plaisir du texte*, Barthes draws a distinction between the ‘texte de plaisir’ and the ‘texte de jouissance.’ The text of *plaisir* differs from the text of *jouissance* as it is linked to a comfortable and, therefore pleasurable practice of reading, which does not demand a particular effort from the reader, but rather contents him by accommodating his cultural values and anticipations. On the other hand the text of *jouissance* appears as a difficult text, connected perhaps to a feeling of discomfort or a state of ‘loss’ (perte) and brings the reader’s relation to language into crisis. I here quote Barthes’ text in length, as it is central to my argument:

Texte de plaisir: celui qui contente, emplit, donne de l’euphorie; celui qui vient de la culture, ne rompt pas avec elle, est lié à une pratique *confortable* de la lecture. Texte de jouissance: celui que met en état de perte, celui qui déconforte (peut-être jusqu’à un certain ennui), fait vaciller les assises historiques, culturelles, psychologiques, du lecteur, la consistance de ses goûts, de ses valeurs et de ses souvenirs, met en crise son rapport au langage.<sup>46</sup>

Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *confortable* practice of reading. Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader’s historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.<sup>47</sup>

Giving examples of texts, Barthes argues that texts by Sade or Robbe-Grillet appear to him as texts of *jouissance*, whereas Flaubert, Proust, Stendhal can perhaps only be read as texts of pleasure.<sup>48</sup>

Within a similar context and in an attempt to analyze Balzac’s *Sarrasine* (in his book entitled *S/Z*), Barthes argues that there are two different ways of reading: one can merely *read*, with only (‘pauvre’) freedom to accept or reject the text, or one can experience a sexual excitement or orgasmic pleasure by *writing* the meaning of the texte

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<sup>46</sup> Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*, (Paris : Éditions du seuil 1973), pp. 25-26.

<sup>47</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.

<sup>48</sup> Within the same frame of thinking, Deleuze argues that repetition can end only in despair or boredom, which resembles the effect of the Barthesian *jouissance*. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum 2004), p. 4.

of *jouissance*: ‘au lieu de jouer lui-même, d’accéder pleinement à l’enchantement du signifiant, à la volupté de l’écriture, il ne lui reste plus en partage que la pauvre liberté de recevoir ou de rejeter le texte: la lecture n’est plus qu’un *referendum*<sup>49</sup> (‘instead of functioning himself, instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a *referendum*<sup>50</sup>). The reader who chooses to read the text as a ‘text of pleasure’ loses the chance to become a part of the ‘écriture’, the process of writing, so important for Barthes. In the introductory few pages of *S/Z*, Barthes identifies, according to the above, two kinds of texts: the *writerly* (*scriptible*) and the *readerly* (*lisible*).

Ce que l’évaluation trouve, c’est cette valeur-ci: ce que peut être aujourd’hui écrit (ré-écrit): le *scriptible*. Pourquoi le scriptible est-il notre valeur? Parce que l’enjeu du travail littéraire [...] c’est de faire du lecteur, non plus un consommateur mais un producteur du texte. [...] En face du texte scriptible s’établit donc sa contre-valeur, sa valeur négative, réactive: ce qui peut être lu mais non écrit: le *lisible*.<sup>51</sup>

What evaluation finds is precisely this value: what can be written (rewritten) today: the *writerly*. Why is the writerly our value? Because the goal of literary work [...] is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text. [...] Opposite the writerly text, then, is its countervalue, its negative, reactive value: what can be read, but not written: the *readerly*.<sup>52</sup>

Barthes suggests that one should be handling the text as a ‘plural’ one, or as ‘une galaxie de signifiants’ rather than as a ‘structure of signifieds.’<sup>53</sup> Thus, the text can be *created* in the act of reading, it can be *written* or *rewritten* (écrit or ré-écrit). Following this frame of thinking ‘l’écriture n’est pas la communication d’un message qui partirait de l’auteur et irait au lecteur; elle est spécifiquement la voix même de la lecture: *dans le texte, seul parle le lecteur*’<sup>54</sup> (‘writing is not the communication of a message which starts from the author and proceeds to the reader; it is specifically the voice of reading itself: *in the text, only the reader speaks*’<sup>55</sup>). In the first case the reader reads in the *readerly* way, whereas in the second, attributing a personal meaning to the text, the reader reads or *writes* in the *writerly* way, where every reading appears as a new

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<sup>49</sup> Roland Barthes, *S/Z: Essais* (Paris: Éditions du seuil 1970) p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York, Hill & Wang, 1974), p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Barthes, *S/Z: Essais*, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 12.

<sup>54</sup> Barthes, *S/Z: Essais*, p. 157.

<sup>55</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 151.

writing. In this case, meanings succeed one another, as the reader performs the *writerly* text in the infinity of language.<sup>56</sup>

Having distinguished the differences between texts of pleasure and texts of *jouissance* and the important *writerly* and *readerly*, I now move on to think about those terms in the context of performance. In my consideration of repetition, I extend Barthes' argument to performance by suggesting this: if we assume that the spectator's role resembles that of the reader's, then the performance appears as a text of pleasure or a text of *jouissance*. In some cases, the spectator *merely reads* the performance of pleasure without adding anything to it, with only freedom to reject or accept it. On the other hand the spectator of a performance of *jouissance* can gain access to the magic of the signifier, by *writing* and *re-writing* or *performing* meaning. In this case, the performance resembles Barthes' *writerly* text. It is a performance that one can *perform* again and again, creating each time new meanings, or new performances. Such a performance, I argue, is then a *performerly* performance. Repetition seems to facilitate such a reading. Departing from the suggestion that there are experiences of spectatorship that resemble the experiences of reading that Barthes describes and which I name respectively *performerly* and *spectatorly*, I argue that there are respectively two kinds of repetition: repetition of *jouissance*, which activates the *performerly* mode of spectatorship, and repetition of *plaisir*, which allows the *spectatorly* experience to take place. The latter type of repetition consists of its comfortable or anticipated development; it is a repetition that one can agreeably relate to or take pleasure in. On the other hand, repetition of *jouissance* appears as a difficult situation that demands the viewer's fortitude, endurance and lively engagement. Repetition, in this case, creates an unsettled situation that seeks to be restored. The perpetual attempt towards the restoration or fulfilment, which will be further discussed in Chapters Three and Four, lies at the heart of the performances of *jouissance*, differentiating it from the performances of pleasure and generating new experiences of repetition each time.

Barthesian discourse, in its concern with writing, produces a series of problems related to the process of writing the present thesis. When discussing the Barthesian notions of

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<sup>56</sup> The Barthesian notion of the infinity of language, which has to do with language's ability to perpetually generate new meanings, has also been addressed by Steven Connor, who connects it directly to the idea of repetition: 'endlessness of language (it is always possible to say something again.)'. Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 17.

*plaisir* and *jouissance*, I pose the following question: does a text that attempts to engage with a repetition of pleasure, as defined above, need to portray the characteristics of a text of pleasure in its reading? As I have already suggested, the attempt to recover a performance of pleasure or *jouissance* happens through writing. I go back to the performance, in order to *write* my experience of it. My methodology is described as follows: I apply the qualities of text to performance and I then recover my experience of performance through writing. The relationship between this writing and the actual performance seen on stage needs, therefore, to be questioned. The *writing* of the experience of repetition seems in most cases different in the act of reading and in the act of writing. This happens even if the act of reading resembles that of writing within the context of the *performerly* that I have set above, where each performance of reading is a new performance, different each time, since repetition, being a *writerly* text, perpetually generates new meanings and experiences of time. Of course, some of those attempts to *write* the performance of repetition might be failed attempts that do not necessarily generate the qualities of performance. Writing, therefore, is important here as an active engagement with the experience of repetition and a process through which repetition occurs again and again. And like repetition itself, writing too becomes something else when revisited in the act of reading.<sup>57</sup>

### *Bluebeard* and *Piano Phase*

In this part I discuss my experience of repetitive movement in the two performances mentioned above and the different ways in which I encounter repetition in this writing *of the return*. In Bausch's *Bluebeard*, Judith is falling again and again in front of the open arms of Bluebeard, until, eventually, he catches her falling body. The particular gesture of falling attracts my attention: 'dance-theatre's emblematic, sacrificial body fell again and again, subject to the violent disregard of the other. The other couldn't catch the fall', as Heathfield has suggested, underlining the imperative that the falling body contains: the imperative to 'recognise, remember and repair'.<sup>58</sup> It seems that the imperative of repetition is a similar one: it demands from me that I return to the performance again and again and repeatedly reproduce my recollection of it. As my

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<sup>57</sup> I use the phrases *writing* repetition, or *writing* the memory of repetition, in order to indicate my encounter with performance in this form.

<sup>58</sup> Heathfield, 'After the Fall', p. 189.

encounter with the work has been an active, perhaps a difficult one, in the *performerly* sense, to return to the performance in memory does not seem enough. In a sense I need to *perform* repetition again, similarly to the way I initially experienced repetition. The mode in which I experience and perform repetition again is, therefore, that of writing. Here I reproduce my memory of my first encounter with Bausch's repetitive movement: 'Libonati falls through the open arms of Jan Minarik in an attempt to be caught by him. Minarik looks ahead, motionless, his arms wide open. Libonati in her pink dress stands up and falls down in a breath, she gets up in almost the same way and falls on the floor. Minarik stands there with his arms open, Libonati falls through his open arms. Minarik, motionless, looks ahead, Libonati stands up in her pink dress and falls down again in a breath, she gets up and falls on the floor. Minarik with his arms open, motionless. She stands up and falls through his open arms, she stands up in her pink dress and stands up and falls again, he looks ahead, she falls in her dress, stands up and falls again and she stands up and falls again and she stands up and falls again he stands up and she falls again she stands up and he falls again he stands up and falls again she stands up and falls again she falls through his open arms to the ground. She stands, she falls and she stands, she falls and before she reaches the ground, he catches her falling body.'

Through this writing, I try to capture the feeling I experienced while watching the performance. This writing somehow is effective in the moment of writing, which is different from the moment of reading. This kind of writing could in some cases be read in a *writerly* mode, preserving some of the qualities of performance, while in others could function for the reader merely as a *readerly* text. Returning to this text, however, and re-reading it does not prove effective, as this writing feels like a failed attempt to communicate some of the qualities of the actual performance or the memory of it. It is perhaps the difficulty of performing repetition or the failed attempt to do so that initiates this kind of writing over and over again. Throughout this thesis, I will return to Libonati's fall, *writing* it again and again in an attempt to capture that *something* that has stimulated my interest in the first place, the lure which Derrida has described, as discussed above (p. 47).

The experience of repetition in the performances I describe here is influenced by time: each recollection of the performative instance differs from the ones to follow, and it is this experiential difference that forms part of this argument. While watching Libonati's



falling, in my own interlude on writing Bausch, I write down: 'he wouldn't really catch her, unless she were to fall first. The repetitive falling appears in my eyes as the preparation for the catch, the holding. It is the necessary process, through which Minarik might catch Libonati's falling body. The possibility of him catching her is embedded in every fall.' Repetition creates space for the holding to take place and by the same token, the holding makes sense only because the falling precedes it: 'she falls through his open arms to the ground, she stands, she falls and she stands, she falls and before she reaches the ground, he catches her falling body.' My sustained feeling of the incomplete is momentarily repaired. Libonati's falling requires me to do something. My act of viewing is not a passive one. I take part in Libonati's falling. I am falling through the open arms of Minarik. I am standing again and falling on the ground. Next to Libonati, I perform the sequence on stage in the *performerly* performance of repetition.<sup>59</sup>

The second time I watch the scene, the repetitive fall is not a process anymore, Minarik's catch does not constitute a moment of redemption or repair. I don't experience the same quality of excitement. The catching does not occupy an important space, but it needs to be there, in order for me to discard it. The moment of catching feels truly weak, as I have seen this before, I suspected it might happen. The impression repetition created the first time has now changed. Although repetition of falling created my need for Libonati to be caught and an anticipation that evolved, repetition of experiencing the repetitive subverts the impression of it: I no longer need Libonati to be caught, I don't experience her demand upon me to do something. However, I still follow Libonati in her fall. I am trapped in her hiccupping sequence, I fall and stand up. The sentiment of fulfilment is now achieved through the very act of falling. Although the performance of falling has changed, it still remains a performance that I engage with, a performance that I *perform*. Since then and for some time after, each time I recover the

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<sup>59</sup> Susan Leigh Foster has also used the Barthesian *writerly* and *readerly* to identify a similar mode of spectating: the viewer becomes a 'relatively immobile...performer [...] actively engaged in writing dancing rather than a passive spectator reading someone else's "dance."' Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley, Calif. and London: California University Press, 1986), p. 224.

act of viewing in my mind, I perform Libonati's falling or the act of viewing Libonati, which is an act of performing.<sup>60</sup>

I discuss here *Piano Phase* which I encountered for the first time at Barbican Theatre, September 2006. The first time I watch *Piano Phase*, I write down: 'Now I know this movement. It feels familiar. They extend their hands and turn around. There is symmetry, but no surprise. It goes on forever. I don't laugh anymore. There must be something beyond. The dancer scratched her nose; I saw the dancer's panties. How can I watch them? My eyes are fixed. I forgot I was watching. She is tired.'<sup>61</sup> What I realise is that in this case I *describe* the repetitive movement in my mind rather than engage with it. What interests me is something that concerns the outside or the form of repetition. My act of viewing feels rather passive. I don't do anything, I am just watching. De Keersmaecker's spinning around exhausts itself, there is nothing to add or to expect. It seems that it is in a way *too soon* to discuss this performance, which suspends my viewing habits and evades comprehension. The difficulty to engage with or experience the performance has perhaps partly to do with spiral shapes and repetition in choreography. As Marianne Van Kerkhoven writes of *Fasen*:

Spirales, nombre d'or, suites de Fibonacci [...]: ces formes, structures ou principes, abondamment presents dans la nature, fascinent Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, au point qu'elle les integere regulierement dans ses choreographies. Peut-être cherche-t-elle a comprendre ce que signifie 'grandir,' 'devenir' ou simplement le secret de la vie. Comment se developpe un embryon? Comment se forme la coquille d'un mollusque? [...] La conscience de ce qui est a la fois repetitive et sans cesse changeant dans la vie est un trait dominant dans son oeuvre.<sup>62</sup>

Spirals, numbers of gold, Fibonacci sequences [...]: these forms, structures or principles, abundantly present in nature, fascinate Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, to the point that

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<sup>60</sup> I watch both *Bluebeard* and *Piano Phase* twice. As mentioned before, I watch *Bluebeard* on a recording, while *Piano Phase* live. I watch *Bluebeard* twice in the course of one week, while *Piano Phase* in 2006 and again two years after, in 2008.

<sup>61</sup> Making use of the Baudelairean terms, De Keersmaecker establishes for me monotony and symmetry, but no surprise. In Libonati's repetitive falling surprise does not appear as monotony's destruction; it appears as part of the monotonous structure: each time Libonati falls, we expect Minarik to catch her and it surprises us when he does not. The act of being surprised establishes itself a monotony at some point in time. Although we might expect that Minarik will let Libonati's body fall, again and again, there always exists the need for it to be caught. This need functions as the resolution of the repetitive phrase, when met. Nonetheless, I feel that this is a false resolution, as the catching happens only once. Perhaps if the catching would be repeated, so that it would establish itself as part of the repetitive sequence, it could function as an *actual* resolution. However, it seems to me that the falling is either repaired through the experience of repetition, or not at all.

<sup>62</sup> Marianne Van Kerkhoven, 'Saisir la structure du feu – 20 ans Rosas', in *Rosas: Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker* (Brussels: La Renaissance du livre 2002), p. 33.

she integrates them often in her choreographies. Perhaps, she is looking to understand what it means to 'grow up,' to 'become', or simply the secret of life. How does an embryo develop? How does a mollusc grow itself a shell? [...] The awareness of that which is at the same time repetitive and ever-changeable in life is a dominant characteristic in her work.<sup>63</sup>

In her dance, the choreographer incorporates patterns which are difficult to experience, as they dramatically influence or suspend the perception of time. The structures of movement, like our perception of them, develop and become different through time. The movement does not perform any differences the first time I watch the piece. Those occur only later, tentatively, when I revisit the performance again in memory. This seems to follow De Keersmaeker's desire to use patterns that work with the memory of the spectator for a long time after the performance has finished. As a result, it seems that Bausch's repetition demands a *performerly* performance, while Rosas incites a *spectatorly* which is then transformed into a *performerly* performance in the return to it.

As shown above, repetition in the two performative instances impresses the spectator in different ways: Libonati's falling captures my attention appearing as an unresolved gesture, yet having a beginning and an end. On the other hand, I expect the movement in *Piano Phase* to change within its sameness, as the repetitive spinning does not feel unsettled or pending, but rather complete in repetition: the unchanged in my perception repetition makes it difficult to watch the dancers, who, in their identical clothes and movement appear as one, effacing the potential for interface. Repetition, here, does not come across as a repetition of a unit (falling and getting up), in the same way that Libonati's falling does. It is a continuous movement with no real sense of the gesture's beginning and end. Therefore, although at the same time anticipating a change, the formality and introversion of their movement makes me reluctant to engage with the sequence.<sup>64</sup> I sit uncomfortably in my seat and wait for it to end. On the other hand, in *Bluebeard* I find myself identifying with Libonati, which has to do with the interaction between the two dancers and their gender being clearly addressed. The development of Libonati's gesture, the doing and undoing of the fall is perceived as a complete movement, one that clearly ends. This type of movement is easily perceived as one that is reiterated, whereas a continuous movement that does not have a clear starting or

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<sup>63</sup> Kerkhoven, p. 33. Translation in English mine.

<sup>64</sup> This resembles the way Ramsay Burt describes De Keersmaeker's dancers in *Rosas Danst Rosas*, as situated 'on a continuum between dramaturgy and formal abstraction.' Burt, p. 154.

ending point cannot *really* be repeated.<sup>65</sup> Although the two sequences use repetition in their construction, they communicate very different meanings or sentiments and are differently perceived. It seems easier to *write* my experience of *Bluebeard*, whereas *Piano Phase* still evades my ability to engage with it. The different sense of anticipation established by both performances occupies an important space, as it is that which initiates my returning to the performances again and again in memory.<sup>66</sup>

Observing the ways in which these two different types of repetition influence the spectator's experience, I argue that there seems to be a connection between the act of witnessing and the act of performing repetition and that is via the Barthesian notions of the *writerly*: in specific cases, such as Libonati's falling, the act of seeing appears as a *performerly* performance, a performance where the spectator performs the repetitive in the act of viewing. Repetition *happens* or acquires meaning through this viewer's engagement with it. The act of viewing constitutes a *performerly* performance and each viewing is a new performance I perform.<sup>67</sup> I don't merely *read* Libonati's falling, but, in fact, *write* Libonati's falling in the act of reading. I perform Libonati's falling in the act of viewing. This text is a *writerly* one, a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds. In performing Libonati's falling I perform the meaning of the repetitive and the content of repetition is realized in this act of performing. On the other hand, *Piano Phase* appears in its first viewing as a *spectatorly* performance: it can be *read but not written*. Left with only the freedom to accept or reject the *text*, I experience *Piano Phase* as an already-written text that does *not yet* allow itself to be re-written. Repetition, in this case, limits the viewer's role and the freedom within which one might perform the act of viewing as well as the excitement that derives from this act. I therefore suggest that the act of viewing certain performances that use repetition within their structure, or in terms of speech and movement, could be experienced as *performerly* performances, which is an active, perhaps difficult engagement with performance, whereas others

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<sup>65</sup> Based on the Steinian concepts of *insistence* (a repetition with no beginning and ending) and *repetition* (which clearly begins and ends), I might argue that De Keersmaeker and Tale Dolven are perhaps *insisting*, whereas Libonati *repeats*. See Chapter Three.

<sup>66</sup> The different ways repetition influences the sense of anticipation due to the sometimes unresolved nature of repetition and the attempt towards a sense of completion or fulfilment form part of this argument. See Chapter Four.

<sup>67</sup> The first time I engage with Libonati's repetition within the understanding of the *performerly*, I write 'Libonati's falling is a performance I read or *write*, a text I perform and read and write a performance I perform and read, a text I write, a text that I read and write, a performance that I perform.'

might invite a more comfortable, effortless process of watching, the *spectatorly* performance.

### ***Plaisir and Jouissance***

Having explored the notions of the *writerly* and *readerly*, and the ways in which these terms can be usefully applied to the experience of repetition in the *performerly* and *spectatorly* modes of spectatorship, I move on to give a further account of the notions of *plaisir* and *jouissance* in relation to the Barthesian *dérive* (drift), and his ideas of *punctum* and *studium*. This framework will allow me to return to and reconsider the two performances I discuss here. In this discussion, I also engage with the performance *A Valediction on a Falling Microphone*, the first of two from my own performance practice, looking specifically at the ideas of ‘recognition’ and ‘destruction’ in terms of the excitement repetition might generate.<sup>68</sup> Finally, I return to *Piano Phase* and *Bluebeard*, in order to consider how my re-performance of them, in writing, has produced new differences in repetition.

Texts of pleasure, Barthes argues, usually consist of the close following of repetition and the observation of difference. On the other hand, one can ‘read’ quickly, ignore the details and lose oneself within the continuity in the performances of *jouissance*. This way of reading repetition could finally lead to a ‘vertical and not horizontal’ viewing of repetition. Time, in that case, should not be seen as additive or linear, but as progressive within the repeated act itself:

D’où deux régimes de lecture: l’une va droit aux articulations de l’anecdote, elle considère l’étendue du texte, ignore les jeux de langage (si je lis Jules Verne, je vais vite: je perds du discours [...]); l’autre lecture ne passe rien: elle pèse, elle colle au texte. [...] [L]’excitation vient, non d’une hâte processive, mais d’une sorte de charivari *vertical* (la *verticalité* du langage et de sa destruction); c’est au moment où chaque main (différente) saute par-dessus l’autre (et non l’une après l’autre), que *le trou* se produit et emporte le sujet du jeu – le sujet du texte.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> In the Greek language the word ‘recognition’ is ‘ανγνωρισις’ (anagnorisis). In Ancient Greek Tragedy, there was always a scene of ‘anagnorisis’, which was meant to induce forceful feelings in the spectator. I am interested in this idea of recognition, as well as in Ernst Bloch’s connection of recognition (‘anagnorisis’) to ‘recollection’, where the latter is connected to the former through memory. Zack Zipes, ‘Traces of Hope: The Non-Synchronicity of Ernst Bloch’, in *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, ed. by Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan, (London: Verso 1997), p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*, pp. 22-23, emphasis added.

Whence two systems of reading: one goes straight to the articulations of the anecdote, it considers the extent of the text, ignores the play of language (if I read Jules Verne, I go fast: I lose discourse [...]); the other reading skips nothing, it weights, it sticks to the text [...]. [T]he excitement comes not from a processive haste but from a kind of vertical din (the *verticality* of language and of its destruction); it is at the moment when each (different) hand skips over the next (and not one *after* the other) that *the hole*, the gap, is created and carries off the subject of the game – the subject of the text.<sup>70</sup>

Excitement arises at those moments when time is experienced vertically, the moment when a gap of meaning is created, which holds the subject of the text. Gilles Deleuze points out the difference between ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ repetition, suggesting that ‘one is repetition of parts, the other of the whole; one involves succession, the other coexistence,’<sup>71</sup> a division, which could be paralleled to the Barthesian *readerly* and *writerly*: *spectatorly* repetition is a repetition of parts, of succession, a horizontal repetition, whereas *performerly* repetition insists on being read as a whole and calls for a reading, which involves coexistence of elements (the Barthesian ‘vertical din’). Reading repetition as a whole may culminate in the reader’s excitement or *jouissance*.<sup>72</sup> Yet, one should not expect an ultimate structure: ‘tout signifie sans cesse et plusieurs fois, mais sans délégation à un grand final, à une structure dernière’<sup>73</sup> (‘everything signifies ceaselessly and several times, but without being delegated to a great final ensemble, to an ultimate structure’<sup>74</sup>). One needs to study the text by always going back and working along the ‘threads of meanings’ that go through the text and pierce it, experiencing the verticality of language. Barthes refers specifically to language, yet the verticality of experience could also be thought of and practiced in terms of movement and time, as I will show later in my discussion of Henri Bergson (see Chapter Three, pp. 92-94), in the revisiting of performance and the working along the threads of meaning.

Barthes, I have shown, suggests that the *writerly* way of reading presupposes a state of loss or a dissolution of the self.<sup>75</sup> The destruction of the reader’s selfhood, as he describes it, indicates a recurring loss and gaining of meaning not only in terms of text, but also as far as the reader’s experiences, feelings and beliefs are concerned. The *I* of

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<sup>70</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 12, emphasis added.

<sup>71</sup> Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 106.

<sup>72</sup> Yet, towards the end of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze argues that vertical repetition causes horizontal repetition. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 370.

<sup>73</sup> Barthes, *S/Z: Essais*, p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 12.

<sup>75</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 14.

the reader is ‘already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes, which are infinite, or more precisely lost (whose origin is lost)’<sup>76</sup> in the *writerly* experience (‘c’est “moi” qui s’approche du texte est déjà lui-même une pluralité d’autres texts, des codes infinis, ou plus exactement: perdus (dont l’origine est perdu)’<sup>77</sup>). The *writerly*’s demand is that of participation in the destruction of the text and the articulation of meaning. The spectator is invited to perform the successive meanings of repetition in the *performerly* performance of spectating. Whence, there are two systems of experiencing repetition: one can closely follow repetition, attending to it, like a text which can be *read but not written*, or one can go quickly, experiencing repetition as a whole in a coexistence of elements and meanings in the *performerly* experience of repetition.

### *A Valediction on a Falling Microphone*

In this part of the thesis I use my performance *Valediction* to open a discussion around the ideas of recognition and destruction, seen in the light of processes of ‘articulating’ or ‘dissecting’ meaning through repetition. The terms ‘articulation’ and ‘dissection’ are borrowed from the Barthesian discourse and used in an attempt to approach in a *performerly* manner the *writerly* fragments of *Valediction*. In order to do that, a different kind of writing is used here, a writing of the experience of performing, which I have placed here in brackets. The ways in which performed repetitions create certain experiences of pleasure or *jouissance*, form part of this section’s objective.

*Valediction* was initially created for the purposes of a small London festival at Rampart Art. The piece was then developed to address more specifically the question of language and repetition. This final version of it was presented in Cluj-Napoca and this will be the performance that I am discussing here. The piece was performed in a big room with wooden floor, the audience sitting opposite us on the floor and chairs. A grand piano was placed in the corner, which was being used throughout the performance. Myself and Dagmara were wearing pink old dresses, no shoes and no make up. There were five wooden chairs on stage and a long wooden table, which we re-arranged according to the purposes of each scene. The piece uses pedestrian experimental movement and fragmented text, deriving from a devising process based on a series of improvisations.

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<sup>76</sup> Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 10.

<sup>77</sup> Barthes, *S/Z: Essais*, p. 16.

Coming back from Cluj-Napoca I have the feeling I have just recovered from a physical illness. I see everything in a different way, images have more colours, people seem more interesting. It seems like I have woken up, my impression of the world has changed, I am a convalescent. My deep and joyful curiosity resembles the ‘animally ecstatic gaze’ of a child, as Baudelaire put it. I am ‘possessed in the highest degree of the faculty of keenly interesting [myself] in things, be they apparently of the most trivial.’<sup>78</sup>

So far, I have referred to repetitive movement in the two dance performances and I will later discuss texts by Gertrude Stein and Sophie Calle. *Valediction* seems particularly relevant to the present research, as it combines both repetitive movement and text. In *Valediction*, Dagmara and I worked with repetitive text and movement throughout an improvisatory process, fascinated by the ways in which meaning is constructed and deconstructed through repetition, giving way to an infinity of narratives due to the fragmentary nature of the piece. The two notions of ‘recognition’ and ‘destruction,’ closely related to the Barthesian ‘articulation’ and ‘dissection’<sup>79</sup> seem to be important in the encounter with repetition. One of the processes of creating meaning involves two operations that Barthes calls dissection and articulation: as Barthes suggests in ‘The Structuralist Activity,’ the act of finding fragments of text, which have no meaning per se, but take their meaning from the situation they find themselves in is important in the process of reading. The reader recognises these fragments (that constitute the *writerly* text), the different configurations of which articulate meanings through certain rules of association. Every configuration constitutes a new articulation of fragments, in the Barthesian sense, and it is in the seam between the fragments that meaning takes place. The absence or loss of meaning is necessary for the nomination of those fragments: ‘en se portant aux limites du dire [...] le texte défait la nomination et c’est cette défection qui l’approche de la jouissance’<sup>80</sup> (‘Bringing itself to the limits of speech [...] the text

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<sup>78</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. by Jonathan Mayne (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), pp. 7-8.

<sup>79</sup> The discussion of repetition will focus here on the way I experience performance as a spectator, watching myself perform. I will later refer to the experience of repetition as a performer in Chapter Four in the performance *Pommes et Parapluies*, the second of the two deriving from my practical engagement with repetition.

<sup>80</sup> Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*, p. 72.



undoes nomination, and it is this defection which approaches bliss<sup>81</sup>). In *Valediction*, the fragmented nature of text used in repetition enables new configurations of meaning each time. Every configuration constitutes a new articulation of meaning that occurs in between these fragments. Some of the phrases we use are the following: ‘What are you waiting for? What are you waiting for what are you waiting for what are you waiting for I’m not sure I’m not sure I’m not sure I am not sure I am not sure I am not sure what are you waiting for what are you waiting for Oh my god oh my god oh my god oh my god oh my god oh my god, I don’t have a lover, I don’t have a lover, I don’t have a lover, I don’t have a lover, I don’t have a lover, I don’t have a lover.’

When experiencing a repetitive sequence like the one described above, the sense of excitement derives not from repetition itself, but from the moment of ‘recognition.’ That is the moment when, similar to the process of articulation, the repetitive phrase or movement receives a context that complements it in the activity of articulation. In order for that to happen, repetition needs to go through the process of ‘destruction’ or dissection, in order for meaning to be perpetually written or articulated. The excitement that arises from the moment of ‘recognition’ is close to the sentiment of pleasure, whereas *jouissance* corresponds to the excitement that derives from the moment of ‘destruction.’ The moment of recognition requires (what Barthes calls) ‘dissection and articulation’. On the other hand, the moment of destruction occurs when only dissection takes place or when dissection follows articulation follows dissection. Therefore, when it comes to a repetitive text, pleasure occurs when meaning is created through articulation of the textual fragments (*spectatorly* performance). This process sometimes functions as the necessary condition for *jouissance* to occur, since it’s ‘le moment où par son excès le plaisir verbal suffoque et bascule dans la jouissance’<sup>82</sup> (*performerly* performance): verbal pleasure, by its very excess, suffocates or ‘chokes,’ following Richard Howard’s translation, and, thus reels into *jouissance*. The structure of fragments performs an important role in the articulation of meaning: dissection and articulation occur in an unobstructed way, as fragments enable an understanding of time, which focuses both on the very moment and not on the duration, but they also allow the reader or viewer to experience time in a vertical way, where all fragmented elements coexist, rather than succeed one another. In a certain way, each fragment of

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<sup>81</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 45.

<sup>82</sup> Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*, p. 17.

the text carries within it all the previous ones and the ones to come. Barthes, following Gide, justifies his choice of writing in fragments: ‘parce que l’incohérence est préférable à l’ordre qui déforme’<sup>83</sup> (‘because incoherence is preferable to a distorting order’<sup>84</sup>). For Barthes, the person who best understood the aesthetic of fragments in music was perhaps, he argues, Schumann, who called the fragment ‘intermezzo’ and increased the use of it in his work: ‘everything he produced was ultimately *intercalated*: but between what and what? What is the meaning of a pure series of interruptions?’<sup>85</sup> Meaning occurs in the seam between two such fragments, in the gap between fragments or, in musical terms, in what Vladimir Nabokov calls the ‘grey gap between black beats: the Tender Interval,’<sup>86</sup> *Jouissance* might occur in this ‘Tender Interval’, in the loss of meaning or its impossibility (or perhaps in the difficulty of accepting this impossibility).

Returning to *A Valediction on a Falling Microphone*, I describe the second part of the performance: Dagmara exits the room and returns with a children's tape recorder. I do the same. We record the unruly phrases we used in the first part of the performance. We exit with the tape-recorders. The performance continues with some storytelling. Then, we enter again with the tape-recorder, rewind and play.<sup>87</sup> This time between the recording and the performance of it is important: the audience needs time in order to forget and recollect later on. Each phrase corresponds to one movement that we perform. The phrases are distorted, through the quick rhythm, what precedes and what follows, their articulation is nearly asthmatic. The recording comprises the score, which we follow, in order to create the repetitive choreography of the phrases. We connect each phrase with one movement that has already been used on stage in a different context. The phrases seem complete, but at the same time distorted: repetition of the phrases creates gaps, which enable meaning to occur. In what follows I attempt to *write* my experience of the above moment as a performer, a moment when movement, addressed through language, and text are intimately intertwined<sup>88</sup>: ‘Where do you come

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<sup>83</sup> Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p 97.

<sup>84</sup> Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 93.

<sup>85</sup> Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, p. 94.

<sup>86</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle*, cited in Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 94.

<sup>87</sup> In Chapter Four and Conclusion I describe the implications of recording, as another repetition or re-performance through Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*.

<sup>88</sup> Although I attempt here to *write* the memory of my experience of watching myself perform, and not me performing *Valediction*, this distinction cannot be always very clear or controlled, since, surely, sentiments of my performance of the movement sequence affect my writing of the experience of

from where do you come from I lean backwards and then quickly forwards hitting my wet dress with my right arm pushing it between my legs and coming up the dress following me I lean backwards and forwards hitting my wet dress with my right arm and I don't have a lover I don't have a lover I don't have a lover I lift my left hip weight on the right leg I caress my right breast starting from the right hip and going up with palms open almost like my breast is melting in reverse I don't have a love I don't have a lover weight on hip palms open caress breast I don't have a lover caress my breast palms open I don't have a lover touch the hip push upwards I don't have a lover hold my breast hold hold my breast where did you come from lean forwards beat your dress between your legs I don't have a lover I caress my breast Shut the fucking door throw my body towards the door extending my arm I don't have a lover I don't have a lover throw my body to the door I don't have a lover caress my where do you come from throw my body to the door I don't have a lover hit the wet dress I don't have a lover hold my breast shut the fucking door throw body to the door.' Writing this text on the back of a scrap piece of paper I feel agitated. I write it quickly, performing the repetition of the text in my mind, improvising on an imaginary level. Barthes argues that *jouissance* is unspeakable and that the text of pleasure is 'hors-plaisir, hors-critique, sauf à être atteint par un autre texte de jouissance'<sup>89</sup> ('is outside pleasure, outside criticism, unless it is reached through another text of bliss.'<sup>90</sup>) I don't experience the same excitement when reading this text, as when writing it. However, when I read the above text out loud or perform in front of an audience, I feel again a similar kind of excitement, like the one I felt when writing. There is then a difference between the excitement one might feel when performing (or writing) repetition and the excitement connected to watching (or reading). Also, it seems that some repetitions are only realised in their performance, rather than the act of reading, as I will attempt to illustrate later.

While watching the video footage of the *Valediction on a Falling Microphone*, I write down: 'I enjoy the fragmented narrative of the piece, I follow it sometimes and sometimes I skip, I look up, I dip in again, I perform me performing the repetitive phrases, I wait. I perform me doing and undoing meaning.' My viewing seems to

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spectatorship. Yet, the *performerly* experience of spectatorship, I argue, resembles to a certain extent, that of performing.

<sup>89</sup> Barthes, p. 37.

<sup>90</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 22.

constitute both a *spectatorly* and a *performerly* performance. Through time the phrases shape new configurations that lead to new articulations of meaning: this comprises a moment of recognition and thus pleasure. Yet, pleasure leads to a feeling of discomfort that has to do with the fleeting nature of meaning and the continuous making and unmaking of sense. Signifiers and signifieds last momentarily and exist in the gaps created ‘when each hand skips over the next.’ The phrase ‘*C’est cela!*’ (*That’s it!*), which Barthes suggests not to be understood as ‘an illumination of the intelligence but as the very limit of nomination’ (‘*Ce cri ne doit pas être entendu comme une illumination de l’intelligence, mais comme la limite même de la nomination*<sup>91</sup>’), seems to signify a moment of recognition that depends not on a cognitive, but rather on a sensual, embodied understanding. This is a moment I might have anticipated, which might take some time to occur. There seem to be two ways I relate to *A Valediction on a Falling Microphone* so far: I watch the performance in the video, relating to it both in a *performerly* and *spectatorly* way. I anticipate a moment of closure, which never really occurs, yet, the process of attending to the performance feels both pleasurable and discomfiting at times. I then attempt to capture those feelings in writing the performance, which is a process of returning to it through memory. This writing is affected by the sentiments I experience watching the piece and the feelings that memory stimulates. A sense of anticipation seems to emerge from these two encounters. The anticipation experienced when watching resembles the feeling that *writing* repetition provokes: *writing* repetition feels like an attempt to reach a particular point. Sometimes a fleeting sentiment of pleasure is achieved only to disappear too quickly and to be followed by others of *jouissance*, the deep enjoyment in non-resolution or non-pleasure.

#### Drift: Performing *Plaisir* or *Jouissance*

The creation of meaning and the sentiments of pleasure or *jouissance* occur as part of the processes of dissection and articulation of the repetitive, which take place in the gap between the seams, the ‘Tender Interval’, as discussed above, or perhaps in the Barthesian *dérive*, to which I would like to refer to now. Barthes suggests that what he enjoys most in the process of reading is not the content of the narrative, but rather the things he experiences while reading: ‘*je cours, je saute, je lève la tête, je replonge*’<sup>92</sup> (‘I

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<sup>91</sup> Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*, p. 73.

<sup>92</sup> Barthes, p. 22.

read on, I skip, I look up, I dip in again'<sup>93</sup>). In drift, which has to do with the shifting of the viewer's attentive gaze, the spectator's look may travel or float as a 'movement-in-stasis.'<sup>94</sup> This movement of attention could be perceived in two ways: attention can either depart *from* oneself or it can drift *towards* oneself. Moving back to oneself resembles the way Barthes describes the viewer's experience when looking at a photograph in *La Chambre claire*: the spectator seems to be carried 'en arrière, je ne sais où de moi-même'<sup>95</sup> ('to carry me back to somewhere in myself'<sup>96</sup>). Being 'en arrière,' the viewer has time to scrutinize, to linger over the picture's subject, to remain with it. Barthes suggests that these moments that occur through reading, where his attention flows away, occur only in a text of pleasure (and not of *jouissance*): 'Je cours, je saute, je lève la tête, je replonge. Rien à voir avec la profonde déchirure que le texte de jouissance imprime au langage lui-même, et non à la simple temporalité de sa lecture'<sup>97</sup> ('I read on, I skip, I look up, I dip in again. Which has nothing to do with the deep laceration the text of bliss inflicts upon language itself, and not upon the simple temporality of its reading.'<sup>98</sup>) He argues that drift has nothing to do with the deep abrasion that the text of *jouissance* performs on the surface of language. However, isn't this 'deep laceration' that the text of *jouissance* performs upon language another form of drift?

La dérive advient chaque fois que *je ne respecte pas le tout*, et qu'à force de paraître emporté ici et là au gré des illusions, séductions et intimidations de langage, tel un bouchon sur la vague, je reste immobile, pivotant sur la jouissance *intraitable* qui me lie au texte (au monde) : Il y a dérive; chaque fois que le langage social, le sociolecte, *me manque* (comme on dit : *le cœur me manque*).<sup>99</sup>

*Drifting* occurs whenever *I do not respect the whole*, and by dint of seeming driven about by language's illusions, seductions, and intimidations, like a cork on the waves, I remain motionless, pivoting on the *intractable jouissance* that binds me to the text (to the world). Drifting occurs whenever social language, the sociolect, *fails me* (as we say: *my courage fails me*).<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 12.

<sup>94</sup> Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, p. 116.

<sup>95</sup> Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire, note sur la photographie* (France: Éditions de l'Étoile, Gallimard, Le Seuil, 1980), p. 68.

<sup>96</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981), p. 40.

<sup>97</sup> Barthes, p. 22.

<sup>98</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 12.

<sup>99</sup> Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>100</sup> Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*, p. 18.

Pleasure can take the form of a drift in the reader's pausing, looking around, and drifting away from the text, similar to drift that occurs in the text of *jouissance* as the seduction of language, where the reader, intimidated by the difficulty of language, finds no language to describe or admit to the experience itself. Thus, drift allows one to be carried away by, or struggle with, the illusive, alluringly captivating text of *jouissance*.

In the experience of repetition, drift seems like a useful experiential mode. Repetition, being at times difficult, uncomfortable or even boring to watch, seems to accommodate or invite a drifting mode of experience. I give here an account of my understanding of drift in terms of my return to the experience of both *Bluebeard* and *Piano Phase*. Returning to Libonati's falling for the third time, my attention is withdrawn, I have drifted away from this falling, looking 'en arrière, je ne sais où de moi-même'<sup>101</sup> ('back to somewhere in myself'<sup>102</sup>). I have the peculiar feeling that my drift *has to do* with the performance itself, or rather that the performance accommodates my drift. The moment I realise I have drifted away or inwards, I consciously direct my focus back again, on the falling, while the memory of the drift is still present. The falling is now different: drift seems to create new meanings that fill the spaces, the gaps between repetitions. It is sometimes through drift that I can recall the particular performative instance. In *Piano Phase*, which I revisit here for the second time in writing, my attention shifts from the outside to *another outside*. Sometimes I look, but I don't focus, my gaze is not a conscientious, attentive gaze, but a spurious one, a pseudo-gaze. I experience time in *Piano Phase* as something like that which Richard Goodkin, discussing Proust, describes as 'an infinite narration of a single moment,' which gives way to dissatisfaction arising both from 'the unrepresentability of a single moment and from the unpleasant feeling that no moment ever really "leads" to another moment except by default, or perhaps exhaustion.'<sup>103</sup> Their shifting makes me drift away from them: the way Reich's music fluctuates gives rise to my drift, which, curiously, is *about something else*: it involves a thinking unrelated to the performance. It appears as an empty space, or as an empty signifier. However, it does create a meaning for the signifier, which might appear as void of meaning or an empty signified. The signifier is, therefore, able to 'float away from one meaning, to remain in a state of suspense – and

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<sup>101</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, p. 68.

<sup>102</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 40.

<sup>103</sup> Richard E. Goodkin, *Around Proust* (Princeton, N.J. and Oxford: Princeton University Press), p. 86.

then, perhaps inevitably, to be attracted down again to form an equally unstable liaison with a new signified'<sup>104</sup> as Andrew Brown has it. The signifier of De Keersmaecker and Tale Dolven's spinning around drifts over and above a plethora of signifieds suspended in a moment before stipulation, awaiting a potential by which it may come to generate meaning.<sup>105</sup>

### *La Chambre claire* or *punctum*

Having given an account of the *performerly* and *spectatorly* and how those can be usefully thought of in relation to feelings of excitement in the experience of repetition, the Barthesian notions of *punctum* and *studium* seem significant in terms of the movement that attention performs, a form of which constitutes drift, and the experience of watching. Barthes argues that there are two different kinds of photographic interest: the general interest that one shows for a picture, which appears as 'le goût pour quelqu'un, une sorte d'investissement général, empressé, certes, mais sans acuité particulière'<sup>106</sup> ('taste for someone, a kind of general enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without special acuity'<sup>107</sup>) or a 'demi-désir, un demi-vouloir'<sup>108</sup> ('half desire, a demi-volition'<sup>109</sup>) that a photograph intrigues to the viewer, which Barthes names *studium*. The second type of interest is what Barthes calls the *punctum*. Whereas *studium* appears as the viewer's interest in the picture, *punctum*, on the other hand, appears as the *picture's* interest for the viewer: 'cette fois, ce n'est pas moi qui vais le chercher [...], c'est lui qui part de la scène, comme une fleche, et vient me percer'<sup>110</sup> ('This time it is not I who seek it out [...], it is the element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me'<sup>111</sup>). *Punctum* is a detail, an arrow that not only 'pierces' but also, like a wound, stays with the viewer even after the picture is out of site. *Punctum* appears as a non-subject, when it is in fact, for those that are interested in it, the hidden subject of the picture. *Punctum* is that detail *qui cependant y est déjà* (*always already*), the detail that attracts the viewer's attention, marks or 'punctuates' the

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<sup>104</sup> Andrew Brown, *Roland Barthes: The Figures of Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 14.

<sup>105</sup> Andrew Brown discusses Roland Barthes' desire for 'une théorie libératoire du Signifiant', Brown, p. 14.

<sup>106</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, p. 48.

<sup>107</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 26.

<sup>108</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, p. 50.

<sup>109</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 27.

<sup>110</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>111</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 26.

picture. These two different kinds of ‘interest’ one might express with regard to the picture, shape for Barthes two different ways of viewing the photograph. One can view it either as ‘folle ou sage’<sup>112</sup> (‘mad or tame’<sup>113</sup>): stepping beyond ‘l’irréalité de la chose représenté, j’ entrais follement dans le spectacle, dans l’image, entourant dans mes bras ce qui est mort, ce qui va mourir’<sup>114</sup> (‘beyond the unreality of the thing represented, I entered crazily into the spectacle, into the image, taking into my arms what is dead, what is going to die’<sup>115</sup>). Looking at the mad picture, the viewer enters the spectacle, abolishing the distance between referent and spectator, holding the subject of the picture and experiencing ‘l’extase photographique’<sup>116</sup> (‘the photographic ecstasy’<sup>117</sup>) or a certain kind of *jouissance* (*writerly*).<sup>118</sup> To see the picture as ‘sage’ (tame) means to find the picture’s *studium*, the obvious subject of the picture, which ensures a comfortable, pleasurable reading (*readerly*). What is particularly interesting within the above Barthesian discourse, is the activity of discovering the *punctum* of the picture, an activity conditioned by repetition: one needs to look at the picture again and again in order to discover what is *always already* there, the pursuit of which could also take place in memory. Looking back at performance with ‘l’œil qui pense’<sup>119</sup> (‘a thinking eye’), the viewer constructs an anamnesis of it, ‘entering’ language in the same way that one ‘enters’ the photograph in *La Chambre claire*.<sup>120</sup> The moment that the reader discovers or performs the *punctum* in the repeated act of looking at or revisiting the picture in memory is perhaps a moment of *jouissance*.

The recollection of the performance allows the viewer to decompose or enlarge the picture, scrutinize, detect the detail: while recalling Libonati’s falling in my mind for the fourth time, what attracts my attention is the particular position her body attains when lifting herself up. This detail of her body, ‘lorsque, paradoxe, tout en restant un “détail”, il emplit toute la photographie’<sup>121</sup> (‘while, paradoxically, remaining a “detail”,

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<sup>112</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, p. 183.

<sup>113</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 119.

<sup>114</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, p. 179.

<sup>115</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 117.

<sup>116</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, p. 183.

<sup>117</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 119.

<sup>118</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, p. 183.

<sup>119</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, p. 77.

<sup>120</sup> The Greek word for memory ‘ἀνάμνησις’ (anamnesis), like *remembrance* or *recollection*, denotes not only that which is remembered, but also the repetition of memory.

<sup>121</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, p. 77.



it fills the whole picture'<sup>122</sup>). What I wait for during the recollection of Libonati's fall is to ensure that Libonati will not *fail me*. She will bend her waist, push forwards, raise her bottom almost ungracefully and lift up. I am utterly captured by Libonati's bottom being lifted up, the angle it obtains in order to rise and fall again. But, is that the subject of repetition, Libonati's bottom going up and down in a strange angle? Libonati's bottom animates the picture, it is the subject-ive of the picture, my private encounter with Libonati's falling, what interests me personally, what stays with me afterwards, what differentiates this falling from another one, what I look for in the experience of repetition.

The idea of drift and the idea of the *punctum* are significant here as actions one performs in the *performerly* performance. When watching or returning to a repetitive sequence, the viewer performs different acts: sometimes drifting away in an attempt to make sense of what is being watched, sometimes concentrating on a particular detail of the 'picture', which appears as its main subject. The viewer's gaze performs a discerning role, either approaching the picture or taking a distance from it, and moving away, in order to come closer again later. In his essay on the Berliner Ensemble's production of *Mutter Courage*, Barthes suggests that it is crucial that Brecht's theatre never *completely* implicates the audience in the spectacle, which could be an alienating experience. Brecht, Barthes argues, succeeded in creating a theatre without alienation, by 'une nécessité de la *distance*' ('necessity of *distance*'<sup>123</sup>): 'si le spectateur ne garde pas peu de recul nécessaire pour *se voir* souffrant et mystifié, tout est perdu: le spectateur doit s'identifier partiellement à Mère Courage, et n' épouser son aveuglement que pour s'en retirer à temps et le juger'<sup>124</sup> ('if the spectator does not keep that slight distance necessary in order *to see himself* suffering and mystified, all is lost: the spectator must partly identify himself with Mother Courage, and espouse her blindness only to withdraw from it in time and to judge it'<sup>125</sup>). This movement backwards and forwards resembles the movement that the spectator performs in the *performerly* performance, which forms part of its function. However, the action of *seeing oneself suffering* could be associated with the *spectatorly* performance. The viewer, in Bausch's case, identifies with the action on stage and performs Libonati's fall within the

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<sup>122</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 45.

<sup>123</sup> Barthes, 'Mother Courage Blind', *Critical Essays*, p. 35.

<sup>124</sup> Barthes, 'Mère Courage aveugle', *Essais critiques*, p. 49.

<sup>125</sup> Barthes, 'Mother Courage Blind', p. 34, emphasis added.

*performerly*, only to *later on* take a distance and look at both of them performing and watching the repetitive fall (*spectatorly*). Yet, in this way, the viewer *is* implicated in the spectacle, perhaps, though, *not completely*, since actions such as drift or the search of *punctum* may take place.

#### *Bluebeard and Piano Phase, Again*

In *La Chambre claire* Barthes explains how he *thinks back in pictures*,<sup>126</sup> how he re-experiences pictures, even when he does not look at them anymore. Barthes' 'thinking eye,' that keeps looking back and thinking about the images seems like a useful metaphor that could inform the process of returning to the performance, realizing that feelings towards it have changed. Returning to Bausch's performance, to perform Libonati's falling for a fifth time, I realise that the urgency to perform Libonati's fall has now curiously disappeared. I experience *Bluebeard* as a *spectatorly* performance, its reading being a comfortable one that generates a sense of pleasure, contrary to the sense of *jouissance* that the same piece had produced in the act of viewing and the subsequent returns to it. On the other hand, the passivity that I felt towards *Piano Phase* has been replaced, on its third revisiting, by restlessness. I feel agitated: my previous apathy becomes, by its very passivity, the agent for energy to occur.<sup>127</sup> It is as if there needed to be a period of time between the performance and the effect of the performance on the spectator, similar in structure to the Freudian 'incubation period', which is the time experienced between a shocking event and its effects to occur.<sup>128</sup> Sometimes, it seems, texts, like performances, work like that, in a temporal distance: a necessity of delay constitutes part of it. *Fase: Four Movements to the Music of Steve Reich* is a 'text' that I experience as a *writerly* text in temporal distance. Although watching the piece live for the first time is a difficult experience, a 'picture', which I cannot enter, the memory of the piece seems to function within completely different orders of time. Repetition, in this case, demands to be revisited in a *performerly* fashion, again and again in a later

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<sup>126</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre claire*, p. 77.

<sup>127</sup> Josué Harari in his article titled 'Sade's Discourse on Method: Rudiments for a Theory of Fantasy' argues that Sadian apathy, by its very passivity becomes 'the agent for the conversion of libidinal energy from minimal to maximal levels.' Josué Harari, 'Sade's Discourse on Method: Rudiments for a Theory of Fantasy', *MLN*, 99, 5 (1984), 1057-1071, (p. 1060).

<sup>128</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Anna O Case (Breuer)*, Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. and ed. by James and Alix Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 79.

time, producing new meanings each time. Difference lies at the heart of this experience, making the return to *Piano Phase* a necessary part of its experience.<sup>129</sup>

### **Steve Reich / The Auditory / *Piano Phase***

Having so far mostly focused on the visual aspect of repetition and realising the impact that the particularity of Reich's music might have on the experience of the performance, I give here, in this last substantive section of the chapter, a further perspective on repetition that focuses specifically on the auditory realm.

Minimalist composer Steve Reich experimented during the 60's and 70's with methods such as tape loops, sampling and other technological means to create innovative work which used repetitive structures and patterns. Not interested in electronically generated sound, but rather in a multiplicity of sound and the effects that might occur from that multiplicity, Steve Reich enabled soloists to play against themselves in pieces such as *Counterpoint* or *Different Trains*. Interested in experimentation as a means of exploring the possibilities of sound and repetition, Reich placed an emphasis on restoring the pleasures of stable harmony and steady pulse. According to Alex Ross, Reich achieved this in a very modern way.<sup>130</sup> The influences of his music ranged from classical composition to Arvo Pärt, Kurt Weill, John Coltrane, polyrhythmic African drumming, electronic music, etc. Having studied at Julliard and Mills College, where Luciano Berio was a visiting professor during the 1960 and 1961, Reich employed Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone method, conducted his own experiments with recordings and participated in Terry Riley's performance *In C* in 1964, 'a hypnotic haze of multiple, looping patterns derived from the C-major scale'.<sup>131</sup> He initially became interested in the effects of phase-shifting with voice recordings (of a preacher who was shouting '*It's-s gonna-a rain-n! It's-'s gonn-nna rai-in! It's-t's gonna-onna rai-ain! It's-it's gonna-gonna rain-rain!*'), he then applied this method to instruments (*Piano Phase*),

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<sup>129</sup> I wonder whether the difficulty I encountered when watching *Piano Phase* has actually to do with the discomfiting sentiment of *jouissance* and the ecstasy I experienced while performing Libonati's falling with Barthes' idea of pleasure. The memory of the performance (*Bluebeard*) has been influenced by time so much that I cannot say with certainty anymore whether I am still able to remember the very first time that I watched the piece or not. It is as if every time I attempt to recollect the performance, I actually recollect the last time I experienced it in memory.

<sup>130</sup> Alex Ross, Steve Reich Website <<http://www.steverreich.com/>> [accessed 15 October 2010].

<sup>131</sup> Alex Ross, Steve Reich Website <<http://www.steverreich.com/>> [accessed 15 October 2010].

and continued with larger experiments with steady pulse which evolved into his 1976 masterwork *Music for 18 Musicians*. In what follows I give an account of the method of phase-shifting in what seems to be of particular importance to this thesis and the experience of De Keersmaeker's *Piano Phase*.

When Reich started working around the idea of phase shifting, he experimented with tape loops playing the same melodic pattern over and over again, and letting them slowly shift out of phase with each other. What Reich found particularly interesting in this process is the 'way of going through a number of relationships between two identities without ever having any transitions. It was a seamless, continuous, uninterrupted musical process.'<sup>132</sup> (I am interested in this uninterrupted continuity of music, as De Keersmaeker's attempt to communicate it through dance has affected my experience of it).

Later on, having created a melodic pattern, which he recorded, he attempted to play against it himself in the piano. Thus, he realised that live phasing was possible and indeed highly pleasurable:

While I lacked the perfection of the machine, I could give a fair approximation of it while enjoying a new and extremely satisfying way of playing that was both completely worked out beforehand (I knew I would start in unison, gradually move one beat ahead, pause, then another, and so on until I was back in unison), and yet free of actually reading notation, allowing me to become completely absorbed in listening while I played.<sup>133</sup>

Through a long process of experimentation with tape loops and phase shifting, Reich realised the 'potential behind patterns based on units of twelve beats'<sup>134</sup> in the phasing process.

In his *Writings About Music*, Reich argues that 'the experience of that musical process is, above all else, impersonal; it just goes *its* way. Another aspect is its precision; there is nothing left to chance whatsoever. Once the process has been set up it inexorably works itself out.'<sup>135</sup> Following this principle, *Piano Phase* is written for two pianos that

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<sup>132</sup> Steve Reich, *Writings About Music* (Halifax, N.S.: Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and New York University Press, 1974), p. 50.

<sup>133</sup> Reich, p. 51.

<sup>134</sup> Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999), p. 182.

<sup>135</sup> Reich, p. 51.

play the same melodic phrase repeatedly, at first synchronously, yet, at some point one of the two accelerates so that the two lines of music become out of phase with one another. Keith Potter suggests that the ‘absence of a clear, functional downbeat in such music leads to all kinds of interesting ambiguities,’ such as the difficulty to discern the ‘acoustic’ from the ‘psycho-acoustic.’<sup>136</sup> Also, for example, in the ‘fuzzy transition’ away from unison, ‘an impression of increasing resonance precedes the effect of actual separation.’ Potter also suggests that in one of these ‘fuzzy transitions’, three different stages are discernible: ‘gradual separation, a chaotic kind of swirling and the coalescing of the new configuration.’<sup>137</sup> However, although this might be true for certain situations, Potter, following Epstein, suggests that these are very delicate acoustic and psychoacoustic situations and for that reason they can lead to variations even when it comes to the same person’s listening experience.

In his writings, Reich discusses the ‘resulting patterns’ of his music, which determine the listener’s perception of the music:

When I say there is more in my music than what I put there, I primarily mean these resulting patterns. Some of these resulting patterns are more noticeable than others, or become more noticeable once they are pointed out. This ‘pointing out’ process is accomplished musically by doubling one of these pre-existent patterns with the same instrument [...]. The listener, thus, becomes aware of one pattern in the music, *which may open his ear to another*, all sounding simultaneously in the ongoing overall texture.<sup>138</sup>

When listening to a recording of the *Piano Phase*, my attention is attracted towards the moments that one piano shifts out of phase with the other one. These are, for me, difficult moments to experience. I write down: ‘I stick to one of the sounds. I follow it. It grows bigger. It becomes something else.’ I find it very hard to follow the sound, although in a way I am trapped by it: I am attuned to it and simultaneously I am not. I focus on the music, sometimes I drift away, I have the sense that I am waiting for something to happen, perhaps the two pianos to come together in unison. However, when the two pianos go back together, it is not as pleasurable as I had imagined it might be.

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<sup>136</sup> Potter, p. 186.

<sup>137</sup> Potter, p. 186.

<sup>138</sup> Reich, p. 53, emphasis added.

In Rosas' performance, my experience of the music is different: I don't experience the same intensity, I don't realise the existence of the resulting patterns, I listen to the music in a rather narcoleptic way, feeling passively frustrated. This might be due to the two pieces (music and choreography) put together. Experiencing at the same time the music and the movement does not allow me to perform their difficulty: this double experience of *jouissance* (that of the music and the movement) seems to cancel itself. Only if I manage to isolate the music or movement from each other, do I seem able to experience them fully. This might occur during my return to the piece in memory, as, in memory it seems that I can experience *either* the music *or* the movement, having at the same time the impression that I experience the performance as a whole.

The difficulty I encounter in this piece has also perhaps to do with it only being fully realised *in time*, that is a time *yet to come*. The first time I experience De Keersmaeker's *Piano Phase*, the combination of music and movement cancels my interest in it, it frustrates and bores me. When I revisit it, I become aware of the patterns both in music and movement and these patterns are pointing out others. They *open my eye and ear to others*, they point out to me the things I should be looking at and listening to, they show me the ways to experience repetition. So, perhaps the logic of the piece requires a certain type of waiting. Repetition needs to be repeated, experienced in repetition in order to be sensed, to be understood and followed:

Listening to an extremely gradual musical process opens my ears to *it*, but *it* always extends further than I can hear, and that makes it interesting to listen to that musical process again. [...] I begin to perceive these minute details when I can sustain close attention and a gradual process invites my sustained attention. By 'gradual' I mean extremely gradual; a process happening so slowly and gradually that listening to it resembles watching a minute hand on a watch – you can perceive it moving after you stay with it a little while.<sup>139</sup>

The experience of *Piano Phase* in De Keersmaeker's performance at the Barbican did not resemble such a gradual process that would enable me understand the music and sustain close attention to it (my focus was mainly on the dance). *Piano Phase* only

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<sup>139</sup> Reich, p. 53, emphasis added.

*became* a gradual process when I replayed it again and again in my mind. In this listening, I managed to sustain close attention, perceive these minute details, and stay with it for a while.

The above attempt to experience both elements simultaneously resembles the effect of phase shifting, which, according to Reich, is fully appreciated in the simultaneous performing and listening. This activity appeared, for Reich, as a ‘new and extremely satisfying way of playing,’<sup>140</sup> as, having memorised the score, he had the opportunity to perform the music and listen to it at the same time. While doing that, according to Reich, ‘one can participate in a particular liberating and impersonal kind of ritual. Focusing in on the musical process makes possible that shift of attention away from *he* and *she* and *you* and *me* outwards towards *it*.’<sup>141</sup> Reich’s simultaneous performing and listening resembles Gertrude Stein’s simultaneous ‘listening and talking’, discussed in the following chapter, which will allow me to open a discussion around an experience of *presence* in terms of repetition in performance. The act of simultaneous ‘listening and talking’ is also exemplary of the critical methodology of a major strand of this thesis, in which I watch myself perform repetition in the act of reading and performing as well as read myself write.

## Conclusion

Barthes’ performativity of language and the category of the *writerly* enable me to introduce the idea of the *performerly* experience: in certain cases, I not only watch repetition, but also I *perform* the repetitive, which seems to return to me and offer to me the opportunity to experience it again and again, and hence, perform it again, in new repetitions each time. The returns to the experience of performance happen in writing, through which I perform repetition again. In this case, writing communicates some of the qualities of the live performance for the writer: it does not only reveal information or details about the performance, but *performs* it, it does not only express sentiments of the past, but creates a new situation within which repetition can be a ‘felt experience’ in

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<sup>140</sup> Reich, p. 51.

<sup>141</sup> Reich, p. 11.

a time 'as it is lived.'<sup>142</sup> Hence, the *performerly* of repetition becomes *writerly* in the returns to the theatrical experience, which might function again as a *performerly* experience in the act of reading. In revisiting performance, I am interested in an affective account of repetition through writing and in the feelings of excitement related to repetition. Pleasure and *jouissance* are two examples of sentiments related to the experience of performance and relevant to my argument: similarly to texts of pleasure and texts of *jouissance*, I argue, there are repetitions of pleasure and repetitions of *jouissance*, which evoke similar feelings to the experience of reading and writing. I am therefore interested in the ways in which repetition can create an experience of pleasure or *jouissance* and in the interaction of pleasure and *jouissance* across time, which is the time of the performance, spectatorship and the time of the return. Pleasure and *jouissance* form the context within which the question of pleasure is posed in the following chapters.

Having identified these two modes of spectating performance that uses repetition as constitutive, I now move on to discuss emotion and temporality in the experience of repetition. In Chapter Three, I give examples of repetition in text, particularly engaging with Gertrude Stein's writings about repetition. I explore the Steinian category of *insistence*, which is the experience of the present moment as one disconnected from future or past. I also introduce two types of excitement: the 'completion of excitement' and the 'relief from excitement', which I also discuss in relation to the Barthesian terminology developed here. The temporality of emotion in the experience of repetition as well as the idea of writing as an active process of waiting for something to happen will be the focus of Chapter Four.

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<sup>142</sup> Heathfield, 'After the Fall', pp. 192-93.



### Repeat Repeat: After Gertrude Stein

This chapter will attend to the experience of repetition in performance and the temporality of feeling emerging through this experience. The ways in which repetition affects the spectator's emotion, creating an experience of the *present* will form part of my argument in relation to the kinds of temporality, which repetitive language might create in the experience of performance. It is essential to point out that the experience of *presence* seems to be produced by repetition, through its operations, but it is not repetitive itself. *Presence*, in other words, is achieved through repetition, yet it is experienced as non-repetitive. I use Gertrude Stein's theatrical writings and lectures about repetition. I apply the Steinian discourse to the thinking of repetition, as it provides a framework for discussing repetition, which seems particularly productive. However, while Stein's writing makes possible certain discussions around repetition, it does not offer a fully developed theoretical framework. What it offers is a detailed attention to the use of language as well as a focus on the spectator's experience. Repetition in Stein's writing makes possible an apprehension of temporality and therefore an attending to emotion. *Lectures in America* (1935) and mainly 'Plays' and 'Portraits and Repetition' are significant to the discussion of the spectator's experience of time. Stein suggests that the emotion concerning the play, is 'always either behind or ahead of the play at which you are looking and to which you are listening. So your emotion as a member of the audience is never going on at the same time as the action of the play.'<sup>1</sup> This chapter argues that repetition might both provoke and prevent such a situation. In showing this, a revisiting of my experiences of both *Bluebeard* and *Piano Phase* through the lens supplied by Stein's writing becomes necessary. Sophie Calle's repetitive *Exquisite Pain* is also discussed within the same framework of ideas. Finally, I revisit the process through which the second performance from my own practice – entitled *Pommes et Parapluies* – has emerged. Here I explore the experience of performing repetition, which seems to offer a useful model for understanding certain qualities exemplified in the act of viewing repetition, especially since, as we have seen in Chapter Two, the *performerly* is a mode of spectatorship.

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<sup>1</sup> Gertrude Stein, 'Plays', *Lectures in America* (London: Virago Press, 1988), p. 58.

In order to frame the Steinian discourse about feeling, I begin with a brief account of theories concerned with matters of perception, duration and time. An interest in the time elapsed between the emergence of the emotion and the action on stage arises in Stein's discussion of theatrical experience. Therefore, William James' theory of emotion (1884), important for its concern for the bodily expression of emotion and its temporality, seems particularly significant, as Stein was famously influenced by his theories, having studied under his guidance (1893-1897). Henri Bergson's account of affect and its temporality (1889) draws a distinction between the experience of *concrete duration* and *abstract time*.<sup>2</sup> I also refer to Cathy Caruth's Lacanian account of trauma, the structure of which is very useful in thinking about the experience of repetition. Finally I briefly refer again to Adrian Heathfield's writing and his account of time and performance.

### **Feeling, Time and Repetition**

In *What is an Emotion?* (1884) William James is interested in emotions that have a bodily expression. These are complicated cases of feelings 'in which a wave of bodily disturbance of some kind accompanies the perception of the interesting sights or sounds, or the passage of the exciting train of ideas.'<sup>3</sup> Surprise, curiosity, rapture, fear, anger, lust and greed, James argues, 'become then the names of the mental states with which the person is possessed.'<sup>4</sup> The impact of a situation or an exciting event on the body seems to be the 'manifestation', 'expression' or 'natural language' of these emotions, according to James. Our natural way of thinking about emotion is that 'the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion' and that 'this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression.'<sup>5</sup> In other words, we usually think, James suggests, that we *first perceive* a change inside or outside of us and we *then feel* that change in the body. However, his thesis contradicts this line of thinking: James argues that 'the bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of an exciting fact and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion.'<sup>6</sup> He adds that 'every one of the bodily changes, whatsoever it be, is felt, acutely or obscurely, the

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<sup>2</sup> F. L. Pogson, 'Translator's Preface', in Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by F. L. Pogson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> William James, *What is an Emotion?* (Radford: Wilder Publications 2007), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> James, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> James, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> James, p. 14.

moment it occurs.’<sup>7</sup> Although, for James, the bodily change is felt the moment it occurs, the emotion occurs in a belated time, as the emotion occurs only after we perceive the exciting event. James gives the example of an encounter with a bear: when we see a bear we first respond physically to it, e.g. run away and then we think of this physical response and we *feel* fear. He therefore suggests that we first run away and then get scared, that is we are frightened *because* we run away. Or, in other cases, ‘we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, or tremble, and not that we cry, strike or tremble, because we are sorry, angry or fearful, as the case might be.’<sup>8</sup> The bodily change *precedes* the fear as it *follows* the perception of the exciting event. The priority of the bodily symptoms to the felt emotion is a key feature of the Jamesian thought and seems to be carried forward in the Steinian account of the experience of emotion in the theatre.

In *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889), Henri Bergson examines the experience of sensations in relation to time. His work is inspired by William James’ approach to emotion, to which he refers directly.<sup>9</sup> Bergson sets up a conceptual framework, within which the reader is invited to reconsider experiences that are *immediate* and not *mediated* through language or quantitative notation. He examines experiences which cannot be measured as such or be expressed in quantitative ways. These are feelings, sensations or passions, which are experienced as pure quality, separate from reason and cognition or knowing, and closer to intuition and dreaming. Opening the discussion about feeling, Suzanne Guerlac notes, Bergson does not ask ‘what are sensations’, but rather ‘how do we usually speak of sensations.’<sup>10</sup> Bergson argues that we speak about our sensations as if they are external objects, which we assume we can measure or compare to others. This is a quantitative approach, which refers to things we can measure, like the light, which can be measured through standardised units. But sensations need to be approached from a qualitative point of view, which refers to the way things *feel to us*: for example, brightness refers to the effect of light, or ‘our feeling of the quality of that light.’<sup>11</sup> There are, therefore, two

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<sup>7</sup> James, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> James, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Bergson suggests: ‘Most of the authorities adhere to this opinion, which would be the unanimous view of positive science were it not that several years ago Professor William James drew the attention of physiologists to certain phenomena which had been but little remarked, although they were very remarkable.’ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Guerlac, p. 45.

kinds of differences to which Bergson draws our attention on: ‘*difference in degree and difference in kind*.’<sup>12</sup> Although in the first chapter Bergson discusses the idea of internal and external experiences as absolute, he does so for heuristic purposes, Guerlac notes, and ‘at the end of the chapter he acknowledges that actual experience occurs at the cusp, as it were, where inside and outside meet.’<sup>13</sup> Bergson also distinguishes between two kinds of consciousness, the immediate consciousness and the reflective one: the immediate consciousness refers to the way ‘something feels to us directly, before we stop and think about it, try to communicate it to someone, or represent it symbolically in any way.’<sup>14</sup> Reflective consciousness, on the other hand, involves thinking, using tools such as language, logic, mathematics, etc.: ‘Reflective consciousness objectifies experiences. It treats them the same way it considers objects in space.’<sup>15</sup> Bergson argues that when we count, we think *not in time*, but *in space*.<sup>16</sup> Reflective consciousness, therefore, represents things in space, whereas immediate consciousness deals with time not as space, but as *real duration*. The subject of inquiry, Guerlac argues, ‘is *duration*, a notion of time radically independent of space and for this reason completely inaccessible to reflective consciousness.’<sup>17</sup> The feeling of *concrete* or *pure* duration ‘can only be lived, or, perhaps, as post-structuralists used to say “written”’, and ‘the difficulties arise from taking up one’s stand *after* the act has been performed and applying the conceptual method to it.’<sup>18</sup> In the majority of cases, Bergson argues, we revise the judgement of our senses *after* having taken into account the nature of the cause of the effect. We therefore decide on the intensity of our feeling, ‘comparing the actual state of the ego with some previous state in which the cause was perceived in its entirety at the same time as its effect was experienced.’<sup>19</sup>

Referring to the experience of movement, Bergson argues that when watching a dancer perform, like perhaps Libonati in *Bluebeard*, it seems that every new movement is indicated in the preceding one:

A third element comes in when the graceful movements submit to a rhythm and are accompanied by music. For the rhythm and measure, by allowing us to foresee to a still greater extent the movements of the dancer, makes us believe that we now control them.

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<sup>12</sup> Guerlac, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Guerlac, p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> Guerlac, p. 62.

<sup>15</sup> Guerlac, p. 62.

<sup>16</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 77.

<sup>17</sup> Guerlac, pp. 63, 67.

<sup>18</sup> F. L. Pogson, p. viii.

<sup>19</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 5.

As we guess almost the exact attitude which the dancer is going to take, he seems to obey us when he really takes it.<sup>20</sup>

In the above case, a pleasure of mastering the flow of time emerges, Bergson suggests, which might be experienced as the emergence of the feeling *before* the action on stage in the Steinian sense. As spectators, we might even sense the need to perform the dancing movement that is to come, performing a *performerly* performance, as I have suggested in Chapter One. This urgency to feel or perform what is to come is called ‘physical sympathy’ in the Bergsonian understanding of emotion. Our body, therefore, reacts to the dancer on stage *before* witnessing the dance. However, our feeling, which is the perception of that bodily impact of the dance, occurs only after we have experienced the effect of the dance on our body. In the case of repetition, when every moment resembles the previous one and announces the one to come, the way we experience that moment in time may be overwhelming, or confusing, as Stein puts it, since it has to do with the past and the future. At the same time, the flow of sensations is suspended, Bergson argues, since rhythm, repetition or symmetry cause ‘our faculty of perception to oscillate between the same and the same again’, drawing our attention to the differences emerging through repetition.<sup>21</sup> This fluctuation of perception resembles the Steinian ‘before or after’ of the emotion, in relation to the action on stage, which invites us in certain cases to revisit the performance over and again in order to experience our emotion synchronously to the event on stage, or as *pure duration*.

Time seems to falter or be suspended in the so-called ‘incubation period’, which takes place after an accident or a shocking experience. In her account of *Moses and Monotheism*, Cathy Caruth discusses the Freudian idea of the ‘incubation period’. Freud claims that although someone may get away ‘apparently unharmed from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision,’ in the following weeks he might develop ‘a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident.’<sup>22</sup> Freud calls that a ‘traumatic neurosis’ and continues that ‘the time elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called “incubation period.”’<sup>23</sup> Freud also uses the term *latency* to signify the time period between the accident and the

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<sup>20</sup> Bergson, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Bergson, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* cited in Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 17. I make use here of the Freudian text as it is quoted by Caruth, since she has modified the English translation to better suit the needs of her argument.

<sup>23</sup> Sigmund Freud, cited in Caruth, p. 17.

appearance of its effects, which seems to consist ‘not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself.’<sup>24</sup> In this inherent latency, Caruth situates the explanation of the peculiar belatedness of the shocking or sudden experience. Such an incubation period may be demanded by certain performances, a time during which an understanding of them in a different time seems to occur. Trauma seems to be a useful model pointing to other experiences that have an odd temporality. Although I am not suggesting that the content of the performances discussed in this chapter is traumatic, I find that the structure of the experience of trauma resembles that of repetition in performance. This functions in two different ways: within the same performance, the effect of repetition might be experienced with a *latency*, as Stein has also observed. Also, on a larger scale, the viewer might feel a desire to go back to the performance and experience it again and again, changing the way it is encountered each time. This function of repetition will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Heathfield also considers the odd temporality of some of performance and its possible relation to the structure of trauma. He suggests that the experience of performance ‘is often something like a trauma [...]. The event is too full and too quick for you to know or contain it, which makes you feel like you were never fully there.’<sup>25</sup> Performance thus ‘institutes a crisis in our ways of rationalising time: it leads us back to our elemental physical relation to time, where time is not simply experienced as linear, progressive and accumulative, but is also infused by suspension and loss.’<sup>26</sup> In this discussion, Heathfield offers examples such as performances by Goat Island or Tehching Hsieh both of which use repetition as a structural as well as constitutive means, which I have discussed in the Introduction (pp. 12-14). The crisis which performance initiates in relation to the experience of time can be argued for much of performance. However, I argue that performances which use repetition initiate this effect more forcefully than others. The Freudian terminology used by both Caruth and Heathfield proves to be useful in thinking about time and repetition in performance. Yet, I would like to note that I am not interested in trauma as such, refraining from arguing that the experience of performance is, in some cases, an experience of trauma. However, there is something

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<sup>24</sup> Caruth, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Adrian Heathfield, ‘End Time Now’, in *Small Acts: Performance, the Millennium and the Marking of Time*, p. 106.

<sup>26</sup> Heathfield, p. 106.

about the structure of trauma that seems very relevant to the experience of repetition and offers a useful way of describing it.

As seen above, William James identified a time elapsed between physical response to an event and the emergence of the emotion, which is the result of a physical change, and not the reason why physical change takes place. There is, therefore, a latency in the way we experience our body reacting to something and our feeling of it. Bergson is interested, on the other hand, in immediate experience. He focuses on eliminating the time between the emotion and the process of thinking about it, which alters the emotion, since language objectifies it and thinks of it *in space* and not *in time* or *pure duration*. Although Bergson is not interested in an account of emotion *after* emotion has been objectified through language, he also suggests that in the experience of dance a desire to master time *before* the action on stage might occur. We might, therefore, due to the rhythm and symmetry of the dance, react to the dancer or *feel* even before she performs the dance. This seems to resemble the Steinian understanding of emotion, which occurs either before or after the action on stage. In the second case, a latency in the emergence of emotion is observed, which seems to result in the event having to be repeated, according to the Freudian theory of trauma. This repetition might, of course, represent itself as a repetition of the performance event, it might, however, also be embodied in the repetition of a movement within the performance itself. In the second case, repetition suspends time and unsettles the viewer's experience of it. Time is, therefore, experienced as non-linear and suspended, at times in syncopated time with the action on stage.

Bergson also raises the problem of language. Interested in accessing immediate consciousness, Bergson argues that language describes feeling *after* the actual occurrence of it. Immediate consciousness, therefore, becomes reflective consciousness. As I will later show, Stein had an interest in automatic writing, precisely because of its ability to communicate some of the qualities of unmediated experience. In her writing, therefore, she aims not only to access such an immediate experience, but also to offer a similar experience to the reader. Both Stein's and Bergson's accounts of the use of language are useful in terms of the kind of writing I am offering here as a re-experience of the performance in the return to it, which tries to be performative and unobjectifying, yet, by virtue of being language, carries some aspects of the Bergsonian understanding of reflective consciousness. This happens for one more reason: the return to the

performance happens *in space*, rather than *in time*. The return to the event will always spatialise experience, the going back to the performance is a going back to the space of memory, within which performance takes place. Therefore, the writing about the return is a writing *of* the event, in Heathfield's terms, and will be reflective of the emotion that occurred in the first instance of performance. However, the aim is to eliminate the desire to re-experience the same emotion again and to observe how repetition influences anew each subsequent experience of it, since 'one never experiences the same sensation twice' and 'all sensations are modified through repetition for the very fact of recurrence alters the nature of the sensation'<sup>27</sup>, as Suzanne Guerlac notes. The Bergsonian desire to access unmediated emotion resembles the desire to experience unmediated performance, exemplified in Phelan's 'Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction'. Phelan, as suggested previously, denies performance's ability to be repeated, valuing live performance that happens only once in the unique duration of the performance. This resembles the Bergsonian aim to experience the intensity of the present, or *pure duration*, which I am concerned with in terms of the Steinian experience of *continuous presence*, attempted through writing.

In the discussion of emotion, feeling and sensation in this chapter, the term 'emotion' seems to occur more frequently than the two others. That is partly because Stein, influenced by her work with William James, uses the term in her writings. Before explaining the way I use these terms here, I would like to refer to Antonio Damasio's account of emotion, as one that is close to the way emotion is dealt with in this project. Damasio draws the following distinction between feeling, emotion and consciousness, offering three stages of proceedings along a continuum: '*a state of emotion*, which can be triggered and executed nonconsciously; *a state of feeling*, which can be represented nonconsciously; and *a state of feeling made conscious*, i.e., known to the organism having both emotion and feeling.'<sup>28</sup> Damasio notes that while '[r]omantics placed emotion in the body and reason in the brain', twentieth-century science 'moved emotion back into the brain.'<sup>29</sup> Although one would have expected that philosophy and the sciences would have embraced the study of emotion and feeling, Damasio continues, it is only recently that 'neuroscience and cognitive neuroscience have finally endorsed

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<sup>27</sup> Guerlac, p. 73.

<sup>28</sup> Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> Damasio, p. 39.



emotion.<sup>30</sup> Damasio gives the biological explanation of emotions being ‘complicated collections of chemical and neural responses, forming a pattern.’<sup>31</sup> Also, emotions are ‘biologically determined processes, depending on innately set brain devices, laid down by a long evolutionary history.’<sup>32</sup> To sense that we have emotions, is to have feelings: ‘consciousness allows feelings to be known and thus promotes the impact of emotion internally, allows emotion to permeate the thought process through the agency of feeling.’<sup>33</sup> My account of emotion is close to that of William James and Antonio Damasio, both of whom point out the underlying physiological experience of emotion related to the way we become conscious of it. Emotion is therefore tied to subjectivity and emerges as a response to an experience of an event or as an immediate consciousness of that event. The before and after of the occurrence of the emotion and the immediate consciousness of that which occurs will be the centre of this chapter. The ways in which emotion might be experienced after a performance has ended in the return to it will be contemplated in the Chapter Four of this thesis.

This chapter makes use of the Steinian observation about emotion occurring in syncopated time in relation to the theatrical action. It is therefore concerned with questions about the spectator’s emotions and its temporality. Following the Jamesian discussion around emotion, Stein seems to be using the term in order to also describe the experiences of ‘completion of’ and ‘relief from’ excitement. I use the term ‘feeling’ quite freely and at times interchangeably with ‘emotion’. I discuss feelings of *duration* or immediate feelings, in the case of Bergson, feelings of *presence*, pleasure, difficulty, discomfort, familiarity and excitement. Bergson suggests that feelings, sensations and passions are all qualitative experiences that cannot be measured, separate from reason and cognition and closer to intuition or dreaming. Bergson uses feeling and sensation interchangeably. He also suggests that reflective consciousness is a form of feeling expressed through language. William James argues that our feeling of the bodily changes that an exciting event provokes ‘as they occur IS the emotion’.<sup>34</sup> As already discussed above, Henri Bergson argues that feelings or intensities ‘cannot be identified, counted or compared to other things in the world.’<sup>35</sup> These experiences are characterised in terms of what he calls ‘internal multiplicities’, which do not have to do with

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<sup>30</sup> Damasio, p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> Damasio, p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> Damasio, p. 51.

<sup>33</sup> Damasio, p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> James, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Bergson, p. 100.

numbers, but rather with the experience of *pure duration*. In order to understand the notion of *pure* or *concrete duration*, we need to give up the way we think about past and present as separate: ‘Pure duration is the form taken by the succession of our inner states of consciousness when our self lets itself live, when it abstains from establishing a separation between the present state and anterior states.’<sup>36</sup> The concept of Bergsonian *durée* is separate, Guerlac explains, from the ‘linear narrative development of past-present-future.’<sup>37</sup> The experience of *duration* resembles an act of temporal synthesis, like the act of listening to a melody, the notes of which, although succeeding one another, we perceive ‘as if they were inside one another’.<sup>38</sup> Significantly, Bergson continues, ‘one could thus conceive succession without distinction as a mutual penetration, a solidarity, an intimate organisation of elements of which each would be representative of the whole, indistinguishable from it, and would not isolate itself from the whole except for abstract thought.’<sup>39</sup> This kind of organisation of elements that are experienced simultaneously could be compared to Robbe-Grillet’s constellations of words, discussed in Chapter Two (p. 49), where language does not signify or represent as such, but rather evokes or performs.<sup>40</sup> The experience of *duration* as an act of temporal synthesis has to do with the second system of reading that Barthes proposes in his *Pleasure of the Text*, which is bound to the idea of excitement (see Chapter Two, p. 69):

[T]he excitement comes not from a processive haste but from a kind of vertical din (the verticality of language and of its destruction); it is at the moment when each (different) hand skips over the next (and not one after the other) that the hole, the gap, is created and carries off the subject of the game- the subject of the text.<sup>41</sup>

The sense of *duration* appears to be useful in terms of the experience of the Steinian text, which attempts to establish a sense of being *in the present*, as I will show below. This feeling of *presence*, which is also experienced in some cases in the encounter with repetitive text or movement in performance, could be usefully connected to the Bergsonian concept of *duration*, the experience of temporal synthesis, as they both require a purging of time experienced as past or present as well as a simultaneity of experiences to take place. Stein offers a similar understanding of experiencing time in her argument about *insistence*, which is the act of simultaneously ‘listening and talking’

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<sup>36</sup> Bergson, p. 100.

<sup>37</sup> Guerlac, p. 66.

<sup>38</sup> Bergson, p. 101.

<sup>39</sup> Bergson, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> Barthes, ‘Literal Literature’, *Critical Essays* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press 1972), p. 24.

<sup>41</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1975), p. 12.

as she calls it, through which a sense of *presence* or *duration* is achieved. This is what Guerlac respectively calls a duration, in which feelings ‘overlap or interpenetrate one another, instead of being organised into a distinct succession.’<sup>42</sup>

One could assume that this sense of being in the present is experienced as static. Yet, there is a feeling of movement bound to the idea of *duration*. Bergson gives the example of the shooting star, which travels a long distance, yet, due to its rapid speed its movement is experienced instantaneously. Mobility in this case ‘is felt as an intensity’ and not as a movement *in space*.<sup>43</sup> Although we are capable of experiencing *pure duration*, Bergson argues, the problem begins when we talk about it, when we use language in order to address our experience. *Duration*, therefore, is what we experience through immediate consciousness, and *time* ‘is what duration becomes when we think and speak it.’<sup>44</sup> Bergson writes: ‘we instinctively tend to solidify our impressions in order to express them in language. It is for this reason that we confuse the feeling itself, which is in a perpetual mode of becoming, with its external object, which is permanent.’<sup>45</sup> Paradoxically, Stein attempts to capture the fleeting nature of feelings, which are not permanent, but perpetually becoming, through language and the use of automatic writing, in order to achieve a sense of *continuous presence*, similar to the Bergsonian *duration*. Stein in this attempt seems to contradict the idea on which language is founded, which is repetition: words are being repeated and in their repetition they acquire meaning. It is this repetition that fixes our experience and gives it ‘the same name.’<sup>46</sup> Stein’s entire concept of continuous present appears paradoxical, when contemplated through a Bergsonian understanding of time and language: Stein strives to arrest immediate data of consciousness, or else, immediate feelings, by using precisely that which appears to fight against the immediacy of feeling *twice*: not only does she use language, which only exists because it can be repeated, but also she uses repetition as a means of expressing those feelings. Stein uses reiteration as a means of cancelling language out, as a strategy for turning language against itself, as Connor suggests: ‘repetition is not only a form of survival in language, it is a way of negating it.’<sup>47</sup> I return to performances through writing, which uses repetition, in an attempt to experience performance again and again, acknowledging the paradoxical nature of this

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<sup>42</sup> Guerlac, p. 67.

<sup>43</sup> Guerlac, p. 68.

<sup>44</sup> Guerlac, p. 69.

<sup>45</sup> Bergson, p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> Guerlac, p. 74.

<sup>47</sup> Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 19

task, as well as the ways in which repetitive language attends to the present moment and the altered nature of sensation that emerges from it.

### **Gertrude Stein**

Gertrude Stein's discussion of the role of excitement in the act of viewing a theatrical performance offers a means of understanding the particular kind of pleasures produced in the act of viewing repetition. I will make use of Stein's remarkable observations about emotion in order to further consider my encounter with Pina Bausch's performance *Bluebeard*. I discuss the *memory* of my encounter with Beatrice Libonati's repetitive falling on the floor. It is a moment that I have also referred to in Chapter One, a moment, which I revisit here, in a later time, to observe the differences that occur through repetition, as every sensation is altered by repetition.<sup>48</sup> The form I use in order to explore this moment of performance is writing. The use of language as a means to access the way I experience repetition seems problematic. As mentioned above, 'language makes us believe in the unchangeableness of our sensations' and it can also 'deceive us to the nature of the sensation felt.'<sup>49</sup> Reading Bergson, Suzanne Guerlac suggests:

All sensations are modified through repetition for the very fact of recurrence alters the nature of the sensation. [...] Language makes us believe in the invariability of our sensations because invariably, it provides the same name. The only way to fight back against the conventionality of language would be to seek a very precise language.<sup>50</sup>

The problem caused by language finds its solution through language: the difficulty that emerges through the attempt to capture the fleeting moment of performance could be to an extent resolved by the use of a 'very precise language', a different kind of language, which does not 'provide the same name', but is in fact attentive to the differences emerging through repetition. This could be a writing *of* the event, as discussed above, or a writing which uses repetition to attend to the present moment. Writing, in this case, attempts to recover the experience of performance, to write or perform the *performerly* performance of spectatorship and to provide a space within which repetition takes place and is allowed to unfold again and again.

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<sup>48</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 131.

<sup>49</sup> Bergson, p. 131.

<sup>50</sup> Guerlac, p. 73.

Stein is interested in experimenting with different forms of writing that not only reveal, but also *perform* and function as a *writerly* text, which produces different meanings each time and embraces repetition as a means to achieve this. Her work, both literary and theatrical, uses repetitive structures, words and phrases in order to deal with problems that arise through language, such as the temporality of feeling. In her lecture ‘Plays’, Stein describes a curious relation between feeling and the action on stage. She argues that when watching a play ‘the scene depicted on the stage is more often than one might say [...] almost always in syncopated time in relation to the emotion of anybody in the audience.’<sup>51</sup> Stein presents this relation to time as a problematic one, longing to experience her emotion synchronously to the dramatic time. This emotion concerning the play, Stein continues, is ‘always either behind or ahead of the play at which you are looking and to which you are listening. So your emotion as a member of the audience is never going on at the same time as the action of the play.’<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, Stein suggests, in everyday life

one progresses forward and back emotionally and at the supreme crisis of the scene [...] one is almost one with one’s emotions, the action and the emotion go together, [...] and so instinctively when any people are living an exciting moment one with another they go *on and on and on* until the thing has come together the emotion the action the excitement and that is the way it is.<sup>53</sup>

In order to resolve the conflict between the temporality of the spectator’s emotion and theatrical time, Stein attempts to perform in writing what seems to happen in everyday life, when ‘one goes on and on and on’ until the emotion emerges at the same time with the action. She, therefore, decides to also ‘go on and on and on’ until the moment that her emotion emerges at the same time as the act of writing, hoping that writing will also function in the same way when read by someone other than herself. As a result, Stein uses repetition in order to deal with the problem of emotion’s temporality.

Elsewhere in the lecture ‘Plays’ Stein proposes two different kinds of excitement related to the experience of the everyday as well as that of performance: the ‘completion of excitement’ that you get when actually taking part in a scene that happens in life and the ‘relief from excitement’ that you feel in the theatre: ‘the difference between completion and relief is the difference between the emotion concerning a thing seen on the stage

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<sup>51</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, p. 93.

<sup>52</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, p. 58.

<sup>53</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, p. 62, emphasis added.

and the emotion concerning a real presentation that is really something happening.’<sup>54</sup> My pleasure contains an excitement that derives from this movement between being in and out of synch with the performance, a movement, perhaps, between completion and relief. Using Stein’s argument, I observe my emotion in relation to Libonati’s falling through writing: ‘I take a great pleasure watching Libonati falling and an even greater one performing her fall. But I am not always falling with Libonati. I am falling sometimes and then I stop falling and she is falling alone and then I think I am falling but I am not. When I am not falling I am watching her fall and sometimes when I am falling I follow her fall or I lead her fall or we almost fall at the same time. There is mostly the moments that my fall is almost one with her fall that I feel I am really falling.’ In this encounter with Libonati’s falling, I make use of the Steinian ‘before or after the thing on stage’ as well as the experience of the *performerly*. I attempt to communicate the experience of being in and out of synch with my emotion. Although this is a fragile sentiment, which cannot be clearly communicated, there is a sense that when watching repetition some moments are experienced more intensely than others. These are the moments that I have the impression that I am performing Libonati’s fall *at the same time* as Libonati herself. My emotion, therefore, seems to occur simultaneously to the action on stage.<sup>55</sup> Those intense moments experienced resemble what Stein calls the ‘listening and talking’ effect, which is an experience of listening and talking to someone at the same time. In performance, the relationship of ‘listening and talking’ would occur as a *performerly* experience, where the viewer is ‘performing and watching’ at the same time. This simultaneity of experience eliminates the problematic syncopated time of emotion and ensures a ‘physical empathy’ with the performer. In Bergsonian terms, it seems to resemble an experience of *duration*, or Steinian *presence*, which might be succeeded momentarily in the experience of repetition in performance and which might also be precisely the quality of the live which is valued in accounts of performance’s ephemerality that draw on Phelan.

This is the sixth time I revisit Libonati’s falling. I go back and count. Going back is important, because it gives me a sense of what repetition does to me as a spectator, what it does to the memory of repetition, when repetition is dissipated. It seems that last time I wrote about Libonati, my re-experience of repetition was not as forceful as the

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<sup>54</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> Gertrude Stein’s discussion of the role of excitement in the act of viewing a theatrical performance seems almost to anticipate Barthes’ discussion of the notions of *plaisir* and *jouissance* in the act of reading.

previous times. This is important in the sense that, now, in this time and space, in Chapter Three, which followed Chapter Two in the sequence of writing, Libonati's falling has acquired something of its initial potency, or impact. This moment is the moment I revisit Libonati's falling and reproduce my experience of this return in writing a seventh time: 'Libonati falls repeatedly on the floor she falls and falls again, Minarik motionless does not move. Libonati falls on the floor. She falls again and again. She wants to be caught by Minarik, but he does not care. He looks ahead, as if Libonati is not there, in front of him, as if she does not exist, as if she has never fallen, as if she has never done anything, again and again. Libonati falls on the ground, and falls again, she falls and feels his hand while falling, she falls again, she feels his hand, his hand moves, she falls with her back, his hand moves and she falls again.'

Stein suggests that people repeat an experience again and again, so that their excitement emerges at the same time as the event they are experiencing: 'they go *on and on and on* until the thing has come together the emotion the action the excitement and that is the way it is.'<sup>56</sup> The repetition of the Steinian event is embodied in Libonati's repetitive falling as well as the desire to revisit the performance again and again. Libonati is falling 'on and on and on' on stage, until 'the thing has come together the emotion the action the excitement'.<sup>57</sup> A similar movement is performed in the return to the performance: I go (back) 'on and on and on', in recollection, which is a repetition backwards. I therefore suggest that part of the reason why Libonati is falling 'on and on and on' is perhaps in order to reach the moment in which 'the thing has come together the emotion the action the excitement,' to reach the moment that the viewer's emotion emerges at the same time as the action, the moment that my emotion coincides with Libonati's falling to the floor. Through Libonati's falling and the repetitive encounter with it, I may reach such a moment. Yet, the anticipation that this piece provokes is never fully satisfied. The perpetual attempt to reach such a moment and the discomfort that this might evoke is experienced perhaps as *jouissance*, the difficult kind of pleasure, connected to the experience of repetition. The encounter with a repetitive sequence, such as Libonati's falling, might, therefore, provoke a momentary 'completion of excitement,' giving rise to a continuous movement of being in and out of synch with the performance related to both feelings of discomfort and excitement.

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<sup>56</sup> Stein, 'Plays', p. 62, emphasis added.

<sup>57</sup> Stein, 'Plays', p. 62, emphasis added.

This suggests an interesting parallel between the Barthesian notions of *writerly* and *readerly* and the Steinian ‘completion of’ and ‘relief from’ excitement. The way Stein describes ‘relief from excitement’ directs me towards the understanding of a sentiment that is fulfilling, without any particular effort. It seems like a comfortable way of experiencing a moment that is happening on stage, where the emotion appears before or after the action itself. This could be, therefore, paralleled to Barthes’ *plaisir*. On the other hand, the term that Stein has chosen to describe the moment when the emotion occurs at the same time as the action appears to me slightly problematic. Although, this moment strikes me as a difficult one, one that perhaps entails a certain kind of discomfort, the word ‘completion,’ like perhaps the translation of *jouissance* into ‘bliss’, does not imply such a meaning. Yet, ‘completion’ in this sense, might have an asphyxiating quality, which could be paralleled to that of *jouissance*. However, I pose the following question: did Stein mean that relief is the difficult feeling that theatre provokes, precisely because the action does not occur at the same time as the emotion, in which case relief would be paralleled to *jouissance* and not pleasure? Could completion then denote a comfortable feeling that occurs in everyday life, such as *plaisir*? The fact, yet, that Stein describes ‘completion’ as a result of a process that entails a certain kind of effort, (‘one progresses forward and back emotionally and at the supreme crisis of the scene [...] one is almost one with one’s emotions, the action and the emotion go together’<sup>58</sup>), makes the first option more viable. Here it becomes very clear that the various dualities that characterise repetition are by no means identical with one another, or interchangeable as ways of accounting for experience.

In this part of the chapter I have been concerned with the Steinian understanding of repetition and excitement. Stein attempted to use language to create an experience of *presence* for her reader or spectator. In order to do that she adopted methods such as automatic writing, or writing plays ‘as landscapes’. Two kinds of excitement seemed to be important in this endeavour: the ‘completion of’ and ‘relief from’ excitement. I have applied the above understandings of repetition’s use in my own encounter with repetitive movement in *Bluebeard*. In what follows, I consider Calle’s repetitive book *Exquisite Pain*, in order to show how processes of repetition might transform sentiments of ‘completion’ into ‘relief’. I am interested in the ways in which processes of writing might allow sentiments related to the experience of repetition to change. Completion of excitement, which is another way of understanding *insistence* or *presence*, could be, in

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<sup>58</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, p. 62.



some cases, similar to *jouissance*. Through a process of repeating and writing, the sentiment of completion might dissipate into that of relief. Repetition, in this case, exhausts itself and ceases to hold the same excitement as before. These processes of amplification and simplification, in Deleuzian terms, will be explored in the encounter with Calle's *Exquisite Pain*.<sup>59</sup>

### **Repetition and Presence**

Working in the psychological laboratory of William James during the years 1893 and 1897 at Radcliffe, Stein was encouraged to take part in experiments with an older student named Leon Solomons. Continuing her studies at the Harvard Psychological Laboratory, Stein published two articles with Solomons in 1896 and 1898 respectively, both in *Psychological Review*: 'Normal Motor Automatism' and 'Cultivated Motor Automatism: A Study of Character in Its Relation to Attention'.<sup>60</sup> Researching automatic, habitual, repetitive actions, Stein began to test her own tendency to perform automatic actions. She, therefore, discovered that

she was able to 'watch [her] automatic movements without interfering with their complete non-voluntariness' – that she could, in short, perform 'automatically' and at the same time remain conscious of this process. This recognition in turn forced her to acknowledge that there exists within the field of automatic motion a certain form of consciousness irreducible to automatism: what she would refer to as 'consciousness without memory,' since it describes a state of conscious awareness that is immediate and cannot be extended from one moment to the next.<sup>61</sup>

This sense of immediate awareness proved to be one of Stein's interests later in her writing. During these experiments, she had already started being interested in automatism and language. For example, Stein undertook experiments where 'the same sentence might be dictated to the subject over and over again, and at the end of the series he would not know what it was'.<sup>62</sup> A consciousness without memory seemed to be at play, which enabled the subject to be conscious throughout, but unable to recall the sentence he had been writing again and again. 'Of course', Barbara Will argues, 'this is not conclusive, for obviously there is memory of some kind even in this case,

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<sup>59</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. xv.

<sup>60</sup> Barbara Will, *Gertrude Stein, Modernism, and the Problem of 'Genius'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2000), pp. 23-24.

<sup>61</sup> Will, p. 22.

<sup>62</sup> Will, p. 26.

though not a memory of what was written.’<sup>63</sup> This form of consciousness, which is achieved through ‘immediate, present-tense distraction,’ Stein seems to suggest, enables the subject to watch what one produces ‘only as it is being produced.’<sup>64</sup> Of course, Stein and Solomons trained themselves to be able to develop such a capacity. In this training process, habits ‘are not simply performed, but perceived anew, defamiliarized.’<sup>65</sup> The point of the process ‘is not to arrest automatic movement, but to allow it to continue while observing it – a process of “sustained attention.”’<sup>66</sup> Later on, Stein grew an interest in combining two elements: ‘production (“motor automatism”) and watchful “knowing” or attentive inattentiveness in which “memory plays no part”’, which constitutes what later will be referred to as continuous present, and which she seems to be employing in the process of writing *The Making of Americans*.<sup>67</sup> Repetition gradually emerges as a means of achieving consciousness without memory through writing. An emphasis is put on moment-to-moment processes of reading and writing, where a different kind of attention is enabled, an attention that has to do with the lively present moment and does not remember the past or is troubled by the notion of the future. Habit and the kind of repetition that is connected to it, is in a sense devalued and discredited: ‘If anything is alive there is no such thing as repetition.’<sup>68</sup> Thus, what we might call ‘liveness’ seems to be for Stein the attentive consciousness of each moment in the moment-to-moment process of reading and writing and consequently, in this project, performing and watching. This is a kind of repetition of language, which is alive, and therefore interested in the present. This kind of repetition, attempted in her writing, is entitled by Stein, as already briefly discussed, *insistence*.

Stein, as she describes in her ‘Portraits and Repetition’, became for the first time conscious of this experience of *insistence* at the age of seventeen. It was then that she went to stay with her aunt in Baltimore, when both of her parents died. In ‘Portraits and Repetition’, Stein mentions ‘eleven little aunts’ and the particular way they engaged in conversation with each other, which seemed to fascinate her. Biographical resources mention only one aunt, so perhaps Stein repeated in her mind her aunt eleven times, for the purposes of her argument. In her writings, Stein argues that she observed her aunts and developed an understanding of a quality of talking, which she then applied in her

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<sup>63</sup> Will, p. 26.

<sup>64</sup> Will, p. 29.

<sup>65</sup> Will, p. 29.

<sup>66</sup> Will, p. 29.

<sup>67</sup> Will, p. 30.

<sup>68</sup> Gertrude Stein, ‘Portraits and Repetition’, *Lectures in America* (London: Virago Press, 1988), p. 174.

own writing. This quality was much later studied and given the name *continuous presence* or *present*.<sup>69</sup> The quality of *presence* in some cases seems to occur due to the use of repetitive language. It appears not only as a characteristic of reading, but also as a characteristic of the experience of listening or spectating. In a performance which uses repetitive language the spectator might experience this quality of *presence* in each separate moment. This is what Stein describes as the simultaneous act of ‘listening and talking’, which resembles the sentiment of *insisting*. *Insistence*, which generates a sense of *presence*, constitutes for Stein a type of reiteration, which differs from repetition: insistence has to do with emphasis upon something and emphasis is not always the same. *Insistence* establishes a feeling of ‘listening and talking’, while repetition has to do with either ‘listening’ or ‘talking’. Thus, Stein argues in her essay ‘Portraits and Repetition,’ when her eleven little aunts stopped insisting in telling their stories, they stopped ‘listening and talking’ at the same time and started repeating.<sup>70</sup> Stein attempted to write in such a way that the reader would not think about the past or the future, but rather experience the present moment. This kind of writing aimed at eliminating remembering. On the other hand, repeating seemed to enable memory, which was undesirable. She attempted to write without repeating, that is remembering, but also, to write in a way so that the reader experiences the same sentiment as in her writing, which is not remembering, but rather *insisting* or ‘being alive’ or ‘existing’. This feeling of being in the *present* constituted one of Stein’s goals in writing.

As mentioned previously, the experience of watching plays made Stein generally nervous about the temporality of her emotions. As she described it, her emotion seemed to occur either before or after the action seen on stage, causing a lapse in her feeling, which troubled her thinking. However, her experience of watching a play in a foreign language proved to be an entirely different experience. During her teenage years Stein saw Sarah Bernhardt performing in San Francisco. Watching a French play, as she later wrote, enabled a different experience of temporality to occur, or a sense of *presence*. Within *presence*, it seemed, her emotion did not occur before or after the action on stage, but rather *in the present moment*, as there was no sense of past or future. She

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<sup>69</sup> Many scholars have discussed the Steinian rhythm and *continuous present*, amongst them Catherine N. Parke, “‘Simple Through Complication’: Gertrude Stein Thinking”, *American Literature*, 60, 4 (1988), pp. 554-574, Marianne DeKoven, *A Different Language: Gertrude Stein’s Experimental Writing* (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), Brad Bucknell, *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics: Pater, Pound, Joyce and Stein* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), amongst others.

<sup>70</sup> Stein, ‘Portraits and Repetition’, p. 174.

discovered that she did not feel the need to get ‘acquainted with’ the characters or attempt to understand. She could sit untroubled and watch.<sup>71</sup> It was for her ‘a very simple direct and moving pleasure.’<sup>72</sup> Stein did not understand the play ‘in the normal sense of the word,’ Wendy Steiner argues, ‘but instead participated in it through something close to direct perception.’<sup>73</sup> Through this experience Stein developed an understanding of plays as landscapes, which constituted a visual experience. The influence of the painters that surrounded her is obvious in her perception of theatre and the choice of language. The importance in experiencing and later writing plays as landscapes seemed to be this: the emotion of the viewer did not occur before or after each moment experienced, since what was experienced was always already there, already ‘seen’ and like in a landscape it did not change or progress. Stein argued that this happened as ‘the landscape does not introduce itself to you, like the actor on stage, the landscape does not need to make acquaintance with you, like the actor on stage, unless you want to make acquaintance with it.’<sup>74</sup> The landscape, according to Stein, does not have an identity or a history, it is a set of relations, the simple visual relations of which render it immediately perceptible.<sup>75</sup> Immediate perception excludes a sense of time before or after, the only time experienced is the present, the now. So, if plays were to be experienced as landscapes, they would produce a particular quality that would allow the viewer to sit untroubled and watch. In that case the viewer would not attempt to understand the meaning or the plot, or think about the past or the future. This experience of time would then be an experience of *presence*, an experience of ‘listening and talking’ or *insisting*. The simultaneous act of listening and talking presupposes a synchronicity with others, or a synchronicity with oneself. It is in the performance of writing or reading that one may experience the effect of synchronicity or *insistence*, but most significantly in the act of watching repetition, which is an act of performing or a *performerly* performance.

This function of repetition does not necessarily occur as an immediate effect. In some cases, a certain time of waiting might be required. In her 1929 essay *An Acquaintance with Description* Stein gives an account of this experience of waiting:

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<sup>71</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, pp. 115-16.

<sup>72</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, pp. 115-16.

<sup>73</sup> Steiner, ‘Plays’, p. 171.

<sup>74</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, pp. 115-16.

<sup>75</sup> Steiner, p. 171.

Always wait along never wait so long always wait along always wait along never wait so long never wait as long always wait along always wait along never wait so long never wait so long never wait so long never wait so long always wait along always wait as long always wait along never wait so long always wait along.<sup>76</sup>

The particular rhythm of language, established by repetition, the shape of it and the play with words activate not only a process of waiting, but also a mechanism of *presence*. Both the writer and the reader need to linger over the words or pause in an active way and perform this waiting. The activity of ‘doing waiting’ is, in this case, an utterance, a performative act that *does* something. The passage performs the process of waiting by *actually* making the reader wait, yet while reading, the act of waiting develops possibly into an experience of ‘listening and talking.’ The passage skilfully triggers in the reader a ‘sense of expectancy or anticipation of that which has not yet happened,’<sup>77</sup> as Michael Kirby puts it. This kind of anticipation that language evokes in its use of repetition functions as a determined constituent of both the activity of waiting and the emergence of *insistence*.

The rhythm of language influences the rhythm of experience or thought, Stein argues. This constitutes part of the research Stein undertook during her time in Harvard with William James. James, interested in the pace of thought, expressed by the rhythm of language in writing, argued that our thought can fly or rest. This generates two different places in writing: the resting-places, or substantive places, and the places of flight, or transitive ones: ‘the aim of the transitive states is to have us arrive at substantive ones.’<sup>78</sup> For Stein this knowledge was important, as, what she was interested in was, as already discussed, ‘the state of perception in which memory does not operate.’<sup>79</sup> In order to achieve this quality, Stein experimented with the idea of transitive places. In her experiments with language, the tangibility of the word and its existence as a self-enclosed entity were particularly enthralling. In her experiments, Stein also used the quality of transitive places to reflect *materially* the changes of thought.

Besides ‘listening and talking’ in order to achieve the quality of *presence*, Stein also did something else, she argues in ‘Portraits and Repetition’ and that was looking. Looking,

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<sup>76</sup> Gertrude Stein, *An Acquaintance with Description* (London: The Seizin Press 1929), p. 20.

<sup>77</sup> Michael Kirby, ‘On Acting and Non-Acting’, in *Acting (Re) Considered: A theoretical and Practical Guide*, ed. by Phillip Zarrilli (London: Routledge, 1995) p. 26.

<sup>78</sup> As examples of these transitive words, Steiner mentions indefinite and universal pronouns, such as ‘thing’, ‘something’, ‘someone’, ‘everything’ and ‘anything’ that contribute, as she says to the extreme lack of concreteness. Steiner, pp. 85, 55.

<sup>79</sup> Steiner, p. 55.

which had previously enabled her to achieve the quality of *presence*, forced her now ‘into recognising resemblances, and so forced remembering and in forcing remembering caused confusion of present with past and future time.’<sup>80</sup> Stein used looking in her attempt to write the portraits of people that surrounded her. Yet, looking at people, like we do in theatre, proved problematic as it forced the writer to ‘recognise resemblances,’ i.e. to use the memory and the experience of time passing. Looking also ‘seemed to involve the stasis of nouns, substantive expanses of thought, memory, resemblance and a conflicting (non-mimetic) time sense – in short identity.’<sup>81</sup> The identity of people compelled Stein to make links amongst them, think about their characteristics, which involved thinking about the past and the future, and perform the betrayal she was so fearful of. Therefore, Stein decided to attempt making portraits of objects instead. In making a portrait Stein had no interest in using descriptive words, but rather the words that made what she looked at ‘be itself,’ as she argues. The words she used were words that related themselves to the thing she was looking at.<sup>82</sup> She attempted to resolve the problematic nature of looking by distinguishing two kinds of visual perception, parallel to the two modes of thinking: ‘the visuality of [...] resemblance, and that of immediate perception.’<sup>83</sup> The first kind of visual perception is, according to her, created by description and the second by ‘the discovery of a direct correspondence between the sense aspect of the word – its sound– and the visuality of the object.’<sup>84</sup> Stein attempted to apply those two types of visual perception in her writing. What she was trying to do through this process was ‘to create a text which would be mimetically adequate to her subject,’ each moment constituting a moment in itself, separate from the others, a perceptual ‘now’.<sup>85</sup> Stein made use of a different sense of time, perhaps a ‘time out of time,’<sup>86</sup> a time that attempted to efface remembering. Sentences connected to each other through rhythm in a kind of writing that resembled the act of ‘listening and talking’, but not remembering. However, writing a play was a challenging task, since, undoubtedly the characters had an identity, which blocked the process of immediate perception and forced the viewer to recognise resemblances. In order to resolve this problem, Stein attempted to write the characters of a play applying some of the qualities of a landscape: those would be finite characters, which ‘cease to exist at the end of the play’ through

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<sup>80</sup> Stein, ‘Portraits and Repetition’, p. 188.

<sup>81</sup> Steiner, p. 61.

<sup>82</sup> Stein, ‘Portraits and Repetition’, p. 191.

<sup>83</sup> Steiner, p. 61.

<sup>84</sup> Steiner, p. 61.

<sup>85</sup> Steiner, p. 60.

<sup>86</sup> Adrian Heathfield, ‘Alive’, in *Live, Art and Performance*, edited by Adrian Heathfield (London: Tate Modern, 2004), p. 8.

immediate perception.<sup>87</sup> This quality of finitude could be useful in relation to the act of viewing. If one can write finite characters, one can also watch, or *perform* finite characters in the act of viewing. That is, the viewer can encounter a performance as finite and perform that finitude in watching performance. Repetition in some cases seems to encourage this kind of experience, which then evolves into a sense of being in the present.

Wendy Steiner gives a useful account of anticipation, synthesis and resemblance in the work of Stein. She argues that in order to be able to read Stein and understand her *continuous present*, the reader should not consider the sense of anticipation and time as impossible, but rather as ‘finite.’<sup>88</sup> Anticipation should appear as a ‘plotless, pure, visible activity,’ one that is not concerned with the entirety of a piece, but rather with each separate moment, one that ‘ceases to exist at the end of the play.’<sup>89</sup> Synthesis and resemblance could be thought of in the same way: these do not disappear completely, but appear as finite actions, actions that exist within a moment: the moment of reading or writing. Having discussed different ways of achieving Steinian *presence*, I would like to pose the following question: could the idea of *immediate perception* be achieved on stage? If using a text of transitive words, which do not survive in memory and which provoke a kind of anticipation that ceases to exist at the end of the ‘play,’ how does one deal with the performer that moves *in space* on stage repeating a phrase that attempts to be perceived as an immediate perception, or *pure duration*, which has mostly to do with experience *in time*? In what follows, I attempt to explain my own understanding of immediate or *continuous presence* in relation to Katharina Seyferth’s performance *Rooms*, based on Stein’s *Tender Buttons*, presented at the Grotowski Institute, Poland, July 2009.

In the performance, the space Seyferth uses is neutral. It is a room, half of which accommodates the performance, the audience being seated on the other half. There are few props on stage: a chair, pieces of white paper and a newspaper scattered on the floor. Seyferth is wearing a long skirt and a t-shirt. She does not impersonate a character as such, but rather changes her voice from time to time, resembling at times the voice of a child and at other times that of an old woman. In the performance, Seyferth carefully creates a context for each small section of the Steinian text, which itself provokes a

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<sup>87</sup> Steiner, pp. 173-74.

<sup>88</sup> Steiner, p. 178.

<sup>89</sup> Steiner, pp. 173-74.

sense of being *in the present*, as no section connects to the previous one or reminds you of it. The text does not quite make sense; yet, Seyferth performs it in such a way that convinces us that she knows exactly what she is talking about. And I believe her. I believe that there is sense in what she is saying, but not ‘getting it’ is not important. The rhythm of the speech and its intonation capture my attention at each separate moment. I experience the intensity of performance throughout its duration, without thinking about it as such, but rather experiencing in an immediately perceptible way with no sense of past or future. I participate in it through something close to ‘direct perception’, as Steiner has it.<sup>90</sup> I experience the piece almost as a foreign language, which I do not speak, yet I am sure it has its own logic and structure.

Seyferth combines Stein’s text with devised movement: she spins around at times, she walks, she hides like a child, she lifts the chair, she jumps, runs, spreads the pieces of white paper as if creating rooms on the floor and walks by them talking. Although she moves *in space*, I do not seem to be affected by it. The experience happens *in space*, like reflective consciousness influenced by language. Yet my understanding seems closer to the Steinian *presence* or Bergson’s immediate perception. The Steinian language succeeds in making time matter with an emphasis upon each moment. It is something about the listening experience that is so enthralling. Seyferth’s voice changes from one passage to the next and although retaining something of her own voice throughout the piece, I never seem to question the text’s fragmented nature. I am never troubled by the fact that the piece does not quite make sense as a whole, because, simply, I think, I don’t need to make sense of it. Each moment is a moment in itself, there is no confusion, because there is no remembering. In Stein’s words, ‘it is when it is and in being when it is being there is no beginning and no ending.’<sup>91</sup> Seyferth, in that sense, *insists* rather than repeats, she performs ‘now’, at every moment, without evoking a sense of past or future.

In a way, I know I have experienced this sense of *presence* during Seyferth’s performance, because I have difficulty recalling the event afterwards. The performance has found a way to efface a need to think about time and last *in time*. It has effaced past and future not only during the experience of it, but also, it seems, in terms of memory: ‘although there is something unforgettable about such experiences of performance,’

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<sup>90</sup> Steiner, p. 171.

<sup>91</sup> Stein, ‘Lecture 3’, *Narration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1935), p. 37.



Nicholas Ridout argues, 'there is also something about them that resists remembering.'<sup>92</sup> In his article 'Two Parrots and an Answering Machine: Some Problems with Knowledge and Memory', Ridout discusses his experience of watching Richard Foreman's theatrical performance. He argues that 'something in Foreman's work functions with the specific purpose of encouraging its own forgetting.'<sup>93</sup> Foreman's theatre does not include, Ridout continues, all those things that usually happen on stage and render theatre memorable: stories, conflicts, powerful imagery etc. *Rooms* is a performance which does not entail any kind of vivid visuals or a story that we can make sense of or hold in memory. Instead, everything that happens does not make itself available to the future, but rather takes place in the moment of performance, resisting its own remembering. It is, Foreman himself later argues, like 'a vivid dream, which, when awake, you know you've lived with intensity, yet try as you might you can't remember.'<sup>94</sup> Stein's writing, which Seyferth uses in performance, has a particular flow, which is difficult to remember or make sense of: 'we don't have the mental apparatus to arrest the flow and reorganise it as we perceive it in such a way that we can incorporate it in existing structures for meaning-and memory-formation'<sup>95</sup>, Ridout continues. The intensity, with which the flow of this work is experienced, in Ridout's words, prevents me from remembering it afterwards. Remembering Foreman's work is difficult because it compels 'our attention to the moment-by-moment unravelling of flow, where connections have to be made here and there in the four-dimensional space that is the present of performance.'<sup>96</sup> *Presence* in that sense is what Stein's writing attempts to establish and achieves through Seyferth's performance *Rooms*.

#### Sophie Calle: *Exquisite Pain*

Sophie Calle's *Exquisite Pain* was first shown in a 2003 Centre Pompidou survey of the artist's work in its original French-language version, *Douleur Exquise. Exquisite Pain*, presented both as an installation and a publication, consists of two parts: the first is 'a countdown to unhappiness in the form of a multipart photo-and-text record of the 92-day span between Calle's departure in late 1984 from home (Paris) and her arrival at

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<sup>92</sup> Nicholas Ridout, 'Two Parrots and an Answering Machine: Some Problems with Knowledge and Memory,' *Performance Research: On Archives and Archiving* 7, 4 (2002), 42-47 (p. 43).

<sup>93</sup> Ridout, 'Two Parrots and an Answering Machine', p. 44.

<sup>94</sup> Richard Foreman cited in Ridout, p. 44.

<sup>95</sup> Ridout, p. 44.

<sup>96</sup> Ridout, p. 45.

what was to be a rendezvous point (New Delhi) with her lover.’<sup>97</sup> The work’s driving force seems to be the exquisite pain experienced by the narrator due to her lover’s failure to show up for their meeting in New Delhi, which marks the midpoint of this project: ‘From there, it moves forward incrementally, in a kind of recovery marked by paired, illustrated texts: Calle’s repetitive retelling of her night in the Indian hotel room, placed beside tales of loss, many of them quite devastating, collected from friends and acquaintances.’<sup>98</sup> For the purposes of this research, I will attend to the repetition of the telling of Calle’s story itself, rather than the parallel stories of pain juxtaposed to Calle’s.

The story begins when Calle, or the narrator, is given a three-month grant to study in Japan.<sup>99</sup> Having been with her lover for almost a year, she has ambiguous feelings about undertaking this trip. She finally departs on October 25, 1984. In order to minimise the time actually spent in Japan, Calle chooses prolonged railway travel. A photograph or a memento marks each day that brings her closer to the day she will finally meet her lover. Counting down the days that keep her away from her lover, Calle’s *Exquisite Pain* ‘uses snapshots, letters and memorabilia to mark her progression toward an unexpected romantic rupture. [...] Each image or item is branded in red ink-cancelled, as it were, like a postage stamp-with a number, followed by the phrase “days to unhappiness.”’<sup>100</sup> In the middle of the book, *Exquisite Pain* ‘begins’ again, as day one is placed in the midpoint of the book. The story makes use of a structure not quite *in medias res*: it begins with a countdown to unhappiness, which forestalls the drama that follows, and begins again from day one of the drama. In that sense, the beginning of the story happens in the middle of the book, and from that point onwards, the story is told again and again in a forward count. The numbered iterations make the story less gripping, until the story fades out ‘through sheer repetition’: ‘Six days ago the man I love left me. [...] Fourteen days ago the man I love left me. [...] Ninety two days ago the man I love left me.’ In the exhibition of *Exquisite Pain* ‘gaps between ever-briefer accounts grow longer, and the texts steadily fainter – the lettering that in the first

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<sup>97</sup> Nancy Princenthal, ‘The measure of heartbreak’, *Art in America*, 8, (2005), 138-42, (p.138)

<sup>98</sup> Princenthal, ‘The measure of heartbreak’ p. 138.

<sup>99</sup> Although never certain if this is an autobiographical experience, since presented as such, I refer to it accordingly. However, at times I might refer to the ‘heroine’ of the story, or the ‘character’ of the book or the ‘narrator’.

<sup>100</sup> Princenthal, p. 138.

installment was white slowly fades to a dim, barely legible gray. On day 90, Calle reports, “As suffering goes, nothing special.”<sup>101</sup>

Six days ago the man I love left me. I used to dream about him as a little girl. He was very handsome. At thirty I managed to seduce him. For our first night I wore a wedding dress. We had been together nearly a year when they gave me that damned three-month grant for Japan. He warned me that he'd forget me if I left. But still I went, on October 25, 1984. In spite of his threat he suggested we meet in India at the end of my journey. About the trip itself there is nothing to say apart from the fact that I counted the days that kept me from this man. On January 24 he called me a few hours before setting off to confirm the details: he was flying in from Paris an hour before me and would wait at New Delhi airport for the flight from Tokyo. After all that waiting, here it was happiness!<sup>102</sup>

Calle narrates again and again the story of her separation from her lover, when he failed to meet her in New Delhi. There seems to be a kind of force that thrusts Calle into the repetition of this love story. Calle repeats her story thirty six times, skipping some days in the counting, until she gets over her pain ‘by comparing it with other people’s’, in the part of the book I am not concerned with in this reading.<sup>103</sup> While reading the text I feel spontaneously attuned to it, I follow its rhythm, I am utterly captured, I am compelled to follow Calle in this journey, left without choice.<sup>104</sup>

As I was boarding they handed me a message: ‘M. can’t join you in Delhi due to accident in Paris and stay in hospital. Contact Bob.’ Must have been a crash on the way to the airport. It was my fault. I had to call my father who is a doctor. To hear that he was dead? In New Delhi it was impossible to get a connection. It took me ten hours to get through to Bob, who didn’t know what I was talking about. Yes, M. had been in the hospital but only for an infected finger.<sup>105</sup>

This part of the thesis will be concerned with Calle’s *Exquisite Pain* in relation to the Steinian notions of ‘relief’ and ‘completion’ of excitement. Again, here, the structure of experiencing trauma is useful. Calle, or the heroine of the story, gets over her pain through repetition. However, in no case is the content of the work or my encounter with it experienced as traumatic. It is rather something about the going back to an experience that is reminiscent of the logic of trauma. Although the tone of writing in the revisiting of the performances I have described above as well as in my encounter with *Exquisite Pain* is rather melancholic, this is not necessarily to do with the content of those performances or, in this case, the content of writing. It is rather that there are similarities

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<sup>101</sup> Princenthal, p. 140.

<sup>102</sup> Sophie Calle, *Exquisite Pain* (London: Thames & Hudson 2004), p. 206.

<sup>103</sup> Calle, p. 203.

<sup>104</sup> The act of reading *Exquisite Pain* is what I am concerned with here, and not the performance of Calle’s text by Forced Entertainment, 2005.

<sup>105</sup> Calle, p. 206.

between the structure of trauma and the experience of repetition that might evoke such thoughts.

So, I called him at home. As soon as he picked it up, I knew it was over: 'I wanted to come and explain things to you'. 'Have you met another woman?' 'Yes', he hoped it was serious. I hung up. I sat on my bed for hours, staring at the phone and the mouldy carpet of the room 261 in the Imperial Hotel. [...] Twelve days ago the man I love left me. January 25, 1985 at two in the morning. In room 261 in the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi. He was a friend of my father, he was very handsome. I dreamt of him all my childhood. [...]

Fourteen days ago the man I love left me. January 25, 1985 at two in the morning. In room 261 in the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi. He was a friend of my father, he was very handsome. I dreamt of him all my childhood.<sup>106</sup>

Calle narrates her story again and again. Each time the story sounds a little different, each time she adds a little information, or gives more details about M's accident, or the telegram, or the mouldy carpet at the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi. Calle gives different interpretations to M's words, the writing becomes angry, sad. She repeats the telegram again and again in different ways, playing with language and its vast possibilities. Calle finds all possible ways to narrate the story, staying close to the incident. Reminiscent perhaps of a Raymond Queneau exercise, in the repetition of its content, the story always begins with a counting of the days of unhappiness. In this journey, Calle's aim is to exhaust the story. In order to do so, she has to go through all the possible versions of the story, going back to the very first night she spent with M, offering different reasons why the relationship was bound to end. Calle goes through the story again and again in order to work out, perhaps, the reason why M did not turn up in the airport, the reason why she has spent so long counting the days of unhappiness. Gradually, the narrative of the story, having been narrated so many times, becomes shorter, its narrator indifferent, immune to the story. As the story goes along, thirty-six days ago, forty-eight days ago, sixty-five days ago, the potency of writing dissipates. This becomes obvious in a number of ways: there are no more variations given to the story, no information added, no details about the telegram, M's accident or the mouldy carpet. The story is given in its facts and this is what happened. The material aspect of writing is also affected: it is obvious that the story becomes shorter, but also the letters on the page fade out slowly. On day 91 the letters have become faint and I barely read the pain. She writes: 'That was all. Not a lot. I'll get over it.'<sup>107</sup> The book ends with a blank page underneath the

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<sup>106</sup> Calle, pp. 206, 216.

<sup>107</sup> Calle, p. 266.

picture of the red phone in the hotel in New Delhi, where Calle broke up with the man she loved on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1984.

Beside the notions of 'completion' and 'relief', which will be useful in approaching Calle's writing, I would like to add the coupled ideas of 'existing'-'happening' and *insisting*-repeating. The difference between 'existing' and 'happening', Stein suggests in *Narration*, is this: 'existing' does not have a beginning and an ending, as 'it is when it is and in being when it is there is no beginning and no ending. That is because it exists any of every day and any of every day is not mixed up with beginning and ending.'<sup>108</sup> 'Existing' does not begin or end, 'happening' does. Thus, an event can 'exist' continuously, but it can 'happen' only once. Stein also distinguishes the act of *repetition* from the act of *insistence*. She argues that one *insists* when one is 'listening and talking' at the same time, which is similar to 'existing'.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, when one is only 'listening' or 'talking', one is *repeating*, which enables memory, and memory is connected to an idea of finitude, so it is closer to the notion of 'happening'. Stein suggests that *insistence* has to do with an emphasis upon something, and the emphasis is not always the same. When one loses interest in something, one stops *insisting* and starts *repeating*:

Twenty-two days ago the man I love left me. January 25, 1985 at two in the morning. In room 261 in the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi. He was a friend of my father, he was very handsome. I dreamt of him all my childhood. [...]

Fifty-eight days ago the man I love left me. January 25, 1985 at two in the morning. In room 261 in the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi. He was a friend of my father, he was very handsome. I dreamt of him all my childhood.<sup>110</sup>

Following Stein's thinking, the writing of *Exquisite Pain* might be experienced as an event that 'exists', rather than 'happens' in the reader's perception of it. It is an event that 'exists' in its many repetitions, again and again. The force of the writing process that initiates all the repetitions seems to resemble the Steinian sense of 'completion' of excitement. It is a sentiment that concerns 'a real presentation that is really something happening'<sup>111</sup>, an event that the reader might experience anew in each new narration of the story, in the *writerly* experience of reading. As such, this narrative effaces every possibility of its finitude. However, in the process of experiencing the text, the 'existent' event with no beginning and ending obtains gradually through *insistence*,

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<sup>108</sup> Stein, 'Lecture 3', p. 37.

<sup>109</sup> Stein, 'Lecture 3', p. 37.

<sup>110</sup> Calle, p. 250.

<sup>111</sup> Stein, 'Plays', p. 60.

(which is the live repetition with an emphasis upon something), a finite quality. The force of writing dissipates through *insistence*, which gradually descends into repetition. In Deleuzian terms, this is a process of simplification, in which the vigour of writing is gradually lessened through repetition.<sup>112</sup> Repetition activates a different kind of experience, one that does not ‘exist’ anymore, but rather ‘happens’ and as such, it moves towards its own end.<sup>113</sup>

Sixty-two days ago the man I love left me. January 25, 1985 at two in the morning. In room 261 in the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi. He was a friend of my father, he was very handsome. I dreamt of him all my childhood.<sup>114</sup>

This thesis therefore suggests that through repetition a narrative that ‘exists’, a narrative of *insistence* that evokes the sentiment of ‘completion’ can be dissipated into a narrative that ‘happens’. It can be transformed into a narrative that *repeats*, one that evokes the sentiment of ‘relief’. The story of this break-up experienced in the reading ‘as a real presentation that is really something happening’<sup>115</sup>, turns into an event that ‘happens’ in our perception, a remembered event or perhaps an event ‘on stage’, bound to end, its quality, or duration removed, to be replaced by its measurable time. The idea of time as measured is important in the work of Calle. Time is perceived as the specific time from the break-up: thirteen days ago, twenty-two days ago, seventy-five days ago. Similarly, a day for Stein is not a day ‘if nothing that had been happening has happened on that day.’<sup>116</sup> Time can progress only in relation to that event; a day is not a day if it is not the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1985. Stein discusses the importance of time in relation to her writing of the portrait of Martha:

Martha:

If one day that comes again and if we consider a day a week day it does come again if on a day that comes again and we consider every day to be a day that comes again it comes again then when accidentally when very accidentally every other day and every other day and every other day that comes again and every day comes again, every day comes again and accidentally and every day and it comes again, a day comes again and a day in that way comes again<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, p. xv.

<sup>113</sup> Later I will argue that repetition provokes a sense of time or anticipation, which has a finite quality in each moment, and, therefore, a sense of being in the present is created. This applies to each separate moment, whereas here I engage with the piece of writing as a whole.

<sup>114</sup> Calle, p. 255.

<sup>115</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, p. 60.

<sup>116</sup> Stein, ‘Lecture 3’, p. 36.

<sup>117</sup> Gertrude Stein, ‘Plays’, p. 123.

Stein argues that when writing a portrait one should not push oneself to create the portrait, but wait until the portrait comes out of oneself. She calls this method 'doing waiting,' which appears as an active process, necessary for her portrait to be completed: 'always each thing must come out completely from me, leaving me just then gently empty.'<sup>118</sup> In this way writing achieves an ending itself. Calle's separation from her lover or perhaps her lover's portrait, comes out from her, 'leaving her just then gently empty.' As argued above, the event of separation that previously 'existed' now obtains a beginning and an end and, thus, 'happens' in memory. *Insisting* becomes repeating and the sentiment of 'completion' has now given its place to 'relief'. As Stein suggests: 'sometime anybody can get tired of it and when everybody who is anybody does get tired of it then that is the end of that way of telling it.'<sup>119</sup>

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud examines patterns of suffering that consist in painful events that seem to repeat themselves against the individual's own wish. Referring to Tasso's romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata* that Freud uses as an example, Cathy Caruth considers Clorinda's accidental death by her lover Tancred as a wound in his mind or a painful event 'experienced too soon, too unexpectedly to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and the repetitive actions of the survivor.'<sup>120</sup> The sentiment of 'fright' that one experiences *after* the shocking or sudden experience is caused, according to Freud, 'by lack of any preparedness for anxiety.'<sup>121</sup> Caruth notes that one might not be prepared to take in a stimulus 'that comes too quickly,' so the threat is 'recognised as such by the mind *one moment too late*.'<sup>122</sup> Caruth's account of the Freudian theory of trauma is useful in terms of its logic and language. The experience of an event *one moment too late* resembles the Steinian account of sentiment, occurring in syncopated time with the action on stage. *Exquisite Pain* offers an account of such an experience, where, the event is re-enacted in writing, achieving a moment of 'completion of' excitement, which then descends into 'relief'. In the repeatedly narrated story the reader might experience an intensity of feeling, which

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<sup>118</sup> Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 586.

<sup>119</sup> Stein, 'Lecture 3', p. 32.

<sup>120</sup> Caruth, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond The Pleasure Principle' cited in Caruth, p. 62.

<sup>122</sup> Caruth, p. 62.

seems to be ‘worked-through’ in writing, or ‘written-through’ in T. J. Clark’s words, as I will show in Chapter Four.

Sixty-seven days ago the man I love left me. January 25, 1985 at two in the morning. In room 261 in the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi. He was a friend of my father, he was very handsome. I dreamt of him all my childhood.<sup>123</sup>

Calle argues that the reason for writing *Exquisite Pain* is this: ‘I decided to continue until I got over my pain by comparing it with other people’s or had worn out my own story through sheer repetition. The method proved radically effective. In three months I had cured myself.’<sup>124</sup> Reading *Exquisite Pain* an increased anticipation that culminates into relief when the performance ends might be experienced. However, my excitement and even the sentiment of relief feel somehow unfulfilled when I reach the end. Relief, in this case, has to do with the desire for the text to end, yet, it also discloses a disappointment related to process of the ending. Of course, the text can be re-experienced in its re-reading, yet, repetition will have changed our impression of it. I will further discuss repetition’s ending and the complications that arise from the encounter with ending in the Conclusion of this thesis.

### Performing Description

Despite her attempt to exclude memory and deny the influence of temporality, Stein, as an author, could not prevent time influencing her perception of others.<sup>125</sup> The idea of a *continuous present* constituted a paradoxical one, which involved a sense of being ‘fully in the moment’.

No matter how complicated anything is, if it is not mixed up with remembering there is no confusion, but and this is the trouble with a great many so called intelligent people they mix up remembering with talking and listening.<sup>126</sup>

Memory seems to unavoidably interact with Stein’s writing. However, her writing attempts to create a sense of ‘listening and talking’ that is ‘existing’ rather than the sense of recollecting the present that is ‘happening’.<sup>127</sup> One of the ways in which Stein excludes memory is by using an ‘intuitive awareness’, which aims at capturing both the ‘essence’ and the unfolding of the character. The concept of ‘being’, which Stein

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<sup>123</sup> Calle, p. 118.

<sup>124</sup> Calle, p. 203.

<sup>125</sup> George B. Moore, *Gertrude Stein’s The Making of Americans: Repetition and the Emergence of Modernism* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing 1998), p. 46.

<sup>126</sup> Stein, ‘Portraits and Repetition’, pp. 179-80.

<sup>127</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, p. 60.



attempts to arrest through her writing, seems far too static to accommodate human complexity. Therefore, the concept is transformed into the more dynamic idea of ‘becoming’.<sup>128</sup> For example, while writing the portrait of Alfred Hersland, Stein finds it difficult to describe his ‘essence’, as she is ‘not yet full up with the being of Alfred Hersland.’<sup>129</sup> By describing others, in order to ‘supplement the continuing characterization of Alfred,’<sup>130</sup> Stein is waiting for Alfred Hersland’s becoming to unfold. In order for Stein to write Alfred Hersland’s portrait, she needs to be ‘listening and talking and talking and listening’ as a mode of writing, until he is ‘out completely from me leaving me inside me just then gently empty.’<sup>131</sup> The portrait of Alfred Hersland brought for Stein a new understanding of the character, as Moore notes: ‘our realization of character may not only change with time, but the “being” we first estimate the character to have may itself change through the prolonged process of observation.’<sup>132</sup> The process of observation, which is a process of repetition, is of great importance, as it has the ability to modify the impressions that a character or a repetitive action has initially created.

Description as a concept has not to do with the actual description of an object or a person, but rather with the process of becoming through repetition, which contains a process of waiting or ‘doing waiting’ (see pp. 109-110, 120):

Slowly every one in continuous repeating, to their minutest variation, comes to be clearer to some one. Every one who ever was or is or will be living sometimes will be clearly realized by some one. [...] Slowly every kind of one comes into ordered recognition [...]. Repeating then is in every one, every one then comes to sometime to be clearer to some one, sometime to be clearer to some one, sometime there will be then an orderly history of every one who ever was or is or will be living.<sup>133</sup>

The characters seem to acquire their essence through repetition. This process of becoming ‘presupposes both that there is something fixed and something that is in flux. If everything is fixed there is obviously no becoming; but equally, if all is flux there is no becoming for there is nothing against which change can be measured’<sup>134</sup>, as Niels Nymann Eriksen argues about the Kierkegaardian category of repetition. This is achieved in the work of Stein through the reiteration of structural schemata, words and

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<sup>128</sup> Moore, p. 85.

<sup>129</sup> Stein, *The Making of Americans*, p. 539.

<sup>130</sup> Moore, p. 112.

<sup>131</sup> Stein, *The Making of Americans*, p. 586.

<sup>132</sup> Moore, p. 126.

<sup>133</sup> Stein, ‘The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans’, *Lectures in America*, p. 85.

<sup>134</sup> Niels Nymann Eriksen, *Kierkegaard’s Category of Repetition: A Reconstruction*, Kierkegaard Studies, Monograph Series 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 2000), p. 14.

sounds and the introduction of new elements or the experience of the invariable elements as new. Thus, both a sense of fixity and flux are established.

Description, in the Steinian sense, might also be used not only in writing of a portrait or a character, but also in an attempt to make a text *perform*. For example:

She would be there if it was very well said that it would be it is would be unsatisfactory it is would be it is would be unsatisfactory and find it from the thing as it is done done has been has been it would as it would be is it it as it would be unsatisfactory. Find it as it would be unsatisfactory. She said and as it would it it is as it would be as it is it is in that from this and as it is in this to be and is to be and is to be and is to be unsatisfactory. She said it would be would be and to be would be unsatisfactory.<sup>135</sup>

When I read this text for the first time I write down: ‘I feel this is indeed very unsatisfactory. For that reason I decide to copy it. This process of writing is unsatisfactory too and I am very annoyed every time I write the word unsatisfactory and actually at the end through repetition I start enjoying the unsatisfactory process.’ Stein’s text refers to an unsatisfactory process and produces the same sentiment for the reader. Sara Ahmed usefully discusses emotions not ‘as being “in” texts, but as effects of the very naming of emotions.’<sup>136</sup> The performativity of Stein’s text has to do with Ahmed’s ‘emotionality of texts’ in terms of ‘the way in which texts name or perform different emotions.’<sup>137</sup> Another example from Stein’s text might be this:

Pleasing them with the  
description of a pear tree. Pleasing them with the  
description of a pear tree. Pleasing them with the  
description of a pear tree. Pleasing them with the  
description of a pear tree. Pleasing them with the  
description of a pear tree. And pleasing them by  
having it not made so much as much differently.  
They might have been and if by this at once.  
Not after all.<sup>138</sup>

How did Stein achieve this quality of excluding memory and being *in the present* through her writing? Barthes answers: ‘évidement par la description’<sup>139</sup> (‘obviously by description.’<sup>140</sup>) Although, as I have mentioned before, Stein had no interest in using descriptive words when making a portrait, she was interested in the words that

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<sup>135</sup> Gertrude Stein, *An Acquaintance With Description* (London: The Seizin Press, 1929), pp. 17-8.

<sup>136</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge 2004), p. 13.

<sup>137</sup> Ahmed, p. 13.

<sup>138</sup> Stein, *An Acquaintance With Description*, p. 7.

<sup>139</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘Le point sur Robbe-Grillet?’, *Essais critiques* (Paris: Éditions du seuil 1964), p. 199.

<sup>140</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘The Last Word on Robbe-Grillet’, *Critical Essays* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1972), p. 198.

performed, rather than revealed or described. Stein's words, like those of Allain Robbe-Grillet, create constellations, which form different configurations, through which meaning arises. This meaning is not revealed, but performed. This is an important distinction, since meaning is not already there, but is performed in the moment of the reading that functions as a performance.

Through the use of description Stein achieves to create a certain type of focus or *presence in the moment*. Repetition manages to take away the mind from the sense of continuity or the historical. This is also achieved in performance. Although, as Jane Palatini Bowers argues, 'once language becomes attached to living people, the playwright loses control of it as a medium' and 'speech becomes identified with the medium that utters it,'<sup>141</sup> there could be *moments* where one experiences Stein's *continuous presence* in performance. These are moments when the novelist, as Barthes suggests, 'purges' language of its meaning. During a fragment from *A Valediction on a Falling Microphone*, I repeat the following: 'sometimes it's so big and sometimes it's so big sometimes it's so big and sometimes it's so big sometimes it's so big and sometimes it's so big sometimes it's so big and sometimes it's so big'. I am in a way describing but at the same time I am not. I use descriptive words, but not in order to give an account of something. At some point I can listen to myself talk. I have the feeling that this is a moment of *insistence*, in the Steinian sense, a moment when I 'talk and listen' at the same time, a moment when I experience the feeling of *presence*. I wonder whether this is a moment when someone watching me experiences the same sentiment. I rewind the tape and watch myself 'listening and talking'. I am drawn in by the words repeated. How could I possibly describe this sentiment? Perhaps, it approaches what Palatini Bowers characterises as follows:

Its circularity opposes the linearity and forward movement of syntax: its self-cancellation seems to erase the meaning as it is made. Within a sentence like this, time stops; we go nowhere because the sentence goes nowhere. Although it goes on and on, filling the paper, it makes no progress. It is what Stein would call a 'continuous present.'<sup>142</sup>

This sense of circularity seems to cancel meaning through repetition in order to be replaced by other meanings *yet to come*. However, I wouldn't suggest that time stops. Time flows, producing a different temporality; it 'gives the impression of an infinite

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<sup>141</sup> Jane Palatini Bowers, *They Watch Me As They Watch This* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1991), p. 23.

<sup>142</sup> Bowers, p. 23.

narration of a single moment.<sup>143</sup> Heathfield suggests that ‘the use of gestural repetition and difference, cyclical events and relations, creates suspensions and returns in our experience, problematises our tendency to rationalise time’<sup>144</sup>, in which case linear time is entertained and eventually suspended. This suspension of linearity and the experience of a different temporality appears to be one of the condition of this peculiar kind of *presence*.

Adrian Heathfield also makes a connection between repetition and *presence*. He argues that repetition in *Café Müller* creates a feeling of the dancers being unable to be ‘in the present space of enactment.’<sup>145</sup> The dancers are not enacting as such, but rather re-enacting, their action being an action that precedes or denies the present. This impossibility (of being in the present) is followed by another one, that of reciprocity, which is traced within the performing body itself. The inability to feel these figures *in the present* creates a sense of anonymity and indeterminacy. They function as ‘ciphers for fleeting embodiments of sense-relation fragments.’<sup>146</sup> Identity appears as a precondition for the sentiment of presentness to arise, or the figures appear anonymous. On the other hand, it is this anonymity or avoidance of characterization that renders Stein’s portraits or characters able to exist *in the continuous present*. This anonymity could be paralleled to the Barthesian idea of the purification of language through repetition. It seems that Bausch’s dancers have achieved what Stein is striving for: a state of anonymity, indeterminacy, which also enables the feeling of *continuous present*. Repetition in *Café Müller* accomplishes this anonymity, which, for Heathfield, denotes the impossibility of being in the present space of enactment, but seems to be very close to the Steinian understanding of *presence*.

A number of ways to comprehend *continuous present* in the experience of repetition seems to become significant. The continuous present, although at times experienced as non-progressive and static, it might also be experienced as evolving or being a movement in stasis. The distinct use of language creates, through the rhythm of words, a sense of movement closely linked to the idea of ‘listening and talking’, which is ‘existing’ and not ‘happening.’<sup>147</sup> An awareness that language has not only necessarily to do with the representation of ideas, but ‘is rather a movement that creates its own

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<sup>143</sup> Richard Goodkin, *Around Proust* (Princeton, N.J and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 86.

<sup>144</sup> Heathfield, ‘After the Fall’, pp. 192-93.

<sup>145</sup> Heathfield, p. 191.

<sup>146</sup> Heathfield, p. 191.

<sup>147</sup> Stein, ‘Lecture 3’, p. 37.

experience of what it would describe'<sup>148</sup> is slowly developed through the Steinian writing.

### ***Pommes et Parapluies: Time and the Performer***

In July 2007, my friend and collaborator David Paredes invited me to spend a month in Grenoble, France and to be part of a research project, which explored the notion of repetition. The two of us designed a four-week workshop, in which we had time to create work, which used repetition in a number of ways. Throughout the project, we used a combination of free-play improvisation, movement and spoken text, different kinds of duration and pattern making. The research culminated in the public performance *Pommes et Parapluies* that took place in the gallery Espace Valles, Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, September 2007. I describe below the process of working with David, focusing on areas relevant to this project. The writing that follows takes the form of a diary. It introduces certain ideas about the processes of making performance using repetition. These ideas underline implicitly the whole of this thesis and function as its intellectual and creative background, posing at the same time significant for this project questions and provoking certain answers. The aim of the following diary pages is therefore to give an account of the process of working, during which some of the questions this thesis poses initially occurred. The duration of this project and the specific time that elapsed between *Pommes et Parapluies* and the writing of it, which follows, marks the time necessary for repetition to function and for the experience of it to return in memory and writing.

The space in which *Pommes et Parapluies* was performed is an empty gallery space. For the purposes of the performance we use certain objects, which constitute the sole props on stage: a cheese grater, a pair of old boxing gloves, a type writer, a pair of paddles. In the first part the objects are lined up on the floor next to the wall, marking the space in which we also perform. We therefore perform in a line wearing black everyday clothes. The second part of the performance consists in improvised movement and phrases, which we perform in the middle of the gallery. This time, we have changed into more theatrical costumes, which I describe below. The positions that each fragmented movement or phrase is performed in are fixed in space.

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<sup>148</sup> Moore, p. 21.

In the passages that follow I offer the textual repetitions at length in writing, but also the different kinds of movement incorporated in the project. In that, I open a discussion about time, variation and familiarity in conversation with Sarah Jane Bailes' argument about repetition and Tim Etchell's account of time *felt in the body*.

Diary Pages. Grenoble, 2007

We enter the studio hesitantly; there are a lot of chairs, a bench and a fridge. I tie myself with an elastic string from the bar of the window. The end of the tie embraces my waist. I improvise a repetitive attempt to reach the fridge, which is always a bit further away. The string around my waist becomes tighter and tighter.

The first improvisation we do together is simple. We tie a cord around our waists looking at opposite directions. There is a giant window in the atelier, which looks at the mountains. We climb on the windowsill and stay there for forty minutes moving according to our weight and the tension between us. Some patterns begin to occur. We question whether we should choreograph the piece in advance according to the improvisatory movements that occur or rely on chance and the live element of the moment.

We have long conversations about people suspended by cords of different lengths and degrees of elasticity. The idea of accumulation and saturation is always present. In the evening we separate. The goal is to separately generate movements and phrases. I create a small performance piece on paper. The text has three parts, the first of which constantly denies: 'Non Non non mais non non non vraiment non non non mais vraiment non non non mais non non' (no no no but no no no but really no no but really no no no but no no). The second part describes: 'Je marche en effet je marche je marche en effet je marche je marche en effet je marche je marche en effet je marche chaque nuit chaque semaine chaque année chaque année je marche je marche chaque année en effet je marche' (I walk in fact I walk I walk in fact I walk I walk in fact I walk every night every week every year I walk in fact every year in fact I walk). The third part pleads: 'κοίτα τα μάτια μου κοίτα τα μάτια μου κοίτα μες στα μάτια μου κοίτα τα μάτια μου' (look at my eyes look at my eyes look inside my eyes look at my eyes).

David comes upstairs after a while. He has come up with this: ‘encore encore encore encore encore encore encore encore encore encore encore encore encore encore encore encore’ (again again again again again again again again again again again again again again again again again) and also with the urgent need to draw these words with his hand in the air. He shows me his movement. He starts as if having a small piece of paper in front of him, writing on it the word ‘encore’ with a pen. He continues to write ‘encore’ and his movement becomes bigger. Now he writes with his hand and the paper has expanded and curved around him it has now the shape of a semi-circle. He continues to write with more intensity: he writes with his arm, with his arm and shoulder, the paper surrounds him. He starts on the far left and finishes on the far right which is the far left and his body is tired: encore encore encore encore encore. He stops, looks ahead and says ‘et encore’ (and again).<sup>149</sup>

David has also drawn on a piece of paper a number of apples and a hand holding a placard that says ‘Bouge’ (Move). We choose three of these actions. We paint spots on the floor for each one of them and give each other some time to find an appropriate costume. I put on a white tulle mosquito net and a purple sleeping bag and I create a long evening dress. David puts on a dirty orange jacket and holds an orange umbrella. We perform the fragments of movement and language together. In what follows, I attempt to describe what we do:

‘We both look straight ahead. I am positioned on the very left front as you look at me: “non non non mais non non non mais vraiment non non non” (no no no but no no no but really no no no). David is on the right behind me: “J’adore, Je pédale, Je rame, C’est bien ça, J’adore, Je rame, Je pédale, C’est bien ça” (I adore, I cycle, I row, it is nice. I adore, I row, I cycle, it is nice). I move from my spot. I go behind David and pointing with my finger to my eye I say: “κοίτα τα μάτια μου κοίτα τα μάτια μου κοίτα μες στα μάτια μου κοίτα τα μάτια μου κοίτα τα μάτια μου” (look at my eyes, look at my eyes look inside my eyes look at my eyes look at my eyes). My body obtains an angle, I lean slightly forward on the right, so that I appear behind David, who continues to say: “Je

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<sup>149</sup> In Beckett’s play *Rockaby*, the character W, an old woman in a rocking chair: ‘Following a long pause, W opens her mouth to release her first, hollow ‘More’, which she repeats again throughout the play. Sara Jane Bailes writes that W’s ceaseless rocking and the utterance of the word ‘more’, gesture towards an unfulfilled desire, a ‘warped sadness and nostalgia’, a ‘mourning after a life lived.’ In a way, David’s ‘encore, encore, et encore’ gestured towards the unfulfilled too: what drives the movement and its continuation is precisely the hope that something will be achieved at the end, something will be discovered or changed. Sara Jane Bailes, ‘Some Slow Going. Considering Beckett and Goat Island’, *Performance Research: On Beckett*, 12, 1 (2007), 35-49, (p. 40).

rame, Je pédale, J' adore, C'est bien ça, J' adore, Je rame, Je pédale, J' adore, Je rame, Je pédale, C'est bien ça" (I row, I cycle, I adore, it is nice, I adore, I row, I cycle, I adore, I row, I cycle, it is nice). David changes spot and goes to the back left: "Bouge bouge bouge bouge bouge bouge bouge bouge bouge bouge" (Move move move move move move move move move). I go and stand on the right behind him and I am folding the upper part of my body in a quick movement, so that my nose touches my knees and my legs and feet do not move. David continues: "bouge bouge bouge". I keep folding the upper part of my body and folding and falling. David stops and I keep repeating the movement. He starts his writing in the air and I keep folding and unfolding. He writes: "encore encore encore encore" and I am folding, "encore encore et encore encore" and I am folding. Then, I stop. Then he stops. And then he says "et encore".

What is interesting for us in the above improvisation is this: that we become familiar with certain constellations of fragments and, when those change, there is still the memory of those constellations in play. The different kinds of connections echo, somehow, the previous ones. Difference is experienced more intensely both in terms of constellation, but also in terms of individual phrases or movements. Sara Jane Bailes discusses how repetition 'invites the audience to understand variation in incremental, almost imperceptible stages'<sup>150</sup> Bailes also discusses the idea of movement finally finding a place to rest: 'Goulish's movement already feels at home; and it is we who have found a place to store it, and who now hold it in memorium. [...] Inevitably, we plot our own, private journey through these resurrected and broken events.'<sup>151</sup> This could also be the case for the performer: a movement that is being repeated until it feels at home. While performing, or watching the video or writing about this improvisation, time is experienced in unusual, unruly ways. I later find Tim Etchells' text about time as it is *felt in the body*.

You start to think about [...] the spaces in a life where time is felt differently. The territory is not singular. Not easy to grasp. Perhaps not a territory at all. [...]

Slow time. Altered time.

Time Waiting.

Time in the beds of hospitals.

Time hangover.

Time in the beds of lovers.

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<sup>150</sup> Sara Jane Bailes, 'Some Slow Going: Considering Beckett and Goat Island', in *Performance Research: On Beckett*, 12, 1 (2007), 35-49, (p. 37).'

<sup>151</sup> Sara Jane Bailes, 'Moving Backward, Forwards Remembering: Goat Island Performance Group' <[http://www.goatlandperformance.org/writing\\_moving%20backward.htm](http://www.goatlandperformance.org/writing_moving%20backward.htm)> [accessed 30 October 2009]



Drugged time. [...]  
Time alone or in unspeakable intimacy with another.  
Time that somehow breaks or slips under the clock.  
Time as it is felt.<sup>152</sup>

Repetition seems to enable, it becomes clear through our working process, a different kind of temporality; a temporality *as it is felt* that has to do with the body. This feeling could be paralleled to the Steinian experience of *insistence* or *presence*, or, as I will argue later, the experience of *being repeated*.

The next day, we separate again and search for repetitive individual actions. I discover a pair of old boxing gloves. I put them on and I improvise a sequence of repetitive movements. I choose this one: I am standing looking ahead holding my breasts with my hands in gloves and moving them up and down. I then discover an old typewriter and I start typing the word 'encore'. I tie my hair back into a ponytail and clasping it with my fist, without gloves this time, I shake it up and down. David comes up. He shows me the movements he has come up with: he is paddling rhythmically with a pair of plastic paddles, then using an old leather suitcase, he picks it up, as if ready to go, pauses for a second, and puts it down again. He picks it up and puts it down. His third action involves an old cheese grater, which he simply manipulates, as if grating cheese. We perform those actions again and observe our feelings during the process of performing as well as when watching ourselves perform in video. We discuss a lot about the use of phrases and actions. Should these elements change in the course of repetition, should they remain the same? What is it that changes when these change, what does it mean when they remain the same? We contemplate the first phrase from Deleuze's chapter 'Repetition For Itself' taken from David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*: 'Repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it.'<sup>153</sup> What is the object repeated? Is it the phrase or movement? Or does Hume refer to an actual object? Because, of course, the cheese grater or the gloves have not changed, yet, the way we repeat the movement changes with time. When referring to 'repetition' in this process of work, we do not refer to the Deleuzian concept of mechanical repetition, but rather to the other kind, that which changes through time. Does this change actually happen in the spectator's mind? We both feel that the

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<sup>152</sup> Tim Etchells, 'Permanent Midnight', in *Small Acts: Performance, the Millennium and the Marking of Time*, ed. by Adrian Heathfield (London: Black Dog, 2000), pp. 29-30.

<sup>153</sup> David Hume cited in Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 90.

differences occurring through repetition affect the movement or phrase as well as the ways in which the spectator experiences repetition.

We spend lots of time discussing, writing down thoughts, returning to the improvisations and commenting on them. We seem to always go back to these videos and watch them again and again, as if something will have changed in them. Or, perhaps it is, like Hume writes, we who have changed in relation to the videos. Each time we discover new things that didn't seem to interest us in the first place. We are interested in the detail, the specific way my dress moves when I lift my breasts or the angle that David's elbows take when rowing. We make lots of sketches of those moments in an attempt to capture something, which always seems to exceed us, to exist beyond our conversations, writings, returns to the material we have gathered, even us being there in Grenoble, working in Brice Glace in the practices of repetition.

Later, we perform an improvisation with the cheese grater, the gloves, the typewriter, the paddles, and the suitcase in the yellow room. When watching the video, there is something about the action with the suitcase that we particularly like: the impression that one is about to leave, the deferral of the departure or else, the sense that someone has just arrived. We decide to repeat the structure of the improvisation, replacing this time all of the objects with suitcases. We now have six suitcases in the yellow room and six different spots for each one of them. The suitcases cannot be moved from those fixed spots. They can only be lifted up and placed down again. We improvise a series of departures that never take place, a series of arrivals that never evolve. Later, watching the video, I write down: Tu viens d'où? Tu vas où? Je pars, Je reviens. Je pars, Je reviens, Je pars, Je reviens. Tu vas où Tu viens d'où Tu vas où Tu viens d'où Je pars Je prends la valise Je reviens Je reviens Dans la chambre dans la même chambre dans la chambre lumière la lumière jaune le wind la wind Je pars Je prends la valise noir je me déplace j'attends Je reviens (Where do you come from? Where are you going? I go, I return. I go I return. Where are you going? Where do you come from? Where do you come from? Where are you going? I go, I return in the room in the same room in the room light the yellow light le wind la wind I go, I take my suitcase, I move, I wait, I return). There is something about this movement which becomes something else through repetition, without clearly gesturing towards a coming or going.

Watching the suitcase improvisation, there are some particular moments I long for and I

get excited when those occur. These are moments of coincidence: when David and I lift and drop the suitcases at the same time, synchronicity generates a feeling of pleasure. This excitement also derives from the fact that I know that this is an improvisation. Rhythmic patterns occur and generate feelings of excitement and anticipation. Our lifting up and putting down at times creates a contrapuntal rhythm, which is also a type of synchronicity: at those times, the same sentiment of excitement emerges. The sound that the suitcases make adds to the sense of rhythm and to the feelings of anticipation for those moments to occur again. I identify two modes of performing: me being *on the inside*, which has to do with me mostly engaging with performing the action and, in a way, not being aware of how my action looks from the outside. The other mode has to do with myself observing myself perform, while performing. In the first case, I am interested in my personal rhythmic patterns. I listen to David and I take into account his movement and sound, but I am more focused on my own repetition. I am listening to the things repetition creates for my body. For example, sometimes there is a need to accelerate the movement or to slow down. I concentrate on this need wondering if it is real, or merely an impression. In the second case, I do no more than follow repetition itself. I follow its force, captivated by its power to lead me and decide on when to begin and when to stop. We later have conversations about the synchronicity and feelings of pleasure, processes of stillness and waiting, boredom, the feeling of *being together*, the excitement that arises from watching us repeat. When the month-long period of our research is over, I have to go back. I am alone now, with all the tapes, notes and drawings that David and I have accumulated during this period of time. I look at them and return to our improvisations again and again, to Brise Glace, to the yellow room, to the windowsill, to the view of the French mountains. Now I am on my own. I shout 'encore' but the performance does not begin again. I can only go back in my memory and write about what has taken place.

### Repetition, Writing and the Performer

Having given an account of the process of making *Pommes et Parapluies*, I go on to think about repetition as 'new' or 'exhausted', repetition and difference and the making of meaning and repetition's ending processes. Here repetition is used as a dramaturgical and compositional tool in the process of making. *Pommes et Parapluies* is significant in allowing me to draw a distinction between the following two different feelings/states of performing: as a performer I feel *I am repeating* at times or that I am *being repeated* at

others. In doing that theories by Gertrude Stein are being made use of. Accordingly, in order to approach the question of an ending, I take into account theories by Deleuze and Beckett. In the discussion of pleasure, again, the Barthesian discourse is extremely significant.

In *Pommes et Parapluies* repetition functions as a structural means as well as constituent of performance. The creative process involves testing repetitive actions and their limit of 'exhaustion'. The production of meaning, the experience of time through repetition and the ways in which repetition might eventually reach an endpoint are amongst the areas of interest that emerge throughout the time spent in Grenoble, as well as during my attempt to unravel this experience and *make sense* of it, after my return to London.

During the actual performance of *Pommes et Parapluies*, an interesting problem occurs: the quality of repetition during the improvisation is very different from the quality that it acquires during the actual performance. The reasons why such a situation occurs could be the following: firstly, it is important for repetition to be 'new,' 'unmarked.' Once it is repeated many times, it ceases to be so and becomes a repetition without potential, a 'used up,' 'injured,' or 'exhausted' repetition. Stein argues that writing which once produced meaning might at some point cease to do so. One needs to take a temporal distance from the performance, which will again produce meaning *after a while*. Like Warhol's images, which appear to be 'both affective and affectless' at one time,<sup>154</sup> the Steinian writing may simultaneously obtain and be deprived of meaning. In some cases both situations may be experienced at once, since repetition enables the reader/spectator to generate an 'infinity' of meaning. Deleuze offers an interesting account of newness and repetition, referring to Kierkegaard: 'Kierkegaard specifies that it is not a matter of drawing something new from repetition, of extracting something new from it [...]. It is rather a matter of acting, of making repetition as such a novelty; that is, a freedom and a task of freedom.'<sup>155</sup> Words or phrases seem to acquire meaning through time. Meaning does not always rely, as mentioned before, on a cognitive

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<sup>154</sup> Stephen Bottoms, 'Waiting for the World to Come Around: An interview with Goat Island', *Frakcija Performing Arts Magazine*, 32 (2004), n.p.

<sup>155</sup> Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 6.

understanding of language, since language does not always represent, but it rather performs, or *evokes*, in Lacanian terms.<sup>156</sup>

Calle's process of writing *Exquisite Pain* seems to have a similar function to *The Making of Americans*. The process of writing makes the characters' essence possible through repetition and waiting (or 'doing waiting'). In *Exquisite Pain* the portrait of the lover is written and then dissolved through repetition, the force of writing seems to lessen gradually. Stein notes: 'I am very full up now with this kind of them and still I am feeling some difficulties in the completion, they are not yet to me all of them entirely completely yet while ones inside me.'<sup>157</sup> She performs a process of 'doing waiting' through repetition in order for the characters to be 'completed inside her'. In a similar way, Calle reiterates her story, so that it 'comes out completely' from her, leaving her 'just then gently empty.' Both processes are performed through repetitive language and require an active performance of waiting. A similar process takes place in *Pommes et Parapluies*, a process of doing waiting, until the action we perform feels 'complete' in the Steinian sense, leaving us 'gently empty.'

This is crucially linked to the question of ending. When does repetition end? When do I, as a performer, stop repeating an action or a movement? One of the reasons why I perform a repetitive action is in order to discover how far I can go with it, how many different meanings my action will obtain, in how many contexts my action will be able to exist: I repeat it until the moment I feel it is 'completed inside me,' until it *happens* in my perception of it: 'I should not be doing any pressing or straining to bring out character; always each thing must come out completely from me leaving me inside me just then gently empty.'<sup>158</sup> The repetitive action slowly 'comes into being', and through repetition it comes out completely from the one that writes or performs. This point determines the end of repetition. Yet, one can of course always begin again. As a result, this is only a temporary ending, until repetition becomes forceful and begins again.

There might be moment when repetition feels 'deflated' to a point that it cannot recover itself: it has, in a sense, given everything it could, it has obtained many different shapes, meanings, contexts. Deleuze suggests that in theatre images end when their energy is

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<sup>156</sup> 'The function of language is not to inform but to evoke.' Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 64.

<sup>157</sup> Stein, *The Making of Americans*, p. 509.

<sup>158</sup> Stein, *The Making of Americans*, p. 586.

dissipated: ‘When one says “I’ve done an image,” it is because this time it is finished, *there is no more possibility*. The only uncertainty that makes us continue is that even painters, even musicians, are never sure they have succeeded in making the image.’<sup>159</sup> When dressed in the purple sleeping bag and white tulle net, repeating ‘No, no, no, but, no not no no non non’, I create in my mind many different contexts. I know that I need to stop repeating when in a way all the immediate possibilities of meaning have occurred to me, when for this time this ‘image’ or phrase is finished. Other kinds of repetition might be experienced in different ways: When holding my ponytail in my fist and moving it up and down, there is no literal context as such. It is the movement itself that leads me and decides when to stop. Here, the problem that arises is this: my body reacts, my hand gets physically tired and slows down and wants to stop, while the repetitive movement itself goes on. Sometimes I have to change hands in order to please both needs. Of course, there might be uncertainties, as Deleuze proposes, concerning the success of making, or finishing an image. When is an image ready, when is it finished and when can I, therefore, finish repeating myself? When Deleuze discusses this, it seems that there is a force of the image itself, which takes control. Hence, the image finishes itself, and the painter or musician’s presence facilitates that ending.

In a way, therefore, I identify two different kinds of feelings in repetition: there is the feeling that *I am repeating* and the feeling that I am *being repeated*. When I am repeating I have control of repetition, I am conscious of the fact that I repeat. When I am *being repeated*, it is repetition that leads the way, I listen to myself repeat, I do not ‘talk and listen at the same time’ in the Steinian sense, I do not realize exactly how one repetition leads to the other. It resembles what Steve Connor suggests for Beckett’s language in *Watt*: ‘once the series has been generated we no longer need the presence of a writer injecting meaning at every moment, for the language can be relied to carry on without him.’<sup>160</sup> Those two sentiments may be experienced in bewildering, incomprehensible ways: I may feel I repeat, while, in fact, I am *being repeated*, I may also feel I control what is being repeated, but then realise that I don’t. I could even pretend I am not in control, when I am, or else, I may feel I am about to lose or gain control, but do not. Repetition may sometimes create situations where the distinction between the active repeating and the passive being repeated is not very clear. Those are deceiving situations, which create certain *impressions* related to repetition and are

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<sup>159</sup> Gilles Deleuze, ‘The Exhausted’, *Essays: Critical and Clinical* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 161.

<sup>160</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, pp. 31-32.

important in the following way: as argued above, some of the emotions that the performer experiences during a performance are similar to the emotions that the spectator perceives. Therefore, encountering those situations as a performer, I can then more easily recognise them when I experience them as a spectator or when, in fact, coming across other people's experiences of repetition. Commenting on Goat Island's performance, Bailes describes the audience's experience of time: 'It was a slip into a mild state of reverie, between sleeping and walking. That threshold where, if lucky, we sometimes retrieve our dreams, and dreaming feels like a kind of remembering'.<sup>161</sup> This kind of experience, which resembles a dream, similar to Bergson's *immediate perception*, which is not interested in sentiments interpreted through language, could apply to both the performer's and spectator's experience of repetition.

As already discussed above, the moment that I decide to finish or complete a repetition is of great importance. What I feel is that it is not me that is taking the decision, but rather, repetition itself. Momentary *impressions* might be created by repetition: for example 'it is about time to stop' or 'I could keep going with that'. These impressions may mislead me as a performer. After a while, I learn not to trust my impression too much, but to actually wait and see how repetition evolves through time. Deleuze writes:

Habit is contraction. Language testifies to this in allowing us to speak of 'contracting' a habit, and in allowing the verb 'to contract' only in conjunction with complement capable of constituting a habitude [...]. This, however, is to confuse two quite different kinds of contraction: contraction may refer to one of the two active elements, one of the two opposing movements in a tick-tock type series, the other element being relation or dilation. [...] When we say that habit is a contraction we are speaking not of an instantaneous action which combines with another to form an element of repetition, but rather the fusion of that repetition in the contemplating mind.<sup>162</sup>

Borrowing the Deleuzian vocabulary, I investigate the moment when repetitions end: repetitions dilate and contract, inflate and deflate. This can happen many times until the moment that they deflate completely and cannot recover. In *Pommes et Parapluies* there are many moments that I think I should stop and leave. However, when I watch the video of this work in progress, I realize that the moments I felt I should have left were the most interesting moments to me as a viewer, and the moments I felt that something was actually happening, were in fact less interesting to watch.

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<sup>161</sup> Bailes, 'Moving Backward, Forwards Remembering: Goat Island Performance Group, n.p.

<sup>162</sup> Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 94-95.

Furthermore, Steve Connor curiously notices a resemblance between Beckett's linguistic repetition and the Freudian 'fort/da', which seems to correspond to the movement of dilation and contraction: 'the move towards ending is accompanied by a repetitive rhythm of psychic control and release, which resembles very strikingly the famous "fort/da" game [...].' Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 10.

Repetition can perhaps have this misleading quality; when you are *on the inside*, you do not realise what exactly is going on *on the outside*. However, this uncertainty performs a useful role for me as a performer, as I am ‘*on the alert, on the defensive, vigilant and taut* and as painfully incapable of relaxation as the tortured body of La Balue in his cage, where he could neither stand upright nor sit down’, as I will further discuss in the following chapter.<sup>163</sup> My favourite improvisation, the one with the suitcases, provides for me an example of inflating and deflating movement. Every suitcase represents a different point. Every time I stop moving a suitcase does not constitute a deflation, it might also be the development of the inflation that continues to the next suitcase. The evolution of the movement being repeated does not have to do with the transition from one object to the other. When do I stop lifting up the suitcases and placing them down? When do I depart. When do I arrive. At times, I am repeating and I feel I am not repeating, but I am *being repeated*. At times, I am thinking about something else. I am drifting as a performer away from the action of repetition. At times, the same thing occurs with writing: I could perhaps argue that at times I write on my own, but at other times things are *being written*. In those cases, the force of writing is controlling. Then, I ask: when does writing end? Similarly to repeating, writing seems to find its own ending, which has to do with it being completed, or exhausted, or in need for some time until it begins again.

Repetition establishes a curious relationship between the reader or writer and language. As Barthes has suggested, language could be erotic on two opposing conditions, both excessive: ‘if it is extravagantly repeated, or on the contrary, if it is unexpected, succulent in its newness.’<sup>164</sup> A question of movement arises here: it seems that if repeated excessively, a word or a number of words may allure the reader into ‘moving towards’ the text. Language, in this manner, seduces the reader/spectator, establishing a movement *felt* in the body, an erotic movement, which can be thought of in two ways: the reader is drawn to the language or language approaches the reader. This double movement is similar to the Barthesian example of *Camera Lucida*: both the picture and the viewer perform a simultaneous interest for each other. The erotic movement that language performs upon the reader or that the reader performs as an effect of language

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<sup>163</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues With Georges Duthuit* (London: John Calder, 1965), p. 12, emphasis added.

<sup>164</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 42.



might be that of approaching or withdrawing from the object of interest, the text.<sup>165</sup> By attaining a distance from language, one realises how close one has been: this realisation might lead to sentiments of pleasure or *jouissance* in the *performerly* performance of reading, where language, in Barthesian terms, either ‘wounds or seduces.’<sup>166</sup> A similar feeling of proximity or familiarity might arise when repeating a movement. In *Pommes et Parapluies*, as already mentioned above, amongst other movements, I tie my hair into a ponytail, I clasp it in my hand and I lift it up and down. I initially experience a certain excitement related to the movement I repeat: I begin this movement and I am excited about it being new to me, I still learn the movement, the amount of force needed in order to lift my ponytail up and down, the rhythm I am creating. Slowly, I get used to the movement, I get tired, my arm hurts and my ponytail is coming undone. However, at that point, or a little later, perhaps, I start enjoying lifting my arm up and down again, the movement is familiar to me now, I take pleasure in repeating the same movement again and again: ‘to see yourself doing the same thing endlessly over and over again fills you with satisfaction.’<sup>167</sup> The excitement I experience has to do with the Barthesian excess of repetition, which is erotic as well as with a sense of observing myself doing that movement. I can somehow look at myself perform and imagine the angle my arm takes when it get tired, the way my ponytail is coming undone: ‘this delight in absolute repetition is founded on a sense that the observing or analytic self is somehow separate from the play of repetition’<sup>168</sup>, Connor argues. Is the pleasure of repeating then related to me observing myself repeating, in which case, it is similar to the spectator’s pleasure, or does it have to do with me actually performing? Most writers, Bowers suggests, erase all evidence of themselves as readers of the work. For Stein, however, the activity of reading is a source of writing. Perhaps in a similar way, as a performer, I might attempt to erase all evidence of watching myself perform, I might, in other words, pretend I am not watching. Yet, as Stein’s reading of what she has written enables her to continue writing,<sup>169</sup> my *reading* of what I have *written* enables me to continue *writing*: I watch myself perform and while performing I enjoy being a spectator and a performer at the same time. Sometimes, I might also need to observe myself performing, in order to ‘keep all the plates spinning on the tops of their poles’, like the circus performer, who,

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<sup>165</sup> Gilles Deleuze reflects upon the connection of Eros and Thanatos in relation to the Freudian ideas of repression and memory: ‘Eros and Thanatos are distinguished in that eros must be repeated, can be lived only through repetition, whereas Thanatos (as transcendental principle) is that which gives repetition to Eros, that which submits Eros to repetition.’ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 20.

<sup>166</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 38.

<sup>167</sup> Samuel Beckett, *The Beckett Trilogy: Molloy* (London: Picador, 1979), p. 133.

<sup>168</sup> Connor, p. 53.

<sup>169</sup> Bowers, p. 98.

according to Connor, must ‘keep returning to them to impart more speed to the individual plates.’<sup>170</sup> Connor’s parallel between the circus performer and the writer and reader of Beckettian repetition seems significant: both the writer and the reader are forced not only to supervise repetition, but also to imaginatively participate in it, in order to ‘keep the plates spinning’.<sup>171</sup> In a sense, then, the spectator becomes a performer, who is performing the repetitive act, and the performer becomes a spectator who is observing and performing repetition.

In both of the above cases, time is experienced differently: ‘In its attention to and playful subversion of the orders of time, performance gives access to other temporalities: to time as it is felt in the body, time not just as progression and accumulation, but also as something faltering, non-linear, multi-dimensional and multi-faceted.’<sup>172</sup> In a way, repetition, in the experience both of the performer and the spectator, creates a kind of temporality, *felt in the body*, which may slow things down and create the opportunity to examine the detail, to observe the difference, to indulge in the ways in which things are and are not repeated: ‘the symmetry of form, the indefinite repetition’, Bergson argues, ‘[...] causes our faculty of perception to oscillate between the same and the same again’, in which case, ‘even the faint suggestion of an idea will then be enough to make the idea fill the whole of our mind.’<sup>173</sup> When observing repetition so closely, or feeling repetition in the body, difference, as Bergson suggests, is experienced more intensely and each time a performance is experienced different things seem to acquire importance. Every return to performance, then, is a different repetition, which invites us to experience it both as new *and* repeated, as empirical *and* imaginative, ‘at once an evocation and a direct perception, real without being merely actual, ideal without being merely abstract, the ideal real, the essential, the extra-temporal.’<sup>174</sup> However, the return to the performance happens mostly in those performances that seem incomplete in their experience, or perhaps require to be returned to in order to start working. Yet, the experience of *presence* does not belong to this category, it seems, as its imperative is to be experienced in the present moment of the encounter and does not affect or deal with the past or the future.

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<sup>170</sup> Connor, p. 32.

<sup>171</sup> Connor, p. 32.

<sup>172</sup> Heathfield, *Alive*, p. 10.

<sup>173</sup> Bergson, pp. 15-16.

<sup>174</sup> Beckett, *Proust*, pp. 74-75.

## Conclusion

Chapter Three has argued that repetition in speech and movement might create a temporality of experience that resembles what Stein describes as *insistence*, which is the experience of the present moment as one that exists without past or future. The Bergsonian concept of time has been significant to the understanding of the experience of time in relation to repetitive structures of writing and movement. Similar to Bergson's concept of *pure duration*, the Steinian attempt to reach a moment of *continuous presence* through repetition is discussed as an example of the use of repetition in contemporary performance, both in terms of the performer and spectator. The problematic experience of emotion emerging in syncopated time with the action on stage seems to be resolved through this kind of immediate experience, which activates a process of sustained attention and only allows for a certain kind of memory: the memory of being there, but not actually remembering what has been taking place. The consciousness without memory puts an emphasis on a moment-to-moment experience and enables a way of thinking about past and present as separate.<sup>175</sup> This chapter has argued that the experience of *being in the present* may be achieved momentarily in the experience of repetitive speech or movement, giving rise to a continuous movement of being in and out of synch with the performance related to both feelings of discomfort, excitement, pleasure or *jouissance*. The experience of *presence*, unlike others this thesis has been concerned with, does not necessarily invite a return to it, as it does not create an unresolved feeling that needs to be restored. The two kinds of experiences, which Stein describes as 'completion of' and 'relief from' excitement seem useful in the understanding of some of the functions of repetition. This chapter has used Calle's repetitive *Exquisite Pain* to argue that there are certain processes of repetition at work in writing and performing. These are in Deleuzian terms, processes of simplification or amplification, adding or descending value from repetition.<sup>176</sup> In certain cases, such as Calle's *Exquisite Pain*, the potency of a performance or writing dissipates through repetition. In others, the opposite effect may occur.

As Bergson has observed, language creates problems in the experience of immediate data, as it does not allow us to observe the way things *feel to us*. It rather transforms immediate consciousness to reflective consciousness, preventing the experience of *pure*

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<sup>175</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 100.

<sup>176</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, p. xv.

*duration* or *presence*. It is therefore difficult to give an account of those experiences through writing, which is the task I set myself in the third part of this chapter. Yet, Stein has to some extent succeeded in creating such an experience using repetitive language, which, somehow, cancels language.<sup>177</sup> Moments of experiencing the simultaneity of ‘listening and talking’ or else *presence* may be achieved through reading or listening to the Steinian text. Equally, some performances might create the same effect in their use of repetition. In order to address those moments and not be deceived into the invariability of emotion, Guerlac argues, one needs to find a ‘very precise language’.<sup>178</sup> This chapter argues that this could be a language which uses repetition as a structural means and constituent of performance. It could also be a kind of writing that occurs as part of the event, the writing *of* the event, or a writing that tries to re-perform the event in a later time. However, as argued above, immediate experience or *presence* do not seem to perform the desire to be revisited, as its revisiting will always be a spatialised one, and therefore a reflection upon rather than a writing of the event. The event as such does not invite the spectator to go back to it. The experience of *presence* is therefore accessed only as the experience of its opposite, whenever that occurs: the ‘listening’ or ‘talking’, the ‘happening’, the repetition (as opposed to *insistence*) or the ‘relief from excitement’. Some performances or writings, such as *Exquisite Pain* seem to make use of that experience of ‘completion’ or *presence* in order to allow for relief to occur in a gradual process of repetition.

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<sup>177</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 19

<sup>178</sup> Guerlac, p. 73.

### Repeat Repeat: Returns of Performance

Throughout this thesis I have been returning to certain performances, such as *Piano Phase* or *Bluebeard* in order to experience them again in a later time and observe the differences that occur through repetition. Some performances seem to possess a quality that invites the spectator to go back to them in the space of memory and encounter them again. Something about their structure seems to demand such a return in a later time. Both *Piano Phase* and *Bluebeard* escape from my approach. The performances seem to invite me to go back to them and try to make sense of their structures and the way that they use repetition. It seems that repetition as a structural element or constitutive of performance holds a certain quality, which invites such a return. It is precisely the use of repetition in structure, movement or speech that, in some cases, initiates the return to these two examples of performance work. This chapter attends to the processes of return to performances that incorporate in their structures the element of repetition. Return, in this case, is both a function of repetition, which consists in the invitation to return, as well as a condition for some repetitions or performances to *actually* take place.<sup>1</sup> This first part of the chapter sets out the context within which the question of return is explored. Examples of experiences of time by Marcel Proust, Steven Connor, Ric Allsopp and others will be important in this exploration. Furthermore, in observing the return to experiences of performance, notions of waiting, anticipation, desire, difficulty and first impressions will be discussed in an attempt to explore the reasons why such a return occurs.

Some performances might evoke a sense of discomfort or difficulty. In this case, performance seems to invite the spectator to work-through this difficulty towards a sense of familiarity in re-experiencing it again and again. In some cases, performance might *already* create a sense of familiarity in the first acts of viewing, and yet invite the spectator to return to it again and again. The return in this case concerns the pleasures that familiarity evokes. Sometimes, however, it is hard to discern the difference between

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<sup>1</sup> This is a reference to T.J. Clark's argument that certain paintings do not happen essentially or sufficiently all at once. T.J. Clark, *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2006), p. 8.

feelings of familiarity and estrangement: difficulty might provoke pleasurable sentiments, whence familiarity might result in sentiments of discomfort or boredom. I pose, therefore, the following question: do I repeat a performance in memory *in order to* appropriate it or precisely *because* I am familiar with it? In some cases, these two stages follow one another in sequence: the return facilitates the re-discovering of the performance (the doing) and the repetition of it contributes to the re-estrangement of performance (the undoing). One re-discovers a performance in remembering it, the attributes of which unfold in the space of memory. Some performances seem to function only in this space of remembering: one might revisit them again and again until they ‘no longer hold excitement anymore not even ever so faintly,’ as Stein suggests, ‘and then you have to wait until you have forgotten it and you can begin again.’<sup>2</sup> A question of movement arises here: do we, as spectators, go back to performance, or do performances revisit our memory?<sup>3</sup>

Although, as mentioned above, the process of return is one that takes place *after* the performance has ended, some performances use the idea of return *during* the performance itself as part of their structure. This structural element further invokes two kinds of returns: the return to an experience of repetition *during* the performance as well as the return to that experience *after* the performance has ended. Both types seem to be stimulated by the use of repetition within the performance: some of these structural repetitions seem to imitate or perform what they try to initiate: the return to them. As examples of this, I engage with specific scenes from Lone Twin Theatre’s performance *Daniel Hit By A Train* in the following section of this chapter.<sup>4</sup> The discussion of *Daniel Hit By A Train* is followed by an account of the returns taking place both in Pina Bausch’s *Bluebeard* and Samuel Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape*. A similar movement of return is performed in these cases: *Bluebeard* rewinds and plays Béla Bartók’s opera, while *Krapp* rewinds and plays his own tape recordings again and again. I compare these two returns in an attempt to explore the pleasures repetition might generate. In understanding these motives, I might be able to further approach this other return,

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<sup>2</sup> Gertrude Stein, ‘Plays’, *Lectures in America* (London: Virago Press, 1988), p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Adrian Heathfield questions his encounter with Stephen Taylor Woodrow’s performance-installation *Going Bye Byes*: ‘As I experience this work, do I act autonomously or am I driven?’ Adrian Heathfield, ‘Facing the other: The Performance Encounter and Death’, in *Shattered Anatomies: Traces of the Body in Performance* (Bristol: Arnolfini Live, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Of course, it could be argued that the movement of return I am describing here could be experienced as a repetition, rather than a going back. However, the movement of return addresses the past, it is a revisiting of the past, rather than merely repeating a movement sequence or a story.

performed in memory by the spectator of performances like the above, which certain types of repetitive structures seem to evoke. I then refer to Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker's *Piano Phase* as an example of the spectator's return, to which I will have returned many times throughout the duration of this thesis. In this fourth section I discuss my return to *Piano Phase* in relation to T.J. Clark's performance of return to Nicolas Poussin's paintings in his book *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* and what seems to be forming for Clark as a practice of repetition: 'I could hardly believe that each day there were new things to see.'<sup>5</sup> Both encounters with artworks make use of a structure of revisiting in order to explore fully the possibilities of the return. The final section of this chapter deals with the experience of repetition as one that constantly initiates desire, which is never fulfilled, but invites the spectator to keep repeating and returning to performance in order to experience the pleasures enjoyed in that return.

Revisiting the event in memory might at times not feel adequate to the intensity experienced during the event. The event might engender a need not only to go back to it, but also to archive it or *perform* it in a vigorous way that requires the spectator to *do* something, or which can be revisited again and again after the performance has ended. The desire to actively engage with performance, archive it and re-perform it seems to be accommodated by the act of writing. The return, in this case, becomes a *writerly* performance. Adrian Heathfield discusses this both in his account of Tehching Hsieh's performances and the work of Goat Island. In his recent work *Out of Now* which is an account of the lifeworks of Tehching Hsieh, Heathfield returns to specific days of Hsieh's walking around the city of Manhattan and re-performs Hsieh's walk in writing.<sup>6</sup> These practitioners, amongst others, create work which 'persists in recurrence, it remains unresolved, haunting our memories, documents and critical frameworks.'<sup>7</sup> Some performance, which does not disappear after being experienced, haunts the spectator and seems to exemplify at times a need to be *written* or *re-written* again and again. *The Sight of Death* is an example of such a return in the form of writing to the Poussin paintings. Sophie Calle's *Exquisite Pain*, which I have discussed in Chapter Three, appears as a different example of repetitive writing, in which Calle revisits an experience again and

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<sup>5</sup> Clark, *The Sight of Death*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Adrian Heathfield, 'Walking Out of Life', *Out of Now: The Lifeworks of Tehching Hsieh* (London: Live Art Development Agency, 2009), pp. 37-41.

<sup>7</sup> Adrian Heathfield, 'End Time Now', in *Small Acts: Performance, the Millennium and the Marking of Time*, ed. by Adrian Heathfield (London: Black Dog, 2000), p. 106.

again. There is a parallel between these two kinds of writings: both of them attempt to repeat an experience and exemplify an urge towards repetition. Yet, although Clark's writing seems to result in an enrichment of the process of seeing, Calle's repetition lessens or decreases the effect of the story during the writing process. In Deleuzian terms, Clark's repetition follows the active rhythm of crescendo or amplification ('climbing, expanding, diastolic, adding value'<sup>8</sup>), whereas Calle's rhythm is that of diminuendo or simplification ('descending, contracting, systolic, removing value').<sup>9</sup>

Two opposite situations may occur in the process of returning: once repetition has been established, 'we no longer need the presence of a writer injecting meaning at every moment, for the language can be relied upon to carry on without him,' Connor suggests.<sup>10</sup> This is an 'autonomous' function of repetition. On the other hand, the opposite might also be the case for some performances:

Writer and reader are in the position of the circus performer who, in order to keep all the plates spinning on the tops of their poles, must keep returning to them to impart more speed to the individual plates. Even infinite mobility cannot be relied on to work without human supervision. We are forced to participate imaginatively in the repetitions, which repel and alienate us in Beckett's work.<sup>11</sup>

In this case, repetition needs the assistance of the spectator, in order to 'keep all the plates spinning'. The return to a performance might favour such a necessity. In both cases, repetition's autonomous or subordinate spinning persists in memory and stimulates the viewer's return to it. This return might also occur as a result of repetition's influence on the experience of time: repetition provokes a sentiment of discomfort or a shift in the spectator's sense of time: the aesthetics of repetition, as Heathfield suggests, undoes flow and progression and time, in similar cases, 'exceeds the spectator's ability to watch.'<sup>12</sup> This excess or difficulty demands to be worked-through in a *later* time, a time *yet to come*. This, of course, might be the case for much of performance, yet, I argue, the imperative of works that use certain types of repetition seems to be precisely that of return.

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<sup>8</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. xv. The third type of rhythm that Deleuze introduces here is the 'attendant' rhythm, which will be useful in a later part of this thesis. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, p. xv.

<sup>10</sup> Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 31-32.

<sup>11</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 32.

<sup>12</sup> Heathfield, 'End Time Now', p. 107.



The term *yet to come*, connected to the experience of performance as a return in a time *yet to come*, which I will be using in this chapter, is also used in the title of the *Performance Research* special issue *On Form/Yet to Come*. For this reason, I would like to briefly refer to Ric Allsopp's discussion of the term. Allsopp begins by quoting Lyn Hejinian: 'Form is not a fixture but an activity.'<sup>13</sup> The question of form is as immediate and pressing as ever, Allsopp suggests, and it concerns the how, where, with and for whom performance takes place. The concept of form is no longer associated with fixity, but rather with processes of formation that reflect the 'intensities, differences, transformations and translations that constitute the work of performance.'<sup>14</sup> The event of performance is a 'shared moment of becoming,' an encounter between the performance and the spectator. Discussing the idea of formlessness, Allsopp suggests that performances are not simply reflective of time, but 'become productive in time, in time yet-to-come.'<sup>15</sup> Performance, as a process and not a pre-existing place can happen many times, renewing its form unceasingly, in a time *yet to come*.

As discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, certain works seem to use repetition as a mechanism to create something new. This relates perhaps to an exhausted modernism that can only generate something new through repetition: Beckett's opening phrase from *Murphy* depicts the exhausted possibility of making it new: 'The sun shone having no alternative on the nothing new.'<sup>16</sup> As mentioned above, some works of performance may initiate a return as a result of the difficulty they perform. According to Bersani and Dutoit and their interdisciplinary *Arts of Impoverishment: Beckett, Rothko, Resnais*, the difficulty that a play, a painting or a film exhibits 'is inherent in the way it inhibits our movement toward it.'<sup>17</sup> It lies in the fact that a writer may not wish to be read, a painter may not wish to be seen, or, in De Keersmaeker's case, a choreographer may not wish to 'move' us, but to 'immobilize' us. Difficulty 'is a function of the obstacles put in the way of our approaching their work – a function of mobility rather than of understanding [...]. To be inhibited in our moves toward the work is to be blocked in our efforts to appropriate the work.'<sup>18</sup> Difficulty appears as a function of an artwork like Beckett's

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<sup>13</sup> Lyn Hejinian cited in Ric Allsopp, Editorial of *Performance Research: On Form/ Yet to Come*, 10, 2, (2005) 1-4, (p. 1).

<sup>14</sup> Ric Allsopp, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Goran Sergej Pristaš cited in Ric Allsopp, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Arts of Impoverishment: Beckett, Rothko, Resnais* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Bersani and Dutoit, p. 4.

writing, Rothko's painting or Resnais' cinema. In the cases I examine, difficulty occurs as a result of the particular uses of repetition. Yet it seems that repetition not only creates this difficulty, but also provides a means to overcome it. In Deleuzian terms: 'If repetition makes us ill, it also heals us; if it enchains and destroys us, it also frees us, testifying in both cases its "demonic" power. All cure is a voyage to the bottom of repetition.'<sup>19</sup> In *Piano Phase*, repetition inhibits me moving closer to the work, blocking my effort to appropriate the dance. It tortures me to the point that it 'makes me ill.' However, it is the experience of repetition that initiates my revisiting of the performance, through which I succeed in moving closer to the work and experiencing it fully.

Repetition, therefore, seems to resist being experienced in certain cases. The performance appears as a performance *yet to come*. In order to illustrate this sentiment, I quote here Beckett's description of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*:

The narrator arrives at Balbec-Plage, a holiday resort in Normandy, for the first time, accompanied by his grandmother. They are staying at the Grand Hotel. He enters the room, feverish and exhausted after his journey. But sleep, in this *inferno of unfamiliar objects*, is out of question. All his faculties are *on the alert, on the defensive, vigilant and taut* and as painfully incapable of relaxation as the tortured body of La Balue in his cage, where he could neither stand upright nor sit down. There is no room for his body in this vast and hideous apartment, because his attention has peopled it with gigantic furniture, a storm of sound and an agony of colour. *Habit has not had time to silence the explosions of the clock*, reduce the hostility of the violet curtains, remove the furniture and lower the inaccessible vault of this belvedere. *Alone in this room that is not yet a room* but a cavern of wild beasts, invested on all sides by the implacable strangers whose privacy he has disturbed, he desires to die.<sup>20</sup>

If the experience of performance could be paralleled to the entering of a room, my experience of *Piano Phase* resembles the feeling that Proust describes here: as a spectator, I 'enter' the performance, which feels unfamiliar. My senses are *on the alert, on the defensive, vigilant and taut*. There is no room for me to either *stand upright or sit down*. In order to experience repetition in *Piano Phase*, I need to let time *silence the explosions of the clock* and make repetition accessible to me, not anymore hostile. The performance is *not yet a performance*, it is a new place, space or language, with which I need to be acquainted with, which I need to feel I own. Habit, as Proust suggests, will reduce the hostility of the violet curtains or, in this case, the performance's peculiar

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<sup>19</sup> Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (London: The Dolphin Books, 1993), p. 12, emphasis added.

experience of time, movement and repetition. The time that is required for habit to do so extends beyond the performance itself. Its work starts to function in the space of returning. Yet, the difficulty that repetitive movement performs and the experience of it, which makes me defensive and alert, might indeed be the subject of the performance and its purpose: the *reaction* to the repetitive movement, the refusal to comply with its rules, the encounter with performance as an unfamiliar space of a room at the Grand Hotel in Normandy. Difficulty, in this case, is a function of the performance and the process towards it *becoming* a performance is part of this function. The subject and the purpose of the performance is, therefore, to be a performance that is *not yet a performance*, a performance that might become a performance in memory, once it has ended.

My first encounter with *Piano Phase* is an intricate one. The performance of De Keersmaecker's repetitive movement and Reich's music seem to repeat many times in memory, after the piece has ended: both the discomfort that the piece creates as well as the need to go back appear to me as part of the work's imperative. De Keersmaecker, I have previously mentioned, searches for those emotional structures that repeat and succeed in creating a dialogue between the performance and the memory of it.<sup>21</sup> Although going back to the piece again and again, renewing its experience each time, my first impression is of absolute significance; it lasts for long after and demands my return to it, affecting my perception of the piece even after the second time I watch it, two years later, at Sadler's Wells, in September 2008. As Phillips suggests, 'the first impressions that matter are the ones that for some reason make us work [...]. And by the strange law of repetition we are prone to think that whatever haunts us, whatever stays with us, whatever keeps repeating itself, must matter [...] even if its significance is obscure.'<sup>22</sup>

In psychoanalytical terms, Cathy Caruth discusses a similar idea, that of the Freudian 'incubation period': Freud argues that although someone may get away 'apparently unharmed from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident,' in the following weeks he might develop 'a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident.'<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>21</sup> Marianne Van Kerkhoven, 'Saisir la structure du feu- 20 ans Rosas' in *Rosas: Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker* (Brussels: La Renaissance du livre 2002), p. 32-33. See Chapter Three, pp. 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Adam Phillips, 'Two Lectures on Expectations', *Side Effects* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 232.

<sup>23</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 17.

time ‘elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called the “incubation period.”’<sup>24</sup> Freud uses the term *latency* to signify, according to Caruth, the time period between the accident and the appearance of its effects, which seems to consist ‘not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself.’<sup>25</sup> In this inherent latency Caruth situates the explanation of the peculiar belatedness of the shocking or sudden experience of trauma.

Some performances, as argued above, might demand an incubation period in order for them to commence affecting the spectator. Of course, *immobilizing* the spectator, in the sense used by Bersani and Dutoit, or putting the spectator *on the alert, on the defensive, vigilant and taut* in the Proustian sense, is already a kind of effect. Yet, this kind of experience alienates or distances the spectator from the artwork, while in other cases the viewer is invited to come closer; the first one being an experience of discomfort, perhaps of the Barthesian *jouissance*, and the second an experience of pleasure. Performance, as a sudden experience, or an unfamiliar space, works better for the viewer once time has *silenced the explosions of the clock*, once the spectator’s body has found the space within the performance to *stand upright or sit down*.

The experience of *Piano Phase* seems to have prompted other people to return to it and write about its repetitions. Ant Hampton, the director of the London-based performance group Rotozaza, writes the following about the piece:

Talking about a lucidity between structure and spontaneity... (Yesterday). No better example for me right now. I’m not sure if it’s because I saw this live a while back (and will again on Monday at Sadler’s Wells) but the video actually works. I think it’s one of the most beautiful things I’ve seen on stage. [...] I re-live watching this and working out the trick of light, the shadows: when you realise the central one is a combination of the two on each side, when it hits you: the perfect geometry of two lights: two dancers: three shadows; the implicit sense of multiplication, of human mathematics – one plus one is three. Such a tug between the intellect saying ‘ah that’s smart, that’s a great idea, that’s what’s happening’ and the emotional, unable to say what the hell’s happening, helplessly sucked down the building vortex of sound and light.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* cited in Caruth, p. 17. I make use here of the Freudian text as it is quoted by Caruth, since she has modified the English translation to better suit the needs of her argument.

<sup>25</sup> Caruth, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Ant Hampton, ‘Rosas, Reich’ <<http://guessbook.wordpress.com/2008/09/24/rosas-reich/>> [accessed 27 November 2008].

The recorded *Piano Phase* seems to work for Hampton possibly because, as he says, he saw the piece live ‘a while back.’ For him, too, there seems to be a need for a period of time to pass in order for the piece to work in its entirety. Hampton specifically refers to the recording of the work, rather than the live event. While watching the video, he experiences the re-living of the piece, the working out of its geometries, its rules. And it seems that it is only after the piece has finished that one is allowed to ‘work it out.’ My encounter with the piece is an emotional one, according to Hampton, since I am unable to say what is really happening. I am only able to look back and reflect on my experience in the return to the live experience of watching. In this space of revisiting, the piece works, as time has allowed me to find a space to locate it in my memory, it has allowed me to choose my own place in relation to it, as Derrida suggests:

The text is remarkable in that the reader (here in exemplary fashion) can never choose his own place in it, nor can the spectator. There is at any rate no tenable place for him opposite the text, outside the text, no spot he might get away with *not* writing what, in the reading, would seem to him to be *given, past*; no spot in other words where he would stand before an already *written* text.<sup>27</sup>

In relation to the already written performance, the spectator cannot find a place. Yet, the performance in memory is no longer ‘displayed,’ Derrida continues, like the already written text, ‘but given play, not staged, but engaged, not demonstrated, but mounted’,<sup>28</sup> it allows to be written, it does not express, but creates, it does not reveal, but performs (in Barthesian terms). Repetition in performance seems to demand our return to its experience. Perhaps this is a mechanism to re-experience what has ended: ‘Like Proust, Beckett explores the relation of the self, possessed *of* Memory and *by* Habit, within Time. What both writers explore is the mental mechanism by which that which is lost is found.’<sup>29</sup> In what follows I discuss the experience of return in the Lone Twin Theatre performance and the ways in which its repetitive structures allow me to return to the piece and experience again that which is lost in the past life of the event.

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<sup>27</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Dissemination’, *Dissemination* (New York: Continuum, 1981), p. 290.

<sup>28</sup> Derrida, p. 291.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur K. Oberg, ‘*Krapp’s Last Tape* and the Proustian Vision’, in *Theatre Workbook 1: Samuel Beckett: Krapp’s Last Tape*, ed. by James Knowlson (London: Brutus, 1980), p. 15.

### *Daniel Hit By A Train*

‘Because it begins by repeating itself, such an event takes the form of a story. Its first time takes place several times. Of which one, among others, is the last.’<sup>30</sup>

The collaboratively devised work by Lone Twin Theatre *Daniel Hit By A Train*, directed by Gregg Whelan and Gary Winters with the company of five performers premiered at the Vienna Festival in May 2008 and is now touring in the UK. It is the second in a trilogy of narrative-based performances (the first being *Alice Bell* and the third *The Festival*) and stages fifty-three true stories, in each one of which a person loses her life in the attempt to save the life of another, drawing on ‘The Watts Memorial of Heroic Deeds,’ a 19th century memorial in Postman’s Park in the City of London. I watched the second part of the Catastrophe Trilogy at Chelsea Theatre, London in October 2008. A bright red rectangular carpet floor constitutes the performance scenery. The performers in everyday clothes enter and exit from a sketchy plastic outline of a door opening. The whole piece is punctuated by the beats of a big drum attached to the waist of one of the performers. The performance consists of a series of deaths, a countdown of the fifty-three stories it narrates. The fifty-three plaques recording acts of impulsive bravery became the focus, as David Williams, the dramaturge of the piece, notes, of the improvisations, ‘the lens through which we looked for forms, languages and rhythms.’<sup>31</sup> It concerns the telling of a story, yet, as Williams argues, ‘the telling itself can be an event in itself – the fashioning, staging and communicating of a world here now.’<sup>32</sup> This is, he continues, ‘what we dance around repeatedly and uncertainly, finding our way, then losing it again.’<sup>33</sup> I will thus attend to this telling, in its carefully crafted repetitions, through which the event happens and occurs again and again.

Throughout *Daniel Hit By A Train* certain structures are used more than once and repetition of phrases, punctuated by a drumming beat, is essential to those structures: ‘Who saw the train? BEAT Who saw the train? BEAT Who here saw the train? BEAT I did I saw the train my name is Daniel [...] this is me hit by a train’<sup>34</sup> Later, ‘what is

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<sup>30</sup> Derrida, ‘Dissemination’, p. 292.

<sup>31</sup> David Williams, ‘Alice and Daniel’ <<http://sky-writings.blogspot.com/2008/07/alice-and-daniel.html>> [accessed 2 January 2009].

<sup>32</sup> Williams, ‘Alice and Daniel’, n.p.

<sup>33</sup> Williams, ‘Alice and Daniel’, n.p.

<sup>34</sup> Lone Twin Theatre, *Daniel Hit By A Train*, Vienna script, May 2008, p. 3.

burning? BEAT What is burning? BEAT What is burning? BEAT What in here is burning? I am – I am burning. I am on fire (GESTURE). My name is Thomas – I am the plumber [...] this is me burning<sup>35</sup> and: ‘Who works for the council? BEAT I do, I work for the council [...] my name is Joseph. I work for the council. I jumped into a river to save a little boy. This is me, the weight of my coat pulling me down.’<sup>36</sup> Amongst the fifty-three stories narrated, the story of Joseph, who works for the council and who jumped into the river to save the little boy, is repeated thirteen times with variations towards the end of the performance. My argument is based on the idea that repetition evokes returns to its experience, or the repetition of repetition itself. Watching a repetitive sequence such as the one described below, I follow the movement that the structure itself performs: I return to the story while it is still being narrated and after it has ended. The return to the story of Joseph, which may take place not only by the performers, but also by the spectators themselves *during* and *after* the performance, constitutes the focus of my attention and influences the performance experience.

ANTOINE  
Hey!

GUY  
Are you alright little boy

ANTOINE  
The river’s rising – I’m stuck – please help

GUY  
Ok – I’m coming I’ve just got to get through these weeds

ANTOINE  
Please be quick

GUY  
I’ve got you, don’t fight

ANTOINE  
Oh god

JIGGER BOTH<sup>37</sup>

Guy (the man) and Antoine (the little boy) repeat the scene five times. Antoine stays unmoving, while Guy takes a step towards him with each phrase. Each time one more

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<sup>35</sup> Lone Twin Theatre, *Daniel Hit By A Train*, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Lone Twin Theatre, *Daniel Hit By A Train*, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> Lone Twin Theatre, *Daniel Hit By A Train*, p. 27.

obstacle is added to the already existent ones: during the first scene, Guy has to go through the weeds, in the second one he has to go through the weeds and get down to the bank, in the third one he has to go through the weeds, get down to the bank, step onto the ice, get off this boat, later on he has to go through the weeds, get down to the bank, step onto the ice, jump off this boat, take off his shoes and call the police, in the next scene, he has to go through the weeds, get down the bank, step onto the ice, jump off this boat, take off his shoes, call the police, take a deep breath, help this little girl. In the sixth scene, the little boy becomes a little girl, while in the seventh Guy has to help the little boy:

Ok – I'm coming I've just got to get through these weeds, I've just got to get down this bank, I've just got to step onto this ice, I've just got jump off this boat, I've just got take off my shoes, I've just got call the police, I've just got take a deep breath, I've just got to help this little girl, I've just got to enjoy the summer, I've just got to reverse time, I've just got to get a cup of coffee, I've just got to get home from work, I've just got to take it easy, I've just got to get through these weeds.<sup>38</sup>

In the eight and ninth scene Guy has to help a mate, a Sir, in the tenth he has to help a little Miss who is going mad, who had enough, who wants this to stop, who knows she cannot be saved. In scenes eleven and twelve Guy has to help a Sir and a friend, in scene thirteen he has to save another Sir who speaks in German and answers to Guy's question 'Are you all right, Sir?': 'Yes, very well thank you, the water is lovely, it's so calm and relaxing.'<sup>39</sup> During the first five times that the river story is repeated, Antoine performs the little boy. In the following scenes the rest of the performers join Guy and Antoine. At the end of each attempt and in order to denote the act of drowning, Antoine and Guy fall on the floor.

Attending to the first five times, it seems that the scene always begins and ends in the same way, yet, each time the venture becomes more difficult, there are more obstacles added to the already existent ones: the distance between the little boy and the man gets longer and the longer the distance between the two gets, the more unattainable the goal seems. The man fails to save the child each time, no matter how hard he tries. And each failure becomes more rigorous, more uncompromising, and more complete. Wondering what it is that makes this experience of performance return to me again and again in memory, I discuss the ways in which repetition induces a sense of anticipation, generates

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<sup>38</sup> Lone Twin Theatre, *Daniel Hit By A Train*, p. 30.

<sup>39</sup> Lone Twin Theatre, *Daniel Hit By A Train*, pp. 27-32.



a desire for closure or relief and influences the perception of time and the memory of the event.

In the encounter with the particular sequence, once I become familiar with repetition, I anticipate each *next* time. Anticipation is characterised by a peculiar quality: I not only think of repetition's *next* time as one that follows, but also I feel the *next* time as though it has already happened. The progression of the sequence, which consists of the new phrase or obstacle added to the sequence, creates a sense of excitement, which evolves into pleasure when my anticipation that a *next* time will follow is confirmed. Although there is an uncertainty as to when the scene will end, each *next* time further approaches the end of the sequence and evokes two different types of excitement: an excitement that has to do with the re-experiencing of the scene as a source of pleasure, as well as a fearful desire for the ending of the scene. In his account of repetition in Beckett's *Watt*, Connor usefully describes this sentiment: 'always mixed with a longing for the series to stop, there must also be a kind of fear that it *will* stop.'<sup>40</sup> The narrative structure of the piece, built in repetition, generates a satisfaction concerning the sense of progression and the holding on to the sequence, as well as a simultaneous longing for closure and relief. I anticipate the *next* time as well as the ending of the sequence *while* watching the scene of the lake. It is this combined sentiment of fear and longing for the scene to end that, as Connor suggests, 'brings about the repetition of repetition itself.'<sup>41</sup> *Daniel Hit By A Train* uses the idea of return within its structure, in order perhaps, to trigger our return to it. The performance performs the same movement as the one that aims to provoke in the experience of it, the repetition of return. Ric Allsopp writes: 'the work performs not what is in it, but what it does.'<sup>42</sup> The experience of this movement seems to haunt my memory: the scene in the lake re-appears many times after the end of the performance, but has also foreboded itself in the repetition of repetitions performed by Antoine, Guy, Nina, Molly and Paul. I do not seem to remember with the same rigor the scene of Thomas, the plumber, burning, or Geoffrey, the priest in the river or Mary going down with the ship, as Thomas has burned only once, Geoffrey has drowned only once and Mary has gone down with the ship only once. A different kind of anticipation emerges here, one that occurs *after* the scene, which has finished, and concerns the past of the scene. This latter kind of anticipation or return to the scene initiates the writing

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<sup>40</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 32.

<sup>41</sup> Connor, p. 32.

<sup>42</sup> Ric Allsopp, Editorial of *On Form/ Yet to Come*, *Performance Research*, 10, 2, (2005) 1-4, (p. 2).

about the scene that will be discussed below.

The anticipation that occurs during and after the story of Joseph and the little boy might be thought of in relation to the Steinian concepts of completion and relief induced by repetition. As previously discussed, ‘completion of excitement’ concerns the present of the play, whereas ‘relief’, the before and after.<sup>43</sup> The first type of anticipation has to do with the particular moment of the present and the emphasis given to it. The second kind has to do with the future or the past of repetition: a pleasurable feeling (relief) that derives from that which is about to end or has already ended. (Here, the end I am concerned with is not the end of the scene as a whole, where there are suddenly more and more people in need to be saved. I refer to the end of the repetitive sequence between Guy and Antoine, which takes place five times). The kind of anticipation that is constituted by the waiting for the *next* time experienced *during* the performance builds towards a completion of excitement, in the Steinian sense, which concerns the present, whereas the desire for closure builds towards a relief from that excitement, referring to the past and future, so that in the future, this present will be past.

Two types of remembering seem at work here: a remembering of the past of the scene while the scene is still happening, which coincides with the anticipation for the next time, and a remembering of the scene as a whole, after the scene has ended. The second kind of remembering concerns my return to the scene over and again in memory. The way I return to the performance by repeating it is a movement traced in memory: memory appears as a space within which the performance is able to unfold again. This remembering is a recollection, in the Kierkegaardian sense, which is a repetition backwards. John Caputo, reading Kierkegaard, argues that ‘the love of repetition is happy, an exhilarating and earnest struggle, while the love of recollection is a nostalgic, melancholic longing for a lost paradise, a dreamy wistfulness’.<sup>44</sup> My remembering of the scene while it is still happening takes the form of repetition, whereas the return to it constitutes a recollection. Similarly, when I anticipate the *next* time during the performance, I seem to repeat, in the Kierkegaardian sense, or to recollect forwards, while thinking of or writing about the performance is a nostalgic kind of repetition backwards, or, in other words, a melancholic recollection.

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<sup>43</sup> Stein, ‘Plays’, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> John Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 15.

When I return to the story of the lake, after the end of the performance, a question arises: since Guy has not succeeded in saving the boy having to overcome only one obstacle, what makes me think that he will still succeed when obstacles are multiplied? This is a question, which has not occurred to me during the performance. What is it that makes me anticipate each *next* time in a hopeful waiting, which promises the rescue of the boy? The adding up of obstacles has not made Guy's venture impossible, although his failure each time feels more rigorous, more complete. It has not made me give up on my hope that the boy will be saved. On the contrary, it has made me hope more. In his discussion of *Daniel Hit By A Train*, Williams cites Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*: 'The work of hope requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong.'<sup>45</sup> Williams wonders what it is that drives someone into the fire, the path of the train, the sinking ship, the toxic pit, the sea, canal, pond, lake and river. What is it at play in this instinctive self-forgetting?<sup>46</sup> If Antoine had started with more obstacles, which would reduce in each consequent repetition, instead of increasing, my increasing sense of hope would make more sense. Yet, repetition makes me forget about this logic of things and through its particular structure convinces me that I can still hope for the rescue to take place. Bersani interestingly suggests that 'desire dislocates attention,' especially when disruptive movements of desire are contained and structured by recurrence.<sup>47</sup> The structured repetitions of the sequence generate an intense feeling of hope, which is highly pleasurable. According to Bergson, hope is such an intense pleasure because it gestures towards the idea of the future, which is 'pregnant with an infinity of possibilities' and thus 'more fruitful than the future itself.'<sup>48</sup> This is why, Bergson continues, 'we find more charm in hope than in possession, in dreams than in reality.'<sup>49</sup> My anticipation, built on the repeated description of the story and enhanced by desire's recurrence over time, is influenced by the story's increasing familiarity and hopefulness: I am closely following repetition, more anticipating and more hoping each time: the more the obstacles, the stronger the hope and the desire. It is as if the duration of each narrative that increases repeatedly drives me into the fire, the path of the train, the sinking ship, like another Joseph, who works for the council or a burning man or

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<sup>45</sup> Williams, 'Alice and Daniel', n.p.

<sup>46</sup> Williams, 'Alice and Daniel', n.p.

<sup>47</sup> Leo Bersani, *Baudelaire and Freud* (Los Angeles: A Quantum Book, University of California Press, 1977), p. 50.

<sup>48</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by F. L. Pogson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 9-10.

<sup>49</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 9-10.

Daniel hit by a train. The sense of anticipation is even more enhanced, and somehow prepared, by a countdown of deaths that structures and punctuates the performance as a whole: '50. Mary going down with the ship [...] 49. Joseph, the weight of his coat pulling him down [...] 48. George running into the burning house [...] 47. Henry, aged eight' and so on.<sup>50</sup>

The question of hope, as already discussed above, occurs to me only after the performance, as if the return to it happens within a different set of rules, which makes me experience the memory of the performance differently. The return to the story gives me a space of freedom: I now seem to be able to reverse the succession of events: the many obstacles now occur first, so that the consequent attempts towards the rescue involve less and less obstacles each time. Now, if one thinks about it, repetition makes more sense. In this space of return, I experience the story of the child in order to repair what now seems like a hopeless, implausible task. In her article 'Moving Backward, Forward Remembering: Goat Island Performance Group,' Sara Jane Bailes discusses the ways in which we are able to rearrange the past, in order to accommodate a future. Returning to experiences of performance, we inevitably 'plot our own, private journey through these resurrected and broken events.'<sup>51</sup> Bailes' title echoes somehow Kierkegaard's recollection and repetition, which are the same movement, but in different directions: repetition is a recollection forwards and recollection is a repetition backwards.<sup>52</sup> I move backwards in recollection when I return to the scene of the lake and I repeat the performance forward in memory. I re-arrange the scene of events, developing a new performance, one that accommodates my desire for the little boy to be ultimately rescued. Although desire, contained and structured by recurrence remains unresolved, there is a certain type of repair taking place.<sup>53</sup> Karen Christopher, a member of the performance group Goat Island, suggests: 'when the show is over, another process begins – the shifting and the changing of emotion and memory, of experience and thought. This process is individual to each person.'<sup>54</sup> I seem to repeat this process of return to the performance many times, creating anew each time the *writerly*

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<sup>50</sup> Lone Twin Theatre, *Daniel Hit By A Train*, pp. 3-7.

<sup>51</sup> Sara Jane Bailes, 'Moving Backwards, Forward Remembering: Goat Island Performance Group', <[http://www.goatlandperformance.org/writing\\_moving%20backward.htm](http://www.goatlandperformance.org/writing_moving%20backward.htm)> [accessed 11 January 2010].

<sup>52</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology* (New York: Harper, 1964), p. 131.

<sup>53</sup> I borrow the term from Goat Island and Adrian Heathfield, who usefully use it in terms of repetition.

<sup>54</sup> Karen Christopher, 'Beginnings', in *Small Acts of Repair: Performance, Ecology and Goat Island*, ed. by Matthew Goulish and Stephen Bottoms (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 51.

experience of *Daniel Hit By A Train*.

Another question occurs: I wonder, now, if there is a certain point that the repetition of repetition will cease, a point when the performance will stop revisiting my memory. A possible answer could be traced in Beckett's description of Watt's walking:

and then again to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north and to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south, and then again to turn his bust as far as possible towards the south and to fling out his left leg as far as possible towards the north, and so on, over and over again, many many times, until he reached his destination, and could sit down.<sup>55</sup>

My moving back resembles the repetition of Watt's walk: it is a movement that repeats itself progressively, in the attempt to reach a different place. Here, Watt walks until he reaches his destination and sits down (in *À la recherche du temps perdu* the narrator cannot sit down, we are told, like La Balue in his cage, until the room in Grand Hotel in Normandy has finally *become a room*). In the experience of repetition, I argue, there might also be such a sense of destination, which is different for each spectator. In *Daniel Hit By A Train* the sequence is repeated according to the performers' and dramaturge's sense of 'destination' in order for the sequence to be effective for the spectator. In *Pommes et Parapluies*, the second performance of my own practice, discussed in Chapter Three, I also pose the question of repetition's ending. As a performer I experience a similar sense of repetition's ability to continue to the extent that is effective and holds a sense of excitement: 'So, I stop when I need to stop and I change when I need to change', I answer. In each of those cases (*Daniel Hit By A Train* and *Pommes et Parapluies*), I argue, there is a particular point where the sequence ends: this is the point when repetition *reaches its destination*, according to the performers' feeling, or ceases to be effective for the spectator (see Chapter Three, pp. 134-137).

The performance of the performance in memory, being an individual process, happens in the private space of remembering and, therefore, unobtrusively, the spectator being able to determine its ending to an extent. As repetition in the performance of memory does not end at a certain point, abruptly or perhaps too late, as it might happen in the experience of performance, repetitive sequences might function more effectively, since it is the spectator herself that chooses its end. Yet, again, the same question occurs: when does this process of repeating in memory stop? Although, sometimes, there might

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<sup>55</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: John Calder, 1976), p. 28.

be no apparent reason why a repetition should stop, 'there is a consequent sense of relief when it finally does.'<sup>56</sup> For Eric P. Levy there are only two alternatives for repetition in *Endgame*: 'winding up' or 'running down'<sup>57</sup>. Repetition progresses towards a direction, it 'winds up,' its effect becoming more and more intense until it arrives at a certain place and stops. Repetition could also follow the opposite direction and exhaust itself to the point that it has to stop. In *Endgame* Beckett denotes the ending of repetition embodied in the movement of sitting down: 'One day you'll say to yourself, I'm tired, I'll sit down, and you'll go and sit down.'<sup>58</sup> There is an uncertainty concerning the time that the end might occur or the reasons why. The ending, it seems, can be sudden or unsure, its causes may involve the person repeating or repetition itself: 'Then one day, suddenly, it ends, it changes, I don't understand, it dies, or it's me, I don't understand, that either.'<sup>59</sup> Repetition might die, exhaust itself or run down. In other cases, the spectator, or, performer, in the *performerly* sense, might get tired of it. This is a different type of exhaustion that does not only concern the efficacy of repetition, but rather the enthusiasm or eagerness of she who repeats. I will further discuss the question of repetition's ending in the Conclusion of this thesis.

Although repetition might end at a certain point, it can surely begin again. The emergence of a re-commencement might involve repetition's failure to accomplish its promise and the desire to try again. Bersani and Dutoit argue that impotence, incompetence and failure do not lead to the end of art: 'they are instead the necessary conditions for what Beckett describes as a break with the compromises of art in the past. They are, in other words, formulas for starting again [...].'<sup>60</sup> In Lone Twin Theatre's performance *Daniel Hit By A Train*, Guy's failure to save the little boy functions similarly as a formula for starting again: failure initiates the repetition of the scene and, consequently, the repetition of repetition in memory. Hence, repetition's work continues after repetition has seemingly ended. A need for a break, so that one takes a distance from repetition, rendering it forceful again, might be necessary: 'That is until at last you

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<sup>56</sup> Connor, p. 29.

<sup>57</sup> Eric P. Levy, *Trapped in Thought: A Study of the Beckettian Mentality* (New York: Syracuse University Press 2007), p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Endgame, The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), p. 109.

<sup>59</sup> Beckett, *Endgame*, p. 132.

<sup>60</sup> Bersani and Dutoit, p. 17.

have read the book so often that it no longer holds any excitement not even ever so faintly and then you have to wait until you have forgotten it and you can begin again.’<sup>61</sup>

The sense of anticipation is intensified once we realise that repetition is not going to fulfil the desire for resolution (completion or relief in Steinian terms), which we suspect it would take place as the rescue of the boy. In her account of desire, Rebecca Schneider argues that much of performance exemplifies an effort to make apparent the link ‘between ways of seeing the body and ways of structuring desire, according to the logic of commodity capitalism.’<sup>62</sup> Schneider discusses the idea of insatiable desire in relation to the western culture of accumulation, where what one is reaching for is ‘forever beyond grasp.’<sup>63</sup> Desire signifies a ‘flirtatious impossibility of access, a paradoxical “reality” only of dream, of shadow, always beyond reach, always already lost.’<sup>64</sup> The structures used by Lone Twin Theatre attempt precisely to stimulate sentiments of anticipation and desire, where what one is reaching for is forever beyond grasp, where, as Dominic Johnson puts it, ‘desire is always left wanting.’<sup>65</sup> Repetition in this sequence establishes itself in our perception and, somehow, makes us believe that it will fulfil its promise, a promise that has to do with an access to that which is anticipated. Yet, the difficulty to reach a sense of fulfilment, or else the ‘flirtatious impossibility of access’ seems to be the aim of the scene. Here, it is not only the repetitive structure of the scene, which points towards that which is impossible to reach, but also its subject matter: the little boy is drowning, there is an urgency for him to be saved, Antoine is reaching for it, but the little boy is always beyond grasp. Although Guy almost reaches Antoine (in fact it seems that he grasps him when he says ‘I’ve got you, don’t fight’), he does not succeed in holding him and, therefore, the ultimate goal of the scene, the rescue, does not take place.<sup>66</sup> Desire, it seems, demands not only the reaching, which can be achieved momentarily (‘I’ve got you, don’t fight’), and then lost forever, but also the holding on to its object. The repetitively performed impossibility to reach what one is aiming for, in terms of structure and content, which has derived from the process of returning again and again to the event of death, in a forward movement, is what renders

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<sup>61</sup> Stein, *Plays*, p. 101. This process seems oppositional to Connor’s idea of the circus artist, who returns to the plates to impart more speed to them in order to keep them spinning. See p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 5.

<sup>63</sup> Schneider, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> Schneider, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Dominic Johnson, ‘No Love: Remnants of a Modern Unconsoled’, in Slava Mogutin, *Lost Boys*, ed. by Slava Mogutin, Octavio Zaya (New York: Power House, 2006), n. p.

<sup>66</sup> In this part, I am not interested in the death of those two people at the end of the sequence, but rather in the repetition of the sequence itself.

the scene so enthralling for me and its effect on memory so profound. The sense of closure promised by repetition as well as the resolution expected in the boy being saved do not seem to occur during the performance itself. Yet, the boy might be saved belatedly, in our recollection of the scene. In a sense, the scene of the little boy in the river invites us to re-experience it or re-write it, as it offers, at the end of it, a series of variations on what seems to be the theme of the little boy in the river:

10.

MOLLY

Hey!

GUY

Are you alright little Miss

MOLLY

No, I'm not, I'm going mad, I've had enough, I want this to stop, you can't save me, I can't be helped

GUY

Ok – I'm coming, I've just got to get through these weeds

11.

PAUL

Hey!

GUY

Are you all right Sir?

PAUL

It's too deep

GUY

Ok – I'm coming, I've just got to get through these weeds

12.

ANTOINE

Hey

GUY

Are you all right friend

ANTOINE

I can't get out

GUY

Ok – I'm coming, I've just got to get through these weeds<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Lone Twin Theatre, *Daniel Hit By A Train*, pp. 30-31.



Although I cannot recollect if the forward numbers that appear on the script were actually uttered in the performance, I realise that the scene I am describing, the thirteen times that someone has tried to save someone drowning, interrupt the countdown of the performance's deaths: a new way of structuring time is here attempted, one that is going forward, being more hopeful, in that sense, and taking place in the present. The variations on the theme, just like in a music score, follow the seven intense repetitions of the boy and the man drowning. In a sense, these variations, allow the spectator to go back to the piece and repair the moment of death. The event of writing about the performance is such a space too, one that accommodates the desire for the little boy to be ultimately rescued, a space of a nostalgic kind of repetition backwards, or, in other words, a melancholic recollection. Memory may repair what the scene has not accomplished, by adding a last piece to the sequence: the rescue of the child. In this case, the memory of the performance, like the memory of Proust's Combray, resurfaces, according to Deleuze, 'not as it was in the present, nor as it ever could have been, but in a splendour which was never experienced.'<sup>68</sup> In this space of experience, which is both imaginative and empirical, repetition fulfils its promise of satisfaction, a satisfaction that derives from the feeling that it has finally ended and is now only retrievable through the form of return, which is controlled by no one else, but the spectator.<sup>69</sup>

The urgency of the child to be rescued and the unresolved desire this urgency gives rise to, finds its place in the form of writing. Writing that occurs as part of the performance functions as a writing *of* the event in Heathfield's terms.<sup>70</sup> Writing, in this case, re-stages the encounter with the artwork; it creates a dialogue with it, which, although addressing an event that is gone, performs all returns in a re-imagined time. Thus, as Connor argues, 'the present moment not only repeats another moment belonging to the past, but reconstitutes that moment.'<sup>71</sup> In this model, Connor argues, present and past exist indissolubly at every instant, in a repeatedly renewed totality. Writing repeats the experience of performance and renders itself repeatable: writing is always already a repetition and it has the capacity 'to yield itself up unchanged for scrutiny, or

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<sup>68</sup> Deleuze cited in Connor, p. 62. I use here Connor's translation, as, unlike Paul Patton's, it captures the sentiment I am interested in.

<sup>69</sup> It seems that, like Freud's grandson, we repeat the movement of *fort/da* in a difficult experience, imposed on us, in order to master it, by taking an active part and gain pleasure.

<sup>70</sup> Adrian Heathfield, 'Writing of the Event', in *A Performance Cosmology: Testimony from the Future, Evidence of the Past*, ed. by Judie Christie, Richard Gough, Daniel Watt (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 179.

<sup>71</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 62.

commemoration; this repeatability seems to double itself, for it depends upon the fact that writing is, in the first place, the repetition of speech.<sup>72</sup> Invoking the Derridean difference between writing and speech, Connor writes: ‘speech is the sign of “full” and present selfhood, while writing is the means, the symptom of self-division and plurality in the self.’<sup>73</sup> The return to a performance in memory and the feelings it generates might not be retrievable as such. Yet, the representation of those feelings in the form of writing enables performance’s retrievability and it is the possibility of language being repeated in different contexts which enables meaning to occur:

Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition) as a small or large unity, can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion.<sup>74</sup>

Every repetition in memory constitutes a new context, which allows for new meanings to occur. Writing, being another such repetition facilitates certain performances’ urgency to be repeated. Repetition in memory and repetition in writing differ. Writing seems to fulfil repetition’s desire to be repeated, even beyond the event of performance. In a sense, it is more possible for repetition to find its ‘destination’ through the repetition of writing rather than that of memory, because of writing’s ability to be revisited again and again in repetition. On the other hand, the memory of the event feels like a non-active process, which does not quite fulfil the desire to repeat, whereas writing operates as a *performerly* performance, which accommodates, to an extent, the insatiable desire emerging through repetition.

Anticipation seems to occur both as a physiological as well as an emotional experience. It is ‘the moment when my body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas as I do,’ as Barthes suggests.<sup>75</sup> This is the moment that pleasure arises in the reading of a text, which is connected to a sense of anticipation and excess. Language, for Barthes, both wounds and seduces. Lone Twin Theatre’s repetitions, which never cease to unravel themselves, refer to such excess, a wound or a seduction, a time, which suspends our viewing habits, as Heathfield has it<sup>76</sup> and invites us to return to the

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<sup>72</sup> Connor, pp. 68-69.

<sup>73</sup> Connor, p. 68.

<sup>74</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Signature, Event, Context’, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 320.

<sup>75</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 17.

<sup>76</sup> Adrian Heathfield, ‘Coming Undone’ <<http://www.adrianheathfield.com/>> [accessed 1 December 2008].

sequence again and again through repetition in memory. This structure, like any musical structure, fundamentally based on repetition, establishes monotony, the term borrowed from Baudelaire, and then surprise. Excitement emerges through the play between fixity and novelty. The structure, it seems, is built upon a major theme. It is through its duration that the sequence becomes significant. In a way, the scene reminds itself to us, by saying: this is what happens, this is what happened, this is what has happened. I experience the event always both in the past and the present. The affective experience of watching appears as a ‘radical form of commemoration,’ in Heathfield’s words, ‘one that returns to phenomenal memories in order to undo and reform the memory found through thought, language and image.’<sup>77</sup> A choreography of expectations seems to arise through the specific structure of the piece: anticipation is at times thwarted, delayed or satisfied. What creates a sense of time, Vladimir Nabokov suggests, is not ‘the recurrent beats of the rhythm but the gap between two such beats, the grey gap between black beats: the Tender Interval.’<sup>78</sup> What happens occurs ‘in the uttering, not in the sequence of utterances: not to devour, to gobble, but to graze, to browse scrupulously, to rediscover.’<sup>79</sup>

### ***Bluebeard and Krapp***

In Beckett’s 1958 play *Krapp’s Last Tape*, first performed at the Royal Court Theatre, London the same year we find an old man, Krapp, alone in a room with a table, on top of which there is a tape-recorder and a number of cardboard boxes with reels of recorded tapes. These appear to be recordings of past memories, recorded always for the occasion of his birthday. Beckett situates the action in a late evening in the future, during which Krapp rewinds and listens over and again a particular tape, which he avoids listening all the way through, till the end of the play.

In *Krapp’s Last Tape*, Beckett experiments with the iterative possibilities of the tape-recorder. Contrary to writing, which, of course, repeats, but at the same time translates the utterance into another medium, according to Connor, the tape-recorder makes

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<sup>77</sup> Heathfield, ‘Coming Undone’, n.p.

<sup>78</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle*, cited in Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 94.

<sup>79</sup> Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, p. 13.

possible ‘the absolute retrieval of spoken words, in what seems to promise a fusion of the written and the spoken.’<sup>80</sup> Although *Krapp’s Last Tape* demonstrates ‘how little is kept in such a “faithful” recording,’ the effect of seeing Krapp go over his past recordings ‘is to run together the two forms of language, making recorded speech like a kind of writing.’<sup>81</sup>

Like writing, these recorded memories help Krapp remember and re-experience:

Just been listening to an old year, passages at random. [...] At that time I think I was still living on and off with Bianca in Kedar Street. Well out of that, Jesus yes! Hopeless business. [*Pause.*] Not much about her, apart from a tribute to her eyes. Very warm. I suddenly saw them again. [*Pause.*] Incomparable! [*Pause.*] Ah well... [*Pause.*] These old P.M.s are gruesome, but I often find them [*Krapp switches off, broods, switches on.*] – a help before embarking on a new... [*hesitates*]...retrospect.<sup>82</sup>

Krapp returns to his past memories in order to be able to record again and look back on his past. Recording seems to necessitate repeating. Krapp embarks on a ‘new’ retrospect by revisiting the past. In this passage, Krapp listens to himself talking about himself listening to an old recording. In doing that, Krapp repeats himself: he does what the tape says that he used to do: ‘Just been listening to an old year, passages at random.’<sup>83</sup> He listens to himself having listened to an older tape. In a sense, this repetition is a double one, it refers to a past, twice: he listens to himself in the past talking about a past past, a past, which has already been past for him in a different time in the past.

Krapp sits in front of a tape recorder and rewinds the tape again and again, in order to listen to his own past recordings. He talks about the girl in the punt. In Bausch’s *Bluebeard: Listening to a Tape-Recording of Béla Bartók’s Opera: Bluebeard’s Castle*, Bluebeard sits in front of a tape recorder and rewinds time and again the tape, in order to listen to a tape-recording of Béla Bartók’s opera, *Bluebeard’s Castle*. In between the listening he gets up, approaches Judith, who lies motionless and lies on top of her. Krapp recollects:

We drifted in among the flags and stuck. The way they went down, singing, before the stem! [*Pause.*] I lay down across her with my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We

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<sup>80</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, pp. 127-28.

<sup>81</sup> Connor, p. 128.

<sup>82</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Krapp’s Last Tape, The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), p. 218.

<sup>83</sup> Beckett, *Krapp’s Last Tape*, p. 218.

lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side.<sup>84</sup>

Bluebeard lies on top of Judith and pushes her with his body across the dead leaves. She stays motionless. He goes back to the tape-recorder, rewinds and plays. In a sense, Bluebeard relives the past too. Judith is one of the many wives he has brought to the castle. He has done this before, I suspect, he has danced with his other wives to Bartók's music in the past. Bluebeard has lived this before. And in having lived it before, he knows what to expect, or to anticipate. Bluebeard desires to defer the imminent end and go back in time. He is therefore rewinding the tape again and again in a futile attempt to prevent time from progressing forward. Bluebeard

searches in violent desperation for the tenderness, the affection, the love he once knew. While the tape repeats the same excerpt from the score, he races to Judith who is lying motionless on the floor with arms angled to receive him, the woman absolute. Bluebeard throws himself on top of her [...] and then with great effort drags her across the floor.<sup>85</sup>

Both Krapp and Bluebeard seem to return to events of the past in an effort to re-experience, but also to avoid the end. Krapp responds to his recordings by commenting on the things he himself once said, Bluebeard uses Bartók's opera as the framing for his encounter with Judith, which creates the illusion that time can be rewound and experienced again and again. They both go back repetitively, preventing time to go on, experiencing the present through the past, through memory or loss, due to a difficulty to experience life in its continuity. Their refusal of continuity negates the movement of time and reduces life to a recurring cycle of past moments. For 'only through loss can that which was blinding, or beautiful, be found,'<sup>86</sup> as Arthur K. Oberg notes. It is possible that some moments resist immediate experience: the going back to those difficult moments aims at filling in gaps in memory and overcoming resistances, as Freud suggests in 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through.'<sup>87</sup> The going back facilitates a process of becoming more conversant with the resistance that difficult events perform, or working-through this resistance.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*, p. 27.

<sup>85</sup> Norbert Servos and Gert Weigelt, *Pina Bausch: Wuppertal Dance Theater or The Art of Training a Goldfish: Excursions into Dance*, trans. by Patricia Stadié (Cologne: Ballet-Bühnen-Verlag Köln 1984), p. 53. Norbert Servos interprets this violent encounter of Bluebeard and Judith as a rape. I have not included this part from Servos' quote, as it does not interest me at this particular moment.

<sup>86</sup> Oberg, p. 153.

<sup>87</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendation on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, XII (London: The Hogarth Press 1958), pp. 147-48.

<sup>88</sup> Freud, p. 155.

Bluebeard's and Krapp's persistent refusal of time's continuity results in them going back to the past moment over and over again. It is as if 'what is most desired is missing in the often uncontrollable present but can be present in a controllable, if, in varying degrees, mythic, past.'<sup>89</sup> In a sense, it is easier to master a past, that is already gone and only exists as a memory, rather than a present that is difficult to control. The live quality of the present seems to be difficult to grasp. It is only possible to fully master it and fix it by going back to it. Adam Phillips suggests that new experiences 'are above all reminders; moments when our always traumatic personal history becomes real, but only through its return.'<sup>90</sup> Krapp and Bluebeard create new experiences in order to live the past, by the re-experience of old ones. They repeat their past in the present, re-living it as a return: Krapp plays the tapes of past memories, while Bluebeard listens again and again to Bartók's opera *Bluebeard's Castle*. This movement backwards resembles my revisiting of De Keersmaecker's *Piano Phase*. Like another Krapp, I go back to my memory of *Piano Phase*, I 'rewind and play'. I realise that one of the reasons why this happens is a possible refusal to experience the performance in its present time. This refusal might arise from a personal denial to encounter the performance, or from the performance's own resistance to be assimilated immediately. It might also have to do with the spectator's expectations from repetition. Yet, repetition might not be possible as an anticipated outcome or a task: 'conceived as a human task or as an outcome anticipated on the basis of reasonable expectations, repetition is *impossible*. Its essence is the shock of knowing its impossibility, resigning its possibility – as a strategic goal.'<sup>91</sup> Levy suggests:

'Yet at the end of the play, as Krapp sits '(...motionless...)' while '(...[t]he tape runs on in silence)' (28), it becomes apparent that his ultimate project is not merely to reduce life to a succession of moments without the inconveniently intervening intervals postulated in *Proust*, but to *empty time of the succession of moments* by which its movement is punctuated. Thus, through regret, Krapp simulates a state where time is no longer threatening because its movement, divested of succession, simply perpetuates the same unchanging preoccupation.'<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Vincent Geoghegan, 'Remembering the Future', in *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, ed. by Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan, (London: Verso 1997), p. 17.

<sup>90</sup> Adam Phillips, 'Two Lectures on Expectations', *Side Effects*, p. 231.

<sup>91</sup> Edward F. Mooney, 'Repetition: Gifts in World-Renewal: Repetition is Required Time', *On Søren Kierkegaard: Dialogue, Polemics, Lost Intimacy, and Time* (Burlington and Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), p. 172.

<sup>92</sup> Levy, p. 188, emphasis added.

Krapp commemorates a past moment. He does that in his attempt to renounce the passage of time. As Levy suggests, Krapp wishes for the *emptying* of time. He performs this endeavour through repetition. Similarly perhaps to Stein, who strives for the emptying of language from its meaning, Krapp longs for the emptying of time from time. He craves a *time out of time*, in Heathfield's terms, a time that has both existed before but is also happening now, being both imaginative and empirical. This *new* time creates both a sense of motion and motionlessness. Krapp rewinds the tape, but he always seems to listen to the same moment. Although moving backwards, he keeps still. Krapp lives the present as a 'retrospect,'<sup>93</sup> he re-lives the present as a re-occurring event. On the other hand, Stein lives the present in the present, as something that is happening *now*. Similar to Krapp and Bluebeard, Clark revisits Poussin's paintings every day for the length of six months at the Getty museum. In this case, each return is simultaneously a new experience as well as an experience in retrospect, in which case 'nothing new is added to the old, but the old has become new, nothing is changed but everything has become new.'<sup>94</sup> In what follows I explore Clark's return to the two paintings through the practice of writing and his understanding of the urge to go back as well as the problems that occur during this process. I use this example in order to further explore my desire to repetitively return to *Piano Phase*.

### **'I could hardly believe that each day there were new things to see'**

In January 2000, art historian T. J. Clark started a six-month period of research at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. Although his initial idea involved research on Picasso, he found himself going back morning after morning to confront two landscape paintings by Poussin: *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (National Gallery, London) and *Landscape with a Calm* (Getty Museum, Los Angeles). For almost six months, Clark visited the museum every morning and documented his responses to the paintings in a written form, which later formed a book entitled *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing*. Keeping this sort of diary, Clark realized that there was more there to see than he had thought in the first place.

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<sup>93</sup> Levy, p. 185.

<sup>94</sup> Niels Nymann Eriksen, *Kierkegaard's Category of Repetition*, Kierkegaard Studies, Monograph Series 5 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), p. 9.

In September 2006 I watch for the first time De Keersmaecker's dance piece *Fase: Four movements to the Music of Steve Reich* at the Barbican. While watching the performance, I try to comprehend the logic of the music and the movement. Writing down my thoughts or feelings seems to facilitate this process. The specific piece stays in memory for a very long time after the performance has ended. Every now and then I recall *Piano Phase* and feel a simultaneous urge to put down in words the feelings it has triggered in me. I realise that as time passes I experience *Piano Phase* differently while the urge to go back to it seems to develop. And slowly, as T. J. Clark suggests, the question arises: 'What is it, fundamentally, I am returning to in this particular case? What is it I want to see again?'<sup>95</sup> Something happens, which cannot effectively be represented except, as he says, by chronicling it as it happen[s].<sup>96</sup> This thesis uses this practice of writing to closely observe the different experiences of repetition, by 'chronicling it as it happens.'

As mentioned in Chapter Two, there is an urge to describe the performance, rather than be involved in it, which has perhaps to do with Clark's experience of language: 'Language is always too specific and discriminating, it seems, when it tries to mimic the first idiotic appropriation of the visual. Writing automatically aims or pretends to be attentive. It likes details. It thinks that details lead directly, magically, to the picture's "questions."<sup>97</sup> As I have discussed in Chapter Three, Suzanne Guerlac has also underlined the ways in which language makes us think of the invariability of sensation, suggesting that 'the only way to fight back against the conventionality of language would be to seek a very precise language.'<sup>98</sup>

In a sense, the first experience of *Piano Phase* feels incomplete. It is as if the piece is not yet fully grasped. There is more there to see than I saw in the first place. My going back to the *Piano Phase* over and again through time and memory seems like an attempt to re-stage my encounter with it, which feels like a missed one. Bersani and Dutoit, in their account of difficult works suggest that part of this difficulty is that 'they so seldom address *us*; they appear to associate not with the real *or* with their audience but only with

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<sup>95</sup> Clark, pp. 5-8.

<sup>96</sup> Clark, p. 8.

<sup>97</sup> Clark, p. 9.

<sup>98</sup> Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca, N. Y. and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 73.



themselves.<sup>99</sup> The self-contained identity of *Piano Phase* is, following Bersani and Dutoit, self-explosive:

The work is continually finding itself in other parts of itself – although what it finds is also always different from itself. And the difference is what saves the work from collapsing into a deathlike and ultimately chimerical immobility in which each of its part would accurately reflect all its other parts.<sup>100</sup>

*Piano Phase* generates for me this first time a sense of immobility, which is extremely agitating: the piece constantly creates obstacles that do not allow me to ‘enter’ it. These only seem to recede once I return to the piece in memory. I *find* the work in *other parts of itself* – what I find is always different, yet, this difference is necessary for my movement towards the piece, which seems inhibited by the piece itself, during the performance. Clark asks whether ‘there are certain kinds of visual configuration, or incident, or play, or analogy, that simply cannot be retained in memory, or fully integrated into a disposable narrative of interpretation.’<sup>101</sup> My need to recollect has to do with the complexity or elusiveness of those visual configurations that De Keersmaeker has carefully crafted together, a complexity, which is to be found in the spectator’s experience of the repetitive music and movement in this piece.

Clark attempts repetitively to capture in words that which cannot be described or resists description. Writing, in this case, not only re-stages the encounter with the artwork, but also creates a dialogue with it, which ‘manifests a form of discourse that is within and partly about the present context of encounter,’<sup>102</sup> as Heathfield suggests, which chronicles in the form of writing what happens between the artwork and the spectator, *as it happens*. Like Poussin’s landscape, De Keersmaeker’s performance appears to me at the edge of speech, and it is precisely in that seam between those edges that the performance occurs or is uttered through writing. This writing is a writing *of* the event, which demands a return to it. It is therefore a writing *of* the return. The work’s imperative is precisely that: to go back. In Barthesian terms, each revisiting is a new reading, each reading a new writing and each revisiting happens through writing. Clark returns to *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* in order to perform a new reading of it, to *write* the landscape in the act of reading. Poussin’s painting functions, and thus can be seen, as a *writerly* text or a text of *jouissance*, which discomforts the reader and

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<sup>99</sup> Bersani and Dutoit, *Arts of Impoverishment*, p. 6.

<sup>100</sup> Bersani and Dutoit, p. 6.

<sup>101</sup> Clark, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> Heathfield, ‘Writing of the Event’, p. 180.

challenges her relation to language: Clark suggests that ‘the running man in the main painting [...] is someone genuinely at the edge of speech, just outside the reach of the verbal. And Poussin wants to show us what is involved in being there – what risks there are in wordlessness, what possible powers.’<sup>103</sup> The event, in Clark’s case, relies on this ‘going back.’ It is not the painting alone or Clark’s thinking about it. It is rather the encounter between the two that happens through writing, which is part of the possible powers involved in wordlessness, subject to its conditions and forces. It is part of experiencing the event, a way to respond to its persistent demand for participation, even after it has ended.

In his attempt to explain this curious desire to go back Clark suggests: ‘certain pictures demand such looking and repay it. Coming to terms with them is slow work. But astonishing things happen if one gives oneself over to the process of seeing again and again.’<sup>104</sup> What I propose through my experience of *Piano Phase* and in relation to Clark’s journey towards the two Poussin paintings is this: certain performances demand a similar looking and repay it. Coming to terms with them is slow work. But astonishing things happen if one gives oneself over to the process of seeing again and again.

After having re-visited *Piano Phase* several times, I experience repetition in a different manner. Something is happening that has not happened before. I listen to the music and the music changes and the movement changes with the music. The following question arises: every time I revisit *Piano Phase* in my memory, do I experience the performance itself, as I saw it in September 2006 or do I revisit the last time I experienced the piece in my memory? I pose again the initial question: What is it fundamentally I return to? What is it I want to see again? Clark argues that, according to Paul Valéry, the reason why he returns to the pictures morning after morning is ‘in order to remember what it was like to encounter them for the first time.’<sup>105</sup> This, for both Valéry and Clark is the aesthetic, the threshold between seeing, remembering and returning.

Clark does not consider the difficulty to *write* the painting that he encounters at certain moments as the end of writing, but rather as a necessary part of the process. Clark writes

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<sup>103</sup> Kathryn Tuma, ‘T.J. Clark with Kathryn Tuma in Conversation’  
<<http://www.brooklynrail.org/2006/11/art/tj-clark>> [accessed 4 February 2010].

<sup>104</sup> Clark, p. 5.

<sup>105</sup> Clark, p. 118.

again:

26 January. I arrive too late, a bit before sunset, and the ceiling louvers whirr shut after a few minutes. About *Calm* – though not about *Snake* – I have the first experience of disappointment. This is difficult (disagreeable) to write about, but it is a recurrent and maybe necessary part of looking at paintings, and shouldn't simply be passed over, waiting for proper enthusiasm to return. Paintings in a sense ought to disappoint us – disappoint our wish to have them be more than they are, to be fully and endlessly discursive.

Clark tries to articulate that which appears to him on the verge of speech. Poussin himself notes: 'Moi, qui fait profession des choses muettes' ('I who make a profession of mute things').<sup>106</sup> Clark, tempted by the unreadable nature of Poussin's paintings, responds to their inability to speak through writing. He speaks about them or through them or instead of them. I experience *Piano Phase* as an untenable, impossible, mute text, one that I cannot write about. Yet, the longing to write about it or *of* it functions towards an attempt to complete what seems to be unfinished. It has also to do with my need to understand or unpack its complexity. What I need to fully grasp and hold tight is precisely the intangible, the impalpable, as *Piano Phase* is a performance that, perhaps like certain paintings, *does not happen, essentially or sufficiently all at once*, to use Clark's phrasing. It does not exhaust itself in the first viewing, it only works in time, in fact it only *occurs* in time, as it needs to 'go down', 'sink' and settle. It is a piece *yet to come*. And this happens through the event's recall in writing, which, as Heathfield proposes, is necessary, vibrant and continuously possible.<sup>107</sup>

Writing constitutes an act of remembering a performance, an act of suspending time, a form of engaging with the performance through a lively waiting, a means through which performance *happens* in memory. The reason why *Piano Phase* demands such a looking has to do with this: the repetitive movement danced to Steve Reich's music makes me feel enclosed or trapped within a single moment the first time I watch the piece. The performance 'gives the impression of an infinite narration of a single moment,' through which one might experience 'a dissatisfaction arising both from the unrepresentability of a single moment and from the unpleasant feeling that no moment ever really 'leads' to another moment except by default, or perhaps exhaustion.'<sup>108</sup> My experience of listening to Reich's music is a difficult one. Keith Potter has talked about the chaotic or delicate

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<sup>106</sup> Clark, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> Heathfield, 'Writing of the Event', p. 179.

<sup>108</sup> Richard Goodkin, *Around Proust* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 86.

acoustic or psychoacoustic situations Reich's music evokes and their endless variations according to each personal experience.<sup>109</sup> Reich himself in his *Writings about Music* suggests listening to the music as a very gradual process and listening to it repetitively, until 'the listener [...] becomes aware of one pattern in the music, which may open his ear to another'<sup>110</sup> as mentioned in Chapter Two. This listening requires an animate pause or suspension of time, which could perhaps be paralleled to Clark's process of seeing again and again, to his waiting for astonishing things to happen.

Through the return to the *Piano Phase*, I get acquainted with it, I become conversant with the resistance that it acts upon me. Through this slow process of recollecting forward, I work through the difficulty of the piece or perhaps my disappointment. Writing constitutes 'a record of looking, taking place and changing through time.'<sup>111</sup> Repetition of movement, like the repetition of stillness in the painting, acquires different, new meanings each time. Writing facilitates the taking place of the event as well as its changes. *Piano Phase* invites repeated responses, which is for Valéry a capacity that defines a work of art: 'the fact that it does not exhaust itself – [...] on first or second or subsequent readings.'<sup>112</sup> Writing is a process of discovery of that which performance can give, of the hidden or that which is difficult to reveal. It is a way of spectating, experiencing difficult performances that resist being entered. Some works of art, like Poussin's landscapes or De Keersmaeker's choreography, demand a return to them over and again, 'this time, then once more I think, then perhaps a last time'<sup>113</sup> till our experience of them feels complete in our returns and writing.

### **Something of Desire**

Repetition in contemporary performance seems to promise a great sense of satisfaction, or a sense of closure and relief. In some experience of repetition in performance, this sense of satisfactory closure never actually arises when or the way expected. Some kinds

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<sup>109</sup> Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999), p. 182.

<sup>110</sup> Steve Reich, *Writings about Music* (Canada and New York: Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and New York University Press, 1974), p. 53.

<sup>111</sup> Clark, p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Paul Valéry cited in Clark, p. 115.

<sup>113</sup> Beckett, *Molloy*, p. 8.

of repetition succeed to ‘keep one’s appetite alive by not being just what one wants.’<sup>114</sup> Following Phillips, I argue that repetition pretends to be able to give what one wants and through the perpetuation of desire for that something, repetition keeps one’s appetite alive. The nature of desire, Bersani argues, in his account of Baudelairian repetition, ‘is to propose excessively inadequate satisfactions.’<sup>115</sup> It seems that repetition denies the satisfaction of the desire it induces. This denial is what drives repetition onwards and keeps the spectator’s longing alive. Yet, the perpetual dissatisfaction, which derives from repetition’s promise of impossible satisfactions, constitutes a different kind of satisfaction or *jouissance*. Repetition is not or does not give just what one wants purposefully. As Phillips argues in his essay ‘Doing It Alone,’ ‘the fact that desire is always in excess of the object’s capacity to satisfy it is the point not the problem.’<sup>116</sup> Repetition seems to feed this excess of desire in being itself excessive.

Desire as a force or energy at work discloses that ‘how we want is baffling, and what we want is impossible.’<sup>117</sup> Although thinking sometimes in terms of completion or closure, the spectator seems to always experience desire as insatiable. In the commodity culture, Schneider suggests, ‘[a]cquisitions augment rather than satisfy desire, ensuring that the consumer will not achieve a state of completed/depleted desire, but will participate in a perpetuation, a heightening of desire, as ritual perpetuates its own terms and solidifies its membership.’<sup>118</sup> The experience of repetitive movement or speech in performance shares something with the experience of commodity capitalism: the desire for more is perpetually renewed, since desire will never be fully satisfied.<sup>119</sup> The spectator keeps wanting and it is the perpetuation of desire that takes now the form of its object. We therefore do not seem to desire a closure anymore, but rather desire’s continuity. Desire’s object is therefore not restoration, but ‘a making new.’<sup>120</sup> Repetition ensures that desire will always be ‘in excess of the object’s capacity to satisfy it’<sup>121</sup> and accommodates the longing to desire. Insatiable desire is perpetually intensified, because of its impossibility to be fulfilled and the denial for satisfaction constitutes a different kind of satisfaction or *jouissance*. Since what is ‘hoped for’ is never acquired, there is no

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<sup>114</sup> Adam Phillips, ‘Doing It Alone’, *Side Effects*, p. 60.

<sup>115</sup> Leo Bersani, *Baudelaire and Freud* (California: A Quantum Book, University of California Press 1977), p. 86.

<sup>116</sup> Phillips, ‘Doing It Alone’ p. 64.

<sup>117</sup> Phillips, ‘The Uses of Desire’, *Side Effects*, p. 166.

<sup>118</sup> Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, p. 90.

<sup>119</sup> Schneider, p. 90.

<sup>120</sup> Phillips, ‘The Uses of Desire’, p. 176.

<sup>121</sup> Phillips, ‘Doing It Alone’, p. 64.

completion or resolution in the experience of repetition. One might return to it again and again in order to complete the experience or attempt again to satisfy desire. Yet, the space of perpetual wanting nurtures the spectator's desire incessantly, while at the same time renders the spectator aware of its paradoxical impossibility.<sup>122</sup>

The return to repetition can in some cases be more satisfactory than repetition itself. I enjoy thinking of *Piano Phase* or returning to it in memory, rather than watching it. That is, in Phillips' words 'as though anticipating the object, or knowing it is there to anticipate, is somehow better than being in the real presence of the object. As though the actual object were a problem in a way that the fantasy, the remembered and expected object, is not.'<sup>123</sup> *Piano Phase* constituted such a problem for me both times: Barbican (2006) and Sadler's Wells (2008). Its repetitive movement did not fulfil my expectations during the performance: 'there is clearly something about the reality of the object that is off-putting, in a sense counter-erotic.'<sup>124</sup> Yet, *Piano Phase* as a memory is not a problem anymore, the remembered object holds an excitement, as the experience of desiring in memory gives a more intense pleasure.

A question arises: do I repeat *Piano Phase* in my mind because I want to, or is the repetition of *Piano Phase* inflicted upon me? There are, I argue, certain types of performance that use repetition, which repeat themselves vigorously and some other types that the spectator chooses to repeat or return to. In his essay 'Waiting for Returns', Phillips names the first type of repetition 'imposed repetition' and the second type 'chosen or preferred repetition'<sup>125</sup> and goes on to say that 'there is a preferred past, a past as an object of desire, a past that for various reasons – conscious and unconscious – one wants to repeat, to revive; and a past that repeats itself anyway, and as persecution.'<sup>126</sup> In the first case, the spectator repeats the past of the performance, whereas in the second the performance repeats itself. Through Freud, Phillips answers the most urgent of the questions: why does the individual repeat the past? '[T]he modern individual copies to avert – and/or to master, to rework – a catastrophe from the past he

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<sup>122</sup> Gabrielle McIntire, *Modernism, Memory and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 48.

<sup>123</sup> Phillips, 'Doing It Alone', p. 64.

<sup>124</sup> Phillips, 'Doing It Alone', p. 64.

<sup>125</sup> Phillips, 'Waiting for Returns', *Side Effects*, p. 200.

<sup>126</sup> Phillips, 'Waiting for Returns', p. 200.

is unconscious of. He copies in order to be able to desire.'<sup>127</sup> The spectator therefore goes back to repetition, although it has been a difficult experience, in order to keep desiring. It is precisely because of the difficult experience of performance that the spectator wants to go back and master repetition. Judith Butler, interested in the theoretical shift in Freud's theory between 1914 and 1920, underlines the distinction between repetition as mastery and repetition as regression that occurs from it. In the first instance repetition 'signals a fantasized return to the past for the purposes of repairing an injury there incurred' or as an effort 'to rewrite or reconstruct a history that remains painful in contemporary experience.'<sup>128</sup> Therefore, return, Butler argues, is always linked with the desire 'to redo or repair.'<sup>129</sup>

In some performance, repetition's imperative is to make the spectator repeat. Difficulty in this case sustains the desire to repeat. The spectator returns to the performance to master it, to rework it perhaps with the intention to resolve the difficulty or to encounter, once again, the unresolved situation and to desire. The desire for resolution is what makes the spectator go back and try again, the impossibility of resolution being the drive for the return. In *Proust*, Beckett comments on the idea of retrieving the past discussing 'the identification of immediate with past experience, the recurrence of past action or reaction in the present,' which amounts to an experience being at once 'imaginative and empirical, at once an evocation and a direct perception.'<sup>130</sup> The experience of repetition in performance may provoke the repetition of repetition itself, as already argued (p. 154). This new experience is both, as Beckett suggests, imaginative and empirical, an evocation and a direct perception. It is a new experience and an old one, 'a kind of physical and imagistic repetition, in which the distinction between past and present falters and slides.'<sup>131</sup> As the perpetual attempt to end repetition by finding a sense of closure is impossible, the only possibility is, as Connor has it, abandonment.<sup>132</sup> The spectator may return to the performance many times in search of resolution, experiencing sentiments of pleasure or *jouissance*, but at some point may abandon it. Or, in other cases, the spectator chooses to abandon repetition, or, in fact, to end it. In his

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<sup>127</sup> Phillips, 'Waiting for Returns', p. 203.

<sup>128</sup> Judith Butler, 'Pleasures of Repetition', in *Pleasure Beyond the Pleasure Principle: The Role of Affect in Motivation, Development, and Adaptation*, ed. by Robert A. Glick, Stanley Bone, 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 264.

<sup>129</sup> Butler, p. 265.

<sup>130</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues With Georges Duthuit* (London: John Calder, 1965), pp. 74-75.

<sup>131</sup> Adrian Heathfield, 'End Time Now', p. 106.

<sup>132</sup> Connor, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 31.

account of Beckett's *Trio*, Deleuze poses a question in relation to the processes of returning and ending:

Why does the protagonist (*in Trio*) nevertheless start over again, long after the voice has fallen silent? Why does he again go to the door, to the window, to the head of the pallet? We have seen why: it is because the end *will have been*, long before he could know it: 'everything will continue automatically, until the order arrives, to stop everything. And when the little mute messenger suddenly appears, it is not to announce that the woman will not be coming, as if this were a piece of bad news, but to bring the long-awaited order to stop everything, everything being well and truly finished.'<sup>133</sup>

The return to a performance is yet another mode, I argue, of experiencing pleasure through the experience of repetition. What follows is the Conclusion of this thesis, which attends to the possibilities of repetition's ending. It also attempts to disclose the difficulties connected to this project coming to an end, which is the end of the process of return and the end of this writing.

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<sup>133</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), p. 167.



## Conclusion

### Repeat Repeat: Endings

The conclusion of this thesis deals with the process of ending and its duration as one that might be constructed, chosen or, in fact, arbitrary. Repetition's ending might be experienced in the ending of writing or the ending of the returns to repetition. In this case, repetition disappears, but in a sense, it also remains and can be repeated again as another repetition. I revisit here Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* and Clark's *Sight of Death* for a last time to give an account of repetition's end as well as the desire to defer an imminent end in an attempt to avoid saying goodbye.

In this ending, which is another beginning, I would like to go back in a final return and remember the kinds of pleasures that arise in the experience of repetition. Looking back, I remember Beatrice Libonati falling again and again through the open arms of Jan Minarik to the floor. I remember my fascination experiencing this fall as a wonderful, comfortable *plaisir* and as a difficult one, something like *jouissance*. I remember Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker and Tale Dolven spinning around in *this moment* again and again, and this again being again *this moment* and the moment after this one, when I return to the performance; Gertrude Stein writing in repetition *in the present, now*, in order to forget the future and the past. This experience of *presence* has proven to be one that invokes a kind of pleasure, particularly in those moments when the reader or spectator experiences the going in and out of synch with the time of the performance. I remember Sophie Calle, T.J. Clark and Krapp going back, repeating and remembering, experiencing again and again and developing a fascination with this experience of return. Finally, I remember myself remembering and returning to those performances and being fascinated and provoked and agitated and confused and enthralled and overwhelmed and transfixed and besieged and mesmerised; in experiencing and returning to writing *of* and about and ending repetition, always anticipating and desiring more.

It seems then that there are certain kinds of pleasures related to the experience of repetitive speech, movement and structure in contemporary performance. The two kinds of excitement proposed by Roland Barthes have so far functioned as a context to discuss

the excitements emerging from repetition. In the experience of Bausch's repetitive movement I experience both difficult moments of *jouissance* as well as comfortable moments of pleasure. In those moments of *performing* repetition in the *formerly* mode of spectatorship, the emotion of the spectator might occur in synch or out of synch with the action on stage. This movement in and out of synch is also one that provokes sentiments of pleasure or *jouissance*, also providing a sense of being *in the present* moment of encounter. In Rosas, the difficulty performed by the combination of music and movement seems to be resolved by the return to performance and the re-experiencing of it in a later time. The return to performance, which functions as a space of repair or an attempt towards a sense of fulfilment, allows the spectator to perpetually desire, which is the ultimate function of repetition. Yet, desire's object is unnameable and its aim is not restoration, but 'a making new.'<sup>1</sup> This 'making new' occurs as the differences discerned in the patterns repetition creates. These differences appear as one of the 'radical instabilities' revealed through the operations of repetition, as Steven Connor has suggested (see Chapter One, p. 21). Repetition seems to direct our attention towards similarity in order to allow us to discover the 'sudden illumination of multiplicity'<sup>2</sup> within it. This thesis has dealt with repetition as novel and original rather than secondary and parasitic. It has attempted to account for the pleasures emerging in the *formerly* experience of repetition, in the experience of *presence*, in the process of return and writing. What follows is an attempt to end repetition and to explore the possible pleasures that might occur in this ending.

### Trying to End

Although performance's life is in the present, as Peggy Phelan argues,<sup>3</sup> part of what performance knows is 'the impossibility of maintaining a distinction between temporal tenses, between an absolutely singular beginning and ending, between living and dying. What performance studies learns most deeply from performance is the generative force of those "betweens"', she also suggests.<sup>4</sup> When then does the disappearance of performance take place? If there is no singular ending of the

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<sup>1</sup> Phillips, 'The Uses of Desire', p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, 'Theatrum Philosophicum', in *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. by Timothy Murray (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997), p. 232.

<sup>3</sup> Peggy Phelan, 'The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction', *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Peggy Phelan, 'Introduction: The Ends of Performance', in *The Ends of Performance*, ed. by Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (New York: New York University, 1998), p. 8.

performance, does our return to it, which has already become *something else*, happen precisely in those ‘betweens’? And if that is the case, when do we say goodbye?

Although performance may not have a singular end, we sometimes may be in search of a feeling of closure. The desire for an ending has to do with the desire for completion or relief. One seems to experience something *completely*, once the ending of that something is experienced. And the experience is, therefore, a valuable one. Tehching Hsieh comments: ‘during the Thirteen-Year Plan, in 1991, I did a piece of work: Disappearance. I didn’t finish it; it is a failed piece.’<sup>5</sup> Endings seem to provoke ambiguous feelings: when things do not end, we might think of them as incomplete: a performance may be experienced as a failure when it remains unfinished, a piece of writing cannot be valued in its entirety unless finished, not clapping at the end of a performance, an act which seems to mark the ending, may generate unresolved feelings. On the other hand, when things do end, the ending might be experienced as difficult, one that is hard to deal with or fully comprehend, and, therefore, master, as endings are somehow connected to the experience of death. We, therefore, sometimes seem to want to engage in a process of deferring the end, which seems imminent.

In 2008 the Chicago-based performance group Goat Island, after twenty years of practice, decided to create a last performance and end the journey of working together. As part of this process of ending, they devised and performed a performance called *The Lastmaker* as well as conceived and realised ‘a constraint-based collaborative writing, archiving and text-visualization project responding to the theme of *lastness* in relation to architectural forms, acts of building, a final performance’.<sup>6</sup> Upon completion of the final performance tour, the company, as stated in the online archive, ‘will end, will complete the process of ending, in order to make room for the unknown that will follow.’<sup>7</sup> Endings, therefore, may not just take place once. They constitute, at times, a process: something *is ending*. We often use the present continuous to denote precisely the process of ending, or its continuity. In cases like Goat Island, where one chooses how to end something, the

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Tehching Hsieh, ‘Live Work: Interview with Barry Schwabsky’  
<[http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/live\\_work](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/live_work)> [accessed 8 October 2009]

<sup>6</sup> *The Last Performance* <[http://thelastperformance.org/project\\_info\\_public.php](http://thelastperformance.org/project_info_public.php)> [accessed 8 October 2009]

<sup>7</sup> *The Last Performance*, n.p.

time of ending might be extended, in order to make the process of separation less difficult to experience and easier to comprehend. Endings are always connected with sentiments of nostalgia and melancholy, even when they happen out of choice:

Trust me, I have done something like this before, saying *goodbye*, farewell, to watch a slow process of ending, two thousand, three hundred and seventy three days – if you come in on a Thursday, please remember to leave on a Thursday and if the 28th door opens and you do decide not to leave then this time, this year take the 28th.<sup>8</sup>

At times we may choose to end things so that we have the chance to experience the feeling of saying goodbye, to enjoy the excitement of writing a valediction, which securely marks and celebrates an ending. We prolong the ending, we even stage the goodbye, we think through all the details: how we want it to happen, where and when, what might take place afterwards. And always, in this process, we are both the spectator and the performer: we watch the other person leaving, but it is we who perform the main role, the one that is left behind. And we might even return to that ending, again and again, and think through, again, all the details, although we are the ones that chose the how and the when in the first place. And sometimes we might write about this ending or talk about it to friends or strangers, like Calle, who narrated the story of her separation with her lover ninety nine times, until she got over her pain ‘through sheer repetition.’<sup>9</sup> Somehow, then, I have imagined many times this moment, the moment when I write about saying goodbye: to Beatrice Libonati’s fallings on the floor, to Minarik’s unable attempts, to Daniel hit by a train, to Calle, to Krapp, to Clark, to Kierkegaard. I write about those people somehow pretending that this is the end of them repeating. Yet, in a sense, I know I prolong their repeating through writing. However, I need to end the event of repetition, and, although I know that there is no singular ending, in a way, I experience the end of writing as the end of repetition. This writing project needs to end somehow, yet, I still choose to end it in a way that I can acknowledge it and indulge in the melancholia that ending allows me to express in writing. I end it here, in this process of ending, in this valediction on a falling microphone, in this repetition or return to repetition through writing for a last time. There is, of course, another ending to repetition: the moment when Libonati is finally caught by Minarik, Clark’s end of writing about the two paintings, Krapp’s last rewinding. I, therefore, ask: when does repetition end? When do I stop returning to repetition? When do I stop writing about or *of* repetition?

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<sup>8</sup>*The Last Performance*, n.p.

<sup>9</sup>Sophie Calle, *Exquisite Pain* (London: Thames & Hudson 2004), p. 206.

## Krapp's Taped Ending

Krapp seems to carefully select the tape he wants to listen to: '[*Briskly.*] Ah! [*He bends over ledger, turns the pages, finds the entry he wants, reads.*] Box...three...spool...five. [*He raises his head and stares front. With relish.*]'<sup>10</sup> He seems certain of which tape he wants to listen to, so, it seems, he also knows its content and how it ends. He knows that the title of the entry he wants to listen to is 'Farewell to-[*he turns page*]-love.'<sup>11</sup> Krapp's rewinding of the tape defers the imminent end, so does the turning of the page, in order to say 'Farewell to love.' There are also moments when Krapp winds the tape forward in anticipation to listening to what follows:

[KRAPP *switches off impatiently, winds tape forward, switches on again*]-great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the windgauge spinning of the propeller [...] [KRAPP *curses, switches off impatiently, winds tape forward, switches on again*]-unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire-[KRAPP *curses louder, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again*]-my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side.

[*Pause.*]

Past midnight. Never knew such silence. The earth might be uninhabited.

[*Pause.*]

Here I end-

[KRAPP *switches off, winds tape back, switches on again.*]<sup>12</sup>

This is the part of the tape Krapp longs to listen to: the part when his head is in her breasts and his hands on her. He winds forward in order to find this part, his encounter with the girl in the punt. Krapp rewinds *impatiently*, with great anticipation to listen to him narrating the story. He has trouble finding the part, but he eventually does. He keeps listening to the tape until he listens to himself say 'Here I end-'. Krapp switches off the tape quickly; he does not want to hear the end, not yet, anyway. He wants to listen to the whole story again, to what happens before past midnight, when the earth seems to be uninhabited:

she lay stretched out on the floorboards with her hands under her head and her eyes closed. Sun blazing down, bit of breeze, water nice and lively. I noticed a scratch on her thigh and asked her how she came by it. Picking gooseberries, she said. I said again I thought it was hopeless and no good going on and she agreed, without opening her eyes. [*Pause.*] I asked her to look at me and after a few moments-[*Pause.*]-after a few

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape, The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), p. 216.

<sup>11</sup> Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*, p. 217.

<sup>12</sup> Beckett, p. 220.

moments she did, but the eyes just slits, because of the glare. I bent over her to get them in the shadow and they opened. [*Pause. Low.*] Let me in. [*Pause.*] We drifted in among the flags and stuck. The way they went down, sighing, before the stem! [*Pause.*] I lay down across her with my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us, all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side.

[*Pause.*]

Past midnight. Never knew—

[KRAPP *switches off, broods.*[...]]<sup>13</sup>

The beginning of the story about the girl and its middle are revealed after we have encountered its ending, which is not yet the end of the tape. Therefore, we listen to that ending for the second time which creates a sense of excitement concerning our anticipation that the story will end this or that way. It is like we own the story gradually; we know it, the sense of familiarity is comforting. Yet, it seems that Krapp switches off the tape again and ‘broods’, when the tape reaches the point when the story is about to end. After having postponed the ending twice, Krapp prepares himself to record a new tape: ‘Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that. Thank God that’s all done with anyway.’<sup>14</sup> Towards the end of this recording, the instructions read: ‘[*Long Pause. He suddenly bends over machine, switches off, wrenches off tape, throws it away, puts on the other, winds it forward to the passage he wants, switches on, listens staring front.*]’<sup>15</sup> Krapp listens to the story with the girl in the punt again, ‘gooseberries, she said.’ This time Krapp allows the tape play all the way till the end. He does not need to defer the end any further. He will finally say ‘Farewell to love’, without turning the page this time. He seems ready to experience it, or, more accurately, re-experience it, since it was him, of course, in the punt with the girl, years before. Krapp listens to the end of the tape, experiencing the farewell again, but more fully this time.

Past midnight. Never knew such silence. The earth might be uninhabited.

[*Pause.*]

Here I end this reel. Box—[*Pause.*—three, spool—[*Pause.*—five. [*Pause.*] Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn’t want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn’t want them back.

[KRAPP *motionless staring before him. The tape runs on in silence.*]<sup>16</sup>

Krapp has tried to change the ending. He has tried to create a new end to the story. Yet, he has failed, because, the story has already ended, years ago. He stares motionless before him and listens to the ending, which has taken place long time ago, but is re-

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<sup>13</sup> Beckett, p. 221.

<sup>14</sup> Beckett, p. 222.

<sup>15</sup> Beckett, p. 223.

<sup>16</sup> Beckett, p. 223.

experienced here, again. And it is perhaps midnight again. And perhaps the earth is uninhabited.

### Desiring (Not) to End

An ending of repetition can be experienced as a time of loss or disappointment precisely because of the hope that repetition has nurtured in its process: in encountering repetition, although ceaselessly experiencing the unfulfilled, we do not seem to believe that it will continue this way. There is something about the way repetition functions, that means that although having been disappointed previously, we still anticipate that something will change. We hope that repetition will produce that *something* that has triggered in us the desire to wait in the first place. The process of active longing that repetition produces has been stimulated by the sense that repetition has the potential to achieve what it strives for. In a way, it has promised to the viewer the return of that *something* that has initially attracted the viewer's interest. That could be a longing for discovery, or for change, a sense of fulfillment or relief, always connected to desire. It is as if repetition has posed a difficult problem, the solution of which it has promised to offer, generating sentiments of pleasure in its resolution. Although resolution might never take place, the process towards it may be a painful yet pleasurable one, which activates hope and constant desire towards that *something*, which manifests itself perhaps as the ending itself.

The tension or discomfort produced by repetition's inability to meet the expectations it has induced intensifies the desire towards that *something*, which is yet to be fulfilled. The reinforced sense of longing renders disappointment even greater: the end of repetition seems to be connected to the completion of desire, which never occurs in the way expected. Instead, what is experienced is a type of ending, which, inevitably, relieves the sentiments of pleasure. In that sense, repetition ends without really ending: it has not satisfied desire and has not offered the remarkable ending it seemed to promise. Yet, it has ended. It is for this reason that the viewer may be left with feelings of loss and longing. The ending, which is not a real ending, takes the place of what repetition has promised. It is like a gesture towards an ending rather than an ending itself: 'Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished', Clov suggests

in the beginning of *Endgame*.<sup>17</sup> The anxiety concerning the possibility of coming to an end, articulated in *Endgame*, also intensifies the desire for this end to occur: ‘fullness of being is always one step further on, always deferred to the future.’<sup>18</sup> The uncertainty that has to do with repetition’s ending creates a fear that repetition might never end. When repetition, therefore, ends, although not in the way expected, the ending may generate sentiments of relief.

In discussing Beckett’s *Rockaby*, Sara Jane Bailes identifies a hesitancy of repetition to end and the beginnings of exhaustion. The sound of the rocking chair punctuates the rhythm of the whole play, which articulates a ‘process of measured, gradual expiration.’<sup>19</sup> Bailes suggests that repetition enables the character on the rocking chair to ‘go (slowly) on’. In that, she recognizes a mode of repetition, which is based on Connor’s understanding of slow going. This slow repetition of the rocking back and forth seems to resemble the repetition with decrease that Connor identifies elsewhere. This is a repetition which reaches an end precisely because of its gradual expiration. This kind of repetition prepares the viewer for its end, yet, the hope that things might be modified still persists. This is an example of linear repetition, as Connor calls it, which promises an ending, whereas circular repetition seems not to.<sup>20</sup> However, I argue that although circular repetitions might not suggest an ending, the desire for it to be resolved or acquire a different shape which can reach a climax may still occur.

In his essay ‘The Exhausted’, Deleuze draws a distinction between the tired and the exhausted: ‘The tired person has merely exhausted the realization, whereas the exhausted person exhausts the whole of the possible. The tired person can no longer realize, but the exhausted person can no longer possibilize.’<sup>21</sup> In Chapter Three of this thesis, I described the idea of repetition’s ending in terms of the performer, giving the example of the performance *Pommes et Parapluies*. I referred to two different modes of repetition: the performer repeats, and the performer *is repeated*. The first mode is more active, whereas the second more passive. In the first case the performer actively repeats and, therefore, chooses the time of repetition’s end. In the second case, the performer

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<sup>17</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, *The Complete Dramatic Works*, p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett. Repetition, Theory and Text* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 123.

<sup>19</sup> Sara Jane Bailes, ‘Some Slow Going: Considering Beckett and Goat Island’, *Performance Research: On Beckett* 12, 1, (2007), 35-49 (pp. 40-41).

<sup>20</sup> Connor, p. 121.

<sup>21</sup> Deleuze, ‘The Exhausted’, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), p. 153.



experiences the feeling of being repeated, a sensation that has to do with repetition being in charge and, therefore, *choosing itself* when to stop. In both of the above cases, the Deleuzian notions of the tired and the exhausted are useful. The performer could reach a point where tiredness sets in and she cannot go on. Yet, this is not a point of exhaustion, since repetition *can* go on. In this case, the force of repetition continues, whereas the performer can no longer ‘possibilize’. The opposite might also occur: the performer may be willing to keep going, when repetition may actually have reached a moment of exhaustion or saturation. In terms of language, Deleuze writes: ‘But if one thereby hopes to exhaust the possible with words, one must also hope to exhaust the words themselves’.<sup>22</sup> The problem of exhausting words dominates part of Beckett’s work, Deleuze proposes: ‘a true silence, not a simple tiredness with talking, because “it is all very well to keep silence, but one has also to consider the kind of silence one keeps.”’<sup>23</sup> There is also a different language one could be asked to exhaust, the language of images or of space: ‘what counts in the image is not its meager content, but the energy – mad and ready to explode – that it has harnessed, which is why images never last very long.’<sup>24</sup> Watt in Beckett’s novel seems to exhaust space in walking towards all possible directions: towards the north, and the south, and towards the north again and then towards the south and again towards the north ‘and so on, over and over again, many many times, until he reached his destination, and could sit down.’<sup>25</sup>

Repetition, like images, possesses energy – mad and ready to explode – as Deleuze puts it, which drives it forward, towards an end:

The rocking chair is a motor ritornello that tends towards its own end, pushing all the possible towards it, going ‘faster and faster,’ ‘shorter and shorter,’ until quite suddenly, it abruptly stops. The energy of the image is dissipative. The image quickly ends and dissipates because it is itself the means of having done with itself. It captures all the possible in order to make it explode.<sup>26</sup>

In a similar way, the energy of movement in *Pommes et Parapluies* dissipates at one point, the energy in Calle’s returning to the story of her break-up, the energy of Libonati falling on the floor, or the energy of me returning to those particular moments. The dissipated energy seems to be a reason why repetition might reach an end. It has ‘given itself’, it has ‘captured the possible’ and ‘made it explode’. The returns to performance

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<sup>22</sup> Samuel Beckett cited in Gilles Deleuze, ‘The Exhausted’, p. 156.

<sup>23</sup> Samuel Beckett cited in Gilles Deleuze, p. 156.

<sup>24</sup> Deleuze, ‘The Exhausted’, p. 160.

<sup>25</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: John Calder Publisher, 1976), p. 28.

<sup>26</sup> Deleuze, ‘The Exhausted’, p. 161.

that memory performs could also be thought of similarly. I stop returning, because my memory's energy has been dissipated, has gone 'faster and faster' and 'shorter and shorter', until quite abruptly it has stopped. Apart from the dissipated energy, Deleuze proposes three more ways to end: 'forming exhaustive series of things', 'drying up the flow of voices' and 'extenuating the potentialities of space'.<sup>27</sup> The forming of exhaustive series has to do with the order things are uttered, shown, danced. The series increases and decreases according to that order, Deleuze suggests. Beckett's text itself seems to function as a 'question of exhausting space'.<sup>28</sup> Watt walking towards all possible directions, I have mentioned before, exhausting the possibilities of walking. Space can be exhausted also by a slow close up, Deleuze suggests. The experience of repetition could function towards that close up or 'zoom in'. Watching a repetitive movement, as I have described in Chapter One, the viewer's gaze might be attracted by a detail, which works as the Barthesian *punctum*. This detail is experienced like a close up on the performer's body, which features as the most interesting detail in the 'picture'.<sup>29</sup>

'Exhaustion does not allow one to lie down; when night falls, one remains seated at the table, empty head in captive hands'.<sup>30</sup> The exhausted person is not lying down, not sleeping, but awake. 'This is the most horrible position in which to await death: seated, without the strength either to get up or to lie down, waiting for the signal that will make us stand up one last time and then lie down forever.'<sup>31</sup> Daydreams, Deleuze suggests, or dreams of sleep are a matter of tiredness, whereas insomnia dreams are a matter of exhaustion. The exhausted does not lie down, and does not sleep. She has insomniac dreams instead, seated. Therefore, exhaustion itself defers the end to the future. Even when all possibilities are played out and their energy is dissipated, there is still no ending.

### Ending Time and Again

To ask whether repetition ends is to ask whether the memory of it dissipates. Forgetting works towards that direction: the dispersal of memory. Matthew Goulish writes:

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<sup>27</sup> Deleuze, p. 161.

<sup>28</sup> Deleuze, p. 163.

<sup>29</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> Deleuze, p. 155.

<sup>31</sup> Deleuze, p. 155.

The dancer stops dancing because she leaves the room.  
OR  
The dancer stops dancing because she hits the wall.  
OR  
The dancer stops dancing because she forgets her steps.  
OR  
The dancer stops dancing because she is too tired to continue.  
The dancer stops dancing because she contracts an illness.  
The dancer stops dancing when the dance has cured her.<sup>32</sup>

A dancer stops dancing. A performer stops performing. A spectator stops spectating. A dancer stops remembering. A performer stops remembering. A spectator stops remembering. A spectator stops remembering because she hits the wall, or is too tired to continue or contracts an illness. A spectator stops remembering, because the dance has cured her, because she has answered the question, because she has decided she is not interested in the answer. Returning back to the performance may occur for a number of reasons, as shown in Chapter Four. We return to restore, or repair, to take pleasure in, to resist the ephemeral, to feel the sorrow of what is gone and to come to terms with that sorrow. These processes may never end. Therefore, I may always return to the *Piano Phase* to resolve it, to understand the reason why I feel captivated and cannot escape. I may also always return to Libonati's falling to experience the excitement of seeing her fall, again and again. I have *fallen* into the trap of temporality, as Lepecki suggests. I am trapped in this movement that 'does not get anywhere, while going everywhere'.<sup>33</sup> In a sense, then, I 'repeat forever'.<sup>34</sup>

Finality may be, in this case, associated with alternation, rather than an actual ending, as Connor suggests: Watt seems to play a game in which he is 'covering the lamp, less and less, more and more, with his hat, watching the ashes greyen, redden, greyen, redden, in the grade of the range.'<sup>35</sup> I return to Libonati's dance to see it 'greyen' and 'greyen' and 'redden'. I return to see it in a different light, which is now 'less and less' or 'more and more'. This movement towards ending 'is accompanied by a repetitive rhythm of

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<sup>32</sup> Matthew Goulish, 'Unwinding Kindergarten', *Performance Research: On Archives and Archiving*, 7, 4 (2002) 92-107, (p. 107).

<sup>33</sup> André Lepecki suggests that 'all repetition is a kind of falling, the falling into a trap called temporality.' André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 63.

<sup>34</sup> I refer here to Tim Etchells' essay 'Repeat Forever: Body, Death, Performance, Fiction'. Etchells writes: 'If you enter a birthday in my electronic diary you can tell it to repeat the reminder year after year. Once the date is entered the prompt comes: Repeat Forever?' Tim Etchells, 'Repeat Forever: Body, Death, Performance, Fiction', *Certain Fragments: Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 124.

<sup>35</sup> Beckett, *Watt*, p. 36.

psychic control and release, which resembles very strikingly the famous ‘fort/da’.<sup>36</sup> It is a movement that resembles the movement of respiration and denotes the absent and the present, reduction and addition, proximity and remoteness and ensures the continuity of repetition. Taking a distance from the event seems necessary, so that we can move towards it again. Of course, ‘sometime anybody can get tired of it and when everybody who is anybody does get tired of it then that is the end of that way of telling it’, Stein suggests, as I have already discussed in Chapter Three.<sup>37</sup>

Repetition begins and ends, again and again. We return to it in writing, which seems ‘necessary, vibrant and continues’, like Heathfield has pointed out.<sup>38</sup> Is, yet, repetition, at some point ‘well and truly finished’?<sup>39</sup> In terms of a final ending, Deleuze writes: ‘this is precisely what Beckett emphasizes whenever he speaks of Beethoven: a hitherto unknown art of dissonances, a wavering, a hiatus, “a punctuation of dehiscence,” a stress given by what opens, slips away, and disappears, a gap that punctuates nothing other than the silence of a final ending.’<sup>40</sup> Beckett describes an ending, which seems hesitant, interrupted, ‘a moment very near the end, an hour close to the last’, a moment, which is experienced like a gap, a silence, which has not yet taken place.<sup>41</sup> Somehow, the performances described in this thesis resist an ending. They do not seem to succumb to an inevitable finitude, although they do not follow an ‘immortal’ or ‘eternal logic’, as Sarah Gorman puts it.<sup>42</sup> The time of performance ‘is experienced as both a personal limit and as a force in excess of the subject’, Heathfield has suggested. Therefore, ‘the ending of the time of the work is both absolutely assured and without certainty, since it cannot be witnessed.’<sup>43</sup>

The dancer stops dancing because she has died.  
The dancer starts dancing because she has died.

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<sup>36</sup> Connor, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Stein, ‘Lecture 3’, *Narration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1935), p. 32.

<sup>38</sup> Heathfield, ‘Writing of the Event,’ p. 179.

<sup>39</sup> Deleuze, ‘The Exhausted’, p. 164.

<sup>40</sup> Deleuze, p. 164.

<sup>41</sup> Deleuze, p. 161.

<sup>42</sup> Sarah Gorman suggests: Without a concept of death or ending there is no longer any need to create “monuments” to people or events or to strive for a “notoriety” which will ensure that at least the name will live on to act as a reminder after death.’ On the contrary, performance calls for such ‘monuments’, it demands to be ‘written’ again and again, therefore, the concept of death and ending is very present. Sarah Gorman, ‘Archive Fever: Memory as a Challenge to Finitude in the Work of Rose English and Insomniac Productions’, *Performance Research: On Memory*, 5, 3 (2000) 90-99, (p. 94).

<sup>43</sup> Adrian Heathfield, ‘Facing the Other: The Performance Encounter and Death’, in *Shattered Anatomies: Traces of the Body in Performance* (Bristol: Arnolfini Live, 1997), n.p. Heathfield refers here to the durational installation *Going Bye Byes*, by the artist Stephen Taylor Woodrow. One, of course, cannot experience the ending of an installation, as this is the nature of the artwork. However, there is something about this experience that seems to also take place in the experience of returns to performance.

The dancer does not stop dancing.<sup>44</sup>

It is for this that we seem to return to the performance, in order to experience its ending, which is at one time ‘absolutely assured and without certainty’. Endings, like performance itself, escape from us, form an experience that is *not quite yet*. The ending’s transient nature performs a demand: to come back to it in order to work-through its resistance. ‘This time, then once more I think, then perhaps a last time, then I think it’ll be over.’<sup>45</sup> The reason for all this repetition is this: to manage, at last, to say goodbye, ‘for you must say goodbye it would be madness not to say goodbye, when the time comes.’<sup>46</sup>

### Saying Goodbye

Adrian Heathfield begins his article ‘End Time Now’ inviting us to imagine that something is ending. He invites us to also look at all those representations that stand in the place of the things that have ended: an image, a text, an object. Somehow, although things are ending, you also see around you things ‘whose “life” evidently extends beyond your own.’<sup>47</sup> Endings seem to be poignant in the sense that they remind to us that things will continue even beyond us, and, therefore, will also continue ending beyond our existence:

You make things, in order to extend your presence in the world, but when you see what you have made you are filled with sorrow; your creations already lack you as the witness to their ‘eternal’ value. The representations that seemed to promise survival only call you back to your finitude: you will not survive. Something happens; somewhere in the heart of this negativity you begin to embrace it. [...] Now, instead, you want to learn something more about the value of making and seeing things that do not last, about the value of the transient and the ephemeral, the value of the present.<sup>48</sup>

Although at times things may provoke sentiments of sorrow, because they are ephemeral, repetition creates a space of illusion, within which the viewer might momentarily forget about performance’s (or life’s) ephemerality. Repetition may create the sentiment that it will go on and on forever. (The sense of the continuous may be experienced, of course, only if one wants to momentarily give in.) As previously discussed, repetition makes a fake promise: it pretends it will never end and makes us,

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<sup>44</sup> Matthew Goulish, ‘Unwinding Kindergarten’, p. 107.

<sup>45</sup> Beckett, *The Beckett Trilogy: Molloy* (London: Picador, 1979), p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Beckett, *Molloy*, p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> Adrian Heathfield, ‘End Time Now’, in *Small Acts: Performance, the Millennium and the Marking of Time*, ed. by Adrian Heathfield (London: Black Dog, 2000), p. 105.

<sup>48</sup> Adrian Heathfield, ‘End Time Now’, p. 105.

therefore, hopeful for the future. The ending of repetition is perhaps for this reason more sorrowful or strenuous when we finally experience it. And, in a sense, this is, again, purposeful. The experience of repetition's ending may be more intense, precisely because of its promise to never end. There is, however, a certain excitement in that ending, a value in 'making and seeing things that do not last', a value that has to do with the effort one has made to make things last or to believe that things will. So, there is a value in seeing things ending, because things have existed, and one has witnessed their existence. I make a performance in order to last, to remind people that I exist and can last, or that I have tried. And even if I don't and even if what I make is finite, I have been there. The ending is marked by myself and others being there. My performance, like its ending, is a unique event, which cannot be entirely grasped, an event 'that is constituted by the very fact that it exceeds you.'<sup>49</sup>

At one of those instances of disappearance, the ending of Goat Island's performance life, Lin Hixson tries to answer the question: how do you want to say goodbye?

A hand moves from side to side. The arm lifts. The hand reaches and finds a place to rest. Then it makes an arch – back and forth – in time. When the hand is still, the gesture could be a salute. It could be a hello. It could be hailing a queen. But when it doubles and moves through time, the gesture acknowledges a departure. Fare thee well. May it go well with you.<sup>50</sup>

Bryan Saner, one of the company's members, replies to the same question: 'Yes. Well. Let it happen the way it wants to go.'<sup>51</sup> Saying goodbye seems difficult, as in some cases it reminds us of the farewell of death: 'Old stories, old scripts. Wanting only not to live the moment, the fact, of death. His. Each our own. The endless repetition of the always failed refusal of that moment is the wound theology tries to recuperate and historiography tries to salve.'<sup>52</sup> Heathfield, describing his encounter with Stephen Taylor Woodrow's installation *Going Bye Byes*, writes: 'Death, no longer distant, is brought into immanence within the liminal form of the work [...]. Temporal progress, which held death in a suspended future, is replaced by an experience constituted as loss.'<sup>53</sup> A sensation of uncanniness, experienced in the encounter with certain events, he continues, seems to function as a sign or a gesture towards death. Heathfield discusses the power of repetition in relation to the Freudian idea of the uncanny and the force of

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<sup>49</sup> Adrian Heathfield, 'End Time Now', p. 105.

<sup>50</sup> Lin Hixson, 'How Do You Want to Say Goodbye? A Choreography for a Last Performance', *Performance Research: On Choreography*, 13, 1, (2008), 49-54, (p. 49).

<sup>51</sup> Lin Hixson, 'How Do You Want to Say Goodbye?', p. 53.

<sup>52</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>53</sup> Heathfield, 'Facing the Other: The Performance Encounter and Death', n.p.

death. Repetition is always ‘death-bound’, he suggests, in his reading of Freud, and it seems to always contain ‘this irresolvable tension.’<sup>54</sup> The force to return to the event of performance, which I have discussed in the previous chapter, seems to be experienced by the spectator of *Going Bye Byes*: ‘This repetition is performed and inherent within the object and the spectatorial experience: it constitutes the work.’<sup>55</sup> I have identified a similar experience of structural and constituent repetition in my experience of *Daniel Hit By A Train* in Chapter Four. ‘As I spectate’, Heathfield continues, I repeatedly meet the face of death. Death presented, death remembered. My death.’<sup>56</sup> Heathfield’s desire is to master the event, to fix it, to know it: ‘I want to see its end’, he says.<sup>57</sup> There is an apparent tension between ‘a reluctance to “fix” the meaning of any single event and the acknowledgment of the desire to arrive at a singular, therapeutic version of the past’ as Sarah Gorman puts it, reading Derrida’s *Archive Fever*.<sup>58</sup> Yet, the work seems to keep repeating, rendering fixity or mastery of it an impossible task. As such, performance may keep repeating forever. What can end, however, is the act of writing about the event, the returning to it through language. The archive of the event in writing, of course, always remains and can be read, or *written*, in the Barthesian sense, again and again, becoming another performance or ‘other than performance’.<sup>59</sup>

### *The Sight of Death*

‘What is it, fundamentally, I am returning to in this particular case? What is it I want to see again?’ Clark questions the returning to the two paintings by Nicolas Poussin.<sup>60</sup> He attempts to discover the reasons behind this urgency to go back. He thoroughly describes each day in the museum, each encounter with the two Poussins. Each day he observes a different part of each painting, its colours, the movement in it, and his sentiments. In a way, he ascribes a quality to each moment, the painting changing over time. Thus, Clark *constructs* an excuse to go back. Yet, what he is really doing is this: he is working through his fear to directly encounter death. The *Landscape With a Man Killed by a Snake* depicts a scene in which a man is lying dead on the ground with a snake on top of his body. Another male figure is directly looking at the scene of death,

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<sup>54</sup> Heathfield, ‘Facing the Other’, n.p.

<sup>55</sup> Heathfield, ‘Facing the Other’, n.p.

<sup>56</sup> Heathfield, ‘Facing the Other’, n.p.

<sup>57</sup> Heathfield, ‘Facing the Other’, n.p.

<sup>58</sup> Gorman, ‘Archive Fever’, pp. 91-92.

<sup>59</sup> Phelan, ‘The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction’, p. 146.

<sup>60</sup> Clark, p. 162.

running, as if to escape death and save his life. Clark has many times throughout the book mentioned this male figure, he has described the light spreading around him, his hands, his feet and the surroundings, yet, he has not encountered him directly. The name of the book denotes precisely what is depicted on the running man's facial expression, the 'sight of death'. In a way, Clark needs to encounter the man's face many times, in order to have really experienced the 'sight of death', to have comprehended it, and to have come to terms with it, in the same way that perhaps Calle rewrites her story many times, until she gets over her pain 'through sheer repetition'.<sup>61</sup> Clark writes about the picture: 'The sunlit streambed, I now understand, is the picture's way into the darkness of death – the royal road to its unconscious. It is beautiful and reassuring. There is a whole lit world, a safe track, for the man to return along.'<sup>62</sup> Clark's book, or the process of writing could possibly function in a similar way as Poussin's 'sunlit streambed': it provides a 'whole lit world', within which Clark can encounter death from a 'safe track', which will enable him to come back. Some visual configurations, like this 'sight of death', Clark seems to be telling us, are more difficult to put in words than others. Difficulty is, in this case, overcome by retuning to it again and again and working through the painting's resistance through writing. Towards the end of his writing journey, Clark writes: 'I still think that some central knot of meaning in *Landscape with a Snake* resists me. Maybe I have to come at it somnambulistically – waking and finding myself in the space between the running man and the woman on the path'.<sup>63</sup> Clark cannot listen to the 'unspeakable tune' that the painting is humming, as he says.<sup>64</sup> He is not ready yet, he is not ready to either look at the 'sight of death' without hesitation, or to write about it. In this preparatory journey, Clark discovers many *punctums* in the picture that keep his attention alert and him busy for a while. Clark, going back to his writings, he finally admits:

Reading my diary entries over, especially in this death-haunted time, has brought home to me that there is never a point in them where I try to describe, in any extended way, the nature of the anguish in the running man's face. I am not surprised. I think we hide, necessarily, from an understanding of what is most to be avoided in the sight of death.<sup>65</sup>

Clark realizes that he has been reluctant to directly face the horror of the painting. He has so far avoided looking at the face of the running man, who is looking at the man killed by a snake, and whose face therefore mirrors all that he sees, 'the figure of Death

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<sup>61</sup> Sophie Calle, *Exquisite Pain* (London: Thames & Hudson 2004), p. 203.

<sup>62</sup> Clark, pp. 160-61.

<sup>63</sup> Clark, p. 201.

<sup>64</sup> Clark, p. 213.

<sup>65</sup> Clark, p. 227.



itself: the *live-ness* of Death, its patience, its glorying in its power.<sup>66</sup> Clark's six-month period of work at the Getty Research Institute at some point ends. This ending coincides with his realization that his reluctance to experience the anguish in the running man's face has something to do with his disinclination to be reminded of the death of a loved one. Clark leaves Los Angeles to go to Montreal's Museum of Fine Arts to encounter another painting by Poussin: *Man Recoiling from a Snake*. It seems that the ending of this writing process has to be marked by the opposite, but near-relation of death: the escape from it. Although the man in the picture also has a terrified expression of fear, Poussin has chosen to depict the moment when the man, it seems, has escaped death. This repetition of someone in danger, who finally escapes, and the hope bound with it could be usefully connected to Lone Twin Theatre's hopeful repetitions of the time before death. It seems that in my experience of reading and watching both Clark and Lone Twin Theatre rehearse the moment of death, even when death has already taken place: Clark chooses to visit *Landscape with a Man Recoiling from a Snake* after he has already encountered Poussin's *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*. *Daniel Hit by A Train* stages death again and again, before the attempt to actually save someone. The painting cannot repeat itself, like the performance does, yet, it can invite the viewer's return to it. Both *Landscape With a Man Killed by a Snake* and *Daniel Hit by a Train* invite multiple experiences of death: a man attempts to save the little boy in the river again and again, but fails, like Clark, who is looking at the sight of death again and again, until he has overcome his fears and has perhaps experienced the landscape as a work of hope, as David Williams puts it, in which, 'something of life is affirmed even in the dying.'<sup>67</sup>

### Disappearance and Remains

Memory, or the re-enactment of events, may function as ways in which 'performance remains, but remains differently', Rebecca Schneider writes.<sup>68</sup> Defining performance as Phelan does, as that which 'becomes itself through disappearance'<sup>69</sup>, seems to assume that 'memory cannot be housed in a body and remain'.<sup>70</sup> Memory or oral history cannot be considered as trustworthy sources of performance remains within scholarly

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<sup>66</sup> Clark, p. 228.

<sup>67</sup> David Williams, 'Alice and Daniel' <<http://sky-writings.blogspot.com/2008/07/alice-and-daniel.html>> [accessed 2 January 2009]

<sup>68</sup> Rebecca Schneider, 'Performance Remains', *Performance Research: On Maps and Mapping*, 6, 2 (2001), 100-108 (p. 101).

<sup>69</sup> Phelan, 'The Ontology of Performance', p. 146.

<sup>70</sup> Schneider, p. 101.

treatments, Schneider continues, because ‘oral history and its performance practices are always decidedly repeated [...] never in thrall to the singular or self-same origin [...]. In performance *as* memory, the pristine sameness of an “original”, so valued by the archive, is rendered impossible – or, if you will, mythic.’<sup>71</sup> Although extensively using repetition within its structure, some performance seems to value the singularity of performance experience, reproducing perhaps a modernist aesthetic. Peggy Phelan has characteristically argued: ‘Performance honors the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame can have an experience of value which leaves no visible trace afterward.’<sup>72</sup> This is one of the reasons why, Schneider argues, performance seems to be so tightly attached to disappearance: because performance acquires its value precisely because it cannot be reproduced or mimicked. Yet, Schneider suggests that a ‘new’ kind of history is possible, according to historiographer Pierre Nora, one that ‘incorporates collective memory and performative practices’. Oral histories, in this case, ‘are constituted anew, recorded and “saved” in the name of identity.’<sup>73</sup> These practices approach performance not as that which disappears, but ‘as both the *act* of remaining and a means of reappearance (though not a metaphysics of presence)’.<sup>74</sup> In this case, performance is constituted by repetition or reappearance, or, in Schneider’s words,

performance becomes itself through messy and eruptive reappearance, challenging, via the performative trace, any neat antinomy between appearance and disappearance, or presence and absence – the ritual repetitions that mark performance as simultaneously indiscreet, non-original, relentlessly citational, and remaining.<sup>75</sup>

Performance, in this light, becomes itself not only through disappearance, but also through repetition. Disappearance therefore is not antithetical to remains, Schneider proposes, giving the following example: ‘Death appears to result in the paradoxical production of both disappearance *and* remains.’<sup>76</sup> Similarly, performance *both* ‘becomes itself through disappearance’ *and* remains, Schneider concludes.<sup>77</sup> The past remains and is performed as a ‘counter-memory’ or an echo. Performance, in this case, begins again and again ‘via itself as repetition’.<sup>78</sup> It is within the tension that ‘the notion of

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<sup>71</sup> Schneider, p. 102.

<sup>72</sup> Phelan, ‘The Ontology of Performance’, p. 149.

<sup>73</sup> Schneider, ‘Performance Remains’, p. 103.

<sup>74</sup> Schneider, p. 103.

<sup>75</sup> Schneider, p. 103.

<sup>76</sup> Schneider, p. 104.

<sup>77</sup> Schneider, p. 105.

<sup>78</sup> Schneider, p. 105.

performance as disappearance crosses chiasmatically with ritual – ritual in which, through performance, we are asked, again, to (re)found ourselves in repetition.’<sup>79</sup>

Although considering writing as an attempt to preserve the impossible, Phelan also notes: ‘Performance’s challenge to writing is to discover a way for repeated words to become performative utterances, rather than, as Benveniste warned, constative utterances.’<sup>80</sup> If writing then does not describe, but performs, Phelan seems to suggest, it is able to preserve, perhaps to an extent, and repeat performance, the nature of which will be altered. Performance, in this case, can ‘be performed again, but this repetition itself marks it as “different.” The document of a performance then is only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present.’<sup>81</sup> In a sense, repetition changes, because the time of the encounter with it is different. In some cases, it is experienced as a *readerly* repetition, as discussed in Chapter One, which has to do with the way it is read by the viewer: *readerly* repetition seems to always offer itself as the same. However, this same is not a repetition proper, as Eriksen has suggested, but a near repetition.<sup>82</sup> In other cases, repetition can be experienced as a *writerly* one, which is always different from the other.<sup>83</sup>

The desire to go back and repeat the performance has, amongst other reasons discussed previously, to do with a desire to preserve it, to counter its ephemerality and create a document of it, so that it is archived for future encounters. The archive functions precisely against the acknowledgment of an ending. The need to perpetuate performance has to do with ‘a compulsive, repetitive and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement.’<sup>84</sup> Yet, The trouble *de l’archive*, Derrida suggests, ‘stems from a *mal d’archive*. We are *en mal d’archive*: in

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<sup>79</sup> Schneider, p. 106.

<sup>80</sup> Phelan, p. 149.

<sup>81</sup> Phelan, p. 146.

<sup>82</sup> Niels Nymann Eriksen, *Kierkegaard’s Category of Repetition*, Kierkegaard Studies, Monograph Series 5 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 2000), p. 110.

<sup>83</sup> Deleuze also distinguishes two different types of theatre: ‘The theatre of repetition is opposed to the theatre of representation, just as movement is opposed to the concept of representation which refers it back to the concept. In the theatre of repetition, we experience pure forces, dynamic lines in space which act without intermediary upon the spirit, and link it directly with nature and history, with a language which speaks before words, with gestures which develop before organised bodies, with masks before faces, with spectres and phantoms before characters—the whole apparatus of repetition as a ‘terrible power’. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>84</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), p. 91.

need of archives'.<sup>85</sup> '[T]o be *en mal d'archive*', he continues, 'can be something else than to suffer from a sickness [...]. It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away.'<sup>86</sup> The archive fever, the repetitive and nostalgic desire to go back, to re-live or to preserve is not a question of the past, Derrida argues, but a question for the future. However, if the past must be archived, in order to give space to the future, as Gorman suggests, could then the past be considered as done with, once archived? Is the past archived only once and considered to have disappeared? In the editorial of the *Performance Research* journal *On Memory*, Adrian Heathfield and Andrew Quick write: 'The defining anxiety: how to begin again, without a "satisfactory" closure of the past?'<sup>87</sup> There can be, it seems, different types of closures of the past: the satisfactory one, which does not invite the viewer to return to it and re-experience it again and again, as well as the unsatisfactory one, which stimulates a repetitive and nostalgic desire, a feverish longing to go back.

Is it finished? Nearly finished. It's nearly finished. So, I begin with a repetition.

The dancer starts dancing because the lights come up.  
The dancer stops dancing because the lights go down.  
The dancer starts dancing because she enters the room.  
The dancer stops dancing because she leaves the room.<sup>88</sup>

The dancer keeps repeating the dance. The end is imminent but still yet to come. Repetition resists its ending and keeps going on: I return again and again to those returns, unsure whether each time I return to a previous time of return, remembering not the performance itself, but the way in which performance has changed through memory. I return to memory and I write. In a sense, repetition reaches a point when it does not have the 'courage to end or the strength to go on'.<sup>89</sup> It is finished, nearly finished, it is nearly finished, it has to succumb to an inevitable finitude, which it longs for, and fights against. This moment is one I have somehow chosen, feared and longed for.

Here, repetition ends. This is perhaps the last time I write about Libonati's falling, Calle's exquisite pain, Rosas' dancing, Stein's insisting, Daniel being hit by a train. This is, in writing, the last return. I construct an ending, like Goat Island's one. I set a

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<sup>85</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 91.

<sup>86</sup> Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 91.

<sup>87</sup> Adrian Heathfield and Andrew Quick, Editorial of *Performance Research: On Memory*, 5, 3 (2000), 1-3 (p. 1).

<sup>88</sup> Matthew Goulsh, 'Unwinding Kindergarten', p. 107.

<sup>89</sup> Samuel Beckett, *The End, First Love and Other Novellas* (London: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 31.

moment in time, when this project ends. That is *this* moment. The process of ending will have finished when I stop writing. Repetition has reached a point when its ending is imminent. This time, then once more, then I think it will be over. And I say, now with certainty, it's finished, it's nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. The dancer stops dancing because her time is up. The purpose of all repetition is this, to have done, to stop repeating. The dancer stops dancing, because someone forces her to. The dancer stops dancing because she has died. The dancer stops dancing. The dancer stops dancing. The dancer stops dancing. The dancer stops dancing because she does not want to have to stop later, because she does not want to have to deal with a later ending. She prefers to get done with it now. The dancer stops dancing out of fear that a later stop will require more effort. The dancer stops dancing. The dancer stops dancing. The dancer stops dancing. The dancer stops dancing, because she has danced all the steps she ever knew (and that is a lie). The dancer stops dancing, because her time is up, the curtains are closed and the auditorium is dark. The dancer stops dancing.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> I have borrowed the phrase from Matthew Goulish's article 'Unwinding Kindergarten', p. 10.

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