The choreography of the gaze: looking back at spectators in works by Pina Bausch and Jacques Tati

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This thesis proposes a new theory of the gaze to understand specific choreographic strategies of dance-theatre practitioner Pina Bausch and film-maker Jacques Tati and their potential impact on spectators. It examines how Bausch in her early works *Blaubart* (1977) and *Café Müller* (1978) and Tati in his masterpiece *Play Time* (1967) conceive of and deploy choreography as a critical practice and framework for exploring and ultimately reorganising the relationship between being and seeing in the new physical and politico-cultural spaces of post-World War Two modernity. By interpreting the mutually illuminating strategies of Bausch and Tati in relation to recent work on the Lacanian gaze, I come to argue that these artists use choreography not simply to facilitate critical looking and self-reflexivity but also to disrupt the spectator's capacity to position herself altogether in relation to images. I describe this disruptiveness as a process through which gestures and spaces stop *meaning* and start *looking* back at spectators.

Jacques Lacan's conception of the gaze as *objet petit a* offers a means of understanding the disruptive sense of images and/or objects looking back at the subject. Recent interventions in psychoanalytic film theory crucially revise earlier conceptions of the gaze in film studies precisely to argue that the gaze ruptures the plenitude of meaning presumed to be established in the realm of the Imaginary and instead induces an experience of the Real that is necessarily unrepresentable. This thesis contends that the Imaginary is in fact crucial to understanding the aesthetic territory from which the gaze emerges and its relation to ways of moving and practices of becoming/being. I therefore examine how the selected choreographies create the conditions for the gaze by reproducing the structure and imagery of the Imaginary. Lacan's notion of the gaze is used to understand the way in which the selected works bring their spectators into an encounter with their own becoming as subjects. By challenging the frames through which spectators look, the works ultimately challenge political narratives of subjectivity based on hierarchical and historically inscribed visual relationships with bodies, objects, and images.

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Abstract

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Introduction

This thesis examines the way in which choreography "gazes" at its spectators in dance-theatre practitioner Pina Bausch's early works *Blaubart*[1] (1977) and *Café Müller* (1978) and film-maker Jacques Tati's masterpiece *Play Time* (1967). I am writing of a particular notion of the gaze: the disruptive sense of images and/or objects looking back that is theorised by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1973). In this text Lacan extends the discourse on vision that he first posited in the famous "Mirror Stage" essay (1949).[2] In that particular essay, Lacan describes the situation of the subject in its formative stages, confronted with its own image in the mirror. The continually negotiated relationship to the image is the basis for the subject's notion of its own identity and autonomy in the world. In his later work on the gaze as *objet petit a*, Lacan theorises the way in which the visual paradigm that this relationship initiates is continually undermined. In so doing, Lacan emphasises the dialectical play at the heart of subjectivity and lays the foundations for theorising the way in which images and objects in the visual field might challenge a subjectivity based on hierarchical and historically inscribed relationships to bodies, objects, and images. The gaze describes the moment at which the subject's look upon a world of objects, constitutive of her identity, is reversed upon her—that is, the phenomenon through which the subject perceives a returned look from the side of the *object*. The gaze undermines the hierarchical structure of consciousness and exposes the subject to the *unconscious*. In this thesis, I argue that the kinds of choreographic models that appear in the selected works by Bausch and Tati produce images that look back at their spectators in this way, and call into question the process of spectatorship as a peculiar and historically specific enactment of subjectivity.

My treatment of the works Bausch and Tati under discussion in this thesis focuses not only on how these works explore difficulties of looking in the context of totalising narratives, but also how these difficulties are specifically related to modes of *being* in these works. One of the main trajectories of the thesis is the way in which both

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[1] Full title: *Blaubart. Beim Anhören einer Tonbandaufnahme von Béla Bartóks Oper „Herzog Blaubarts Burg"* (*Bluebeard—Whilst Listening to a Taped Recording of Béla Bartók's Opera "Duke Bluebeard's Castle"*).

[2] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the 'I' as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," trans. Alan Sheridan, in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York and London: W.W Norton, 2001), 1285–90.

practitioners conceive of and deploy "choreography" as a critical practice and framework for interrogating ways of looking as well as modes of being/becoming, and, moreover, the relationship between the two in the context of modernity. Choreography functions as both a compositional and interpretive framework—that is, as a means of both constructing and reading bodies in motion. I understand Bausch's and Tati's choreographies as resistive because choreography is used in these works to examine and contest the very frames through which we look and are able to read bodies. In other words, what is being resisted here are the affordances of the conventions of choreography itself as an interpretive framework. Further, I consider how the difficulties of looking created by these works and the kinds of choreography that they depict actually come to impact the consciousness of the spectator, bring her into an encounter with her *own* becoming, and, ultimately, contest her subjectivity.

My examination of these works is part of a broader interest in how choreography, as an object of avant-garde performance practices in dance-theatre and film, operates on vision. These particular works are significant in their overt investment of the choreographic towards answering questions of vision. They are also significant in the context of Bausch and Tati's *oeuvres* in that they represent key developments in the way in which each practitioner conceives of and deploys choreography. Each practitioner uses choreography as both an embodied and visual practice to address existing possibilities of looking in the spaces and aesthetic regimes of post-War modernity and to open up new ones. In response to narratives of alienation and oppression these works present visual fields characterised by multiplicity, simultaneity, repetition, arrest, and durational choreographies. In these works, choreography is both a critical disposition—that is, an approach to constructing and reading bodies in motion that is based on the repetition and interpretation of patterns—and something that defies critical reading by creating difficulties of interpretation and the inability to fix the choreographic body both as subject and object of vision. I consider the extent to which the concept and practice of the "choreographic" as it appears in these works is consonant with contemporary discourses of choreography that speak of subversion and openness and I subsequently explore what Lacanian concepts such as the gaze and the Imaginary might add to these discourses.

Hence, another crucial reason for my selection of the three works is that in their construction of the body and exploration of subjectivity amidst the visual and gestural paradigms of mid-twentieth century modernity, these works examine narratives that

coincide in some important ways with the Lacanian narrative of subjectivity and respond to some of the same impulses. Key aspects of these narratives include: the constitutive, initially hierarchical and possessive, but, ultimately, continually contested relationship between self and other (and the broader categories of subject and object); the Symbolic socio-political coding of this relationship; and the impulse towards *wholeness*, symptomatic of and reinforced by the culture of mid-twentieth century modernity. The selected works also resemble and reproduce some of the key choreographic structures of the Lacanian Imaginary and as such present pertinent examples of the playing out of the theoretical relationship that I want to elaborate between certain kinds of choreography and the gaze in the Lacanian schema. Reciprocally, Lacanian psychoanalysis can help us to understand the implications of these choreographies for spectatorship itself as a very particular enactment of subjectivity. Lacan's theories can help us explain the mechanisms by which these choreographies gaze, challenge historically specific modes of consciousness, and expose spectators to the unconscious. Lacan's concept of the Imaginary in particular provides an account of the construction, organisation, and disruption of vision in relation to modes of embodiment and images of the body. In this regard, the Imaginary as Lacan conceives it is itself implicitly choreographic. The Imaginary at its most fundamental level posits a relationship between motor exploration, perception, and images of the body. This relationship is negotiated through an exchange that is choreographic inasmuch as it involves the performance, recognition and evaluation of movements as expressions of form. The Imaginary thus functions in this thesis as a dramaturgical framework for understanding how the selected works use choreography to unsettle their spectators and renegotiate their practices of looking by bringing them into an encounter with their own becoming as viewers and as subjects.

I examine previous theoretical evocations of the Lacanian gaze in the fields of film studies, dance studies, and theatre and performance studies in order to clarify the significance of my emphasis on the Imaginary as the realm in which occurs the crucial intersection of visual and embodied practices. Reference to a specifically Lacanian gaze has featured strongly in psychoanalytically influenced film theory, and for different reasons both early and contemporary Lacanian film scholars have, for the most part, either misunderstood or ignored the role of the Imaginary altogether. In my theorisation of the performative and choreographic functioning of the gaze, I reassert the importance of the role of Imaginary in mediating the subject's relation to images through movement

and in connecting seeing with being. Through a close reading of both Lacan's writings on the gaze in *The Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis* and in his earlier "Mirror Stage" essay, I show that his work on the gaze constitutes an extension of, rather than a departure from, the model of vision posited in the earlier essay. I subsequently argue for a theorisation of the gaze that has its basis in the Imaginary and the choreographic scaffolding that it rests on. In so doing I both examine the relationship between the gaze and choreography in Lacan's writings, and work towards an understanding of how certain choreographic practices in the selected works of Bausch and Tati elicit the gaze.

My choice of works from the disciplines of both live theatre and film is crucial to my argument regarding what exactly it is in these works that is gazing. In this thesis I correlate the gaze with the choreographic practices and gestural paradigms that appear in these works rather than the differing technical apparatuses and conditions of reception (and the discourses associated with these differences, including references to "immediacy" and "presence" with regard to theatre, and the "screen" of cinema). I further distinguish the gaze from critical reflection and the kind of self-reflexive looking that characterises some definitions of theatricality and is often evoked in performance studies when writing about avant-garde practices. Indeed, much of the scholarship on Bausch's work in particular focuses on how the body invests critically in its own signification. Such treatments construe repetition in Bausch's work as a device for self-critical reflection. I argue that the radical potential of Bausch's choreographies in fact goes beyond the positioning of conscious critical looks, and lies instead in their capacity to gaze back at the spectator and thereby expose spectators to the unconscious. They do this by challenging the legibility of the body and of the subject and object relationships that structure consciousness. In the later chapters of the thesis, the key aspects of the choreographic that I will be examining in detail in this regard, both in terms of their operation in the selected works and their significance in Lacan's theory of the gaze, are the construction and framing of gestures, the ontological status of the bodies that perform them, and the work of spacing and duration.

Before I elaborate the main aspects of my argument in more detail, I begin with a description of scenes from two of the selected works in order to introduce the centrality and functioning of the choreographic in these works.

Scene 1

A man in an overcoat stands with his arms outstretched, unable to move from where he is standing. In front of the man's arms a woman dances, turning and lunging through quick undulations of her body. The man tentatively moves his hands as the woman dances between his arms; he is unable to hold her. His hand movements seem by turns helpless and half-hearted. The choreography in this section of the work is characterised by hesitation, stillness, and inaction. As this unfolds, a taped recording of Béla Bartók's 1911 opera *Herzog Blaubarts Burg (Duke Bluebeard's Castle)* plays from a tape-deck built into a desk on wheels in the centre of the space. In preceding sequences the taped recording is controlled by the man, as he obsessively rewinds and replays sections of the opera. In this moment, however, the opera plays without interference from the man, who stands adjacent to the desk, staring blankly into the space. As the music builds in tension, the woman's dancing motion extends into a fall to the floor in front of the man's outstretched arms. The woman gets up and repeats the falling motion in time with orchestral flourishes in the music, each time going through the movement a little more quickly as the pace of the music builds. Both figures appear compelled by the music to repeat this pattern of movement in which the woman falls and the man for a long time fails to catch her or even attempt to do so. The man seems either unable or unwilling to catch the woman, apparently gripped by the music in a catatonic state. The sequence continues increasingly frantically until the man eventually catches the woman as she is about to fall for the umpteenth time.

The figures are characters from the narrative of the opera: the protagonists Bluebeard and his wife Judith. The sequence is one of many enduring images in German Dance Theatre practitioner Pina Bausch's choreography of *Blaubart. Beim Anhören einer Tonbandaufnahme von Béla Bartóks Oper „Herzog Blaubarts Burg"* (*Bluebeard—Whilst Listening to a Taped Recording of Béla Bartók's Opera "Duke Bluebeard's Castle"*). The work presents Bausch's interpretation of the Bluebeard fairytale, and is choreographed as a particular intervention into the perpetuation of violent, oppressive relationships reinforced in early twentieth-century versions of the tale. However, as Meg Mumford points out, the clean-shaven male looks more like a

contemporary figure than the bearded villain of the fairy tale.[3] The compulsive behaviour of the characters in Bausch's choreography also has a contemporary resonance. One possible reading of the choreography, stressed by Bausch scholars Meg Mumford (2004) and Karen Mozingo (2005), is to consider its repetition of compulsive behaviours in the enactment of interpersonal relationships in the context of a concern with the lingering cultural after-effects of authoritarian narratives in post-War Germany.[4] Bausch's choreography, I argue here, achieves this by way of an interrogation of ways of being and looking that are inscribed by these narratives of control.

What both of Bausch's early choreographies *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* have in common with Tati's *Play Time* is a driving interest in the relationships between the bodies, spaces, and objects of the new post-War modernity, processed through the cultural and architectural modernisms of the first half of the twentieth century, and characterised by the fragmentation identities and a reticence of movement. My interest in the works is less about the specific narratives and histories they deal with, and more about the choreographic models they present in response to these narratives. Undoubtedly the choreographic models are a product of these narratives and histories, and I will elaborate more broadly how they emerge from and in relation to the visual and gestural paradigms of modernity (and why Lacan is consequently appropriate for understanding these choreographic models), but my primary interest is in the strategies and formal qualities of these choreographies.

The sequence described above, is typical of Bausch's choreography and provides one of many examples in Bausch's work of a moment or series of moments in which particular gestural relationships and patterns of behaviour are compulsively repeated. Through their repetition, these sequences reveal the possibility for change, the emergence of multiple other meanings, and, as Mumford points out with respect to another, similarly repetitive sequence in *Blaubart*, the "chance for intervention."[5] Moreover, I contend that such sequences present potential moments in Bausch's choreography in which a *gaze* is returned from the image back onto the work's spectators, and that this gaze is profoundly disruptive to the consciousness of the

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[3] Meg Mumford, "Pina Bausch Choreographs *Blaubart*: A Transgressive or Regressive Act?" *German Life and Letters* 57, 1 (2004): 44–57.

[4] Karen Mozingo, "The Haunting of Bluebeard-While Listening to a Recording of Béla Bartók's Opera 'Duke Bluebeard's Castle'," *Dance Research Journal* 37, 1 (2005): 97.

[5] Mumford, "Bausch Choreographs *Blaubart*," 48.

spectator and the positioning of her look. In these moments, gestures and spaces stop *meaning* and start *looking*, gazing back at the spectator. That is, they stop functioning within the confines of particular systems of meaning (pertaining to both politico-aesthetic histories and the conventions of theatre) and become something else— functioning, however momentarily, only in the realm of the aesthetic, which in this case is the choreographic. Such moments ultimately produce a reassessment of the audience's place and identity in relation to the image, as viewers and subjects of a particular historical context. The audience are situated and gazed at as durational bodies coinciding with the durational bodies of the performers themselves as the performers exhaustively enact interpersonal relationships in a series of choreographed "routines", as Gabrielle Cody describes them.[6] The spectator bodies are implicated in the display of the violent relations that form choreographic sequences in *Blaubart*, as co-presences to the violence, and there is the suggestion that they too are complicit in the perpetuation of such relationships. In these moments the boundaries of the audience's experience of both the performing body and their own bodies are accentuated.

Bausch's work ultimately calls into question the subjectivity of the spectator, and challenges identities, identifications and practices of looking that are sustained in relation to and entrenched within problematic politico-aesthetic narratives and systems of representation. Previous scholarship on Bausch's work has noted this idea of the implication of spectators (Birringer, 1986; Price, 1990)[7], and the chance for critical intervention (Bowman and Pollock, 1989; Mumford, 2004; Climenhaga 2009).[8] Into such scholarship, I introduce the analytical framework of the Lacanian gaze to not only consider the criticality of the "choreographic" in *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*, but ask how the choreographic in these works in fact subverts the hierarchies of subjectivity and vision that are still implicit in the notion of "critical distance". I do so by examining the nature of the experience of the gaze in these works, what its mechanisms are and what engagements with the audience it gives provision for.

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[6] Gabrielle Cody, "Woman, Man, Dog, Tree: Two Decades of Intimate and Monumental Bodies in Pina Bausch's Tanztheater," *TDR: The Drama Review* 42, 2 (1988): 115–131.
[7] Johannes Birringer, "Pina Bausch: Dancing Across Borders," *The Drama Review* 30, 2 (1986): 86–87; Price, David. "The Politics of the Body: Pina Bausch's *Tanztheater*." *Theatre Journal* 42, 3 (1990): 322–31.
[8] Michael Bowman and Della Pollock, "'This Spectacular Visible Body': Politics and Postmodernism in Pina Bausch's *Tanztheater*." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 2 (1989): 113–18; Meg Mumford, "Pina Bausch Choreographs *Blaubart*: A Transgressive or Regressive Act?" *German Life and Letters* 57, 1 (2004): 44–57; Royd Climenhaga, *Pina Bausch.* Oxon: Routledge, 2009.

I begin with Raimund Hoghe's observation that "in the theatre of Pina Bausch one can experience many ways of looking, of becoming aware of one's subjective way of watching."[9] This is an observation echoed by many other Bausch scholars—for instance, Bowman and Pollock argue that Bausch's works demonstrate the body's critical inscriptions[10]; David Price in turn takes up Johannes Birringer's point that Bausch's choreographies make visible the gestures and "internalised norms we no longer see"[11]; and Mumford describes both how Bausch's choreography of *Blaubart* "shows us the contours" of a number of performative games, and also how her sequences lend themselves to multiple readings.[12]

Hoghe's conversations with Bausch reveal the transfixion with visibility, watching and looking, and in particular seeing that which is repressed. In emphasising the generation of alternative ways of looking in Bausch's work, Hoghe refers to Bausch's own words: "You can always see the other way."[13] While I extend such appraisals of this aspect of Bausch's work, I argue that the radical capacity of her choreographies goes beyond facilitating an awareness of "subjective way[s] of watching"[14] and the implementation of critical structures of viewing. My discussion of the gaze in Bausch's work appeals not only to the critical recognition of the ways in which bodies and the signifying processes that inscribe them are liable to fail, but also to the multiple *failures* of recognition that Bausch's choreographies produce. That is, Bausch's work is as much about the inability to see as it is about seeing critically. Price's study is unique in this regard in that he points to the operation of another dimension in Bausch's work pertaining to its indecipherability and its amalgamation of "scraps and debris." He refers to dream-like elements and a kind of "somatic imaginary" in Bausch's work that operates in tension with her staging of the social inscription of the body by "cultural symbolic structures."[15] But where Price goes on to elaborate the contrasting Brechtian and Artaudian elements of Bausch's work in order to frame the different kinds of feminisms with which her work engages, I unfold the Lacanian

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[9] Raimund Hoghe, "The Theatre of Pina Bausch," *TDR: The Drama Review* 24, 1 German Theatre Issue (1980): 73.
[10] Bowman and Pollock, "'This Spectacular Visible Body': Politics and Postmodernism in Pina Bausch's *Tanztheater*," 113–18.
[11] Price, "The Politics of the Body: Pina Bausch's *Tanztheater*," 325; see also Birringer, "Dancing Across Borders," 86–87.
[12] Mumford, "Bausch Choreographs *Blaubart*," 48.
[13] Hoghe, "The Theatre of Pina Bausch," 73.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Price, "The Politics of Tanztheater," 323.

connotations and implications of the Imaginary in Bausch's work by promoting the significance of a Lacanian reading for understanding Bausch's imagery and how it impacts spectator consciousness through the evocation of an unconscious.

In his treatment of the Artaudian aspects of Bausch's choreography, Price refers to Artaud's objective of bringing "into the light of day by means of active gestures certain aspects of the truth that have been buried under forms in their encounters with Becoming."[16] It is precisely in this Artaudian project that the potential for Lacanian analysis is most pertinent. The Lacanian schema is a theorisation of both a Becoming, and a burying or repression of the Real in the subject's encounter with and perception of her own Becoming. It is my contention that through the kinds of "active gestures" Artaud refers to, Bausch draws the spectator into another kind of *encounter*—that which Lacan describes in his writings on the gaze—namely, the encounter with the traumatic Real.[17] I shall demonstrate how this encounter is produced by Bausch's choreographic strategies of repetition, duration and parataxis, and, by recourse to Lacanian theory, I will seek to account for the radically disruptive extent of this encounter.

Scene 2

We see a shot of some clouds in the sky, over which credits appear. Eventually the title "Play Time" appears in blue and red against the backdrop. The title fades, and the camera pans slowly across the sky. The pan is interrupted as the scene cuts abruptly to an image of a tall glass building against the sky. In the next shot, two nuns enter the ground floor of the same building, with synchronised walks and synchronised flapping headdresses. A cut to an interior shot of the building shows the nuns entering into and walking through a waiting area. They nod in unison as they exchange some muffled words. In the background, against three separate window panels, stand three formally dressed women. We guess that they are employees of whatever space we are in. Here our attention is drawn to symmetry, design, order, and *display*, which will become the central themes in all the spaces we encounter in the film. As the nuns exit the frame, a man in white clothes, pushing a service cart, enters the space. This figure is possibly an

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[16] Ibid., 330.

[17] Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Sheridan (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), 69.

orderly or a cleaner or perhaps a member of the kitchen staff. Another man in a suit enters in the background just as the man in white moves off at a right angle into a passage between cubicles and out of the frame. The man in the suit pauses and remains in the shot only briefly, before walking off in the same direction as the man in white.

These are the first in a series of precisely timed entrances by various figures in the opening scene of French comedian Jacques Tati's fourth feature film *Play Time* (1967). In the scene described we see each of the figures, one at a time, enter and leave the space, each with her own individual rhythm. The sounds of various kinds of footsteps are also heard, including the military step of the man in uniform, shuffling motions, long even walks, and the absurd scurrying of the press photographers trying to get into perfect position to get a shot of an important official as he walks through the space surrounded by an entourage. As various figures enter and exit the space, some trajectories coincide. A security man paces back and forth, and as he comes towards the camera, a woman, in a stop-start shuffling motion, enters, follows him, makes a right-angled left turn and disappears into a passage between two cubicles.

Inasmuch as compositional strategies of series, rhythm, and pacing quickly become apparent, this series of entrances and exits contributes to a sense of the "choreographic" in this opening sequence. Tati quickly establishes a relationship between choreographic modes of embodiment and the regulation and transaction of vision. In the foreground towards the bottom left of the screen, a couple are seated. They turn their heads to watch the various entrances and exits. In between entrances, amidst snippets of muffled conversation, the wife gently prods her husband and adjusts his clothes. The man repeatedly shrugs off his wife's persistent prodding. Their jostling is comically stop-start, interrupted as they turn to watch each figure enter or exit the space.

The choreographic is a mode of not only being, but of seeing. From the outset, Tati establishes a pattern of lookers positioned within the shot. Watching and looking are established as important subject matter. The characters' looks positioned within the shots are sometimes aligned with the spectator's look, but at other times they do not see some crucial detail that the spectators see and are thus prone to misapprehension. Yet, as Lee Hilliker points out, in *Play Time* Tati equally "actively challenges the viewer's

abilities to identify, follow, and locate as well."[18] The spectator's view, too, is thus susceptible to obstruction, deviation, distraction, and manipulation, and is not allowed to settle as she is bombarded with innumerable rhythms and entrances. The particular sense of the choreographic performed here defies critical and/or narrative reading by refusing to allow seeing to inform meaning. Instead the choreographic forces us to question both our place as lookers (as viewers of cinema and as ourselves as subjects of modernity) and the expectations this place of looking gives rise to.

The visual field in *Play Time* is characterised by both the saturation and absence of particular details—that is, a visual field that either shows too much or too little. Tati's films, and in particular *Play Time*, present several moments in which the spectator is confronted by a visual field that is unsupported by protagonists, narratives, and often soundtracks. In these moments, she is asked to distil the visual field, to decipher its confused iconography, and to confront and participate in its multiplicity, magnitude, composition and structuring, gaps and absences, and proliferation of bodies, activities, and relationships. One way to understand the visual field's failure to generate intelligibility and meaning in *Play Time* is to consider how the visual field begins to *gaze* back at the spectator. It does so through the confusion of the key loci through which the look of the subject (in the form of both character and spectator) and her aural apprehension of space are routed and coordinated.

The opening scene, described above, takes place in what turns out to be an airport, although this is not made clear at the outset. A baby in a pram, some nurse-like figures, the cleaning staff, and the cubicles to the right of the frame suggest that it might be a hospital. Michel Chion has pointed out that Tati redesigned Orly airport, in the southern suburbs of Paris, to give it the appearance of a hospital clinic.[19] Later, we see similar buildings and spaces in other contexts, further displacing the relationship between appearance and function. The image of the segmented space, produced in the opening scene by the cubicles, is revisited in later sequences in the cubicles inside an office building, the stalls of a trade fair, and the adjacent apartments in a box-like complex with glass windows. In this way Tati is making a point about the homogeneity

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[18] Lee Hilliker, "In the Modernist Mirror: Jacques Tati and the Parisian Landscape," *The French Review* 76, 2 (2002): 320.
[19] Michel Chion, *The Films of Jacques Tati*, trans. Antonio D'Alfonso (Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2006), 14.

of the spaces of modernity and their capacity to simultaneously pre-empt and alienate the behaviours associated with them.

The two main types of space Tati sets up in *Play Time* are the two primary spaces of modernity: compartments (including the aforementioned cubicles, trade-fair stalls, and apartments, but also the elevators, waiting rooms, and foyers, in which Hulot finds himself isolated at various points in the film), and thoroughfares (the airport building, the trade fair, the Royal Garden Hotel, and the city streets which reproduce his presence in the form of a number of Hulot doubles). These spaces variously organise, compress, or distance bodies, at times preventing connection between bodies, and at other times forcing unintended connections, producing near-misses, collisions, and errors of identification.

Following the opening series of entrances and exits in the airport scene, Tati begins to play not only on the viewer's expectation of the body, but also the familiar choreography from the previous films, and the central presence of the protagonist. The important yet nondescript-looking official now walks through the foreground, ushered by assistants and circled by photographers. As a stream of American tourists are organised by an airport official in the foreground, a figure that resembles Tati's serial protagonist Monsieur Hulot briefly stumbles on in the background, reproducing the pendulum-like gait so familiar to viewers of the previous Hulot films, *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (1953) and *Mon Oncle* (1958). In the opening scene of *Play Time*, the figure first appears only momentarily before stumbling back out of the space and exiting the shot. But he re-emerges a few moments later and drops his umbrella on the ground, causing the others in the shot to turn and look at him. Tati places the protagonist (or in this case a look-alike that stands in for the protagonist) in the background and directs our attention more deeply into the visual field. By doing so he fleshes out the multiple spaces in which the film will take place. In addition to the importance afforded to watching and looking as critical activities, issues of space, *spacing* and composition become a major part of the "work" undertaken by *Play Time* on teleological narratives of modernity and the practices of looking that these narratives engender. Tati takes issue with the way in which such narratives promote the idea of a linear and progressive history that is underpinned by technological advancement, at the expense of traditional and minor cultures. This conception of history gives rise to and favours socio-political and cultural hegemonies that espouse not only that there are laws of historical

development but that the movement "forward" is necessarily for the greater good of humanity.

In Tati's films (in particular *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time*) the alternate dilution and condensation, and ultimately confusion, of the visual field through the play of spacing forms part of a broader thematic focus on the conflicting relationships of modern subjects to the urban environment. Through the relationship between bodies Tati reveals a visual field in which distance (or, alternatively, lack of distance) is embroiled in an aberrant play of perception and often presents faulty or misleading spatial coordinates. The spectator's expectations of space, of its logic, flow, separation or continuity based on the positioning of bodies and objects are routinely thwarted by the spaces that appear in the film and the way that bodies interact within these spaces.

The *choreographic* is thus central to the work undertaken by Tati's films on the visual field. One of the key questions in my discussion of Tati's *Play Time* and the two works by Bausch, is "what exactly is it that is gazing in these works?" In tying the gaze to the functioning of the choreographic, I refer to the legible content of the image in performance—the body/ies and spaces. I argue that the gaze emerges from difficulties of reading bodies and spaces. Tati's dramaturgy condenses the spaces of modernity and displaces them, and at other moments dilutes them, and in so doing evokes the deviant spacing of the unconscious that characterises Freud's theorisation of the dream image. In such moments, I believe, *space* itself—the composition, performance and manipulation of space by the choreographies—exceeds the purposes of the characters who inhabit it and asserts itself to the extent that it confronts the viewer as a spectacle that cannot accommodate them either or support their processes of meaning-making. In this way, space begins to look back at the spectator.

As with Bausch's works, repetition, duration and parataxis form key choreographic strategies, and I examine the implications of these strategies for spectatorship. With respect to existing scholarship on Tati, I take my point of departure from Hilliker's discussion of the reflexive structures introduced by the mirror-like play of Tati's set and choreography and the resultant difficulties surrounding perception and identity.[20] I draw out the implicit but largely unexplored Lacanian connotations of this reflexive play, to account for and elaborate the radical capacity of Tati's choreography to exert a gaze back onto its spectators. I also heed Iain Borden's observation that *Play*

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[20] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror."

Time at once "acknowledges and repudiates [the] epistemo-visual system" produced by the new urban environments of modernity, by physically and visually limiting the ability of both its characters and spectators to see and control the object of vision.[21] I further argue that this lack of mastery over the visual field is manifested as a gaze directed back from the images themselves.

In exploring the Lacanian tangents available in both Hilliker and Borden's readings of *Play Time*, I extend their observations to what I see as their potential theoretical endpoint—that is, not only does Tati's imagery problematise looking and encourage new modes of looking within the city, but it also exerts a gaze on its spectators in a Lacanian sense, and in so doing exposes its spectators to the unconscious and brings them into an encounter with their own becoming as subjects. What the Lacanian schema (and in particular the concept of Imaginary) also offers to an analysis of Tati's work is an account of subjectivity in which the construction and subsequent thwarting of historical subjectivities is actualised specifically through ways of looking. That is, the Imaginary offers a discourse on the connection between ways of looking and ways of being. Consequently, the Imaginary allows me to account for the way in which difficulties of looking in Tati's choreographies not only afflict the "being" of characters in the film, but also engage, implicate, and challenge the embodied subjectivity of the spectator. Conversely, what are not revealed clearly in Hilliker and Borden's analyses are the choreographic practices—or, in other words, strategically deployed ways of being—through which Tati's films challenge the look. My analysis focuses in particular on the key role of repetition and duration in this regard. As with the two works by Bausch, Tati's *Play Time* ultimately deploys such choreographic strategies to call into question the capacity of spectators to position themselves as subjects amidst both the teleological structure of history itself and specific modern histories of the subject.

The Construction of the Body and the Look

The opening—and, indeed, the closing—line of Edgar Allan Poe's short story "Man of the Crowd" (1840) is: "es lässt sich nicht lesen" / "it does not permit itself to be read."[22]

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[21] Borden, "Tativille," 221.
[22] Edgar Allen Poe, *Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 131.

In the story the narrator records his inability to read the titular man of the crowd as a figure distinct from the stream of gestures and bodies that populate the city. One of the main threads of Poe's story is the difficulty of reading particular bodies and gestures within the environments of modernity. In such environments, the act of looking itself is rendered problematic. Bodies are over-determined with meanings and *narratives* are difficult to grasp.

The early, 1977-78, dance-theatre works of German choreographer Pina Bausch and the films made by French comedian Jacques Tati between 1953 and 1967 are similarly concerned with practices of looking in the politico-cultural spaces produced by particular versions of modernity. These choreographies underline first the need to look, and then the need to look *differently*. Bausch's repetitive choreographies encourage us to "look again and again,"[23] whilst Tati's sustained wide shots and intricate choreography of both the background and foreground immediately force us to look more deeply. Yet these choreographies, characterised by multiplicity and simultaneous disconnected actions, also draw out and emphasise the difficulty of looking within these environments. Moreover, they actively work to challenge practices of looking that emerge from and are informed by politico-cultural narratives of oppression and alienation in their respective national histories. The *choreographic* at once provides a system that yields coordinates for reading bodies and thwarts these coordinates and the capacity to read bodies.

The Choreographic

Two key questions drive my inquiry into how choreography operates on vision in the two works by Bausch and the one by Tati. These are: "how do choreographies gaze?", and "what kinds of choreographies gaze?" Here the "choreographic" is derived from an understanding of choreography as a subversive practice of embodiment in avant-garde dance work and functions as a critical term. Jenn Joy's comprehensive study *The Choreographic* provides several important definitions. Drawing on the work of Georges Didi-Huberman, Joy describes the choreographic "as one possibility of sensual address—a dialogic opening in which art not only is looked at but also looks back,

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[23] Quoted in Johannes Birringer, "Dancing Across Borders," 91.

igniting a tremulous hesitation in the ways that we experience and respond."[24] This notion of choreography looking back is central to my inquiry, and I explore what the Lacanian gaze might offer in understanding the mechanisms and ramifications of this looking back, and the way in which it interrogates the very basis of a historicised subjectivity itself (along with the narratives that historicise it). I unfold the performative aspects of the gaze in Lacan's schema, reading Lacan's work on the Imaginary as a unique formulation of the relationship between choreographic practices of embodiment and vision, and examine the role choreography plays in the way that we look. I argue that Lacanian theory presents a conception of, and response to, modern subjectivity that intertwines choreographic modes of being—the repetition of gestural patterns, and the creation of relationships to other bodies and spaces—and the construction and subsequent disruption of seeing.

Like Joy, I define choreography as the site of a continual negotiation between forms of knowledge and non-knowledge regarding the body, space, and world of objects. A particular feature of the choreographic in the selected works of Bausch and Tati is the characteristic fragmentation, isolation, and repetition of sequences that emerges out of a response to modernist narratives of the body that are predicated on notions of wholeness. The revelation of the work being undertaken by the performing bodies and the often mechanical appearance of bodies engaged in fragmented, isolated, and repeated sequences in these works also takes place in the context of the narratives of the machine age. My notion of the choreographic in these works is therefore one that is particular to the kinds of aesthetic impulses these works were responding to. Felicia McCarren chronicles these impulses, and the resultant choreographies in her book *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.[25] McCarren notes the valorisation of efficiency of movement and the erasure of labour on the one hand, and the revelation and celebration of the physical signs of work being completed on the other hand (labour, but also the kinetic energy of machines). I draw on McCarren's understanding of choreography in the context of modernism in my theorisation of how the choreographies of Bausch and Tati being discussed here produce a gaze. I argue that the gaze emerges in these works from the choreographic

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[24] Jenn Joy, *The Choreographic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2014), 1.
[25] Felicia McCarren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

territory between efficiency and excess, in which our expectations of the body and its ideological interpellation and signification through work are both set up and thwarted.

One of the key aspects of the kind of choreography that appears in the selected works is the way in which it operates on a teleological determination of subjectivity—that is, one which defines the experience and value of subjectivity in terms of progress towards certain political ideals—through the use of repetition, duration, the paratactical arrangement of elements, and exploration of states of arrest. Joy writes of the "metonymic" condition of the choreographic, and my analysis of the functioning of the choreographic in the three Bausch and Tati works focuses on how these works obsessively interrogate the part and its mechanics through repeating gestures or patterns of behaviour. The practice of the choreographic at its essence in these works involves composing with parts or "moves" that are then rehearsed over and over again, and by doing so opening up the knowable whole, the whole of movement as a system of knowledge, to the unknowable.

The Gaze

The gaze in Lacan's schema corresponds not to the mastering look of a subject, but to the return of a look from the side of the object that is profoundly disruptive to the subject. The authority of the subject's look and her privilege as viewer is undermined in moments in which a gaze is returned, and ultimately the very notion of her subject-hood is threatened. I contend that the choreographic images of Bausch and Tati gaze back at the spectator in this way, and in so doing call into question the spectator's ability to conceive of a notion of self in relation to and within the *teleological* structure of problematic histories. The concern with teleology is manifested in the work of both practitioners as a concern with the way in which modern subjects are co-opted into engulfing, totalising systems of representation and structures of causality by political narratives that "progress towards finally meaningful perspectives"—perspectives that Bausch and Tati find problematic. Part of the exploration of the difficulty of looking in these works is manifested in the difficulty of *reading* and placing bodies as part of such systems. In my theorisation of the gaze of the choreographic body, what gazes is not the dancer as subject, but the choreographic object—the combination of body and space,

organised into patterns of rehearsed behaviour, that at once facilitate and thwart the recognition and evaluation of bodily codes.

The Gaze in Film Studies

In writing about how choreographic images across film and theatre gaze, I consider how the gaze has been previously theorised in Theatre Studies and Film Studies. The Lacanian gaze has featured prominently in psychoanalytic film theory and has been understood in a number of ways. The gaze I refer to differs from the gaze as conceived by early psychoanalytic film theorists such as Christian Metz and Jean-Louis Baudry, who compared the situation of the cinema spectator to that of the subject at the Mirror Stage in Lacan's schema.[26] Within this model of cinema, these theorists wrote of the gaze of the spectator and conceived the gaze as the locus of the spectators' ideological duping, comparative to the illusory sense of wholeness the subject finds in the mirror image.[27] As Joan Copjec pointed out in 1994, theorists like Metz and Baudry—as well as Laura Mulvey, who developed a highly influential conception of the male gaze of cinema—erred in their reading of Lacan, placing the gaze on the side of the subject.[28] More recently, in 2007, Todd McGowan revisited the notion of the gaze in cinema, arguing that Metz and Baudry mistakenly emphasised the Imaginary in theorising the gaze, and that the gaze in fact corresponds to the Real. While situating the radical capacity of the gaze in relation to the Real accounts for why and how it disrupts spectator consciousness, it is my contention that the mechanisms by which the gaze is elicited nevertheless belong to the Imaginary in Lacan's theorisation of it throughout his writings. Consequently, in the following pages I return to the Imaginary and the Mirror Stage as the basis for theorising the gaze.

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[26] Christian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," *Screen* 16, 2 (1975): 14–76; Jean-Louis Baudry and Alan Williams, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus," *Film Quarterly* 28, 2 (1974-1975): 39–47; Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, edited by Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 299–318.

[27] Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 2.

[28] Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994), 36; Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 833–44.

McGowan's turn away from the Imaginary and subsequent emphasis instead on the relationship between the Symbolic and the Real is based on an understanding of the Imaginary as necessarily teleological and totalising in its movement towards a resolved image of the subject, and as productive of a fortifying relationship to the image that provides the subject with a sense of wholeness. Indeed, Lacan's mirror stage is superficially about the comfort of attaining a total autonomous identity based on the assumption of an image that reinforces itself and its boundaries.

This understanding of the Imaginary ignores the play of negation that characterises Lacan's theorisation of the structure of misrecognition within the Imaginary in his 1949 "Mirror Stage" essay and also in his later writings on the gaze (1973). I argue here that the gaze already exists in Lacan's formulation of the mirror stage, and that his writings on the gaze do not present a radical departure from the model of vision proposed in the earlier paper, but rather an extension of some its key tenets. Through a close reading of these key papers, I show that the gaze in fact emerges from within the problematic nature of identification and the continually contested relationship of subject, image and object in Lacan's Imaginary. The readings of both McGowan and the early psychoanalytic film theorists ultimately do not recognise the radical potential of the Imaginary to in fact contest ideologies as much as mediate them. I will argue that in their challenge to problematic ideological systems the choreographies of Bausch and Tati reproduce the contested structure of the Imaginary. Ultimately, understanding the gaze in terms of this Imaginary structure is significant inasmuch as it allows me to relate the production of the gaze in the works of Bausch and Tati to the particular *choreographic* strategies these works employ. I will argue that the Lacanian Imaginary, with its play of subject and object (and the partial manifestation of this play in the Freudian game of "fort-da"[29]), identification, recognition and misrecognition, provides not only a useful conceptual framework for describing the aesthetic territory of these works, but also proves crucial to understanding how the gaze is returned from within these spaces. It is my contention that the dramaturgies of Bausch and Tati reproduce the continually contested structure of identification in the Imaginary, and return the spectator to the problematic *scene* of identification as theorised by Lacan.

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[29] A game in which Freud's grandson throws a wooden reel (tied to a string) out of sight (expressed as "fort!" or "gone"), and then pulls it back into sight (accompanied by the expression "da!" or "there"). Freud came to associate this play with primary psychic processes and in particular repetition-compulsion. I will argue that this kind of play features prominently in Bausch's choreography.

Lacanian Theory and Performance Studies

To be sure, Lacanian theory is not new to the research work undertaken in performance studies. In *Theories of Theatre*: *A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present*, Marvin Carlson chronicles the uptake of Lacanian concepts by a particular stream of performance theory from the 1980s, pointing to the work of Anne Ubersfeld and Josette Féral in particular.[30] He notes Ubersfeld's emphasis on the centrality of absence and "desire as lack" to the experience of spectatorship, and situates this emphasis as part of a nascent shift embodied by Ubersfeld's work from approaches to performance analysis based in semiotics and structuralism to approaches based in post-structuralism, and in particular Lacanian psychoanalysis.[31] As Carlson points out, Féral's seminal 1982 essay "Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified," advances this work to provide one of the more rigorous examples of a poststructuralist methodology.[32] One of the crucial aspects of Féral's work for this thesis is her description of performance that "works right in those extremely blurred junctures out of which the subject eventually emerges."[33] This kind of performance, she proposes, is typified by the staging of the "subject in process within an *imaginary* constructive space."[34] It uncovers the "under-side" of theatrical processes and presents a working through or staging of the death drive. While Féral associates this kind of performance with the Imaginary and the unconscious, these two concepts remain condensed in her work. There is nevertheless scope within her conception of performance to elaborate the "dramaturgy" of the Imaginary and its relationship with the gaze and the unconscious in Lacan's schema. It is precisely this dramaturgy that I endeavour to make evident in my analysis of the choreographic images of Bausch and Tati reproduce this dramaturgy.

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[30] Marvin Carlson, *Theories of Theatre*: *A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1993), 510–11.
[31] Carlson, *Theories of Theatre*, 510; Anne Ubersfeld, *L'école du spectateur* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1982).
[32] Josette Féral, "Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified," *Modern Drama* 25, 1 (1982): 170–181.
[33] Ibid., 173.
[34] Ibid., 171 (my emphasis).

The gaze, criticality and theatricality

The complexity of Lacan's conception of the gaze and the confusion surrounding what exactly it entails, to whom it belongs, and how it arises, has led theatre scholar Matthew Causey to suggest that the gaze "may be one of the most misused terms in the critical theory of performance".[35] Indeed, my aim is to distinguish the gaze both from discourses of self-critical reflection and from the kind of intersubjective gaze often described to be taking place in contemporary performance practices across dance, theatre, and cinema. I do so by following the lead of clarifications offered by both Barbara Freedman and Maaike Bleeker. Freedman, for example, observed in the early 90s that theatricality reproduces the structure of the gaze by displaying "the problematic of display itself" which she associates with a tension between what is shown and the act of showing.[36] More recently, Bleeker has written of the radical visual paradigm produced specifically in postdramatic theatre by the "retheatricalization" of performance.[37] Extending the work of Freedman and Bleeker, I elaborate an understanding of the gaze in relation to discourses of theatricality. I consider various understandings of theatricality and explore the extent to which they allow for a conception of the gaze in the properly Lacanian sense.

One of the main contentions of this thesis is that the phenomenon of the gaze as elaborated by Lacan is to be distinguished from the kind of self-critical reflection implicit in conceptions of theatricality that are common in treatments of various historical traditions of dramatic performance, but that also feature prominently in discussion of avant-garde practices including recent work on the postdramatic tradition. The gaze goes beyond the production of a critical look to the point of undermining the very structure of looking itself.

Following Freedman and Bleeker, I consider how theatricality is problematised as a framework for curating the look when placed within the Lacanian schema and its continually contested structure of identification. In its play of recognition and misrecognition, the Lacanian schema complicates the notion of theatricality and offers a

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[35] Matthew Causey, *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture: From Simulation to Embeddedness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 196.

[36] Barbara Freedman, *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis and Shakespearean Comedy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 52.

[37] Maaike Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre: The Locus of Looking*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan 2008), 7.

more complex understanding of the way in which theatricality produces the failure not only of signifying processes, but also upsets the basic modes of perception on which the processes of signification depend. Ultimately, I distinguish the gaze from understandings of theatricality that frame it as a highlighting or *recognition* of the failure of the signifying processes of theatre. I place emphasis conversely on the multiple *failures* of recognition itself as the locus of the gaze in these works.

Gesture, Spacing, and the Unconscious

Lacan explicitly connects the notion of a signifier that does not permit itself to be read (the epigraph of Poe's story "Man of the Crowd") to the unconscious in his famous reading of another of Poe's stories, "The Purloined Letter" (1844).[38] This story revolves around a stolen letter, the contents of which are never revealed to the reader. For Lacan, the letter's contents are not meaningful in themselves, the far more significant fact being that one either does or does not have the letter in her possession. That is, the letter ultimately points to a lack. To demonstrate the workings of the unconscious, Lacan draws on the double meaning of "letter". The letter is not only the piece of paper in an envelope that is exchanged in the story, but also "that material medium [*support*] that concrete discourse borrows from language,"[39] which corresponds, on a functional level at least, to the signifier in Lacan's schema. Lacan uses Poe's story to elucidate the lack at the heart of the Symbolic that is simultaneously contained in and concealed by the signifier. The letter/signifier, in its signifying *function*, works to conceal the lack, but in its continual deferral and essential meaninglessness, paradoxically embodies the lack itself. In the case of either the purloined letter or signifier, it is the unknowability of and inability to pin down its signifying content, that reveals a lack in signification itself. This lack is nothing other than the letter's refusal to be read. Lacan uses the letter to elucidate the workings of the unconscious, which operates in the space created by lack. The unconscious as the perpetual revelation of this lack threatens to disrupt and/or impinge upon the fantasies of wholeness created by consciousness. I argue that in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, it is when gesture refuses to be read, and its

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[38] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Purloined Letter," in *The Purloined Poe*, edited by John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 6–27.
[39] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton), 413 (Brackets and italics in original).

signifying function is thwarted, that the unconscious begins to manifest itself in the form of a lack that gazes back at the spectator. The gaze in this sense constitutes the staging or showing of the unconscious. The unconscious *performs*, in the sense that Lacan attributes to it, when he writes that the potential of the gaze to disrupt lies in the fact that "*it* shows."[40]

As mentioned above, the gaze is returned from the "other". Gesture is always-already "other" inasmuch as it appears "over there" in the mirror in the first instance, when the subject perceives her own form at the Mirror Stage. It is when gesture reveals its essential "otherness" to the subject, that it displaces the subject's identifications.[41] In the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, gesture is *purloined* from its usual context. It appears fragmented, multiplied and dissociated from its meanings. The refusal to be read is also important for the construction of space and the work of *spacing* in Tati's work, inasmuch as it produces a visual field in which we can never see everything. I argue that in these choreographies, gesture and choreographic space stop *meaning* and start *looking*, gazing back at the spectator. Indeed, it is this failure to read gestures, bodies, and spaces in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati that is constitutive of the broader attack on processes of identification within the context of the politico-cultural narratives and visual regimes of modernity, and the alienating and rigid identities that such narratives generate.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter One I introduce the selected works and their key concerns, and place them amidst the respective canons of Bausch and Tati. I focus on the way in which these particular works share a concern with practices of looking within the politico-cultural

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[40] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 75.
[41] That is, the subject's identifications are situated as fictional. They are revealed to be fictional inasmuch as the subject assumes what is "over there" to correspond to some reality "here"—that is, her reality as a subject. In the case of spectators viewing gestures in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, the gestures shown are not literally the spectator's as in the Mirror Stage (although for Bausch and Tati, these gestures are inevitably "owned" to some extent by the audience, not only in the sense that they represent particular post-War bodies that reflect the politicised bodies of the original intended spectators of these works, but also in sense that any audience (from any period) is situated in these works (and particularly in Bausch's work) as complicit in the construction and perpetuation of particular identities). As I will elaborate in Chapter Two, the reflexive structure introduced by the Mirror Stage in Lacan's schema in fact forms the basis for all of the subject's subsequent identifications, not only in relation to her own image, but also her broader relation to the category of "other", which includes other bodies, objects and gestures.

and physical environments of their respective visions of post-War modernity. I examine the extent to which looking is figured as a resistive act in these works and how the act of looking is inextricably intertwined with ways of being in the spaces that the works depict.

In Chapter Two I elaborate the functioning of the choreographic in the selected works, and the way in which choreography is used in these works to address questions of vision. I focus in particular on the way in which they deploy choreography as a resistive tool to disrupt the spectators' capacity to identify with certain post-War narratives of subjectivity, and to open up new possibilities of looking in the spaces and aesthetic regimes of post-War modernity. I then elaborate the features of choreographic in these works, and how they relate to contemporary discourses of avant-garde choreographic practices in dance studies. I examine the tendency of particular approaches in previous scholarship on the selected works to emphasise Bausch and Tati's reflexivity and set up the terms and scope of my inquiry into how the works go beyond reflexivity.

In Chapter Three I elaborate the concept of the gaze in Lacanian theory and consider what it offers to an analysis of these works, specifically in understanding the mechanisms by and the extent to which these works call into question the spectator's historically invested practices of looking. I examine the way in which the gaze has been theorised in the disciplines of Film Studies, and Theatre and Performance Studies. First, I explore the ways in which the concepts of the gaze and the Imaginary have featured in Performance Studies and distinguish the gaze from discourses and practices of self-critical reflection that are typically invoked in evaluations of contemporary avant-garde performance practices. Second, through close readings of Lacan's "Mirror Stage" Essay and his later writings on the gaze, I elaborate the essential relationship between the gaze and the Imaginary, and exposit how this relationship has often been misconstrued in psychoanalytic film theory. I ultimately propose a return to the Imaginary as the basis for theorising the gaze and in particular its relationship to embodied practices.

In Chapter Four I explicate how the Imaginary as a dramaturgical framework affords us insight into the way in which Bausch and Tati deploy choreography in *Blaubart*, *Café Müller*, and *Play Time.* I consider the place of choreography in the Lacanian schema and its central importance to the relationship between vision and embodiment in Lacan's work. The dramaturgical aspects of the Imaginary I focus on are: the play of misrecognition, repetition, multiplicity, and negation that characterises

the choreography found in the Lacanian schema, and how Bausch and Tati use this type of choreography to question the processes of identification and the subjectivity of the spectator; the imbrication of subject and object and the resultant inability of the spectator to fix the identity of or attain mastery of subjects and objects; the exploratory spatial play of the child in front of the mirror; the prevalence and functioning of images of fortification and control; and the repetitive enactment and subsequent renegotiation of compulsive relationships with the "other".

The final two chapters focus on the two main aspects of choreography that I consider to be essential to the operation of the gaze in the selected works: the construction and framing of gesture and the work of spacing. In Chapter Five, I theorise the gaze from within the deviant functioning of gesture in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati. I draw on the work of Heidi Gilpin and Max Kommerell to theorise how the gaze and subsequently the unconscious is mobilised in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati through the repetition of gesture. Further, I explore the relationship between the gaze and the choreographic body in the selected works by considering the capacity of choreography to structure our expectations of presence in these works, and the way in which these choreographies, typified by strategies of fragmentation and multiplication, produce a *critique* of presence to bring the spectator into an encounter with her own becoming.

In Chapter Six I theorise the gaze in relation to the deviant functioning of space and the *work* of spacing in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati. I discuss the *work* of spacing as pertaining to the operative, regulative function of space itself—not simply space represented, but a process that operates on the relationship between bodies, gestures, architectural structures and vision in these choreographies. I consider how choreographic spacing impinges on the positioning of the spectators and forces a renegotiation of their practices of looking.

Chapter One: Modes of Being and Ways of Looking in Selected Works by Jacques Tati and Pina Bausch

Introduction

Jacques Tati's masterpiece *Play Time* and Pina Bausch's late '70s works *Blaubart*[42] and *Café Müller* explore the construction and transaction of "the look" within the changing aesthetic regimes of post-World War Two France and Germany respectively. These works also share a strong thematic concern regarding the alienation of the body and the displacement of human relationships in the new environments of modernity.

Tati's choreography in *Play Time* takes place in the context of a wave of urbanisation in post-War France and focuses on the new spaces, social arrangements, rhythms, comportments, and visual practices to which this urbanisation gave rise. Bausch's early works can be seen as choreographic responses to the cultural pervasiveness and post-War ramifications of the authoritarian narratives of National Socialism. Both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* interrogate the perpetuation of perceptual frames and patterns of behaviour emerging from these narratives, and explore their ongoing impact on interpersonal relationships.

Within the emergent physical and politico-cultural landscapes explored by Tati and Bausch in these works, the act of looking is both subject to scrutiny and a powerful tool that provides a locus of resistance to the political and cultural narratives affecting the body. Reciprocally, the choreographed body becomes a means for interrogating and reorganising perception. In this chapter I explore the way in which vision is transacted and subsequently disrupted in these works through a combination of organised behaviour and observation – in other words, through *choreography*. In these works choreography functions not simply as a way of designing movement, but as a critical tool for exploring the construction of behaviours and as a way of challenging how we *look* at bodies. Whilst I will consider more complex definitions of choreography as it operates in these works and in avant-garde dance practices generally in later chapters, in

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[42] *Blaubart. Beim Anhören einer Tonbandaufnahme von Béla Bartóks Oper „Herzog Blaubarts Burg"* (Bluebeard—Whilst Listening to a Taped Recording of Béla Bartók's Opera "Duke Bluebeard's Castle").

this chapter I focus primarily on the way in which practices and modes of looking and being are inextricably intertwined in these works.

I begin the chapter with a short introduction to the works, their focus on looking, and the versions of the "modern" that they resist. I then consider how the act of looking in these choreographies is tied to the ways in which the body is articulated and able to be expressed in the changing environments of modernity. The demarcation of space and the distribution of bodies structure the possibilities of looking within and at these spaces. The prevention and interruption of physical connections are complemented by difficulties of seeing. In Bausch's work looking and touching are each at various times alternately the locus of resistance and oppression. Looking and touching are variously used as ways of: controlling the other, facilitating moments of connection, creating incursions into others' physical and psychological spaces, and returning scrutiny upon oppressors. In Tati's work the look increasingly takes the place of the body's physical engagement with space, as both the subject of interrogation in his films and the mechanism through which resistance is mounted. I examine how the music-hall influenced slapstick of his earlier films is reconciled with the increasing focus on perception in his later films, and the subsequent place of the body in the critical activities of Tati's choreography of *Play Time*.

A short introduction to the works

Tati's filmic choreographies explore post-War urban identity and its transformation through the new narratives and changing spaces of modernity, defined on the one hand by purported efficiency, convenience, organisation, and order, and on the other by experiences of displacement, alienation and separation. More specifically, the targets of Tati's own critical look are the new gestural and visual paradigms these spaces produce.

His first film *Jour de Fête* (1949) depicts a rural village in which a visiting fair impacts the day-to-day lives of its inhabitants. After a film of the streamlined modern American postal system is shown at the fair, the film's protagonist, François the postman, finds himself under pressure to find more efficient delivery methods. The main action of the film features a number of slapstick sequences in which François, on bicycle and on foot, rolls and stumbles his way through the houses and winding roads of the village as he attempts to deliver the mail at breakneck speed. *Jour de Fête*

introduces the conflict of the rustic and the modern that occupies Tati for at least his next two films. In *Jour de Fête*, Tati also sets up the themes of perception, attention, and misapprehension, which become the central concerns of his canon.

Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot (1953) is the first film to feature Tati's serial protagonist Monsieur Hulot, whose arrival in a beachside locale and commitment to enjoying himself causes chaos amongst the holidaying families and work-obsessed vacationers. As with *Jour de Fête*, the slapstick sequences of *Les Vacances* arise as a result of the contrasting rhythms of the protagonist and the other bodies in the spaces depicted. Hulot's ham-fisted and, at times, reckless actions are at odds with both the slow, leisurely pursuits of some vacationers, and the restrained behaviour of others too concerned with appearances to enjoy themselves. *Mon Oncle* (1958) also draws on this kind of rhythmic contrast. The second in the Hulot series, the film explores the changing spaces and technologies of modernity by contrasting a village steeped in the old ways with the new urban environments across town in a modernised residential area, where Hulot's sister lives with her family. In contrast to Hulot's ramshackle apartment in the old part of town, Hulot's sister lives in an ultra-modern house with new technologies and an absurd garden with a winding pathway and a fountain that Hulot's sister rushes to switch on whenever guests arrive. Efficiency and inefficiency are juxtaposed in both the clumsy interactions of Hulot with this new landscape, and the efforts taken by his sister to keep up appearances in front of guests. In *Mon Oncle*, Tati begins his interrogation of urban experience specifically, and its capacity to generate new visual and physical relationships.

Tati's exploration of perception and spatial experience reaches a climax in *Play Time* (1967), which depicts a hyper-modern vision of Paris, in which Hulot is let loose to wander the streets of the city. The film has no real narrative through-line, and is instead comprised of a series of encounters chronicling the alienation and displacement of bodies within the urban landscape. The second main sequence of the film (following the confusion of the opening scene at the airport, which I described in the introduction to this thesis) begins with Hulot arriving for an appointment at a city office building, before he is displaced from his initial trajectory by a number of accidental engagements that take him through the labyrinthine urban environment that Tati had specially built for the film on the outskirts of Paris. Semblances of a narrative appear throughout the film: it begins with an arrival (or a stream of arrivals, including, among various other figures, the American tourists at the airport) and ends with a union of sorts (quickly

followed by a parting) between Hulot and an American tourist named Barbara, who, similarly to Hulot, possesses an inquisitive look and a tendency to linger in spaces designed for through-traffic. If there are indeed any protagonists in the film, it is these two, "romantic leads" in the loosest sense possible. Yet they too are subsumed by the landscape and the film takes in much more than their sporadic experiences of the city. *Play Time* represented a big shift from the gentle slapstick of the previous films. The centrality of the protagonist's body as the focus of the slapstick in the earlier films is replaced by a figure very much on the fringes of the world Tati creates. The *mise-en-scène* is no longer organised by the mediating presence of the protagonist and there are numerous "gaps" in the film during which Hulot is absent and the spectator is confronted with wide shots of sprawling choreographies taking place amidst the buildings and streets of the city. In *Play Time* vision is structured not only by the urban landscape and its reflective surfaces but also by the ways in which the body is able to be articulated amidst this landscape. Whilst Tati went on to make two more films—*Trafic* (1971) and *Parade* (1973)[43]—*Play Time* remains his most definitive work and climactic exploration of urban experience, and it is in this film that Tati's choreographic discourse on vision is most prominent.

The *Tanzheater* (dance-theatre) works of Pina Bausch explore cultural memory and the performative construction of identities and gestural roles. The works being discussed in this thesis share with Tati's work an interest in the articulation and transformation of the body in the context of the new aesthetic regimes, narratives of subjectivity, and spaces of post-War modernity in Europe, and an interest in the visual practices these regimes, narratives, and spaces gave rise to.

Bausch's exploration of these themes was characterised by a distinct choreographic practice, with its roots in her training at Kurt Jooss's Folkwang School and her exposure to German expressionist dance.[44] Her work in the late 70s introduced a new kind of choreographic vocabulary—frequently violent, jarring, repetitive, and prominently featuring falling and colliding bodies. This work explored the implications

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[43] Despite coming to be regarded as Tati's masterpiece, *Play Time* was a commercial failure at the time of its release, and *Trafic*, the final instalment in the Hulot series, was subsequently made under heavy studio-enforced restrictions. The film follows Hulot, now employed in the automobile industry, to a trade show in Amsterdam where he is to display his latest design—a fully-equipped modern camping vehicle that continually malfunctions. Tati's final film, *Parade*, was made for Swedish television and features Tati as a ringmaster in a circus. Here, Tati revives a number of mimed sequences from his live act as a music-hall performer, and turns his critical focus to the relationship between spectators and spectacle.
[44] Royd Climenhaga, *Pina Bausch* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 4.

of authoritarian political narratives for interpersonal relationships and human connection, and her late 70s works in particular have been read as responses to the cultural after-effects of Germany's authoritarian political past.[45] *Blaubart* (1977) deals primarily with the cultural repetition and internalisation of narratives of oppression in post-World War Two Germany, exploring these themes through the narrative of the Bluebeard fairy tale. Bausch's work responds to particular versions of the tale that appeared in German culture at the beginning of the twentieth century. These versions reflected the desire for control in German politico-cultural narratives leading up to World War Two and the authoritarian political structures produced as a result.[46] In their depiction of the relationship of the wealthy nobleman Bluebeard and his wife Judith, these versions typically contained violent images of repression of the political and sexual other. Bausch's choreography presents an intervention into the learned patterns of behaviour and relationships generated by such narratives, as well as the perceptual frameworks they create.

Café Müller (1978), like Bausch's other choreographies from the period, depicts dancers in rehearsed, culturally embedded relationships and roles as they address painful cultural memories and the dislocation they experience as a result. In *Café Müller* the various figures dance with alternating hesitation and aggression in a darkened theatre space littered with empty tables and chairs, evocative of a deserted café. In one of the most enduring images of the choreography, a female dancer moves through the space in sweeping motions, as a male figure desperately moves the tables and chairs out of her way. Norbert Servos points out that this sequence highlights the separation of bodies and the prevention of human connection.[47] My analysis additionally focuses on the way in which such choreographic sequences represent the difficulties involved in seeing, not only literally, as a result of the darkened space, but also politically, amidst a complex constellation of cultural memories. The crucial connection I want to make in this chapter is that choreography (and the strategies and modes of *being* that this choreography entails), is reflective of and reinforces particular ways of *seeing*.

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[45] See Deirdre Mulrooney, *Orientalism, Orientation, and the Nomadic Work of Bausch* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002), 114; Mumford "Bausch Choreographs *Blaubart*"; Mozingo "Haunting of *Bluebeard*."

[46] Mozingo, "Haunting of *Bluebeard*," 97, writes of a "national myth of control and power" in Germany in the early 1900s, and cites Gordon Craig's characterisation of German culture during this period as being dominated by an "apocalyptic strain" (Ibid., 96).

[47] Norbert Servos, "Café Müller," in *Café Müller: Ein Stück von Pina Bausch*, by Pina Bausch (Paris: L'Arche *Éditeur*, 2010), film booklet, 72.

The cultural construction of vision becomes one of the central lines of inquiry in Bausch's works from the late seventies. Several scholars have indicated the way in which Bausch's works from this period frequently produce an awareness among spectators regarding the conventions of watching.[48] Raimund Hoghe's conversations with Bausch, recounted in an essay published in 1980 (and therefore pertaining to Bausch's late seventies works), reveal Bausch's transfixion with issues of visibility, watching and looking, and in particular enabling one to see that which is repressed.[49] Deirdre Mulrooney has noted the importance of eyes in *Café Müller*, categorising the work as "sight-specific" performance.[50] Indeed, the piece begins in darkness, with the dancers stumbling through the space with their eyes closed. Mulrooney differentiates *Café Müller* from Bausch's previous works, arguing that "there are no gags, no tricks, no winks at the audience" and that "[in] contrast to preceding pieces, in which the audience is literally taken by the hand [. . .] through [. . . an] anti-narrative jungle of the present moment, here we are physically excluded, 'fourth-walled', from the dance again."[51] However, it is my view that what unites the earlier work *Blaubart* (1977) with *Café Müller* (1978) is precisely the interrogation of the look, which takes place at the level of both the content and form of Bausch's choreography. It is both represented in the choreography and, crucially, directed back at the audience from within the work itself. Both works implicate the spectator in the representations on stage and the perpetuation of certain kinds of images and behaviours, and draw attention to the act of looking as both something that is inscribed by politico-cultural narratives and something that itself constitutes a political act.

In this thesis I focus my analysis on *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* as the archetypal works of Bausch's late seventies output. These choreographies, along with Tati's *Play Time*, have been chosen because they represent key moments in the development of these practitioners' compositional vocabularies. Mulrooney describes *Blaubart* as a "watershed in the Bausch landscape," pointing out that for the first time, spectators, "in their quest to 'make sense' of what they see'" are deprived of traditional Aristotelian plot structure and time constructs.[52] Royd Climenhaga suggests that Bausch's works

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[48] Birringer, "Dancing Across Borders," 86-87; Hoghe, "The Theatre of Pina Bausch," 73; Climenhaga *Pina Bausch*, 1-2.
[49] Hoghe, "The Theatre of Pina Bausch, 73.
[50] Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 122.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 114.

from this period were emblematic of a dramatic change in the world of dance, a great call toward new possibility in theatre."[53] According to Climenhaga, despite Bausch's earlier explorations of choreographic practice in 1975-76, it was Bausch's work of the late seventies (*Blaubart* 1977, *Café Müller* 1978, *Kontakthof,* 1978) in which her characteristic approach was developed, and her later works "all draw on [the] fundamental break in presentational practice" first created in these works.[54]

Another reason for my selection of works is the historical specificity of their intervention into visual practices. Both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* respond specifically to seeing that is informed by post-War European political narratives of subjectivity and share a concern with the readability of bodies within the visual paradigms of modernity. In this sense they are historically and thematically somewhat closer to Tati's *Play Time* than some of Bausch's other works. I will argue throughout this study that these works also share certain formal characteristics with *Play Time* in their approach to the totalising impetus of particular manifestations of twentieth century narratives of subjectivity. I will ultimately explore how a particular conception of choreography, as a set of strategies of being and looking, emerges in these works specifically out of their response to such narratives, and their underlying current of the search for wholeness. Whilst major themes of loss and identity continue to inform her later works too, the two works I will be discussing are the ones that respond most overtly to the situation and transformation of bodies in the vision of modernity that played out in Germany following World War Two, and specifically to the lasting impact of the totalising political narratives of National Socialism on the formulation of post-War German subjectivity. Bausch's understanding of the choreographic in these works developed in the context of this historically specific vision. Despite Bausch's continued exploration of similar themes regarding difficulties of seeing and interpersonal relationships in *Kontakthof,* and her use of similar strategies of repetition, duration, and fragmentation, the overt political context and narratives that inform this exploration in *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* are less prominent in *Kontakthof*. It is my belief that the two earlier works give a clearer sense of the emergence of such strategies in Bausch's work in relation to such narratives. Later works take a more international focus, explore the personal histories of her international ensemble to a greater extent, and have less of a sense of

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[53] Climenhaga, *Pina Bausch*, 1
[54] Climenhaga, *Pina Bausch*, 1; 70.

operating in relation to rigid, totalising political narratives. Janice Steinberg noted in her article on Bausch in *Dance Magazine* when Bausch was given the magazine's award in 2008, that Bausch's work from the 1990s was characterised by gentler "travelogues."[55]

In the case of Tati, I have selected *Play Time* because it represents the apotheosis of Tati's choreographic system developed and deployed in relation to the changing, newly urbanised spaces of post-War France and the visual and gestural paradigms these spaces gave rise to. Nowhere in Tati's canon is the constitutive relationship and exchange between ways of looking and ways of being more elaborately articulated and investigated than in *Play Time*. In this film we become much more aware of restrictions placed on both movement and vision, and of the way in which movement and vision define each other within the urban landscape. In *Play Time* the act of looking is more sustained and more frequently takes the place of the body of the protagonist Hulot (who dominates Tati's previous films in similar settings) as the locus through which the film's slapstick sequences are developed. To a much greater extent than in his previous films, the act of looking is inscribed not only by Hulot's actions, but by the choreographing of multiple bodies. From *Mon Oncle* onwards, Tati places Hulot in designer urban spaces that he rewrites through his peculiar ways of being and looking. Yet in *Mon Oncle*, Hulot retains a degree of agency and at times a perverse intention to subvert the rules of these spaces. In *Play Time*, Hulot's interventions are much more unwitting and less assured, and it is Tati the choreographer that takes over, forging new trajectories through the arrangement of bodies.

What is of prime interest to me is the way in which the three works—Tati's *Play Time* and Bausch's *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*— use choreography in order to question the perceptual coordinates through which identity is constructed in their respective politico-cultural environments. Bausch typically suspends performers in exhaustive choreographic sequences that reorganise narratives through repetition and fragmentation. In these moments she calls into question the spectator's processes of identification, encouraging her to "look again and again."[56] For Heidi Gilpin, Bausch's choreographies stress "not only the ephemerality of identity, but also its insistently fragmented and disfigured compositional form."[57] Lee Hilliker similarly notes of Tati's

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[55] Janice Steinberg, "Pina Bausch," *Dance Magazine* 82, 11 (2008): 30–31.
[56] Quoted in Birringer "Dancing Across Borders," 91.
[57] Heidi Gilpin, "Amputation, Dismembered Identities, and the Rhythms of Elimination: Reading Pina Bausch," in *Other Germanies: Questioning Identity in Women's Literature and Art. Postmodern Culture Series*, ed. Karen Jankowsky and Carla Love (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 173.

Play Time, that it creates "sites where perceptual stability and notions of identity are undermined in an ongoing comedy of errors."[58] As Hilliker points out, the progression of Tati's films mirrors the transience and the cluttered, compartmentalised structures of the life he depicts, presenting a system that is not so much one single narrative, but rather an amalgam of multiple narratives, many of them incomplete, or incoherent.[59]

As with the two Bausch works, all of Tati's films—but *Play Time* in particular—are concerned with the difficulties involved in looking. They resist the relatively fast-paced, action-oriented aesthetics of the films of Keaton and Chaplin, to whom he is often compared, and with whom he shares music-hall roots. Instead, Tati offers a durational choreography, comprising a series of wanderings and visual gags. Part comedy, part choreography, and part visual art, his films deny viewers conventional frames of reference, forcing them to "make their way" through the visual field they are presented with. Hilliker points out that in addition to "questioning the perceptual powers of its characters [. . .] Tati's films actively challenge the viewer's abilities to identify, follow, and locate as well."[60] Many critics have emphasised to various extents the work and play involved in watching a Tati film. Kristin Thompson, for example, has noted how "many people find it a tiring experience to watch [*Play Time*]."[61] Bausch's exhaustively repetitive choreographies present a similar challenge, locating viewers as durational bodies along with the performers, and are complicit in the perpetuation of oppressive cultural narratives. Susan Kozel observes that "Bausch's performances are often very long, causing them to be experienced in 'real time' where all parties involved battle exhaustion."[62] In their repetition *ad nauseam*, in their gaps, stillnesses and tableaux, Bausch's arresting choreographies produce moments in which a sense of expectation is conferred upon the spectators themselves, or as Mumford puts it, the "chance for intervention" arises. [63]

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[58] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 321.
[59] Lee Hilliker, "Hulot vs. the 1950s," *Journal of Popular Culture* 32, 2 (1998): 76.
[60] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 320.
[61] Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 252.
[62] Susan Kozel, "The Story is Told As a History of the Body," in *Meaning in Motion*, ed. Jane Desmond, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 106.
[63] Mumford, "Bausch Choreographs *Blaubart*," 48.

Narratives of the modern and the figuring of history in Bausch's work

In Bausch's case, the relationship to totalising narratives is clear. The narrative setting of *Blaubart* is provided by a recording of Béla Bartók's opera "Duke Bluebeard's Castle", which plays from a tape desk at the centre of the performing space. The narrative of Bartók's opera centres on the discovery by Judith, Bluebeard's newest wife, of a chamber in Bluebeard's castle in which she finds the corpses of his previous wives. The Bluebeard fairy tale has had a long history in German culture. Mumford has noted that several early twentieth-century versions depicted a sympathetic Bluebeard, while showing his wife as a figure who "masochistically seeks and accepts her fate" and whose curiosity is ultimately dangerous and tragic.[64] These versions of the tale omitted Charles Perrault's 1695 happy ending, and rather "[belonged] to a bleak canon typified by tragic, non-utopian endings…."[65]

Mumford (2004) and Mozingo (2005) have described *Blaubart* in particular as a response to the personal and political after-effects of authoritarian narratives in Germany in the second half of the twentieth century. They situate Bausch's appropriation of the Bluebeard narrative in light of the changing place of the Bluebeard fairy tale in German culture, and the prominence of violent "images of control"[66] and the submissive role of the female in early twentieth-century Germanic retellings of the tale, concurrent with the political climate in which they were told. Mulrooney (2002) writes of the central figuring of "nation-narration" and a resistance to the psychology and narratives of fascism in Bausch's work. [67] Mulrooney writes that "the totalitarian's need for a coherent and totalising narrative springs from the cornerstone of the *modus operandi* 'Nations are themselves Narrations'."[68] She points out that "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging [. . .] is vitally important to, indeed inextricably bound up with, German imperialism (i.e. fascism/Nazism)."[69] Chronicling the abandonment of objective narrative in Bausch's *Tanztheater* from *Blaubart* onwards, Mulrooney describes Bausch's 1976 work *The*

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[64] Mumford, "Bausch Choreographs *Blaubart*," 46.
[65] Ibid., 44.
[66] Mozingo, "Haunting of *Bluebeard*," 97.
[67] Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 41; 256.
[68] Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch,* 256.
[69] Ibid.

Seven Deadly Sins as the "end of the narrative phase" in her canon.[70] In *Blaubart*, Bausch began to dismantle linear narrative, time constructs, and traditional plot structure.[71] Bausch's treatment of and operation on narrative is increasingly bound up in the articulation of a fragmented subjectivity, both in the figures that populate her work, and in the way in which the spectator is able to identify with the political and cultural narratives.

Bausch's repetitive, fragmented choreographies in *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* respond not only to authoritarian narratives in Germany's recent political history, but also to the potential structure of history itself as a totalising narrative. In his essay "After the fall: Dance-theatre and dance-performance", Adrian Heathfield discusses the re-figuration of time across "shifts in choreographic practice" brought about first by dance-theatre in the 1980s and '90s, and then through the "current European scene [. . .] at the interfaces of dance and performance art."[72] Heathfield argues that Bausch's choreography of *Café Müller* takes place in an "after-space" of performance—that is, it corresponds to "a space of remembrance and re-enactment within the present" and points to the figures' "inability to be in the present space of enactment."[73] I would argue to the contrary that the dancers are never entirely able to successfully access the past or inhabit their memories either through performance, and are involved in a constant process of discovery, difference and deferral.

In the opening sequence of *Café Müller*, two female dancers move hesitantly against the wall of the set. The dancer in the foreground moves more aggressively, colliding with the wall, falling to the floor and bumping into the tables and chairs that litter the space as she negotiates a space that, as Heathfield highlights in his term "after-space", gives the impression of cultural memories being revisited and renegotiated. This impression is created both by the mess of unoccupied tables and chairs, and the fact that the dancers' eyes are closed as they move through the space. (Others have also pointed out that this image situates the sequence as a dream,[74] or else depicts the women as sleepwalkers.[75])

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[70] Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 113–4.
[71] Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 114.
[72] Adrian Heathfield, "After the fall: Dance-Theatre and dance-performance", in *Contemporary Theatres in Europe: A Critical Companion*, ed. Joe Kelleher and Nicholas Ridout (London: Routledge, 2006), 188.
[73] Ibid.,190.
[74] Price, "The Politics of Tanztheater," 329–30.
[75] Servos, "Café Müller," 73.

The dancer in the background reproduces the first dancer's movements, but as a gentler choreography. In this sense, the second dancer can be read as revealing the status of comportment as memory in this sequence as both dancers rediscover the body. Yet in her use of duration and repetition, these memories can only be accessed in dislocated parts that are prone to difference and excess in their re-enactment. In *Blaubart*, Bausch reworks Bartók's version of the tale through rewinding and repeating sections. Bluebeard literally controls the tape player from which the opera beams into the space, rewinding and replaying the tape as he compulsively enacts certain behaviours. Through their isolation and repetition, the choreographic sequences begin to signify in their own right, interrogating their own place within the narrative of the fairy tale and its early-twentieth century politico-cultural significations. In Bausch's extended repetitive sequences, cultural memories become dissociated from the teleological structure of history. History can be understood as teleological when it is taken to constitute an official system of narration that makes deliberate causal connections between multiple phenomena or events, and in so doing consigns them a definite place within the narrative.

Cultural memory and narratives of modernity in Tati's films

In this section I introduce some of the key historical narratives that Tati's films engage with. Both *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time* are primarily concerned with what Hilliker describes as "the evolving technological-social nexus of French society in [the] period of the 1950s and '60s" as it manifested in new ideas of design and living.[76] Yet from *Mon Oncle* to *Play Time*, there is, as Borden points out, a marked shift in the manifestation of the modern. In *Play Time*, the hypermodern vision of Paris that Tati constructs "is stripped of the history, memory, colours, dirt, nature, family relatives and other aspects of old France still visible in *Mon Oncle*."[77]

The loss of spatial coordinates and the identities of places carry important implications for ways of being and looking in the modern metropolis. In *Play Time*, Hulot is cast astray: in contrast to the hotel in *Les Vacances* and the apartment in *Mon*

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[76] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 318.
[77] Borden, "Tativille," 218.

Oncle, Hulot doesn't live anywhere in *Play Time*.[78] He also does not work as far as the audience knows, and he doesn't really know anyone apart from a few acquaintances he encounters in passing.[79] Even then, they seem to know him more than the other way around. Additionally, rather oddly, several passers-by and officials seem to recognise or misrecognise Hulot or one of the many Hulot-like doubles that populate the film. The totalising setting of *Play Time* has often meant that the film is interpreted as an "assault on modernism".[80] In one sense Tati's films chronicle the recession of history (a key concern of cultural modernism) amidst the aesthetic spaces of architectural modernism. The destabilisation of the relationship between perceiver and perceived in *Play Time*, noted by Hilliker, is situated in the context of this recession.[81]

History, here, refers more broadly to the reminders and markers of the past that have been subsumed by new markers of an increasingly homogenous urbanity. On the one hand, history in this sense is lost in the hypermodern vision of *Play Time*. On the other hand, history, or rather the teleological model of history, as a formal and often institutionally governed process of narration that communicates and perpetuates structures of power, is precisely what Tati is challenging. In *Play Time*, Tati interrogates, counters, and modifies *new* histories of the subject written by the changing post-War spaces of modernity. Tati's works resist not only the teleological, synthesising activity of history, but also the way in which the modern *inserts* itself into, and figures itself as part of, this history. In any case, history takes a different function to its formulation in Bausch's works, where the past functions as a lingering paralysis confining bodies to violent relationships and submissive gestural roles. While the works of Tati and Bausch respond to "problematic narratives" in their recent national histories, in Tati's case the problematic narrative is much more recent. It is the totalising vision of urban life generated by the wave of technological and social change in post-War France. Tati shows that the modern is in fact productive of a poetic cacophony, a fragmentary experience of space. *Play Time*, consequently, can be read as an assault on the narratives of containment, compartmentalisation, order, hierarchy, organisation, convenience, and efficiency of the modern. Tati's gags locate slippages, discrepant experiences of time and space, and poetic possibilities of embodiment that have the

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[78] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 322; Chion, *The Films of Jacques Tati*, 85.
[79] Chion *The Films of Jacques Tati*, 85.
[80] Noted by Borden, "Tativille," 218.
[81] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 327.

potential to create new urban narratives. At the same time, Tati's films retain a fondness for remainders of the *past*, separate from the formal teleological processes of history. The disappearance and ghostly apparition of Parisian monuments in *Play Time*, the depiction of village life in *Jour de Fête* and *Mon Oncle*, and the old-world ways, expectations and rhythms of both François the postman and Monsieur Hulot, speak of a past that Tati values, and one that is fast dwindling in the new spaces of modernity.

One of the focuses of Tati's exploration of urban experience is the way in which this vexed relationship to the past and to the modern affects the act of looking and ways of being within urban spaces. This relation to the past is also routed through the figure of Hulot himself, who is on the one hand a figure with an affinity to the rhythms and social rituals of the past, and on the other hand, in comparison to the other figures that inhabit the spaces depicted in the films, uniquely attuned to the playful possibilities of the modern. He approaches the modern as neither entirely poetically liberating, nor as unequivocally negative.

The look in *Play Time*

In the set-up of the look in the opening airport scene in *Play Time*, Tati immediately directs the audience's look more deeply into the shot, with his wide shots and refusal to privilege foreground over background. The looks of spectators and the film's characters alike are misplaced throughout the film. At the entry to the office building, Giffard stands metres away from Hulot, who has been waiting to see him. As mentioned earlier, Hulot sees Giffard's reflection in the glass walls of the building opposite, where a trade fair is taking place. He follows the reflection, and then sees Giffard recede into the background. Another figure in the pattern of lookers Tati often sets up within his shots—a man giving a report to some boardroom executives on one of the upper floors of a glass building—sees Hulot on the street below looking for Giffard through the glass of an adjacent building. The look is incidental, accidental, and often misleading, distracting, and misguided. The sequence is completed when Hulot locates a man with grey hair, blue coat and grey trousers inside the trade-fair building, and approaches him, only to find that it is not Giffard, but a salesman at a trade-fair display selling, absurdly enough, black vinyl chairs much like the ones Hulot had encountered earlier in the office building, while waiting for Giffard. A second salesman then arrives to tell Hulot

all about the chairs and proceeds to press one of them and demonstrate how they return to their original shape. Hulot is made to sit down and try one of the chairs, whereupon the earlier image of him in the waiting room interacting with the deflating chairs is recalled and his trajectory is interrupted once again. This sequence forms part of a dramaturgy of distractions throughout the film, connecting ways of being, or moving through space, and looking.

Despite the continual displacement of the look of both the characters and spectators, the look is also figured in *Play Time* as the locus of resistance and as that which is capable of producing new ways of interacting with the rigid and alienating structures of the modern city. Hulot's look itself is set up as a deviant look, or as Pedro González suggests, a "poetic look".[82] In Hilliker's view Tati is seeking to bring "a sense of humanizing possibility to contemporary architectural space from which it had been absent."[83] Quite apart from that of most of the other figures in the film, Hulot's look is characterised by ingenuity and playfulness towards the urban landscape. Towards the end of the opening scene at the airport it becomes evident that Barbara, an American tourist, possesses a look that is more akin to Hulot's than to that of the other female tourists. She stops to notice a woman petting a dog stored inside her luggage, and eventually leaves through a different turnstile from that of the other tourists. Thereafter, Barbara is often left behind by her tour group as she stops to look. At such moments her look is aligned with that of Hulot.

In *Mon Oncle*, Hulot's inquisitive look, which lingers a little longer upon objects and spaces than that of other characters, reveals to us a range of comic potential. In one sequence, Hulot looks out of the open window of the stairwell to his apartment. When he closes the window, the light cast upon a cage mounted on an adjacent wall outside the apartment, causes the bird inside to tweet. When he opens the window, the tweeting stops. After playing with this "mechanism" of his own discovery for a while, Hulot closes his window and leaves, allowing the bird to carry on tweeting in his absence. Hulot's resistive look upon the world functions as a *reclaiming* of space (and time) in the experience of the modern metropolis. More broadly, his exploration of and interaction with spaces opens up new possibilities of inhabiting urban space, and challenges the movements, mechanisms and relationships encoded within this space.

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[82] Pedro Blas González, "Jacques Tati: Last Bastion of Innocence," *Senses of Cinema* 37 (October 2005), accessed August 12, 2014, http://sensesofcinema.com/2005/european-cinema-revisited/tati-2/.
[83] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 326.

Hilliker writes that it is the "meditation on and active manipulation of perception [that] sets *Play Time* apart," and argues that the film's destabilisation of the relationship between perceiver and perceived forms part of "a discourse on boundaries and identities." He has also noted that Tati "challenges the viewer's abilities to identify, follow, and locate as well."[84] Tati's challenge to the viewer's capacity to make perception meaningful can be more firmly articulated through an analysis of the choreographic practices and strategies through which this challenge is mounted. In my treatment of *Play Time* I endeavour to unpack the complex interrelationship of modes/strategies of being and looking.

Ways of being and looking

At every moment in *Play Time* there is a tension between the persona of Hulot as subject—as well as the establishment of that persona both socially within the fictional world of the film and cinematically as protagonist for the audience—and the overwhelming objective environment, with its capacity to confound and alienate. In this film Tati constructs a more complex relationship between Hulot and the spaces he inhabits: here his environment is totalising, unlike in *Mon Oncle,* where he has a space of his own, and *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*, where he is able to wreak mischief in a beachside locale. Hulot's *rapprochement* with his dominating environment in *Play Time* seems difficult—play becomes more subtly resistive. His mischievous streak and gay abandon from the previous films seems in *Play Time* to be somewhat repressed, and replaced with bewilderment and curiosity. Tati's modernist vision of Paris completely envelops Hulot. In *Les Vacances,* Hulot's primary engagement and conflict is with people. By *Play Time*, his engagement with people decreases in deference to a more primary engagement with space.

As mentioned earlier, in *Play Time* Tati sets up spaces purportedly defined by containment, efficiency and convenience that often become the opposite in the various drawn-out sequences that he choreographs within these spaces. In one sequence, Hulot is accosted on the street by an old acquaintance, who invites him in to look at his new apartment. The man proclaims triumphantly that he has paid cash down on his new car

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84 Hilliker "Modernist Mirror," 320.

and approaches the parking meter, only to realise he has only paper notes. He obtains the small change he needs from Hulot, whose politeness once again obliges him and implicates him further into the action of the scene. Hulot is ushered into the apartment complex by his friend for a drop of Scotch, and is again inconveniently engaged, side-tracked from his initial trajectory. *Play Time* involves Hulot in a series of interruptions and engagements that delay him from his task of finding Monsieur Giffard, which extends across most of the film (and which I will discuss shortly). Hulot is endlessly deferred and displaced, getting stuck in waiting rooms, elevators, and the foyer of his friend's apartment complex. As the reluctant Hulot is ushered into the apartment complex by his acquaintance, there is a comical moment inside the doors when the negotiation between Hulot and his acquaintance about whether Hulot should come in continues as they wipe their feet on the doormat. As a result, they continue to wipe their feet for some time as the acquaintance tries to convince Hulot to come inside. In this instance, Hulot is once again obliged by the space he is in to comport himself in a certain way—the space regulates the gestural body—and he continues to wipe his feet. We then cut to a wide shot of the apartment building from the street outside, and we see Hulot and his acquaintance still wiping their feet.

The gestural and architectural Imaginary of Tati's work comprises a series of impeded trajectories, of glass doors, reflections, walls, elevators, car parks and traffic jams.[85] The implications of these trajectories for vision are that both causality and intentionality are interrupted and we are given a fragmentary experience of space. In an early gag, Hulot negotiates his way through a heavily occupied car park, and is forced to take another route when his path between two parked cars is blocked by the opened door of one of the closely parked cars. The free-flowing Hulot of *Les Vacances* appears in *Play Time* displaced. He is absent for several shots, presumably lost in the labyrinthine cityscape. As Hulot enters the trade fair, he is swept up in a movement of businessmen into an elevator. As a result, in the next scene at the trade fair he is absent, having been displaced, dislocated. Instead, his spot is filled by a double, whose behaviour at the trade fair later lands the real Hulot in trouble when he finally appears. His comical search for Monsieur Giffard, the man who Hulot is scheduled to meet for

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[85] What is significant in speaking of the operation of an "Imaginary" in these films and the spaces they represent is the implication that the structuring of these spaces has for the construction and contestation of *identity*. In Chapter Two I will elaborate how the aesthetic territory of Tati's films resembles the Lacanian Imaginary.

some reason or other, similarly places Hulot in a play of absences in a maze of cubicles in an office building. The culmination of this running gag occurs when Hulot seeing a reflection of Giffard in the glass doors of the building opposite thinks he has finally located him and makes his way towards the building. In fact, Hulot has been distracted by appearances and Giffard is left standing behind him.

Throughout the film, Hulot's presence is continually *excluded* from the landscape and from contiguous scenes in that landscape as he faces a number of dislocations, interruptions and accidental detours. Presence itself is embroiled in a play of reflections, absences, and doubles. In the sequence in which Hulot goes to see the new apartment of an old acquaintance, when Hulot attempts to leave, he finds himself stuck in the foyer, unable to find the mechanism to open the main doors. We leave him for a while, and in his absence the camera pans back to the apartment windows, through which we watch his acquaintance take off his jacket and sit down to relax, and the woman in the adjacent apartment watches television. We see Giffard leave the building through another entrance and follow him as he walks along the footpath and past the doors of the foyer in which we last saw Hulot. The camera then returns us to the foyer where Hulot's acquaintance finds Hulot still trying to find his way out. Monsieur Hulot is a partial presence in *Play Time*. As André Bazin observes, "the originality of the character [. . .] lies in the idea of non-completion. [. . . His] main characteristic lies in daring not to be there entirely."[86] Hulot, Bazin claims, "raises shyness to the height of an ontological principle."[87]

Indeed, Hulot is an outsider in every scene of *Play Time*—he is never the central figure in the proceedings/activity of a particular location. In the trade fair his is an incidental, accidental presence, apart from the vendors and the tourists who are the main participants. In Giffard's office building, he is once again a perpetual outsider, always waiting or stranded. In one lasting image, the detached Hulot stands at the top of an escalator, looking down upon the maze of cubicles and the activity in and around them. His frequent absence and sidelining throughout the film has a significant impact on ways of looking in the film. The figure of Hulot on the outskirts looking in becomes a model for vision, the model for a particular kind of inquisitive look that the film induces in its spectators. Alternately, Hulot's exclusion from the landscape and frequent absence

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[86] André Bazin, *Qu'est le Cinema* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1975), 43, quoted in Chion, *Films of Tati*, 47–8.

[87] Bazin, *Qu'est le Cinema*, 43, quoted in Chion, *Films of Tati*, 48.

from entire scenes presents moments in which the visual field is not organised for the spectator by the guiding look of a protagonist—moments in which the viewer is forced to make her way visually through the image, unaided. The spectator's look is alternately displaced and encouraged.

In Tati's films, and in *Play Time* in particular, ways of *being* are inextricably linked to ways of *looking*. Alienation, separation and isolation are contrasted with reproduction, repetition, multiplication, and reflection, which function resistively to create new perceptual experiences and modes of embodiment. The labyrinthine spaces of *Play Time* are full of dead ends, collisions, absences, detours, conflicts, restrictions and hesitations and at every moment prompt a reappraisal of the possibilities of space. The implications of this space for gesture, perception and identity become the focus of Tati's deconstructive strategy.

Tati connects ways of looking and ways of being most overtly in his imbrication of spaces designed for *display* and *inhabitation*, most notably in the trade fair, but also in the apartment complex, Royal Garden Hotel and office building. This connection is particularly highlighted in the waiting room of the office building. The walls of the room are covered in framed portraits of important figures, perhaps former company presidents, in contrast to Hulot, who is an unimportant figure cast aside and made to wait while more important business presumably takes place elsewhere. It is at once a space in which people wait (and in Hulot's case for quite a long time) and a space designed to display the distinguished history of the company to visitors. The elegance of the figures in the portrait is in contrast to Hulot's clumsy and uneasy engagement with the contents of the room.

The trade fair consists of display stalls that reproduce part of the home—a door that closes in silence, part of a living room (the site of a vacuum cleaner demonstration) and the ubiquitous black chairs, which appear on display at the trade fair and form the crucial link between the office spaces at the beginning of the film, and the residential apartments in the middle. In the apartment scene, Hulot's host attempts to impress him by casually pressing one of the chairs as he passes so that it deflates. Hulot has by now seen the same demonstration three times. The scene in the friend's apartment presents one of the most overt examples of Tati's conflation of viewing and living spaces. Significantly, the ever-elusive Giffard, with whom Tati has had a number of near-misses but has been unable to actually meet since the opening of the film, is a guest in the adjacent apartment, separated from Hulot only by a wall. We see the apartment from

outside, the windows enclosing and framing activity within. As Borden notes, the sequence both reveals and reflects upon the medium of film itself as a "structure of viewing."[88] More specifically, both the apartment and trade fair scenes show that such viewing is being structured in relation to the question of spectacle: both scenes situate the space of living itself as a space of display.

Similarly, in *Mon Oncle*, the Arpel house presents the collusion and conflict of spaces designed for display and habitation. One of the most enduring gags in the film is the ridiculous garden, with its impractical design features such as the curved pathway stones, which guests unwittingly follow, even though it takes them much longer to get to the house, and the fountain that Madame Arpel, as mentioned earlier, scurries to turn on and off depending on just who is visiting. In *Trafic*, where Hulot is employed as an automobile designer, the convergence of spaces of display and inhabitation is manifested in the very premise of the display car designed by Hulot. The car is a utility camping vehicle to be shown at an Amsterdam automobile show, while the show itself, in its confusion and haphazard organisation, becomes a space in which looking and being are fraught with difficulties. In the disintegration of the Royal Garden Hotel in the second half of *Play Time*, appearances and display are of prime importance. The efforts of the hoteliers to maintain order are systematically thwarted when the patrons and staff inhabit the space. The disintegration of the modern materials and décor of the hotel is a crucial part of Tati's "assault" on modernism in *Play Time*, as spaces designed for elegance and display do not stand up to the actual inhabitation of these spaces. In such sequences, the visibility of the body is both shaped by and interrupts the visual schema and trajectories set up by the spaces.

The body and the look

In the choreographies of both Bausch and Tati that concern me here, looking is established on the one hand as an important critical activity, and on the other as something that is subject to difficulties in the particular spaces in which their work is constructed. For both choreographers the inability to see is inextricably tied to the difficulties of moving in these spaces and the associated interrogation of one's place in the world physically. However, in the two works by Bausch, touching and physical

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[88] Borden, "Tativille," 222.

contact often supplant the act of looking (for the characters, who alternate between looking and touching as modes of engaging with each other). In *Play Time*, the failures of and limitations placed on physical interactions between bodies to a greater extent force the figures of the film to rely increasingly on looking and open them up to errors in looking. The construction of the look is bound up in the articulation and organisation of bodies, objects and spaces.

In Hulot and the other figures in the film, Tati situates the body alternately in deference to the cityscape and as the site of resistance. Giffard and numerous other docile figures seem to co-operate with urban space and the demands it makes of them, whilst at the same time appearing flummoxed by it. By contrast, through the bumbling Hulot, Tati provokes new interest in the poetic possibilities of urban architecture and the possibility for problems and errors of identification. Nevertheless, in *Play Time* the look is developed and to a large extent takes the place of the body as operative and resistive, and as the focus of Tati's intervention into spaces of leisure and work. In contrast to the more conventional and centralised slapstick body of the two previous Hulot films, the alienating structures of the urban environment in *Play Time* prevent Hulot from engaging with his environment physically to the same extent. His long, sustained looks, and his tall, leaning figure standing at the fringes of the action, are more ubiquitous in *Play Time* than in Tati's earlier films, in which the body is more frequently mobilised in the midst of a gag. In *Mon Oncle*, and in particular in *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*, Hulot's clumsy physical interactions with the objects and architecture of modernity often leave a trail of destruction. In *Mon Oncle*, his part-time employment at the "Plastac" Factory operated by his brother-in-law results in a chaotic intervention into the production line, producing several lengths of irregular plastic hose, to the great amusement of his co-workers. By contrast, Hulot's intervention into urban space and identity in *Play Time* is often a result of effects of perception rather than slapstick physical interventions. Here the focus shifts to errors in identification, misapprehension, and gestures, bodies and phenomena being misread or mistaken. The act of looking is itself rendered both suspect and deviant. Despite this evident shift in *Play Time* from a focus on the body to the resistive potential of the look, and the extent to which its failure might produce novel experiences in the new spaces of modernity, I nevertheless argue that the way in which the body is able to be articulated, performed, and read in these spaces remains crucial to understanding just how the look is constructed and

contested in *Play Time*. Of prime concern to Tati is the way in which the displacement of the body creates difficulties of seeing.

Ways of moving through space and the construction of the look in *Café Müller* and *Blaubart*

In the spaces constructed by Bausch, modes of inhabiting and looking are similarly intertwined. In *Café Müller* a female dancer (Bausch herself) emerges into the onstage darkness through a door to one side. With her arms outstretched, she takes small, hesitant steps. She dances very close to the walls of the set, around the outside of the mess of tables and chairs that occupy the remainder of the space. In this opening sequence, Bausch establishes in her dancers a particular way of moving through space that pervades the work, characterised by hesitation, longing, interruption, failure and separation. The demarcation of space corresponds in an important way to the working through of specific cultural memories. The stuttering, dream-like dancing of two female figures, the continual clearing of the café chairs and tables, and the movement through revolving doors at the back of the space, can all be read as part of the processing of cultural memories. As Norbert Servos has written, the mess of chairs and tables in the space functions to "prevent the dancers from expansive gestures or forming a group."[89] The chairs and tables create distance between bodies and prevent connection.

At several points in *Café Müller*, the female and male dancers thump into the walls of the set, an action that also occurs in *Blaubart*, marking the limits of their bodies and the space itself. As Leonetta Bentivoglio suggests, in *Café Müller*, "[the] space has its limits: like the perimeters of a prison. The body has its limits: its eternal need for contact and love."[90] In Bausch's choreographies, as with those of Tati, the two (the limits of space and body) are intentionally and unavoidably linked.

In *Blaubart*, the demarcation of space also corresponds to a reworking of the scopic regime. The dancers are constantly framed in relation to the tape deck towards the centre of the space, from which the Bluebeard figure plays and manipulates a recording of Bartók's opera. In an early sequence a chain of male and female figures

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[89] Servos, "Café Müller," 72.
[90] Leonetta Bentivoglio, "The Impossibility of Really Seeing Oneself," in *Café Müller: Ein Stück von Pina Bausch*, by Pina Bausch (Paris: L'Arche *Éditeur*, 2010), film booklet, 82.

walk the perimeter of the space with linked hands. Their heads hang down, perhaps out of shame, perhaps out of habit. Judith, the female protagonist, pulls the women out of the chain and positions them in the space so as to look at Bluebeard. In this action there is a challenging of the scopic regime, a reversal or inversion. Judith's action of turning the looks of the women back upon Bluebeard is also a turning in of the look, a changing of the direction of the look, going from Bluebeard at the centre of the space looking out at the women, to the women on the outside looking in at and enclosing Bluebeard. This is both an introspective look and a critical one, cast as much on Bluebeard the figure as "Bluebeard" the fairy tale, and cultural systems of representation that mediate narratives of oppression. Judith is the exemplary seer, who, as Mozingo points out, Bausch uses to direct the audience's gaze while "undermin[ing] the objects of her seeing, creating a type of visual deconstruction of the scene unfolding on the stage."[91] Such seeing, however, is balanced by equally important moments in which the look fails and the characters do not see. I will argue by the end of the thesis that it is ultimately not the critical look of deconstruction, but the failed look and subsequent gaze of the psychoanalytic unconscious that comprises the radical character of Bausch's choreography.

For now, what is significant is the way in which the look is positioned and displaced by the organisation and demarcation of space through movement. In the aforementioned sequence, there is not only a turning in or inversion of the look, but also a redistribution of the look. Judith disrupts the straight line of bodies around the perimeter, scattering them instead within the space. No longer organised rectilinearly, the look the women cast on Bluebeard comes from a variety of locations and distances. As Mozingo points out, on numerous occasions the women encroach upon Bluebeard's psychic space.[92] The look plays an important role in this, and at such moments signals its potential to displace the subject. In the sequence described above, it is the composition and manipulation of space that both regulates the look and the way looking is encoded in space.

Further, for Bausch, as for Tati, ways of being are inextricably intertwined with ways of looking; the prevention and interruption of physical connections are complemented by difficulties of seeing. *Café Müller* sets up a deliberately dark space,

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[91] Mozingo, "Haunting of *Bluebeard*," 101.
[92] Mozingo, "Haunting of *Bluebeard*," 100; 102.

into which two female dancers stumble with their eyes closed. The women do not see; their experience of space is facilitated by various male figures. In several of Bausch's pieces, long hair covering women's faces also functions as an impairment of vision. It is the movement of female bodies in light-coloured clothing and the frenzied activity (and sound) of a male facilitator moving tables and chairs out of the way as they move that define the otherwise darkened space. At one point this facilitator loses his glasses, so that he too is temporarily unable to see.[93] As in Tati's films, quite often sound, for example, the repeated thuds of the body against walls or floor, gives identity to bodies and spaces in *Café Müller*. At one point near the beginning, a red-headed woman hesitantly and noisily shuffles in stop-start groups of little steps, in the dark and through the wreckage. She wears a long black coat that hides her dress. She is heard, but her time to be seen is later, when she will remove her coat to reveal a bright turquoise dress, and perform a solo routine.

As in the opening sequence of *Café Müller*, in which the dancers' eyes are closed, there is very little eye contact between the dancers in the opening sequence of *Blaubart*. They don't really look at each other, but rather enact their relationship through compulsive rituals of touch and separation. Significantly, as Bluebeard walks from the tape desk to the body of Judith, his eyes stare blankly into the distance rather than at Judith's awaiting body, before he buries his head in her bosom. The fact that Bluebeard enters into a relationship with Judith without even looking suggests the "automatic" nature of the ritual. As she lies on the ground and Bluebeard curls up on top of her, Judith similarly looks away from him, at the ceiling. For much of this sequence, the look is entirely absent as a way of mediating interpersonal relationships. What is being highlighted instead is the cultural compulsion to behave in certain ways. Here, *not seeing* is tied to modes of being that are disconnected. In the following sequence Judith's hand repeatedly makes its way up Bluebeard's body and caresses his head, only to be violently flung down by Bluebeard each time. The look is not part of this cycle. The escalating sequence as a whole might be read as a violent manifestation of a cultural compulsion, a shutting down (of interpersonal connection and of Judith's "encroachment" upon Bluebeard, as Mumford puts it) that is representative of the authoritarian narratives mediated through the Bluebeard fairy tale. [94]

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[93] Simon Murray and John Keefe, *Physical Theatres: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2007), 79.
[94] Mumford, "Bausch Choreographs *Blaubart*," 48.

The look is then set up in contrast in the next sequence (which I described above), in which the ensemble of male and female dancers enter and walk around the perimeter of the space, and Judith pulls out the women and positions them to look at Bluebeard. Yet this look doesn't last long before the women lower their heads and their long hair obscures their vision. While the look becomes a powerful critical tool in the rest of the piece, at this moment it is subdued. Both the look and touch are each situated alternately as methods of control and the locus of resistance. The look is both oppressive and resistive.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have elaborated the focus of the selected works on the transaction of vision and the displacement of bodies in the context of totalising political and cultural narratives of post-War European modernity. Bausch's fragmented, repetitive sequences work to dissociate cultural memories from totalising authoritarian narratives in order to challenge the notion of the inevitability of certain patterns of behaviour and political and sexual relationships, as well as the representational systems that enable the cultural perpetuation of these behaviours and relationships. Similarly, Tati's poetic practices of embodiment and looking in urban environments rescue the modern from the formal, teleological processes of history in the context of narratives of technological and architectural progress.

In the following chapter, I deepen the discussion undertaken here of the intimate connection between ways of being and possibilities of seeing—of how gestural practices and articulations of the body give rise to and are reflective of visual practices—to a more formal treatment of the operation and defining characteristics of "choreography" both in these works and in the broader field of writing about avant-garde dance practices. I consider how choreography describes not only a set of strategies for being in these works, but also provides a framework for both curating and challenging the spectator's look.

Chapter Two: Choreography as Look and Choreography as Gaze

Introduction

The cultural construction of the look in the works of Bausch and Tati and the difficulties of looking amidst the cultural and physical landscapes of modernity can be understood as a discourse on vision. This discourse is tied to the "choreographic" dimension of the works insofar as ways of seeing are defined by the possibilities of being and moving within the spaces depicted. In this chapter I argue that choreography both mediates and challenges visual relationships in the selected works by Bausch and Tati. In the first part of the chapter I describe the features of the choreographic in these works and how they relate to contemporary discourses of choreography in dance studies. I understand the notion of the "choreographic" as both a mode of being/becoming and a framework for seeing. Further, I consider the way in which the choreographic is bound to these practitioners' responses to the visual and gestural paradigms of mid-twentieth century modernity and prevailing cultural narratives of wholeness and productivity. To this end, I examine the choreographic as a critical concept and resistive practice in relation to modernity. I also look at the some of the ways in which choreography has more generally been understood as a resistive practice in writing about avant-garde dance, and the discourses of "openness" and "subversion" that are common in such writing. I aim to add to these discourses by theorising the way in which choreography mediates and challenges visual relationships in the selected works by Bausch and Tati.

Whilst other scholars such as Hilliker (2002) and Borden (2002) have written about Tati's focus on perception in *Play Time*, what is missing in their assessments is an analysis of the importance of the choreographic to Tati's exploration of perception, and specifically an analysis of the particular choreographic practices through which he challenges the spectator's ways of looking. In the case of Bausch's late seventies works, many scholars (Bowman and Pollock, 1989; Price, 1990; Fernandes, 2002; Mumford, 2004; Mozingo, 2005) have already identified some of their choreographic strategies and how they facilitate certain ways of seeing for spectators, but none have done so explicitly in terms of the choreographic as an overarching critical concept and framework, or in relation to contemporary discourses of the choreographic. Moreover,

the work of these scholars has largely focused on the way in which Bausch's choreography invites the spectator into a critical engagement with the politico-cultural signification of the body and culturally inherited behaviours and relationships. In this chapter, I begin to argue that choreography not only carries critical capacities in these works and permits the appraisal of signifying practices, but in its frequent unreadability goes further, challenging the very subjectivity of the spectator and her ability to position herself critically. That is, choreography in these works not only enables certain kinds of looking, but also "looks back". In so doing, choreography contests the critical literacy of the spectator and the culturally and historically inscribed frames of perception that define the viewer's position as autonomous subject.

Ultimately my aim is to explain this displacement of the spectator-as-subject in terms of the choreography exerting a "gaze" in the Lacanian sense. Lacan's work on the gaze offers a theorisation of the way in which the visual regime in which the subject is constituted is undermined by the reversal of the look, a returned look from the side of the image. Lacan's theory of the gaze accounts for just why such a returned look should be so disruptive to the subject and allows us to better understand the radical extent of Bausch and Tati's choreographies and the way in which they displace spectators. Finally, I briefly consider the place of choreography in the Lacanian schema's formulation of subjectivity and vision, and how the Lacanian schema might provide key dramaturgical paradigms (such as the Mirror Stage and the Imaginary) for understanding the relationship between being and seeing in these works and their exploration of subjectivity in the political and cultural environments of modernity.

Starting Points: The Choreographic: Modes of Being and Seeing

What connects my analysis of Tati's films to my analysis of Bausch's theatre works are the formal aspects (including key strategies and aesthetic territory) of Tati's response to the narratives of modernity. His films, no less than her theatre works, are distinctly choreographic—that is, in a very broad sense, they are made up of distinct, dance-like compositional sequences that draw attention to the construction of gestures, spaces and bodies/comportments.

In *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, Susan Leigh Foster traces the historical use of the term "choreography" and the ways in which its meanings

and scope changed over time: from its use in the eighteenth century to refer to a system of writing or notating dance (a definition perhaps last used by Laban in the 1960s), to the disappearance of the term in the nineteenth century, its re-emergence in the twentieth century to refer to "the process of individual expression through movement," and its development, transformation and expansion since then to refer to "a vast range of engagements… producing distinctive visions of and knowledges about the body."[95] Foster notes that throughout the history of its usage, the term has variously been used to refer to the act and/or processes of learning, teaching, performing, and creating dance.[96] What is also significant here is the simultaneous use of the term to refer to processes, methodologies and/or acts alternately belonging to dancers and choreographers (and, as we shall see shortly, spectators). The terms "choreography" and "the choreographic" can be variously used to refer to: the methods by which *dancers*/*bodies* learn patterns of behaviour; a broader sense or observed *quality* of behaviour itself that has been learned; the methods by which the *choreographer* designs movement for dancers/bodies; the processes by which the choreographer *imparts* or *teaches* movement to bodies; a framework through which the choreographer *communicates* movement to an audience; the ways in which the choreographer *manipulates* the performing body; and the repeated *performance* of patterns of behaviour.

In my treatment of choreography in the works of Bausch and Tati, the term encompasses a range of performative, analytical and pedagogical modes. In writing of choreography as a pedagogical system, my concern is less with the choreographer's rehearsal methods and processes of teaching sequences to dancers than it is with Bausch and Tati's exploration of the way in which bodies learn, discover, process, and transform behaviour through performance. *Blaubart*, *Café Müller*, and *Playtime* in their own ways present strong examples of the overt investment of the choreographic in answering questions of vision. They are driven by an interest in the relationship of vision to practices of embodiment, comportment, and gesture; how movement and spatial structures affect our practices of looking; the organisation of the visual field (bodies, spaces, objects) into spatial and temporal patterns; and the visual apprehension and perception of the body.

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[95] Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 16; 72.
[96] Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 16.

The choreographic provides a critical framework for understanding the *interrelationship* of modes/strategies of being and ways of seeing in the selected works. The choreographic is both an embodied practice—a mode of *being* and analysis-through-being for *dancers* that involves repeating rehearsed movements—and a visual practice—a mode of *seeing*; a set of aesthetic and critical frames and conventions through which the *spectator* (guided by the choreographer) looks at, recognises, and interrogates patterns of behaviour. As a mode of being, choreography organises the experience of seeing through the systematic construction and performance of presence.

Defining the Choreographic as a Subversive Practice in the Selected Works and in Contemporary Dance Theory

Let's begin by examining the functions of the choreographic in the selected works and how they relate to some of the ways in which the choreographic has been theorised as a critical concept in contemporary dance scholarship. Whilst the term "choreographic" has been applied to a range of divergent practices, the following treatment focuses on a few of the key aspects and recent formulations of the choreographic that are relevant to my work here.

Bausch's dance-theatre works reveal the "choreographic" construction of identity in both an aesthetic and a political sense. Choreography, as a tool of dance, implies in one sense the construction of identity through learned patterns of behaviour, whereby bodies perform/are performed through a series of rehearsed steps or positions. Bausch demonstrates the choreographic dimension of political relationships (and the narratives that engender them) inasmuch as the perpetuation of these relationships similarly relies on learned patterns of behaviour, which for Bausch are either already physical (or carry implications for the physical relationship between bodies), or can be physically embodied in sequences of dance-movement. In Tati's films, as with those of his predecessors Keaton and Chaplin, choreography is both a key element of the music-hall-inspired slapstick sequences, and a means of examining the demands made on the body by modernity and the comportments and subjectivities produced as a result. In the works of both Bausch and Tati, choreography functions as a reflection on and investigation of cultural codes, narratives, and expectations surrounding the body.

Many of the formulations of the choreographic as well as observations about the ontological and corporeal status of the dancing body that appear in the articles collected in Noémie Solomon's *Danse: An Anthology*, focus on the subversive potential of choreography to operate on codes, roles, and histories. Alexandra Baudelot writes of the work of choreographers Jennifer Lacey and Nadia Lauro as offering a series of codes.[97] Baudelot's description might as well apply to choreography in general: "codes that are rooted in the bodies and spaces in which they evolve, and which toy with modes of representation."[98] Lacey and Lauro's work often combines multiple forms of representation and methods of dissemination including choreography, installation, television footage, and comic-strip drawings, and draws on a range of images and contemporary cultural archetypes including "sanitized porn stars… various Marie-Antionettes, Fantômas, fairy tale princes," and characters from popular films.[99] The dancers in these works embody and subvert contemporary cultural archetypes through parody. The work of Lacey and Lauro is in many ways quite different to the kinds of work I consider in this thesis, and I engage in different theoretical territory in writing of the way in which choreography might ultimately exert a gaze (returned upon the spectator) from within the collapse or suspension of its own meaning. Nevertheless, Baudelot's observations towards a general notion of choreography exceeding its form as danced movement provide many points of intersection with my discussion of the choreographies of Bausch and Tati. Baudelot later writes that

> Choreographic art is not limited to the space of danced movement alone. It expresses a constant interaction between culture and the body, each time requiring the invention of a structure and a vocabulary that make it possible to actualize the many situations we are caught up in. These situations can be seen as founding experiences that continually re-signify the grammars of the choreographic genre.[100]

In Bausch's hybrid of dance and theatre, the choreographic exceeds its status as danced movement, and continually renegotiates the relationship between "culture and the body." We have seen that both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* explore the plight of the body as it interacts with and is inscribed by oppressive cultural narratives and their aftermath

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[97] Alexandra Baudelot, "Jennifer Lacey and Nadia Lauro: Choreographic Dispositifs," in *Danse: An Anthology*, ed. Noémie Solomon (Dijon: Les Presses du Reél, 2014), 177–185.
[98] Baudelot, "Choreographic Dispositifs," 182.
[99] Baudelot, "Choreographic Dispositifs," 179.
[100] Baudelot, "Choreographic Dispositifs," 182.

of loss and alienation. In these works, the body vacillates between the compulsive reiteration of gestural roles and a process of rediscovering movement. The movement of the body between these two modes is evident in the contrasting opening sequences of *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*. *Blaubart* opens with the two protagonists Bluebeard and Judith initially occupying well-rehearsed roles of oppressor and victim and shuffling across the space, as Bluebeard rewinds and repeats a section from the Bartók opera version of the fairy tale. Through the course of the sequence, these clearly-defined roles are blurred, with Judith appearing at times to drag Bluebeard across the space. Nevertheless, there is a sense of figuratively and literally diving head-first into the familiarity of a relationship that has been rehearsed in recent German culture and political history. By contrast, *Café Müller* opens with two figures feeling their way with uncertainty through a darkened space littered with physical and cultural detritus. One of the dancers moves cautiously as though gently recalling movements, whilst the other engages in a more expansive choreography that is fraught with the risk of colliding with the objects in the space. Where *Blaubart* begins in the midst of a relationship and the revisiting of ingrained patterns of behaviour, *Café Müller* begins with a re-marking of the body and of space, and a sense of discovery and picking up the pieces "after the fall," to borrow the title of Heathfield's essay on *Café Müller*.[101]

Two interrelated aspects of choreography are its recognition and subversion of codes and its concern with learning, manipulation and discovery of patterns of behaviour. Crucially, the choreographic in this regard is characterised not only by a reproduction of form, but also by a performative *force* that operates on the relationships it constructs, through the very processes of embodiment and repetition. This is evident in the opening sequence of *Blaubart* described above, as the repeated act of performing and embodying what starts off as a violent and oppressive relationship ultimately reveals the participation and labour of both dancers. In the introduction to *Danse: An Anthology*, Solomon writes that "the affective force of dance resides in its enfolding of intensive choreographic gestures that always point to a series of "foreign" elements, outlining an experimental praxis that is based on propositions for differences, variations, and metamorphoses."[102] In the works of both Bausch and Tati, the choreographic, as

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[101] Adrian Heathfield, "After the Fall: Dance-Theatre and Dance-Performance," in *Contemporary Theatres in Europe: A Critical Companion*, ed. Joe Kelleher and Nicholas Ridout (London: Routledge, 2006), 188–198.
[102] Noémie Solomon, "Introduction," in *Danse: An Anthology*, ed. Noémie Solomon (Dijon: Les Presses du Reél, 2014), 21.

both the manipulation and repeated performance of learned bodies, comportments, and gestures, works to create dissonance, difference, and fragmentation amidst totalising aesthetics produced by the problematic political and cultural narratives. In the case of Bausch's late seventies works these were the narratives of control, possession, alienation, and exclusion in Germany under National Socialism, whilst in the case of Tati's films they were the narratives of efficiency, progress, and alienation that variously provided the rationale for and consequences of the sweeping urbanisation and modernisation of post-War France.

One of the main focuses of both practitioners' choreographies is the way in which political narratives co-opt modern subjects into engulfing, totalising systems of representation, structures of causality, and cyclical patterns of seemingly inevitable behaviour. The choreographic is both a means for depicting these relationships, and renegotiating them. In the works of Bausch and Tati, the choreographic operates on politico-cultural determinations of subjectivity and the inevitability of political and interpersonal relationships through the production and repetition of particular kinds of bodies and gestures—the haunted, compulsive bodies mentioned earlier that appear in Bausch's early works, and the slapstick body in Tati's films.

Throughout Tati's canon, the slapstick body alternately exacerbates and circumvents the physical and visual codes of urban space. In one of the later sequences in *Play Time*, a drunkard follows a looping neon arrow sign into the Royal Garden Hotel and is thrown out only to once more get mesmerised by the arrow and repeat the behaviour. In this moment the slapstick body, which might be seen as obedient (in relation to the sign) or disobedient (in relation to the hotel staff), highlights the ways in which urban codes malfunction.

What is further evident in this example is that choreography also creates and subverts expectations of *space* working and being inhabited in particular ways. This is also evident in the movement of bodies into, through, against, and out of the sets in both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*. The regulation of the space between and around bodies is a way of not only depicting and creating personal relationships, but also of operating on politico-cultural significations. Bausch's choreographies typically contain sequences in which bodies come together and separate, often violently. The manipulation of this space between bodies is both a means of exerting control over bodies and relationships, and a means of alternately collapsing or "spacing out" habitual relationships. In both works, the thudding of bodies into the walls of the set can be read as simultaneously

interrogating the representational space of theatre and dance; the cultural space of the inherited narratives, images, and memories that enclose and restrict the bodies to violent and oppressive patterns of behaviour; and the interpersonal space in which new relationships might be created.

The spaces inhabited by the dancers in *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* are spaces of memory and re-discovery, evoking, as we have seen, a kind of cultural "after-space."[103] One of the key aspects of the functioning of choreography in Bausch's work is its operation on time and history through its merging of the past and present. As the repeated performance of rehearsed behaviours, choreography negotiates a relationship between the past and the present, bound up in the dual mechanism of performativity as both a *citation* of past gestures, expressions, and bodies, and a heterogeneous *performance* in the present that is amenable to change. Bojana Kunst's observation of the "openness and subversion" that characterises the evolution of the dancing body in the history of twentieth-century dance is pertinent here. In her essay "Subversion of the Dancing Body: Autonomy on Display,"[104] she analyses the status of the dancing body in Conrad Drzewiecki's 1999 work *Waiting For* to demonstrate the openness and subversive potential of dance that uses the past to stay in and remobilise the present.[105] Drzewiecki's piece was a short solo with a dancer in a gold costume using his movements and gestures for the purpose of "decorating his body" in a way that "clearly evoked the Central European dance of the thirties." [106] Whilst quite different in content, this is similar to Bausch's undertaking in *Blaubart* in some ways, inasmuch as Bausch uses the historical re-telling of the Bluebeard fairytale, with its authoritarian undertones, to expose and renegotiate contemporary relationships between bodies. For Bausch, however, the past itself is the problem and the point of *Blaubart* is to bring into focus the legacy and cultural after-effects of an authoritarian political system on the nature of contemporary interpersonal, sexual, and political relationships. In *Blaubart*, Bausch negotiates not only the present, but also the hauntings of the past.

In its merging of past and present, the choreographic in Bausch's work is also characterised by the parody and repossession of culturally marked images and in this regard shares another quality with the deployment of the choreographic in the work of

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[103] Heathfield, "After the Fall," 188.
[104] Bojana Kunst, "Subversion of the Dancing Body: Autonomy on Display," *Danse: An Anthology*, ed. Noémie Solomon (Dijon: Les Presses du Reél, 2014), 55–67.
[105] Ibid., 56.
[106] Ibid., 55.

Lacey and Lauro mentioned earlier. The parodic and burlesque elements in *Blaubart*, as Mozingo notes, "make visible the hauntings of German culture."[107] Mozingo points out that Bausch's parody lies in her satirising of figures of power. This is most overtly evident in "Bluebeard's compulsive attempts to fortify himself against his memories and past deeds" and his attempts to control Judith, while the fragility of Bluebeard's ego is "echoed by the shabby walls of the castle and the debris of dead leaves."[108] Masculinity is associated with rigidity and is sometimes overtly comical, as Mozingo notes with reference to a sequence in which the men in the ensemble all line up in front of a doll and strike bodybuilding poses.[109] Moreover, by examining Bausch's work through the lens of Tati's, we see how the clumsiness of Bluebeard and other male figures as they try to control and contain women's bodies at various points approaches slapstick. In the sequence where Bausch's choreography has the Bluebeard figure either unwilling or unable to catch Judith, the repetition of falling in front of his outstretched arms speaks to the missed connections between bodies that were trademark aspects of the music hall routines that inform the work of Chaplin, Keaton, and Tati.

If Bausch begins with political and interpersonal relationships and through repetition transforms them into slapstick sequences in order to parody them and explore slippages, Tati's choreographies begin with the language of slapstick and use it to explore and comment on modern subjectivity and the demands made on the body by the changing cultural, political, and physical environments of modernity. For Tati, as for Chaplin in *Modern Times*, slapstick is the choreographic language *par excellence* of modernity. Tati's choreographies vacillate between economy and excess, and play out the absurd tension between the need for efficiency in the modern world and the need to display (one's bearing, one's wealth, one's participation in society). Choreography in these films is not only a mode of being and a mode of seeing, but also a mode of *being seen* and, further, *showing being*.

While choreography is a little used term in film analysis, consider its pertinence to the following sequence from *Playtime* where Hulot waits for Monsieur Giffard in the waiting room of an office building. Another man enters, dusts a seat adjacent to Hulot's with his hand, sits, and turns to acknowledge Hulot with a nod. There is an aural component to the greeting between the two men, with the sound of the foam chair

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[107] Mozingo, "The Haunting of *Bluebeard*," 94.
[108] Ibid., 102.
[109] Ibid.

whooshing as the man sits. Hulot reciprocates by leaning off his chair and sitting back down to emit a similar noise. The man then goes through a series of very deliberate, demonstrative, and rather mechanical moves. He crosses his right leg over his left, dusts his right pant leg off, checks his watch, adjusts his shirt sleeves, inspects his hand and brushes his finger nails, nods, unzips his compendium, stops to check his watch again, pauses to look up perfunctorily (throughout this sequence the man's look is also a 'move' in the choreography, an embodied performance of the act of seeing), removes a single piece of paper from the compendium, crosses his legs the other way, now dusts off his left pant leg, taps the paper with his fingers, takes out a box of mints from his inside jacket pocket, eats a mint, snaps the box shut very deliberately and puts it back in his pocket. He then touches the paper with his finger as if to finally get to the purpose of this extended choreography, but then detours once again to rub his bottom lip and pull his hat down slightly. He finally removes a pen from his jacket, scribbles one word, possibly a signature, dots the paper ceremoniously three times with the pen, clicks and puts the pen away. The brevity of the intended outcome (signing the paper) is contrasted with the extended choreography leading up to and following it. After putting his pen away, the man continues a sequence of checking, brushing, and adjusting himself and his belongings. At that point Giffard returns and escorts him away into the office, while Hulot waits on. The man's stay in the waiting room is made up entirely of displays of organisation, grooming, and importance. Throughout the sequence, form seems to be more important than function. His actions also form rhythmic phrases, and the sequence is punctuated by the distinct sounds his moves create. We hear the man's brushing, shuffling, zipping, snapping, tapping, and dotting, as well as contact of the body with the various surfaces in the space – the vinyl and foam of the chair, and the sound of the man's shoes on the hard floor. The emphasis on form and rhythm in this sequence is typical of Tati's treatment of urban bodies throughout the film. Indeed, much of the film's humour derives from its development and framing of such choreographies amidst the urban landscape. In Tati's films, choreography emerges as the natural and inevitable outcome of modernity, as the body becomes embroiled in new spatial arrangements, technologies, and rhythms. Choreography becomes a means for examining the visual and gestural paradigms of modernity and the subjectivities produced as a result.

As a system of being, seeing, and showing, choreography in the works of both Tati and Bausch participates in an analysis of the construction of presence within the new environments and cultural situations presented by modernity. The fragmentation of

bodies and gestures in the work of both practitioners functions as a breaking down of the performance of presence, and Tati and Bausch explore the implications of this not only for vision and visual practices, but also for notions of selfhood and models of subjectivity in the context of mid-twentieth century modernity and modernism.

Choreography and Modernity

The choreographic can be understood as a critical concept and resistive practice in relation to modernity. In her important book *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Felicia McCarren has chronicled in detail the development of choreography as a practice in relation to modernity with a particular focus on the place of choreography in the machine age. McCarren writes primarily of the overlap between dancing bodies and machines in the context of the changing language and aesthetic values of mid-twentieth century modernity. She points out that "between machines' not-quite-human functioning and humans' not-quite-machine-like performance, choreographers, philosophers, writers, filmmakers, and artists have situated dancers."[110] Tati's urban landscapes deal explicitly with the objects and spaces of the age of mechanical reproduction and how they implicate the body. These arrangements between bodies in spaces consider new living and working arrangements, transport, postal systems, and, in *Jour de Fête*, where postman François is obliged to "update" his methods after seeing an American film, the medium of film itself. *Jour De Fête* contains a number of slapstick sequences in which we see Francois struggle to meet the demands of the new system he implements. Many of the film's sequences evolved from an earlier short called *L'École des facteurs* (*School for Postmen*) (1946), which features three postmen rehearsing the choreography of a delivery in a classroom under the supervision of an instructor, with the intention of improving their efficiency. *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time* continue Tati's interest in how the new spaces and objects of modernity produce certain comportments and bodily trajectories, which also affect the how people relate to one another (by permitting and/or limiting communication and contact), and, finally, impact the transaction of vision (specifically the relationship between seer and seen). In an early sequence in *Play Time*, as Hulot tries to navigate his

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[110] Felicia McCarren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 12.

way through a maze of office cubicles in search of Giffard, he sees a woman with a headset sitting at a reception desk in the centre of the maze, and stops to tip his hat to her. Hulot continues his search and runs around the outskirts of the maze, only to see another woman facing him as he looks in from another of the walls of the office building. Hulot stops once again to acknowledge her before continuing on his way. After he has left, we see there is only one woman seated on a swivel chair at the desk, which surrounds her on all four sides. As she deals with different clients on her headset, she moves between adjacent sides. *Play Time* is full of such sequences in which the positioning of bodies in the new spaces of modernity and the resultant confusion of spatial coordinates produce novel interactions and interpersonal relationships. Communication between bodies is either comically extended and difficult, or thwarted altogether.

In Bausch's *Blaubart* the mechanical or technical redefinition of relationships manifests directly in Bluebeard's manipulation of one particular technical object—the tape desk beaming out Bartók's opera and its cultural compulsions repetitively into the space. Bluebeard's relationship with the tape recorder also speaks of a new relationship between the body and vision in the face of the technological and cultural machines of modernity in the context of the after-effects of National Socialist ways of thinking, being, and looking. Bluebeard, as I have already noted, does not see Judith for much of the opening exchanges. He looks elsewhere as the two thrust across the floor covered in leaves in the opening sequence, and stares blankly into the distance as Judith falls repeatedly in front of his outstretched arms in a later sequence. These two key images highlight the subsuming of the look within the seemingly automatic reiteration of narratives from Germany's authoritarian past, manifested through the repeatedly replayed soundtrack and the accompanying performance of habitual and oppressive relationships.

For the most part, however, in Bausch's work the interest in mechanically reproduced "objects" is less about the materials and concrete objects of modernity, and manifests instead in the possession, reproduction and mechanisation of bodies-as-objects through the compulsive politico-social "choreographies" that govern interpersonal relationships. Further, unlike Tati's films, Bausch's choreography of *Blaubart* does not take place in a modern urban centre. Rather, the set recalls earlier periods of German architecture and contains elements suggesting a fairy-tale mansion. With paint-chipped walls and a floor covered in leaves, the set evokes a space of

cultural detritus. Apart from the aforementioned tape-deck, the work does not otherwise focus on the way in which the spaces, objects, and technologies of modernity shape perception and embodied practices—or at least not the version of modernity prevalent in Tati's work. Nevertheless, Bausch's work takes place in the context of the broader aesthetic discourses of modernity and reflect a concern with the way in which the politico-cultural environments of modernity—and, in particular, representations and representational systems that were the legacy of authoritarian government in Germany in the first half of the twentieth century—impact interpersonal relationships. Her choreographic sequences explore the mechanisation of such relationships and of the transaction of desire within these politico-cultural environments, and in so doing engage in the kind of discourses chronicled by McCarren regarding the place of the dancing body in the machine age.

Modernity, Work, and the Choreography of Becoming

At the beginning of this chapter I defined one of the senses of choreography as the appearance of patterns and compositional sequences in movement. One of the defining features of Bausch's choreographies is that they reveal the *work* of composition. Susan Kozel, among others, has written of the exposure and display in Bausch's choreographies of the work involved in constructing and performing dance and the exhaustion faced by both dancers and spectators.[111] As I mentioned earlier, the opening sequence of *Blaubart* provides a key example of this. As Judith and Bluebeard shuffle across the space, the effort and labour of both of the dancers in sustaining the forward motion is evident. This revelation of the "work" of composition in action takes on extra significance in the context of the narratives of modernity that inform the explorations of both practitioners. Tati's films contain several sequences in which the choreography of work itself is highlighted and exaggerated. At the trade-fair in *Play Time*, various stall attendants demonstrate how their latest products assist the performance of household chores. A woman performs a repeating choreography in which she sweeps her arm across her body and feigns putting litter into a pedal-operated, ancient Greek-styled bin. Nearby, a man demonstrates using a vacuum cleaner with a long handle and a

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[111] Susan Kozel, "The Story is Told As a History of the Body," in *Meaning in Motion*, ed. Jane Desmond, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 106.

swivelling head to access hard-to-reach places like under a desk. This type of demonstration sequence is a key part of Tati's choreographic vocabulary and methodology, stemming from his background in mime. Tati highlights not only the choreography of work but also the work of *showing.* Showing the work involved in showing becomes a broader theme in Tati's films, set against the politico-cultural impulse of modernity to hide or erase labour.

In the trade fair sequences, choreography itself is highlighted as a mode of demonstrating, teaching, learning, and streamlining work behaviours. This is also the case in the aforementioned 1946 Tati short *L'École des facteurs*, in which three trainee postmen are put through the paces of the choreography of a delivery on model bicycles in a classroom. Another Tati short, *Cours du Soirs* (1967), shot on the set of *Play Time*, shows Tati once again in a classroom, this time taking a class of suited men through various choreographic lessons including the choreography of 'the social smoker' and the mathematics of stumbling up a set of stairs. Here choreography itself is the job of the instructor—choreography *as* work. The close association of choreography with work across Tati's canon reflects the way in which choreography is conceived and deployed in his films, specifically as a practice emerging in relation to modernity, and as the ideal medium for exploring the ways in which the body is implicated in the spaces, social rituals, and technologies of the machine age.

Dance scholars have chronicled the emergence of a particular formulation of the choreographic with historical links to practices of embodiment and subjectivity from the mid twentieth century on. The refiguring of the dancing body in the twentieth century as *machinic*, with an emphasis on work being performed, is one of the tenets of McCarren's analysis of choreography.[112] Andrew Hewitt writes comparably of the prominence of questions of production and productivity surrounding the body in mid-twentieth century modernity, and the human motor as the "principle image" of modernity in his book *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance.*[113] For Bausch and Tati, choreography is on the one hand both an intervention into the visual and gestural sphere of modernity, and contests the coherence of aesthetic regimes and visual systems emerging from new discourses of productivity and mechanisation affecting the body. Against this determination of the body, choreography becomes a

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[112] McCarren, *Dancing Machines*, 14–20.
[113] Andrew Hewitt, *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 41–42.

powerful tool for the likes of Bausch and Tati. In their hands, choreography becomes a tool not only for creating patterns, but finding the excess of these patterns, for recovering moments of human connection.

The characteristic fragmentation, isolation, and repetition of sequences that defines the "choreographic" in the selected works emerges in response to modernist narratives of the body predicated on notions of wholeness and the sensory and emotional alienation produced by totalising visions of modernity (which I described in the previous chapter with respect to the selected works).[114] Bausch's choreographies of both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* are heavily based in repetition and the repetition of *loss*. As such they are explicitly about the renewed search for a personal wholeness in the wake of a National Socialist history that envisioned wholeness in more problematic political terms. As Mozingo points out, the castle in the Bluebeard fairytale as envisioned in the set of Bausch's interpretation represents not only a physical prison, but Bluebeard's controlling psyche, the oppressive ideologies and imagery of National Socialism, and the representational apparatus of the theatre.[115]

In *Play Time* Tati is similarly concerned with the way in which an artistic and cultural imperative towards wholeness affects bodies and subjectivities in the urbanised spaces of post-War France. Hilliker links Tati's depiction of architecture to the institutional adoption of 1920s Bauhaus design principles in France following World War Two. Hilliker notes "the seamless architectural whole" formed by the various spaces in the film, and their appearance in the context of the theoretical and practical principles of a modernism informed by notions of wholeness and ensemble.[116]

In his essay "Synthesis and Total Artwork" Norbert Schmitz defines the aesthetic project of the Bauhaus as being guided by a philosophy of wholeness. Schmitz notes that definitive Bauhaus artist László Moholy-Nagy's adoption of a notion of the "total artwork," derived from the Wagnerian notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, manifested in his work in an attempt to find "an increasingly *non-ideological* balance" between industrial spaces/technologies and man.[117] This deviated in its aims from the concurrent

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[114] Dance theorist Michel Bernard has written similarly of how modern dance's exploration of themes of conjunction and disjunction, along with the heterogeneity of sensations can be used to challenge the organisation of the body in modernity. "On the Use of the Concept of Modernity and Its Perverse Effects in Dance," in *Danse: An Anthology*, ed. Noémie Solomon (Dijon: Les Presses du Reél, 2014), 70.

[115] Mozingo, "The Haunting of *Bluebeard*", 102.

[116] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 323.

[117] Schmitz, Norbert, "Synthesis and Total Artwork," in *Bauhaus*, edited by Jeannine Fiedler, (Potsdam: Könemann, Tandem, 2006), 302–3 (my emphasis).

politicisation of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* by National Socialism, which deployed a militarised notion of wholeness for ideological purposes. Nevertheless, as Schmitz points out, Moholy-Nagy's framing of the synthesis of man and industrial space as a function of *biological* necessity was guided, ultimately, by a kind of "biological determinism" that, in its emphasis on the "whole", failed to take account of the "fragmentary and incomplete" physiological, psychological and social aspects of the modern subject.[118] In other words, the Bauhaus's seemingly purely aesthetic reasons for privileging the whole were nevertheless underwritten by a kind of ideological imperative and, moreover, had significant political ramifications for the fundamental experience of subjectivity. In responding to the post-WWII redevelopment of France according to Bauhaus-inspired design principles and aesthetic philosophies, Tati's choreography explores and exposes these political ramifications and recovers the fragmentary and incomplete aspects of the encounter between man and industrial space. Borden argues that *Play Time* seeks to unravel "the irrational, passionate, performed and contested elements of city life."[119]

In *Play Time*, Tati examines the place of the body amidst the machine of modernity. In sequences such as the aforementioned examples of the drunkard repeatedly following the neon arrow outside the hotel and the woman swivelling at the desk at the centre of the maze of cubicles in the office building, Tati shows bodies functioning as part of a larger physio-economic system. One of the major thematic concerns in Tati's films from *Mon Oncle* onwards is the design and flow of urban spaces and the way in which the body fits in, spatially and rhythmically into architectural and techno-social wholes. Tati's choreography explores the kinds of subjectivities produced by such spaces—not only how subjects are comported in comical ways by these spaces, but also how subjects are able to derive, from their positioning in relation to the environment, a sense of themselves and their place within the world. Tati's discourse on wholeness is also evident in the incompletion of the picture through the constant exclusion of the protagonist Hulot, as I mentioned in Chapter One. Hulot's attempts to meet the office-worker Giffard and his eventual meeting with and separation from Barbara, an American tourist, can also be read as a search for wholeness. In both cases his meeting with these figures represents a

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[118] Ibid.
[119] Borden, "Tativille," 218.

resolution of the film's main action—in the case of Giffard the series of detours that develop from the initial appointment that Hulot arrives for at the beginning of the film, and in the case of Barbara, the search for connection and a like-minded companion in an often alienating and overwhelming urban environment.

Choreography as Metonymy

In her landmark book entitled *The Choreographic*, Jenn Joy defines and develops a notion of choreography as a critical and subversive practice in avant-garde dance. She defines "the choreographic" in this context as "a metonymic condition that moves between corporeal and cerebral conjecture… through a series of stutters, steps, trembles, and spasms."[120] There are several elements pertinent to my analytical work that can be drawn out from Joy's definition. Firstly, in moving between "corporeal and cerebral conjecture," choreography forces us to acknowledge and negotiate the relationship between being and looking, moving and reading. This is central to my understanding of choreography as a system of being and seeing and of the relationship between the two. Secondly, the movements described by Joy as characteristic of the avant-garde choreographic are certainly pertinent to the choreographic vocabulary of Bausch's *Tanztheater* in the late '70s and the development of this choreography in relation to narratives of wholeness. For large parts of both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*, figures stumble, stutter, tremble and spasm their way through a series of repetitive and fragmented movements that alternate between hesitation and aggression. Sequences of falling feature prominently in all of Bausch's works from this period. What can also be drawn out from Joy's characterisation of the choreographic as a "metonymic condition" is the significance and prominence of the part or fragment and the way in which it operates in relation to the whole in avant-garde choreographic practices such as those of Bausch and Tati. This idea of a negotiation of the relationship between parts and wholes gives us a definition of the practice of choreography at its essence, which involves composing with parts or "moves" that are then rehearsed over and over again. In the selected works of Bausch, through choreographic strategies of repetition and duration, fragmented parts (gestural, spatial, and aural) are removed from their functioning within the wholes (of political and aesthetic systems and embodied practices) to which they

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[120] Jenn Joy, *The Choreographic*, (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2014), 1.

belong, and are rendered excessive and deviant – that is, the parts they no longer correspond to the wholes that they represent. In *Café Müller*, the dancers stumble onto the stage in darkness and throughout the work continue to stumble through fragments of memories. At one point in the opening sequence, the female dancer in the foreground falls over suddenly. As a male dancer rushes to attend to her, another female dancer reproduces the choreography of the fall in a gentler and more mechanical way in the background. This kind of dissociation and repetition of gestural fragments occurs throughout the work. The structure of Bausch's choreography of *Blaubart*, meanwhile, is defined by the fragments of the opera that the Bluebeard figure obsessively plays and rewinds and repeats. Through the unfolding of the choreographic "parts" that accompany these fragments, Bausch finds moments in which Judith's movement cannot be contained by the narrative imposed on her by Bluebeard. Judith's choreographies often extend for too long, or venture into different spaces, and never provide closure for Bluebeard. Prominent examples of this include a number of "Ausdruckstanz" solos (sequences recalling an earlier tradition of Expressionist Germanic dance) performed by Judith throughout the piece. [121] In such sequences, Judith spinning and lunging through the space is juxtaposed with Bluebeard's failed attempts to control her. In one sequence, the women from the ensemble surround the seated Bluebeard and smother him with their touch, whilst Judith dances in the background. At the end of this sequence Bluebeard stands in stillness and appears unable to take in the whole scene with his look as the women dissipate and sequentially fall to the ground in different parts of the space. In another sequence, Judith performs a one of her solos behind Bluebeard's back whilst he is repeatedly jolted as he attempts to take the hand of another female dancer. The fragmentation, displacement, and multiplication of choreographic parts across the space and in its fringes are set against the centralised, often paralysed figure of Bluebeard and his attempts to maintain the representational whole and totalising impulse of the narrative of the opera.

The characteristics of the choreographic that Joy touches on—stutters, steps, and stumbles, moving between corporeal and cerebral conjecture—are also pertinent to Tati's body in *Play Time*, which hovers between distanced observation (cerebral conjecture) of and stuttering moves (corporeal conjecture) into the new spaces and

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[121] These sequences have been identified by Mumford as being reminiscent of the Ausdruckstanz tradition, "Bausch Choreographs Blaubart," 54.

perceptual paradigms of modernity. In many respects, the Hulot of *Play Time* might be considered a post-slapstick body. Hulot's body takes on a different function and expresses a different relationship between being and looking in *Play Time* compared to its operation in the earlier Hulot films. Hulot's body stumbles *through* much of those films. In *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*, Hulot arrives at a beachside hotel and obligingly carries a stack made up of his own and other people's suitcases into the hotel. With his vision obscured by the suitcases, he carefully negotiates one step at a time. Anticipating another step, he extends his foot into the air and loses his balance. He stumbles through the front door of the reception room and his momentum carries him straight out the back door where he drops his stack of suitcases. Indeed, Hulot's peculiar lean, with his body constantly on the verge of tipping over, is a defining feature of the character. In several sequences in the earlier films, this lean develops into a running stumble. In *Play Time*, the lean is sustained. It becomes a vantage point for Hulot the observer, with his pipe extending like a feeler into the space in front of him. One of the enduring images of the film is Hulot standing at the top of some escalators in an office building, looking down over the maze of cubicles and observing the peculiar logic to which bodies are subjected by this space. For much of the film Hulot is similarly detached from the action. These two sequences/images (one from *Les Vacances* and one from *Play Time*) are exemplary of Tati's shift from his earlier films to his later films, in the way that he conceives of the body and its relation to vision. In the *Les Vacances* sequence, Hulot does not see—his view is blocked by suitcases. He steps right into the thick of the action. In *Play Time*, Hulot stops to look for much longer.

Nevertheless, Hulot's stuttering incursions into urban spaces remain a key part of the choreographic vocabulary of *Play Time*. Throughout the film Hulot is to be found teetering on the edges of large spaces like the office building, and lured into transitional spaces like lobbies, waiting rooms, corridors, and elevators. He is almost always off-balance, confounded by both the vagaries of urban design (the homogeneity of the architecture and the continuity between different spaces) and the disorienting, fast-paced, and continuous movement of other bodies through spaces. In one sequence his path to the homeware displays at the trade fair takes an unintentional detour when he is carried along by a current of bodies entering the building, into an elevator. He later unintentionally stumbles in on a board meeting in progress. Hulot's movement is characterised by a combination of curiosity and apprehension towards the spatial arrangements he encounters, and this takes him on a number of detours throughout the

film. From the moment we first see him (or a man that looks like him), when he stumbles into view in the background at the airport, to the final time we see him, when his attempts to give a gift to the departing Barbara are thwarted by an uncooperative turnstile, Hulot is embroiled in a series of stops and starts and finds it difficult to traverse spaces. In the waiting room of the office building, Hulot takes a few steps around the room to examine the decor. As he tries to make his way back to the chair, he is suddenly unable to gain traction on the glossy floor and slips and slides across the space. In this sequence, the music-hall slapstick routine of the clown falling over is refigured as part of a choreographic discourse on modern subjectivity. Throughout the film (and also in the previous film *Mon Oncle*) Hulot's motor capacities are thwarted by the surfaces, spaces, and technologies of modernity.

Choreography as Being, Becoming, and Stumbling

The prominence of stumbling and stuttering in the choreographies of both Bausch and Tati should be understood in the context of a broader discourse on subjectivity in modernity, and the interrogation of former notions of the self in cultural modernism. I have thus argued that choreography is deployed and might indeed be *defined* in the work of Bausch and Tati as a fragmentation of subjectivity. In these works choreography functions at once as a becoming and a death, a process or medium for both the construction and dissolution of subject. Stumbling, then, becomes a metonymic gesture for a return to the grounds on which subjectivity itself is constructed. In *Social Choreography*, Hewitt writes about stumbling as one of the pre-eminent gestures of modernity, amidst a broader discussion of the functioning of social choreography as a passage into language and subjectivity.[122] Hewitt writes of stumbling as a moment of failure or opening up of gesture. In this moment, "dance fails as gesture through an inability either to begin or to complete the gesture, and it figures a linguistic play that neglects the work of semiotic closure."[123] Joy, following Hewitt, argues that the stumble, "a staggering step toward an almost falling… reveals the unevenness of ontological, theoretical, and literal grounds," and that stumbling is a "choreographic event [that]communicates a critical breaking point, signalling toward an impossible

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[122] Hewitt, *Social Choreography*. See in particular Chapter Two on Stumbling and Legibility, 78–116.
[123] Ibid., 83.

legibility—the moment when gestures become spastic, when bodily expression becomes undone and unreadable." [124]

Earlier I described the use of choreography in Bausch's early works as a means of "discovering" and processing movement as dancers piece together disparate fragments of embodied memories. I touched on Foster's broader definition of choreography as a means of producing knowledge about the body. In her treatment of the choreographic as an avant-garde practice, Joy writes of the uncertainty of meaning implicit in the choreographic as a site of continual negotiation of knowledge and non-knowledge.[125] For Joy, the choreographic is a practice that takes place in the interstices of knowledge and non-knowledge. In this regard, and in light of my analyses of the choreographic vocabulary of the selected works thus far, I want to return to the two basic and intertwined conceptions of choreography that I mentioned earlier in the chapter. The first is grounded in *recognition*—the recognition of codes and the conventions of genre, along with the standardisation, codification, and reproduction of sequences that Foster attributes to historical connotations of the term choreography.[126] In this conception, choreography functions to curate the spectator's look. It permits analysis of movement and produces knowledge about the body. Such approaches might be summarised in terms of their conception of "choreography as *look*". The other notion of choreography I have begun to explore is one that brings about an encounter with the *unknowable* and the *illegible*, a choreography that displaces the spectator's look, and which I will refer to in this thesis as conceiving of "choreography as *gaze*". Whilst Joy's conception of the choreographic falls into the latter category, there are some important differences in my conception of the way in which this kind of choreography engages and displaces the spectator's look.

Choreography as look and as gaze

In previous sections I examined the way in which the writers in Solomon's *Danse: An Anthology* characterise the choreographic as avant-garde practice in terms of "openness" and "subversion".[127] Nevertheless, what is missing in these evaluations is a more

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[124] Joy, *The Choreographic*, 80.
[125] Joy, *The Choreographic*, 4–6.
[126] Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, 72.
[127] Kunst, "Subversion of the Dancing Body," 55–56.

thorough investigation of the relationship of the choreographic to vision in performance and to theories of vision. In this thesis I aim to theorise the subversive potential of choreography, as it is deployed in the three works by Bausch and Tati, in terms of its radical effects on and relationship with the spectator's practices of looking.

Joy provides several important definitions of the choreographic as a critical term in this regard. Joy characterises choreography in terms of a rethinking of orientation in spatial, linguistic, and ethical relationships, a positioning in relation to other bodies that involves participation in a "scene of address that anticipates and requires a particular mode of attention".[128] Joy also points out that engaging in choreography involves "sensual counter-address to the legislative acts of consumption, erasure, and violence" that make up the political landscape.[129] For the present study, what I want to draw from Joy's conception of the choreographic is its relation to vision (and to the politics of vision). Joy frames the choreographic as "a dialogic opening in which art not only is looked at but also looks back, igniting a tremulous hesitation in the ways that we experience and respond."[130]

This idea of choreography looking back is central to my treatment of the image in Bausch's *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* and Tati's *Play Time*. I begin my analysis of the relationship between choreography and vision in Bausch's two works with a consideration of some of the ways in which existing scholarship on Bausch has understood the functioning of choreography in her works and its role in organising the visual experience of spectators. Whilst none of this scholarship uses the choreographic as an overarching critical framework for understanding the construction and displacement of the spectator's look, many writers have nevertheless touched on the importance of looking in Bausch's work and the way in which her repetitive sequences facilitate a kind of critical looking. Royd Climenhaga writes of a particular kind of "looking back" when he describes a sequence from Bausch's *Kontakthof* (1978), where the dancers look back at the audience, baring their teeth, lifting their skirts, and demonstrating their awareness of being on "display". Climenhaga writes that

> Never before had someone so clearly and succinctly exposed the inner workings
> of the stage as a means of engagement and display and used that uncovering for
> immediate visceral impact. It is a pure moment of performance that reflects back

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[128] Joy, *The Choreographic*, 1.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

upon the audience and makes us aware of our own complicity in taking in the worlds that are presented for us.[131]

Birringer similarly observed in 1986 that the emotional intensity of Bausch's sequences often produces on the part of the spectators an awareness of the conventions of watching and reveals to us "internalised norms we no longer see."[132] He further notes that Bausch's dancers "acknowledge and investigate" the presence of the audience by addressing them directly or by entering their space.[133] Hoghe has also argued that in Bausch's theatre "one can experience many ways of looking, of becoming aware of one's subjective way of watching."[134] Scholars writing about Bausch have emphasised two points that are of particular interest to this thesis: the implication and complicity of spectators in what they are watching and the perpetuation of on-stage behaviours; and the critical capacities of both the work and the modes of looking it induces in the audience. The kind of looking undertaken by the audience is characterised by the plausibility of multiple interpretations, as both Mumford (2004) and Mulrooney (2002) have pointed out in relation to Bausch's early works. [135] Mumford writes in particular of the way in which Bausch's sequences in *Blaubart* "show us the contours" of various "performative games" and create the chance for intervention.[136] Michael Bowman and Della Pollock (1989), meanwhile, have argued that Bausch's works demonstrate the body's critical inscriptions and that her works declare the body's "'spectacular power': its power to observe itself in performance and, consequently, to resist its own subjugation."[137] The common thread in this scholarship is that the performance and organisation of bodies (part of what I have termed "choreography") functions in Bausch's work as a structure for critical viewing, and induces a consciousness of one's position as viewer.

Whilst I affirm such appraisals of this aspect of Bausch's work, I argue that the radical capacity of her choreographies and the way in which they "look back" at spectators goes beyond facilitating an awareness of "subjective way[s] of watching"[138] and of the conventions and "act" of staging and the way in which this act continually

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[131] Climenhaga, *Pina Bausch*, 1–2.
[132] Birringer, "Dancing Across Borders," 86–87.
[133] Ibid., 88.
[134] Hoghe, "The Theatre of Pina Bausch," 73.
[135] Mumford, "Bausch Choreographs Blaubart," 48; Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 21.
[136] Mumford, "Bausch Choreographs Blaubart," 48.
[137] Bowman and Pollock, "This Spectacular Visible Body," 113–18.
[138] Hoghe, "The Theatre of Pina Bausch," 73.

brings a critical attention to its significations. Bausch's work not only creates moments of critical recognition of the ways in which bodies and the signifying processes that inscribe them are liable to fail, but also produces multiple *failures* of recognition. In other words, Bausch's work alternates between a focus on seeing critically and the *inability* to see. In addition to carrying critical capacities and permitting the appraisal of signifying practices, Bausch's choreography frequently challenges the subjectivity of the spectator and her ability to position herself critically altogether. By looking back at spectators, Bausch's choreography displaces them as subjects. In this regard, Bausch's work comprises an interrogation at the very heart of subjectivity itself, continually attacking the relationship between spectators and images that constitutes the spectator-as-subject in the moment of performance, and in particular contesting the spectators' capacity to identify with the cultural narratives being represented and examined on stage. The kind of "looking back" that I write of in this thesis differs from the kind Climenhaga describes in his example from *Kontakthof*, not only in the way in which it situates the spectator, but also in that it does not come from the dancers, but rather, from the choreography itself. This also provides a point of departure from the kind of looking back that Joy writes about.

By way of introducing the visual paradigm instigated by the choreographic in the sense that she defines it, Joy briefly writes of a telling sequence in Maria Hassabi and Robert Steijn's 2010 work *Robert and Maria*, in which the two dancers gaze intensely into each other's eyes:

> At once simple and gorgeous, the structured duration of their gaze renders a devastating address. It is not a gaze that reifies the cult of the visible, but rather transports me to a more sensuous moment of its undoing. [139]

Whilst Joy points to the way in which the gaze unravels practices of looking, in this example it takes place through a gaze that is exchanged between dancers, and observed by the audience. Later, writing about luciana achugar's *PURO DESO* (2009), Joy describes a sequence in which a dancer stops to turn her head and stare at the audience "a direct confrontation as her gaze meets mine, an acknowledgement of the implicit voyeurism of the viewing relationship that she intends to quite literally turn, a dramaturgical decision reinforcing the singular perspective of her gaze." The piece is

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[139] Joy, *The Choreographic*, 1.

characterised by "repetitions, falls, and the dramaturgy of the gaze."[140] In these regards
it broaches broadly similar choreographic territory to Bausch's *Café Müller*. Of another
of achugar's pieces, *The Sublime is Us* (2009), Joy argues that that choreography serves
to induce an "ecstatic consciousness" extending outwards from the performance of
visceral gestural content and bringing the spectator into a "sensuous encounter".[141] In
Joy's analysis, the dramaturgy of the gaze (of both dancers and spectators) in these
works is figured as a function of a heightened consciousness, a state of seeing oneself
seeing, and in this regard echoes some of the scholarship on Bausch's work mentioned
above. Like Hoghe's notion of "becoming aware of one's subjective way of watching,"
Joy argues that in "[w]atching the dance that surrounds us, we are also always watching
ourselves watching dancing" [142] Further, similarly to the sequence from *Kontakthof*
described by Climenhaga, the gaze in the example from *PURO DESO* is an
intersubjective one. The moment of "looking back" is the dancer-as-subject returning
the gaze. The kind of looking back that I will argue takes place in the works of Bausch
and Tati, by contrast, is not a function of a shared consciousness between spectator and
dancer as *subjects*. Rather, it is a look back that comes from the choreography itself (as
object) and that calls into question the hierarchical differentiation of subject and object
upon which the spectator's position as subject relies.

It is Jacques Lacan's work on the gaze that will allow me to describe this
peculiar reversal of the look, and just why it should be so disruptive to the subject. The
gaze as *objet petit a*, theorised by Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-
Analysis*, is not something that occurs between subjects, but rather is defined as a
returned look felt by the subject to be coming from the image itself, from the side of the
object. [143] As such, the gaze disrupts the very structuring of consciousness itself, which
Lacan defines in terms of a hierarchical relationship between a subject that looks and an
object that is seen. The gaze calls into question not only the sense of autonomy the
subject derives from her privileged position of looking, but also the historical narratives
that code the relationship between subject and object throughout the subject's life. I
extend Joy's work on the relationship between choreography and the gaze, but
ultimately depart from it both in my assessment of the origins and implications of the

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[140] Ibid. 114.
[141] Ibid., 110; 114.
[142] Hoghe, "The Theatre of Pina Bausch," 73; Joy, *The Choreographic*, 110.
[143] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 65–119.

gaze in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati and in the theoretical framework I deploy in order to understand its mechanisms. I use Lacan's conception of the gaze in order to examine the radical nature of "looking back" in the selected works, the mechanisms through which it disrupts the spectator's practices of looking, and the relationships it negotiates between bodies and images. In the final section of this chapter I consider in particular what a performative reading of the Lacanian gaze and its relationship to particular kinds of choreography in the Lacanian schema might tell us about the way in which the works of Bausch and Tati deploy the choreographic in order to challenge the look and historical subjectivity of the spectator and bring the spectator into an encounter with her own being. Lacan's broader model of psychosexual development provides a conception of and response to subjectivity in the context of modernity—a conception that intertwines choreographic modes of being (repeated gestural patterns, the creation of relationships to other bodies and spaces) and the construction and subsequent disruption of seeing.

Choreography in the Lacanian schema

Baudelot and many of the other contributors to Solomon's anthology evolve a notion of the choreographic as a constant negotiation and redefinition of both the body's and dance's borders. As we saw earlier, Baudelot defines choreography as a framework that performs the relationship between "culture and the body," depicting "founding experiences" that require the "invention of a new structure and vocabulary."[144] It is my contention that the Imaginary in Lacan's schema presents us with a quintessential choreographic model that operates at the level of the "founding experiences" of subjectivity itself, and through which the relationship between culture and the body is negotiated throughout the subject's life.

The Imaginary corresponds to both an early stage in the psychosexual development of the subject, and an order of the psyche that continues to operate throughout the subject's adult life. The phase of development where the Imaginary holds sway begins with the child encountering its own image in the mirror. Through identifying with this image, and taking it to correspond to her autonomous form, the

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[144] Baudelot, "Choreographic Dispositifs," 182.

child constructs a preliminary understanding of itself as subject. In Lacan's model, the child engages in a kind of exploratory choreography before the mirror and negotiates the relationship between looking, being, and moving by defining itself in relation to the world of images seen in the mirror. This choreography is typified by tentative gestures exploring space, a fragmented experience of the body, alternating experiences of possession and separation, proximity and distance, and repetition. It is a choreography operating at the very premises of subjectivity—a subjectivity brought together in the however tenuously established congruence of the image with the lived experience of the body. For now, there are two key points to note with respect to the appropriateness of Lacan's Imaginary as a dramaturgical paradigm for understanding the kind of choreography that appears in the works of Bausch and Tati: 1. Lacan's model of subjectivity emerges in the context of mid-twentieth century modernity and as such responds to and reflects similar politico-historical impulses to the works of Bausch and Tati under discussion, and in particular the cultural prominence and privileging of notions of wholeness in major political and aesthetic movements of modernity; and 2. The Imaginary describes the constitutive relationship between *looking* and *becoming*/*being*, and as such provides a pertinent choreographic model for understanding the relationship between vision and choreography in the works of Bausch and Tati. The Imaginary ultimately describes the performative processes and choreographies through which the subject negotiates her own becoming and visual practices in relation to totalising cultural narratives, and the way in which such narratives are liable to fail. I will argue in coming chapters that the selected works reproduce the performative processes, choreographies, and key images described by Lacan in his account of the Imaginary, and that the Imaginary is therefore crucial for understanding how Bausch and Tati use particular kinds of choreography to thwart totalising political narratives, challenge perceptual hegemonies, and bring spectators into an encounter with their own becoming as political and cultural subjects.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have elaborated some of the key features of the choreographic in the selected works by Bausch and Tati and how they relate to contemporary discourses of choreography in dance studies. Choreography functions in these works variously as: an

embodied practice that explores the way in which bodies learn, discover, process, and transform behaviour through performance; a visual practice that operates through the recognition of patterns of behaviour and codes; a framework for exploring and understanding the relationship *between* modes of being and ways of seeing; a performative negotiation of the relationship between past and present in the recalling of past gestures and their rediscovery in present; a metonymic practice that uses fragmentation and the repetition of parts in order contest the coherence of politico-aesthetic wholes; a framework for examining the mechanical or technical redefinition of interpersonal and political relationships in the context of modernity and its prevailing cultural narratives of wholeness and productivity; a practice of becoming that draws dancer and spectator alike into an encounter with their own being; and a way of constructing and contesting the act of looking. One of the main focuses of this thesis is the way in which choreography creates and impacts practices of looking in the selected works. I identified a focus in previous scholarship on the way in which Bausch's choreography invites the spectator into a critical engagement with the politico-cultural signification of the body and its culturally inherited behaviours and relationships. In this chapter I have begun to argue that in the selected works choreography not only induces particular kinds of looking in the spectator, but itself "looks back", denying the spectator critical frames and presenting a challenge that penetrates to very heart of the spectator's subjectivity and the practices of looking through which this subjectivity is sustained. Finally, I introduced Lacan's conception of the gaze as a way of explaining the nature of this displacement of the spectator-as-subject, and briefly considered the way in which Lacan's broader concept of the Imaginary might provide a dramaturgical framework for understanding the kind of choreography that appears in the works of Bausch and Tati relationship. In the following chapters I will examine how Bausch and Tati's choreographic responses to the cultural narratives of wholeness prevalent in mid-twentieth century modernity not only coincide with, but reproduce the structure and imagery of the Lacanian model of subjectivity and its visual paradigms. In Chapter Three I elaborate Lacan's famous but often misunderstood conception of the gaze and its bearing on the relationship between bodies and images. I examine what Lacan's notion of the gaze offers us in the way of understanding the mechanisms and radical extent of the visual paradigm initiated by avant-garde practices of the choreographic in the works of Bausch and Tati.

Chapter Three: The Gaze

Introduction

We are in the process of considering how choreography operates in the works of Bausch and Tati both as a structuring of vision—in its codes, patterns of behaviour, and organisation of space—as well as an undoing of vision and the act of seeing, through the creation of moments in which choreography looks back at spectators. In this third chapter I use Lacan's conception of the gaze to describe how choreography "looks back" and what its implications are for the spectator in the works of Bausch and Tati under discussion. This chapter asks the following questions: What does it mean to "look back"? What are the mechanisms of this looking back, and how is it related to the movement of the choreographic body? Finally, what is the extent of its effect on the spectator?

Towards the end of the previous chapter I introduced Lacan's notion of the Imaginary as a choreographic model that describes the situation in which the subject is constructed as a function of a relationship between the moving body and the image, between acts of becoming/being and seeing, and, ultimately, between subject and object. The Imaginary is therefore crucial for understanding the way in which choreography operates in the works of Bausch and Tati and to my argument that choreography returns dancers and spectators alike to something akin to this constitutive moment in the subject's history as expressed by Lacan. It is by questioning the relationship between being and seeing that the Imaginary initiates the return to the constitutive moment of subjectivity. In the Imaginary experience of subjectivity as theorised by Lacan in his early work on the "Mirror Stage," consciousness is organised in terms of a constitutive (albeit tentative) relationship between an authoritative subject and a definable, graspable object. Lacan's later conception of the "gaze" complicates the narrative advanced in his earlier work, and in particular the Imaginary relationship between the subject-seer and object-seen. The gaze occurs when the object "looks back". In this moment, the object takes up a subjective power and reveals to the subject the precariousness of her grasp over the world of objects, and the inadequacy of the processes of representation through which she establishes a relationship to this world when accounting for the reality of her situation. The gaze allows us to understand what

is at stake in this looking back and why it should be so disruptive to the subject. In short, the gaze returns the spectator to the grounds of subjectivity and calls into question the processes of identification through which she both reads bodies and images and positions herself as subject in relation to these bodies and images. In his work on the gaze, Lacan describes the way in which the tentative autonomy experienced by the subject in the Imaginary is continually undermined in the structuring of the subject's look itself. The gaze in Lacan's theory is thus not the authoritative, mastering gaze of the subject, but rather a disruptive gaze that comes from the side of the object.

Further, understanding the gaze explains why this looking back is ultimately a radical departure from the kind of critical self-reflexivity that has characterised not only a range of contemporary theatre practices, but has also been a key point in writings about the resistive capacities of such theatre practices and how they operate on signifying practices and processes of meaning-making. Most importantly, I want to distinguish the gaze from what Hoghe describes in Bausch's work as an "awareness of the conventions of watching" and from similar descriptions typical in existing Bausch scholarship. In examining the way in which the gaze has been variously understood in the disciplines of dance studies, theatre studies, and film studies, I set out to unpack the complexity of the Lacanian formulation that led theatre scholar Matthew Causey to write that the gaze "may be one of the most misused terms in the critical theory of performance."[145] To do this I firstly describe what kind of look the gaze is, and how it differs both from discourses of self-critical reflection and awareness and from the kind of intersubjective gaze often described to be taking place in contemporary performance practices across dance, theatre, and cinema. Secondly, I describe this gaze as inextricably linked with modes of being and practices of becoming. To this end, my emphasis on the Imaginary is crucial. Based on what have now been deemed to be erroneous understandings of the Imaginary in early psychoanalytic film theory, much contemporary Lacanian film theory moves away from the Imaginary in theorising the gaze. I call for a return to an emphasis on the Imaginary as the basis for Lacan's theorisation of the gaze, and, significantly, as that which places the gaze in relation to choreography. I contend that Lacan's work on the gaze does not represent a departure from his earlier work on the Mirror Stage, but rather offers a further, more detailed,

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[145] Matthew Causey, *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture: From Simulation to Embeddedness* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 196.

elaboration of it. Through close readings of key papers from both phases of Lacan's work, I demonstrate not only that the Imaginary already contains the structure of the gaze within it and underneath its identifications, but also that the Imaginary is absolutely vital to an understanding of how the gaze emerges in relation to the body and its processes of becoming. Whilst I will provide some indications in this chapter of how the gaze manifests in the selected works by Bausch and Tati, the focus of the chapter will be on unfolding Lacan's complex and often misunderstood theory of the gaze, and its implications for the subject-spectator. More concrete analysis of the dramaturgy of the Imaginary and the gaze as it appears in *Café Müller*, *Blaubart* and *Playtime* through aspects of choreography will follow in subsequent chapters. To begin with, however, I will lay the theoretical foundations for Lacan's formulation of vision by reviewing his influential schematisation of subjectivity.

A brief introduction to the Lacanian model of subjectivity

Lacan theorises the psychosexual functioning of subjectivity in terms of three orders of the psyche: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. The Real refers to the unknowable and unassimilable, material essence of life prior to the subject and object categories that are delineated in the Imaginary (and indeed beyond the differentiation that characterizes language and makes the undifferentiated world of the pre-Symbolic into a world of things). The Real is characterised by a state of continuity between the child as primordial subject and the maternal body. Lacan designates the Real as "impossible" and "unfathomable," inasmuch as it cannot be accessed through conscious *thought* (which belongs to the Imaginary and Symbolic orders). [146] The Mirror Stage marks the incipience of the Imaginary, in which the primordial subject engages in a relationship with images. In the first instance this manifests as a relationship with the subject's own mirror image, through a correlation of the reality of the child's own movements with the representation of her/his form in the mirror image. [147] Through this

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[146] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book II. The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–55*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 164; 167.

[147] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," trans. Alan Sheridan, in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York and London: W.W Norton, 2001), 1285.

correlation (for which Lacan uses the term "identification"), the child derives a sense of her/his autonomous form and cognitive and motor independence.

The encounter with the mirror image lays the foundation for the subject's relationship to all images, and for the nascent relationship between categories of self and other. Since the mirror image with which the subject identifies appears "over there", it is simultaneously self and other, and lays the platform for the subject's problematic and continually negotiated relationship with the field of the other throughout her/his psychosexual life.

Finally, the Symbolic is the order of signification in which the subject's relation to itself and others (along with the associated categories of subject and object) is interpellated into social structure and signification. In his "Mirror Stage" essay, Lacan writes of a "genetic order" in the "defences of the ego" that

> situates [. . .] hysterical repression and its returns at a more archaic stage than obsessional inversion and *its* isolating processes, and the latter in turn as preliminary to paranoiac alienation, which dates from the deflection of the specular *I* into the social *I*.[148]

Here, Lacan places the subject's engagement with her/his own reality in three stages (outlined further below).[149] Together the three stages comprise the resolution of the Oedipal complex, whereby the subject's dependent relation to the (m)other that stems from her/his existence in the Real is sublimated into a relation with patriarchal social structure and the big Other of signification. The first stage is hysterical repression, which Lacan places as the most primitive engagement with the primordial energies of the Real. The "obsessional inversion and *its* isolating processes" that comprise the Imaginary fortification of consciousness constitute the second stage, in which the subject consolidates her/his sense of a discrete self through identification with the mirror image. The final stage is "the deflection of the specular *I* into the social *I*"—in other words, the subject's interpellation into the structure of signification.

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[148] Lacan, "Mirror Stage," 1289.

[149] By its "reality" I mean the conditions and circumstances of the subject's existence within the world. In the subject's relation to the world, this reality in its initial, formative stages includes the Real, inasmuch as consciousness is forced to establish itself in relation to the Real that confronts the primordial subject. However, the subject's reality thereafter is based on the denial and distancing of the Real. In this sense, *reality* is removed from the Real. The subject's conception of reality is instead bound up in numerous Imaginary and Symbolic structures.

While the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic are roughly analogous to stages of development in the psychosexual history of the subject, they are more accurately orders of the psyche, and as such continue to operate throughout the subject's adult life. The Real continues to function, therefore, and "returns" or manifests in moments of traumatic encounter in which the subject's status as autonomous being is called into question, while the Imaginary continues to mediate the unresolved relationship between language and the Real, between the material substrate of life and the structures of signification. The Imaginary is mobilised by the psychic proximity of the Real and consequently the subject's relationship to images forged in the Imaginary remains problematic. The ontological status of the image in the Lacanian Imaginary therefore remains unresolved inasmuch as the identifications made in relation to these images can no longer be resolutely relied upon as the basis for constructing identities and the particular meanings associated with these identities. I will argue that the choreographic image in the works of Bausch and Tati is similarly unresolved, and becomes a locus of contestation and interrogation of processes and acts of identification/signification and their relationship to the Real. Further, I contend that in its mediation of the performing bodies' and spectators' relationship to the Real, the aesthetic territory of these works reproduces the structure of the Imaginary. One of the key ways in which it does this is through the creation of a dramaturgical space that contests bodies and images by returning to the anxiety of their construction and separation from the Real. In so doing, choreography in these works, like the Imaginary in Lacan's schema, challenges not only specific constructions of identity, but also the efficacy of the very representational systems used to understand them and the political and cultural iterations of the Symbolic that embed these identities as natural.

The gaze

The Lacanian narrative of subjectivity advanced in the "Mirror Stage" essay is further complicated by the introduction of the notion of the gaze in Lacan's 1977 publication, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.[150] Lacan's concept of the gaze represents the point at which the subject's look is returned to her from the field of the

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[150] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Sheridan (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), 65–119.

object. The gaze is realised as an eruption in the visual field, disrupting the dominant mode of consciousness, the "look". Although, broadly speaking, the gaze is itself a look, it is important to note that the term "the look", when deployed theoretically by Lacan, refers to the look belonging to the subject and is to be distinguished from the gaze, which works in opposition to the economy of the look. The gaze is indeed *a* look, but one that is returned from the field of the object. The look cast by the subject, by contrast, distils amidst the field of the visible the relation of the subject to the object.[151] The look of the subject upon a world of objects is a mastering look based on a misrecognition of totality and the coherence of the world. The subject derives from this look a sense of wholeness and autonomy. The gaze arises at the moment when the object seems to "look back" at the subject. It is as though the subject's mastering look has been reversed upon her; the gaze is a force that disrupts the visual field as it is organised by consciousness, and in particular the hierarchical relationship of the subject to the object. The gaze is experienced as both the projection of the domain of the other (that which is designated by consciousness as other, over there) onto the subject, and the reciprocal displacement of the subject herself into the domain of the other.

Lacan represents the operation of the gaze in the formulation "I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides."[152] The gaze consequently renders the viewing subject a picture, an object in the field of the visible. It is in this "objectification" of the viewer that the *economy* of the look (in separating the subject from the object) is dissolved and the *excess* of an exchange of gazes within the visual field, between subject and the field of objects, takes its place. This shift from the economy of the singular look to that of multiple gazes typifies the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, in their displacement of certain Symbolic structures and the modes of viewing that these structures instil.

Crucially, the experience of being seen "from all sides", being subjected to a look, constitutes for Lacan an "ontological turning back, the bases of which are no doubt to be found in a more primitive institution of form."[153] I would suggest, and this is the point on which my entire thesis hangs, that this "more primitive institution of form" pertains to that which Lacan posited in his earlier "Mirror Stage" essay—the subject's assumption of an image and consequently a sense of autonomous form at the

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[151] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 72–80.
[152] Ibid., 72.
[153] Ibid.

Mirror Stage, through which the subject experiences her becoming and is elevated from the undifferentiated mass of the Real. The success of the Imaginary as a framework that organises the subject's visual and physical experience of the world according to the laws of consciousness and elides the terror of the Real depends on the extent to which the subject is able to conflate the image that appears "over there" with her own reality "here". Yet as we have seen, this assumption of an image and arrival at a sense of one's autonomous form is never straightforward and the Imaginary is riddled with dialectical complications and it is this scenario to which the gaze returns the subject. Here, the condition of the gaze is revealed as an exacerbation of the problematic relationship to the image sustained by the subject in the Imaginary. I will return shortly to the Imaginary bases of the gaze, and the importance of this understanding for how the gaze emerges from within the composition of images themselves in the Bausch and Tati choreographies. The "ontological turning back" produced by the gaze, in the form of a return to the scene of identification, becoming, and separation from the Real, accounts for the radical, disruptive effects the gaze produces for the subject in Lacan's theory.

The gaze, as that which unravels the Imaginary framework of vision, is central to my analysis of the capacity of choreography to resist acculturated modes of looking and call into question the representational biases that underpin the spectator's look. The gaze accounts for the way in which these choreographies, in their staging of subject and object, disrupt the spectators' look and expose them to the unconscious.[154] The gaze emerges from the disruption and renegotiation of the relationship between subject and object, and in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, functions to contest historically coded relationships between subject and object in the context of modernity and the practices of looking that such relationships engender. These works challenge spectators' ability to position themselves in relation to the images that are constructed on stage (and that belong to problematic cultural narratives, as I discussed in Chapter One), and it is here that the radically disruptive potential of the gaze lies. Ultimately, the gaze impacts the subject's ability to position herself in relation to the world of images through which she apprehends her/his relationship to objects. In the psychosexual development of the subject as Lacan describes it, the continual presence of the gaze produces an irreducible tension between the subject's status as autonomous perceiver separated from the visual field (in the formation of the "I"), and the reality of her/his experience amidst the field

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[154] I will unpack shortly what is at stake in this exposure to the unconscious.

of the visible as an object seen. The gaze operates as a counter-figurative force and works against the fiction of self-representation initiated at the Mirror Stage.

When Lacan proposes that the subject, gazed at, "becomes that punctiform object, that point of vanishing being with which the subject confuses his own failure"[155] he is referring explicitly to the subject's experiences of her own nothingness, her failure at subjectivation itself. In adding that this gaze is "un-apprehensible" and the subject "manages, fortunately, to symbolize his own vanishing [. . .] in the illusion of the consciousness of seeing oneself see oneself, in which the gaze is elided"[156] he is suggesting that the subject can only reform herself by means of imagining she has the capacity to be outside herself and reflect herself, in other words to be self-reflexive. The trick of consciousness by which the subject formulates her/his own visibility is expressed in the experience of "I see myself seeing myself". Lacan insists that this formulation is a "mere sleight of hand," the mechanism of consciousness "turning back on itself," to once again elide the gaze.[157] This turning back of *consciousness* on itself that constitutes a self-reflexivity that is self-affirming is not to be confused with the "ontological turning back" mentioned earlier, in which the subject's notion of self is called into question by the disruption of the very coordinates by which the subject establishes herself. In "seeing oneself seeing oneself", the subject becomes conscious of herself as an object in the visual field, but also maintains the "I" doing the seeing, whereas the gaze proper unravels the "I".

What is further implicit in the status of the gaze as the un-apprehensible "*underside* of consciousness"[158] is that the gaze does not belong to the *subject* in the form of other *people* inasmuch as this type of look and its reception/apprehension function within the topography of consciousness. Lacan points out that the gaze is not apprehended originally in "the relation of subject to subject," in the "function of the existence of others as looking at me."[159] Rather, it is correlative to an experience of being looked at that emanates from the *object field* and displaces the subject as seer.

There are two key points, then, in addressing the theorisation of the gaze in dance studies and theatre studies – 1. The gaze is not intersubjective (both Joy and Lepecki write of the gaze as taking place between subjects – between dancers and other dancers

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[155] Ibid., 83.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid. (my emphasis).
[159] Ibid., 84.

or between dancers and spectators); and 2. The gaze is distinct from the effects of consciousness implicit in Lacan's formulation of "I see myself seeing myself", in which the subject imagines herself under a "gaze" that remains a product of a subjective consciousness. The latter allows the subject to retain a sense of mastery over her/his own image and status in the visual field as both subject-seer and object-seen. I contend that practices of "self-critical reflection" in the theatre, often designated by the term "theatricality", similarly retain the privilege of the viewer, and that the gaze being theorised in this thesis produces an altogether different visual paradigm.

The gaze in theatre studies

As Tracy Davis and Thomas Postlewait chronicle in the introduction to their study entitled *Theatricality*, the term "theatricality" has taken on varied meanings throughout its history. Used pejoratively it can describe pretence and over-acting, and may characterize a performance that is "illusory, deceptive, exaggerated, artificial, or affected."[160] In studies of contemporary and post-dramatic theatres, such as Lehmann's, the term theatricality is often used to describe moments of self-referentiality or self-reflexivity.[161] Theatricality entails both the idea and the act of performance (and quite often an awareness of both); it also corresponds to a sense of the rehearsed; and finally it includes a work's reference to conventions and histories of staging and to possible readings. Similarly, in Performance Studies the use of the term often implies a consciousness of staging and its conventions—is a sense of a retained mastery over the image and its construction as theatre (the constant sense, as Richard Schechner suggests, of "it's only a play"[162]). Theatricality relates directly to the question of looking when it is used to characterise the spectator's observation and "critical inspection" of simulacra and of the machinery of theatre itself such as we find in Jean-Pierre Sarrazac and Virginie Magnat's writing.[163] Theatricality in this sense corresponds

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[160] Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, *Theatricality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.

[161] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 17; 103.

[162] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 124–125.

[163] Jean-Pierre Sarrazac and Virginie Magnat, "The Invention of 'Theatricality': Rereading Bernard Dort and Roland Barthes," in "Theatricality," special issue, ed. Josette Féral, *SubStance* 31, no. 2/3 (2002): 58.

to a look-at-a-distance, whereby a spectator takes up a critical relationship to the apparatus of theatre.

Michael Fried, across two landmark works of art history and criticism, his 1967 essay *Art and Objecthood* and his 1980 follow-up *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, laments a tendency in minimalist and modern visual art toward works that are aware of and participate in the spectacle of their own exhibition and affirm the position of the viewer by declaring this spectacle to the viewer.[164] He describes the "theatricality" of such works, and compares them to theatrical performances that similarly declare their awareness of the viewer and the conventions through which they are given-to-be-seen. Fried is critical of works that display a consciousness of viewing and contrasts such works with others that obscure the viewer through an absorption in their own content. Fried focuses his discussion on 18th Century French painting that typically depicted figures listening, watching, reading, sleeping, or otherwise absorbed in action.[165] Whilst Fried is critical of theatricality in both painting and theatre, it is an important strategy in the kinds of ethical move made particularly by Bausch with relation to the spectator in both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*. In following sections I arrive at an understanding of theatricality in which the spectator's position as viewer is continually contested, and argue that this is crucial to the way in which Bausch's choreographies produce the gaze. But for now, it is important to note that the gaze must be distinguished from the phenomenon of a consciousness of staging such as we find in some uses of theatricality. The gaze, by contrast to this type of theatricality, allows the spectator no such critical distance, dissolving positions of a privileged subject "seer" and an object that is "given-to-be-seen".

The critical activities of theatricality: demonstration and observation

Bausch's choreographies of *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* are typified by a thematic interest in looking and the power of the look, in regard to both performing bodies that are engaged in violent sequences, and spectator bodies that watch these sequences unfold.

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[164] Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
[165] Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*, 7–70.

When the term theatricality is used to refer to the critical activity of staged performance it relies on a unity between demonstration and observation. For example, in their analysis of the body, politics and postmodernism in Bausch's work, Michael Bowman and Della Pollock write about the body's power to *observe* itself and implicitly associate the gestural body in her choreographies with the creation of a kind of critical "look" that is ultimately extended to the audience. In their effort to situate the body as both a resistive locus and as having the capacity to interrogate signifying practices, Bowman and Pollock focus on how Bausch's choreography both highlights the ideological construction of the body and empowers the body to look. They argue that Bausch's work interrogates the "materiality that is fully and unashamedly involved in the processes of domination and resistance which are the inner substance of social life."[166] As such they construe the body in Bausch's works as the locus of ideology and argue that her choreography recovers

> those theatrical and pedestrian dimensions of body-centred performance that are usually suppressed under the rubric of "dance". In so doing, she at once demonstrates the ideological apparati at work on the body and declares the body's "spectacular" power: its power to observe itself in performance.[167]

The "spectacular visible body"[168] is in turn associated with the functioning of a critical look. The *theatricalisation* of the body's inscriptions now comes to *demonstrate* the ideological interpellation of the body (and in *Blaubart* and *Café Müller,* specifically post-War German bodies).[169]

The contested status of the choreographic body and the spaces in which it is realised in Bausch's work, in fact goes beyond the emergence of a critical look associated with their theatricality, and produces moments in which the audience's look is actively challenged. Bowman and Pollock, Mumford, Price, and Mozingo all point to the impression created in Bausch's works of the audience's complicity in perpetuating the violence and narratives of oppression being ritually performed on stage. In this sense, Bausch's works not only produce a "critical look", but are also *critical* of the spectator's look, whereby the audience are made to see not only bodies enacting certain

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[166] Bowman and Pollock, "This Spectacular Visible Body," 113.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid., 113–118.
[169] Ibid., 113.

relationships, but also their own complicity as viewers. The body's "power to observe itself" is therefore extended to observing the place of its own look—bodies (both performing and spectator) seeing themselves (and others) *seeing* themselves.

Yet seeing oneself, or indeed others, *seeing* is not tantamount to the gaze. The radical quality of Bausch's choreographies in fact goes further than this facilitation of another mode of seeing. These are moments in which the work of gesture and spacing produce a Lacanian gaze that in fact disrupts the look and the narratives that inform it. Bausch's choreographies take a thematic interest not only in empowering and enabling oppressed bodies to look, but also in disempowering the politicised look that oppresses and perpetuates authoritarian narratives. That is, in addition to moments of critical looking, as we saw in Chapter One Bausch's choreographies equally create moments in which it is difficult to see. In such moments the spectator's look is displaced and the narratives informing her/his look are thwarted.

Ultimately, the theoretical relationship between the Lacanian gaze as a phenomenon and notions of theatricality hinges on how the failure produced by theatricality is understood, and on the ramifications that this kind of failure has for the spectator's consciousness. The notion of failure implicit in discourses of theatricality thus needs to be reconfigured wherever the gaze is concerned to include not only the staged failure of the signifying practices of the theatre, but also the failure of the spectator's *look* itself. Here it is not the *recognition* of failure (implied in notions of theatricality as critical reflection upon the signifying practices of theatre) that produces the gaze, but rather the continual *failures* of recognition produced in the spectator that are revealed by alternate and more complex conceptualisations and practices of theatricality, and that account for why the gaze should be so disruptive to the spectator's consciousness.

Theatricality and the Gaze

Two formulations of the relationship between theatricality and the gaze are key to my argument. Barbara Freedman's important 1991 book *Staging the Gaze* is one of the earliest treatments of the Lacanian gaze in Theatre Studies and remains one of the few treatments that associates the phenomenon of the gaze in a properly Lacanian sense with the complex relationships that theatre stages between performing bodies and spectators.

Freedman defines theatricality as a challenge to separate "what is shown" from "the act of showing", arguing that it displays "the problematic of display itself" and as such reproduces the structure of the gaze.[170] She writes that:

> If theatricality is a showing and if showing is a staging or displacement, then what one shows can never be that which is. In this sense, theatricality can only display the problematic of display itself, can only rehearse the paradox implicit in a spectator consciousness; it is that which constantly proclaims that what is seen is never where it is.[171]

Implicit in this analysis of theatricality is the comparison of the paradigm of theatricality to the experience of the subject in the Imaginary, and the subject's relation to the specular image, whereby "the subject sees itself as a whole only by being placed *elsewhere*."[172] Theatricality is in Freedman's definition constituted in a tension between what is shown and the act of showing—between the "over there" of the narrative space or represented space being constructed, and the "here" of the performance act. Theatricality is thus configured by Freedman as the challenge to separate two levels of reality—the present act of display, and the deferred meanings and representations of what is displayed. She argues that Lacan's theorisation of the Mirror Stage is inherently theatrical and depends on theatrical metaphors. Thus, the Mirror Stage may be read theatrically, as "the *stage* of the psychic apparatus, upon which are played out various ego identifications."[173] Crucially, Freedman also points out that the Mirror Stage is "infiltrated by the threat of reversal; the 'I see' is accompanied by the 'I am seen', or by the double as usurping image."[174] By comparison, she refers to a "fractured reciprocity" in the functioning of theatricality, whereby "beholder and beheld reverse positions in a way that renders a steady position of spectatorship impossible."[175] As such Freedman defines theatricality as a complex process relating to the interplay of looks between a work and its spectators. Nevertheless, her association of the gaze with theatricality also at times hinges on the "self-awareness" of the theatrical: "What do we

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[170] Freedman, *Staging the Gaze*, 52.
[171] Ibid., 52.
[172] Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 2005), 183; quoted in Freedman, *Staging the Gaze*, 53.
[173] Freedman, *Staging the Gaze*, 53.
[174] Ibid., 59.
[175] Ibid.

mean when we say someone or something is theatrical? What we mean is that such a person is aware that she is seen, reflects that awareness, and so deflects our look."[176].

Freedman's discussion of the functioning of the gaze in Shakespearean comedy has its basis in an idea of the "lure of a spectator consciousness". She goes on to suggest that the audience, "colluding with the stage fiction, [. . .] denies the place of its look and identifies with the relay of looks between the play's characters." The works "no sooner tantalize us with a stable position of mastery than they mock this stance by staging audience, character, plot, and theme as sites of misrecognition."[177] I concur with Freedman's association of the gaze with the play of misrecognition but want to go beyond her understanding of the operation of the gaze at the level of something that is merely *represented* within Shakespeare's texts themselves. The misrecognitions (and the subsequent displacement of the audience's look) that she talks about function as part and in aid of the narrative and thematic structure of Shakespeare's comedies, rather than as counter-figurative to this structuring of the work.

The gaze in Lacanian terms works against the construction and reception of fiction. Insofar as the play of identification and misapprehension in Shakespeare's comedies functions within the fictional framework of the plays, it is contained within the Symbolic. The gaze as I discuss it in the work of Bausch and Tati emerges directly from the Imaginary, and works to prevent the formation of narratives. In Chapters Five and Six I will consider how the deviant, operative work of spacing and gesture within the image reveals its internal lack in a way that produces the gaze, and forms the basis of the subject's encounter with the unconscious.

The inability to "take in" the performance, produced by the gaze has important implications for the viewer of the work of Bausch and Tati and for her/his place of looking within the politico-cultural teleologies to which these works respond. Yet where the gaze remains, for Freedman, a function of Shakespeare's text and its representation of misrecognition, my discussion of the gaze comes from attention to how the spatial, gestural, visual and dramaturgical elements of the works of Tati and Bausch create a situation in which it is difficult to *see*. The gaze in Freedman's analysis does not correspond to specific moments in heterogeneous live productions of Shakespeare's comedies, but rather to the general play of misrecognition and displacement inherent to

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[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid., 2.

Shakespeare's texts themselves (and thus their narrative structuring). As such, Freedman does not address the actualisation of the gaze, and to what extent and in what ways particular productions and performances might make manifest this play of misrecognitions for the spectator. Subsequently, what is also not clear in Freedman's discussion is the relation between form and content, and the extent to which reversals of form and content function in facilitating a displacement between seer and seen.

A more complex theatricality

Following Freedman's work on the gaze and its relationship to theatricality, Maaike Bleeker's *Visuality and the Theatre: The Locus of Looking* (2008) discusses the radical visual paradigm produced in postdramatic theatre by the "retheatricalization" of performance, which "expose[s] the relation between what is seen and the bodies/subjects involved in seeing it".[178] What distinguishes Bleeker's approach from Freedman's is the fact that her discussion of the radical activity of theatricality on the transaction of vision in theatre is inseparable from a discussion of dramaturgy and practices of staging. Bleeker starts with the reconfiguration of subjectivity in much postdramatic theatre which "theatricalises" the relation between seer and seen in such a way that the act of "just looking" is no longer that of a disembodied I/eye that envelops itself in the fantasy of a "totalized and mastered" body. Rather, the act of "just looking" is embodied viewing that presents the "'inverse' of the relationship between bodies, space, vision and subjectivity as it is part of the psychoanalytical story of the subject."[179] It is an inversion of the psychoanalytical narrative inasmuch as in the psychoanalytic model the ego takes up an image of the body from "a point of view outside the body". That is, by identifying with the image "over there", the subject experiences a disembodiment that detaches the subject from her/his own reality "here". By contrast, through attention to works that "use *retheatricalization* as a strategy to expose the relation between what is seen and the bodies [. . .] involved in seeing it,"[180]

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[178] Bleeker, *Visuality in Theatre*, 7. This kind of performance enacts a *re*-theatricalisation inasmuch as previous traditions of naturalistic dramatic performance perceived theatricality pejoratively and as such sought to eliminate it. In much contemporary performance, theatricality instead forms a part of the theatre's critical strategies.
[179] Ibid., 6.
[180] Ibid., 7.

Bleeker argues for a notion of theatricality that is characterised by an *embodied* mode of seeing.

In arguing for the renewed attention of the postdramatic paradigm in particular to the radical potential of theatricality as a practice and critical concept, Bleeker laments the "many [contemporary] accounts of theatre in which the relationship between audience and event is described in terms of immediacy and directness, that is, in terms that, in describing this relationship, at the same time deny [it] *qua* relationality."[181] "Theatricality," she asserts, is "the repressed other of the modern visual paradigm," erased or obscured and appearing only in pejorative reference to the failure of a particular production to create a sense of immediacy and directness.[182] In revisiting theatricality as critical discourse and as postdramatic strategy, Bleeker attempts to account for the complex relationships between audience and performance that are produced by postdramatic theatres.

Significant here is the way Bleeker's insistence on heeding theatricality as an embodied mode of seeing upsets the binary put forward by Josette Féral in her earlier effort to clarify the complexity of the term. In her seminal work on theatricality and performativity, Féral points out two ways of thinking about theatricality that have characterised writings in the field of Theatre and Performance Studies—theatricality conceived of as an artistic function, or theatricality conceived of as a more pervasive structure in social interaction. She argues "it is either a mode of behavior and expression, or a mode of perception. It is either linked to the objectified process of meaning and creation of the artistic work or is dependent on the subjectivity of the spectator. It is seen as either a mode of production or a mode of reception."[183] In other words, it is either a way of showing/enacting, or a way of seeing. What Bleeker's study of visuality in the theatre achieves is a placement of theatricality in the relationship between seer and seen, such that it is neither a mere staging that is given to be seen, nor exclusively a practice of looking.[184] Rather, it is produced in the relationship of expectations, conventions and shared histories of staging, between the viewer and the staging. I argue that it is ultimately the manipulation and constant undermining of this relationship that creates the conditions for the gaze.

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[181] Bleeker, *Visuality in Theatre*, 3.
[182] Ibid., 3.
[183] Josette Féral, "Foreword," in "Theatricality," special issue, ed. Josette Féral, *SubStance* 31, no. 2/3 (2002): 6.
[184] See Bleeker, *Visuality in Theatre*, 1–5.

In elaborating the functioning of theatricality, Bleeker, like Freedman, uses Lacan's Mirror Stage to represent and shed light on the relationship between the spectator and the theatre work. In particular, she draws on Kaja Silverman's intervention into Lacanian theories of identification. Silverman "spaces out" the moment of identification.[185] As Bleeker points out, Silverman disputes the "presupposed instantaneous and natural character of the jump from the body felt to the body seen" in the subject's assumption of an image.[186] Where Bleeker extends Silverman's project into the theatre is in her account of the embodied practices that contribute to the spectator subject's relationship to the images presented in performance, and that complicate the "automatic" nature of the identification.[187]

Bleeker subsequently writes briefly of the concept of the gaze in Lacan's work, noting that the "Lacanian gaze disrupts the symmetrical opposition of subject and object, of self and other, of body and mirror image. It is neither subjective nor objective."[188] She goes on to argue that "the gaze appears as a third term mediating in the constitution of what is self and what is other," and that the gaze as such "points to the interference of culture in the experience of 'just looking', and in how we perceive the visual field."[189] Ultimately, Bleeker's emphasis on the cultural expectation conferred upon and mediative of the relationship between seer and seen casts Lacan's gaze, following Silverman, as a "cultural gaze".[190] Bleeker goes on to cite the example of influential dance critic John Martin's perception of Martha Graham's "white, female body as 'naturalness', while rejecting the bodies of black and native American dancers as distortions of the natural essences he perceives in Graham."[191] Bleeker associates Martin's perception with his positioning within a culture in which whiteness signifies a "complex intertwining of the 'natural' and the ideal." She highlights the "culturally specific ideality" involved in recognition, and in her discussion of Lacan, in the way in which the gaze shapes the act of "just looking".[192] Following Silverman, Bleeker conceives of the gaze as that which gives rise to the look, and as "the manifestation of

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[185] Bleeker, *Visuality in Theatre*,126.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid., 137.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid., 147.
[191] Ibid., 137.
[192] Ibid.

the Symbolic order in the field of vision."[193] In this capacity, the gaze in Bleeker's account of postdramatic theatre functions to *curate* the subject's look, and as such functions in aid of identification. I argue that that the gaze belongs to the Imaginary rather than the Symbolic, and is precisely what is elided in cultural practices of identification.

Whilst the gaze itself, as the object of a drive, is indeed a "product" of culture and the structure of desire it establishes, I would argue that its radical potential lies in its capacity to displace and disrupt those very looks that are curated or positioned with specific frameworks of cultural ideals. And it is in this capacity that it functions in the work of Bausch and Tati to resist problematic teleologies of space, gesture and vision.

In her discussion of Heiner Müller's play *Bildbeschreibung*, a paradigmatic work in the postdramatic tradition, Bleeker writes of the sense of absorption created by the landscape space of the work, in which the performance of multiple thematically and physically disconnected actions redistribute the viewer's attention. In so doing she distinguishes the sense of absorption created in *Bildbeschreibung* from the jubilant assumption of the mirror image by the child, arguing that in Müller's play there is an "impossibility of getting the picture, that is, the failure to unify all elements of the landscape… [as] 'a whole contained under a single point of view.'"[194] This is also a radically different conception of absorption to that of Fried, and involves the spectator being engulfed by multiplicity and simultaneity in the visual field. Following Erika Fischer-Lichte, Bleeker in fact attributes this kind of absorption to the theatricality of the work.[195] Yet where Fischer-Lichte writes of the freedom this kind of theatricality affords to the spectator to survey the theatrical image at will, and the spectator's subsequent "mastery over possible semiosis," Bleeker argues that the spectator instead experiences a loss of control over the image.[196] And it is with this crucial difference regarding the positioning of the spectator that we move towards theorising the Lacanian gaze. However, Bleeker nevertheless maintains that this experience of absorption "still allows for the loss of control to be a subjective experience."[197] The gaze in a properly Lacanian sense denies any possibility of subjective positioning and the capacity of the

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[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid. 76.
[195] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre: A European Perspective*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997); Bleeker, *Visuality in Theatre*, 64–66.
[196] Fischer-Lichte, *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre*, 41; Bleeker, *Visuality in Theatre*, 65–66.
[197] Bleeker, *Visuality in Theatre*, 77.

spectator to rationalise the loss of control as a subjective experience. Furthermore, Bleeker argues that the challenging of singular and unifying perspectives in postdramatic theatre gives rise to a consciousness in the spectator of the relationship between the audience-seer and performance-seen.[198] The gaze, by contrast, refuses this kind of critical consciousness and, in so doing, disrupts the spectator's status as viewer in a more profound way. The key to understanding the disruptive capacity of the gaze is the way in which it makes the *unconscious* felt.

The unconscious

Lacan attributes the radical character of the gaze to a *showing* (and in this regard is consonant with discourses of theatricality), arguing curiously that "not only does it look, *it* also *shows*."[199] In other words, the reason why this gaze should be so disruptive to the subject is that it constitutes a moment in which the object field not only looks back, but also, in so doing, shows the subject's lack to her. The force of the gaze is bound up in this showing. In *Four Fundamental Concepts*, Lacan writes that

> The world is all-seeing, but it is not exhibitionistic—it does not provoke our gaze. When it begins to provoke it, the feeling of strangeness begins too. What does this mean, if not that, in the so-called waking state, there is an elision of the gaze, and an elision of the fact that not only does it look, *it* also *shows*.[200]

In my reading of this passage, the "waking state" corresponds to the realm of consciousness, and, moreover, entails a consciousness that is in control of its own look, a look that is authoritative and effective in its organisation of the visual field into something intelligible to perception. In this state, the gaze and its capacity to *show*, its capacity to reveal the inadequacy of the subject's look, are elided. What Lacan means when he says the "world is all-seeing, but it is not exhibitionistic" is that the subject is always-already circumscribed by the visual field, but in the normal functioning of consciousness, her place in the visible world, as not only seer but also seen, is not *shown* to her in a way that harasses her or disrupts her sense of autonomy. Lacan further hints at the full extent to which the gaze is able to disturb the subject with this *showing*

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[198] Ibid., 76.
[199] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 75.
[200] Ibid.

when he adds that, in the positing of an objective reality that the subject is able to master, the world does not "provoke our [own] *gaze*."[201] What Lacan is suggesting here is that the profoundly disruptive potential of the gaze takes effect when the objective world in fact begins to provoke *our* gaze. This would be akin to rendering the subject an object-part of the visible. In so doing it turns the subject, who ordinarily looks, into the gazing object itself. By stripping the body of its status as subject and its possession of an authoritative look, the gaze supplants the economy of the look itself. In this moment "the feeling of strangeness begins."[202] What ultimately occupies Lacan in both his "Mirror Stage" essay and his writings on the gaze in *Four Fundamental Concepts* is the relationship between consciousness, which is governed by structures of misrecognition that work to distance the Real, and the unconscious illumination or *showing* of the subject's place in the Real which upsets the fiction or fantasy of misrecognition.

Earlier I mentioned the mechanism of *consciousness* through which the subject formulates her/his own visibility, encapsulated in the expression "I see myself seeing myself". The gaze, as a manifestation of the *unconscious*, is distinct from the critical reflection implicit in this formulation, whereby the subject retains control over both her/his own look and the experience of being seen. As I mentioned earlier, it is in the status of the "I" that the difference between the reflexive mechanism of consciousness and the unconscious is clearest. In the "waking state", it is the work of consciousness in maintaining the "I" that elides the gaze, and the traumatic encounter with the Real that it produces.[203] On the other hand, with regard to the dream (as a paradigm in which the unconscious is manifested most potently and in its least adulterated form), Lacan writes of an "absence of horizon, the enclosure, of that which is contemplated in the waking state [. . . such] that [. . .] our position in the dream is profoundly that of someone who does not see."[204] The dream produces most acutely the "sliding away" of the subject produced by the "it *shows*" aspect of the gaze. Lacan points out that the subject is unable to "apprehend himself in the dream in the way in which, in the Cartesian *cogito*, he apprehends himself as thought." In other words, the subject is unable to apprehend

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[201] Ibid. (my emphasis).

[202] Ibid. It is important to note that in this moment the gaze does not belong to the subject. Instead, the body, momentarily stripped of its status as subject, is rendered continuous with the object field, and it is only as *object* that the body is able to gaze.

[203] Ibid.

[204] Ibid.

herself as the consciousness functioning within the dream, the position of a looker that has mastery over what she sees.[205]

The inability to see

> In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze.
> —Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*[206]

As I pointed out in Chapter One, Bausch and Tati's works produce not only moments in which the spectator is invited to reflect critically on her/his practices of looking, but also other moments in which it is difficult to *see*. In this sense their choreographies are evocative of the state of not seeing that Lacan attributes to the dream, and it is in their mediation of seeing and not seeing that we can further identify the operation of an unconscious. The inability to see in their choreographies provides the grounds for the emergence of the gaze from within their images. Tati's multiple, overlapping choreographies captured in wide shots, in which it is impossible to see everything at once, highlight this inability. In *Play Time* characters and spectators alike experience moments in which the visual field cannot be resolved into meaning. Tati creates such moments through manipulation of scale, colour, the properties of surfaces, multiplicity, simultaneity of action, confused iconography and the continuity or collusion of spaces. In the travel bureau, there are poster advertisements for travel to different cities, that all look the same. Meanwhile, objects, shapes, and structures reappear across the different spaces in which the film takes place. The homogeneity of the glass buildings and the continuity between office spaces, the trade fair selling the latest in modern living, and apartment interiors makes it difficult to distinguish between different kinds of spaces. Famous Parisian monuments also appear displaced—we see reflections of various iconic structures including the Eiffel Tower in the glass doors of large office buildings that are in fact revealed to be located directly opposite to other large office buildings. I have already discussed how the darkness of the stage limits visibility in Bausch's *Café Müller*. The multiplicity and simultaneity of action, as well as the repetition and

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[205] Ibid., 75–76.
[206] Ibid., 73.

displacement of actions in space, and the resultant inability to apprehend sequences and *mise-en-scène* in their entirety, forces a renegotiation of meaning and forces the spectator beyond conventional, indeed, ossified, readings of particular relationships. Characters and spectators are unable to "enclose" bodies, gestures and spaces with their look. In the construction of gesture and spacing in Bausch and Tati's choreographic images, something forever eludes our look and our ability to grasp figures of representation. It is this thwarting of the look in a visual field that is typified by problems of identification that constitutes the gaze in these choreographies.

Vision as a discourse of possession

What the formulation of "I see myself seeing myself" also reveals is a discourse of possession that is implicit in vision in the Lacanian model. The relation of the viewing subject to her/his object is necessarily one of possession. Lacan also calls the subject seeing itself a "bipolar reflexive relation". The "I see myself seeing myself" establishes the "privilege of the subject" from the basis of "that bipolar reflexive relation by which, as soon as I perceive, my representations belong to me."[207] The convergence of having and seeing is manifested in what Lacan calls the "*belong to me* aspect of representations."[208] The discourse of possession implicit for the subject both in the paradigm of "I see myself seeing myself" and in the broader, "belong to me" mechanism of representation in general (both as operations of consciousness) is undercut by the gaze.

Crucial to Lacan's theorisation of the gaze, and indeed to his theorisation of the relationship between consciousness and vision, is his attempt to convey in it a sense of the "intuition concerning the visible and the invisible [. . .] prior to all reflection, [. . .] in order to locate the emergence of vision itself"[209] that he affirms in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writing on vision. It is this site/moment of the emergence of vision itself that Lacan invokes in his theorisation of the gaze, and to which the gaze returns the subject in the model he puts forward. The impossibility of possession in Lacan's notion of the gaze corresponds in Merleau-Ponty's work to the broader "impossibility of

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[207] Ibid., 81.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.

distinguishing between what sees and what is seen."[210] Charles Shepherdson points out in this regard that

> [t]he gaze in Merleau-Ponty's sense would thus seem to emerge only in the moment at which narcissism is overcome, only when the mirror *no longer gives me back to myself* in an imaginary form, only when my body is no longer its own possession, its own unity, but is rather that opening upon the world in which "the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen."[211]

What I want to draw out here is that the "opening" produced in the gaze is antithetical to possession. It is precisely in this sense that the gaze becomes crucial to the resistive work undertaken by Bausch's choreographies in particular upon authoritarian narratives and the possessive sexual, political and cultural relationships that these narratives engender. What is consequently at stake is the audience's capacity to identify with the hierarchies generated by these narratives and relationships.

In Bausch's choreographies, the functioning of the gaze dispossesses the spectator-subjects of their object in the form of performed bodies and gestural identities inscribed within particular systems of meaning-making. It is the subject's control and mastery over the object field that is both established and threatened by the movement of the impossible object in Lacan's schema, the *objet petit a*, and the subject's inability to possess it.

The *objet petit a*

> In the scopic relation, the object on which depends the phantasy from which the subject is suspended in an essential vacillation is the gaze.
> —Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*[212]

In *Four Fundamental Concepts*, Lacan writes of the gaze "as" *objet petit a*. What is crucial to understanding why the gaze should be so disruptive is the status of the *objet*

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[210] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 167.

[211] Charles Shepherdson, "A Pound of Flesh: Lacan's Reading of 'The Visible and the Invisible'," *Diacritics* 27, 4 (1997): 78. Whilst Lacan places the gaze as prior to all reflection, before narcissism, Shepherdson writes here of "overcoming narcissism"—tantamount to a return to that state prior to reflection, in which the seer is not yet elevated from the seen.

[212] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 83.

petit a in the constitution of the subject and the stakes for the subject that are bound up with it.

The *objet petit a* is defined by Lacan as that "privileged object, which has emerged from some primal separation, from self-mutilation induced by the very approach of the real."[213] The excision from the subject of the *objet petit a* institutes the subject into Symbolic desire and works to distance the Real, thereby separating and stabilising subject and object positions. The *objet petit a* is the fantasy object cast off from the subject to account for the remainder or surplus resulting from the imposition of the Symbolic order upon the Real.[214] It is a psychical construct that stands in for that part of the Real that the Symbolic cannot account for, and as such represents that which is at once essential to the structure of the Symbolic (inasmuch as the Symbolic is necessarily expressed as a relation to a *lack*), and also threatens to undermine this structure. Because it is an excision, the *objet petit a* creates a lack in the subject correlating to a desire that is forever unsatisfied, and is only expressed partially in the drives. This lack is a constitutive split of the subject from the mass of the Real.

Lacan defines the *objet petit a* as the *object-cause* of desire. In *Four Fundamental Concepts*, he writes that

> the object of desire is the cause of desire, and this object that is the cause of desire is the object of the drive—that is to say, the object around which the drive turns. … It is not that desire clings to the object of the drive—desire moves around it…."[215]

There are two points to emphasise here. First, the *objet petit a* is not an object that the subject directs its intentions toward. It is not the goal of desire but the cause of desire. Second, and relatedly, because the *objet petit a* is that which has been excised, desire is not oriented toward an object which will fulfil it, but toward what is lacking in the subject.[216] In other words, the subject does not desire the *objet petit a* itself. The structure of desire produced by the casting off of the *objet petit a* is instead sustained in relation to a lack that can never be resolved. The subject not only derives enjoyment from the repetitive experience of desire, but also depends on its incompleteness for

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[213] Ibid.
[214] Despite this relationship it sustains between the Symbolic and the Real, I will argue shortly that the *objet petit a* itself is Imaginary
[215] Ibid., 243.
[216] Ibid., 103.

sustaining itself as a subject in the Symbolic order. The *objet petit a* is an intermediary measure in two senses: on the one hand, it renders the subject's relation to the Real impossible and situates it as the excess of signification that defines the subject; and on the other hand, it sustains the subject's relation to the Real in the form of a desire (the form of which is circular and repetitive) that promises and yet continually defers something that is both pleasurable and dangerous.

In the manifestation of the gaze "as" *objet petit a*, the subject is exposed to the essential lack at the heart of her/his representations. The gaze is manifested when the *objet petit a*, cast off from the subject, reappears in the field of the subject and threatens to displace the coherence and certitude of the subject's identifications and, ultimately, the very notion of her/his subjectivity itself. The gaze in this sense corresponds to the imbrication of subject and object fields produced by the revelation of the problematic nature of their separation in the first instance. Elizabeth Grosz points out that

> Lacan stresses that the *petit a* is not a thing or object but a movement, an activity, the taking in or introjection of the object, its absorption into the subject. This produces satisfaction and leads to the object's expulsion."[217]

It is perhaps Žižek who provides the most useful conception of the *objet petit a*, by conceiving of the function of the *objet petit a* in relation to subject and object, and the complex relation that the *objet petit a* mediates between subject and object fields. In *The Plague of Fantasies*, he argues that "the *objet petit a* is in a way the subject itself in its 'impossible' objectality, the objectal correlate of the subject," going on to suggest that the *objet petit a* "is not only the 'objective factor of subjectivization' but also the very opposite, the 'subjective factor of objectivization.'"[218] In other words, it is a movement *between* subject and object and corresponds not only to that which is excised from the subject, but also to that which is the radical potential in the objective field and which subsequently may gaze back, and threatens to displace the subject from a position of mastery. Understood in this way, the *objet petit a* is radically subjective, pertaining to the subject's reality. It is the subjective remnant in the positing of objective reality, a remnant which is always-already a stain in the objective world. The excision of the

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[217] Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), 73.
[218] Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), 215.

objet petit a thus plays an important role in mediating a relationship between both fields. This complex interrelation of subject and object fields has its basis in the dialectic of identification engaging the subject in the Imaginary—whereby the specular image is simultaneously a reflection of self and radically "other". The psychical matter of the *objet petit a* addresses that which in the Imaginary is both "over there" and residually "here", and threatens to undo the subject's identification with his/her specular image. The *objet petit a* could then be considered a fantasy that effects the separation of object and subject fields, by simultaneously functioning as that which is excised from both fields—that is, an excision of the radical, subjective quality of the other, and the objective excess in the field of the subject, and an elision of the radical *otherness* of the self. Further, the conception of the *objet petit a* as *movement* is crucial to theorising or gesturing towards what the *objet petit a* might be in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati.

It is important to note that neither the *objet petit a* nor the Real correspond to anything tangible in the works of Bausch and Tati in the sense of a *representation*. The Real cannot be represented and the *objet petit a*, in connoting the Real, works to undermine representation itself. In the Lacanian schema, the *objet petit a* points to a lack in representation, and alternatively produces the ability (in the proper functioning of the *objet petit a*) and inability of the subject (in the deviant functioning of the *objet petit a*) to master the visual field and establish him/herself resolutely as subject. Bausch's choreographies not only expose the lack at the heart of representational systems and disrupt their ordering, but also expose *spectators* to the disruptive connotations of the Real by denying them a mastering look, a look that defines their subjectivity in the Imaginary. I argue that the *objet petit a* manifests in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati as the lack in gesture and gestural systems that defies meaning and penetrates the signifying practices that encode gestures and in particular the subject's embodiment, possession and apprehension of gesture (as both performer and viewer). I will return in Chapter Five to how the lack at the heart of gesture in these choreographies reveals a different kind of movement, the movement of the unconscious. What is important to note for now, is that in the subject's experience of the gaze, the *objet petit a* is no longer at a safe distance. It is this distance that ensures the separation of subject and object, and what is implicit when Lacan writes of the gaze "as" *objet petit a* is the manifestation of the gaze as a *projection* of the *objet petit a*, that is, the renewed proximity of the *objet petit a* to the subject. The gaze threatens a

synthesis of the dialectical tension between subject and object fields sustained in the Imaginary, and consequently threatens to return the subject to the undifferentiated mass of the Real. It is this prospect that the fantasy of the excision of the *objet petit a* from the subject works to obscure. The disruptive facet of the gaze is experienced by the subject as a *projection* of the radical quality corresponding to the *objet petit a* from within the visual field. The implication of this is that the gaze is not simply a gap in the visual field, but, as Lacan points out, "*it* also *shows*"—that is, it shows the subject's lack to her at an unconscious level, in a way that radically disrupts her position and authority as viewer. The trajectory of the *objet petit a*, in its excision from the subject and its continual return in the form of the gaze, suspends the subject in an "essential vacillation" between the Symbolic and the Real.

Real or Imaginary?

There has been much confusion regarding the complex notion and functioning of the *objet petit a* and, consequently, the gaze as *objet petit a*, due to the many and often incompatible ways in which they are theorised throughout Lacan's writings as he developed his ideas. Evans writes that "from 1963 onwards, *a* comes increasingly to acquire connotations of the Real, although it never loses its Imaginary status; in 1973, Lacan can still say that it is Imaginary."[219] McGowan describes the *petit a* as a particular kind of small other, necessarily cast off in the process of signification.[220] However, beyond the implications of the term *objet petit a*, which relates it to the little other, a more complex function is evident. The *objet petit a* is not strictly an other, but rather something that relates to the field of the other. It is better thought of as the radical potential in the other that threatens the subject's fiction of self-representation. In the primary identification at the Mirror Stage (the process by which the child assumes an image corresponding to an Imaginary self), the relationship sustained to the field of the other is problematic and dynamic. The excision of the *objet petit a* upon secondary identification (the process by which the subject places herself into relationship with the Symbolic order), in which the ideal I is structured by a network of social relations and

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[219] Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 128.
[220] Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 6.

signifiers, works to stabilise the "I". Despite associating the *petit a* with the small other, McGowan later argues that the gaze is "a manifestation of the real rather than of the imaginary."[221] In my view, however, by describing its functioning within a primary relationship between the Symbolic and the Real, McGowan's theorisation of the gaze neglects the significance of the Imaginary connotations of the *objet petit a*. I deem these connotations to be significant to my understanding of how the gaze, "as" *objet petit a*, emerges from within the paradigm of the Imaginary and in particular the subject/spectator's relation to *images* in the selected works.

At the very least we need to revisit the placement of the gaze in relation to the Symbolic, Imaginary and the Real. Like McGowan, Charles Shepherdson also indicates the essential relation implied by the gaze, as one sustained between the Symbolic and the Real:

> [T]he "gaze" introduces a dimension that is located at the very limit of the symbolic order, in the sense that the gaze marks the "limits of formalization," the point at which the symbolic structure is incomplete. As such, the gaze belongs to the category of the *real*."[222]

We need to remember here that the gaze, for Lacan is the object of the scopic drive, the partial manifestation of the *objet petit a* in the field of the visible. It is important to note that, for him, the drives are culturally produced, rather than biological or instinctual.[223] As the object of a drive, the gaze is therefore a cultural by-product of desire, and cannot correspond to anything material in the Real (as McGowan and Shepherdson characterise it). As object of a drive, the gaze, rather, works in relation to culturally produced apparatuses of vision. However, the pursuit of the *objet petit a* in the form of an alluring gaze, and the consequent projection of the gaze from within the visual field, connotes the "*approach* of the real."[224] Ultimately, I argue that the creation of the *objet petit a* as a culturally encoded *fantasy* of lack signals its status as an Imaginary object.

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[221] Ibid.

[222] Shepherdson, "A Pound of Flesh," 73 (my emphasis).

[223] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2006), 680; Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 160–5. In the relevant passages of both *Four Fundamental Concepts* and *Écrits*, Lacan writes that the drives are not biological or to do with organic processes. In that Freud's term "Trieb," which would translate rather well as "drive" in English, is instead often translated as "instinct" and that this is problematic because it implies a connection to biology. The drives are instead entirely cultural and cannot be satisfied by any real or organic object.

[224] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 83 (my emphasis).

Objet petit a as fantasy

Slavoj Žižek crucially characterises the *objet petit a* as the "internal limit" of desire and thus the psychic apparatus itself: it is that which not only causes desire, but also, in its impossibility, prevents desire from being satisfied.[225] Kirshner, too, reminds us that the *objet petit a* is a fantasy, an invention of the psychic apparatus. It is thus actually internal to the psychic apparatus, an internal limit even though it is "excised" from the subject. This excision is a fantasy that is constitutive, that "creates" the subject. In its status as a fantasy the *objet petit a* differs from the abject, which also marks the territory between subject and object, but is an external and corporeal reminder of a Real fluidity between inside and outside, subject and object. The *objet petit a* is instead a construct of the psyche, a way of *accounting* for the Real.

Kirshner and McGowan have both pointed out that in Lacan's schema the *objet petit a* does not exist prior to its absence.[226] The nature of the *objet petit a* as an *absence* is crucial to locating its functioning in the domain of the Imaginary: it is something connoting rather than comprised of the Real. The *objet petit a*, says Kirshner,

> represents an imaginary link between the infantile body and the mother [. . .]. However, it is neither a concrete feature of her anatomy nor a specific memory, but the fantasy of a loss established retrospectively, after the child has been "subjectified". The step of becoming a subject (through entry into the symbolic order) leaves a gap between human reality and the real of nature.[227]

"The symbolic order," he goes on, "always falls short of totally capturing lived experience, inevitably excluding a part of the real in which we are rooted."[228] This part of the Real, the excess of the specular image, is expressed in the (absence of the) *objet petit a*, the excision of which is a fantasy that allows the fiction of self-representation to be experienced as a Symbolic totality, as a coherent, self-contained reality produced within the process of signification. The *objet petit a*, as a fantastical object excluded from the Symbolic circuit of desire, therefore, presents the *Imaginary* means by which the relationship between the Symbolic and the Real is mediated. The *objet petit a* plays a crucial role in mediating the subject's relation to both little other and big Other, to

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225 Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 48.
226 Kirshner, "Rethinking Desire," 88; McGowan, *The Real Gaze*, 23.
227 Kirshner, "Rethinking Desire," 88.
228 Ibid., 86.

both the desire to reconnect with the Real of existence and the insistence of the signifier. The *objet petit a* is at once that which we separate from ourselves and project into the field of the *other*, producing a lack in the subject, and that which coordinates our desire in the field of the *Other*. The casting off of the *objet petit a*, the fantasy of its excision from the subject, which is the cause of desire in the Symbolic, partly directs the subject away from physiological and biological dependence on and exchange with the mother, and into a linguistic structure. Yet crucially, the *objet petit a* continues to function as a fantasy of connection with the maternal object. The status of the *objet petit a*, and its strong connection to the psychical matter of the Imaginary (rather than a direct connection to the *physical* matter of the Real) is ultimately important to my theorisation of the gaze, as the manifestation of the *objet petit a* in the visual field, in terms of the Imaginary. In turn, the importance of this to my analysis of the emergence of the gaze in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, is in the connection of the gaze and its disruptive potential with the kinds of spaces these choreographies produce, which I argue are structured like the Imaginary. Specifically, I focus on the emergence of the gaze from within the dialectical play of subject and object that characterises both the Lacanian Imaginary and these choreographies. In the next section I advance my argument for the Imaginary status of the gaze by considering its relation to the structure of misrecognition that characterises the Imaginary.

The gaze in Film Studies

The notion of the gaze I have thus far elaborated differs markedly from that which was understood in applications of Lacan's work to film criticism in the 1970s. Working from Lacan's early writings on the Mirror Stage, early psychoanalytic film theorists such as Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry, and Jean Comolli wrote of the gaze of the spectator and associated it with the ideological constitution of the viewing subject.[229] They considered the experience of spectatorship to be analogous to the subject's fascination and engagement with the mirror image as theorised by Lacan. Reading Lacan through Althusser, this engagement with the image was seen as facilitating the subject's interpellation into ideology under the guise of a fantasy of wholeness that the mirror image seemed to offer to the primordial subject (whose reality was fragmented).

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[229] McGowan, *The Real Gaze*, 2.

In this way early film theorists emphasised the Imaginary dimension of spectatorship. Crucially, they incorrectly placed the gaze on the side of the subject and neglected the radical potential to disrupt ideology implicit in Lacan's own writings on the gaze.

The Lacanian gaze comes not from the side of the subject, but from the side of the object, and works against the representational apparatus, the visual hierarchies this apparatus sustains, and the processes of identification it gives rise to. In revisiting early psychoanalytic film theory's conception of the Imaginary here, I argue that the Imaginary, far from providing an experience of plenitude and wholeness in which the look of the subject is able to master its image, in fact presents a locus in which the subject's relationship to the image is rendered problematic. Further, I intend to make some crucial distinctions regarding the Lacanian gaze from existing theorisations within *contemporary* psychoanalytic film theory. I focus in particular on the interventions made by two writers: Joan Copjec and Todd McGowan. Joan Copjec's landmark revisiting of Lacanian film theory in her 1994 book *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists* in particular signals the beginnings of what could be called contemporary psychoanalytic film theory.[230] In this work, Copjec explores the implications of a properly Lacanian gaze for cinema and takes issue with the conception of the gaze prevalent in the work of the early Lacanian film theorists.

Slavoj Žižek's extensive work has undoubtedly consolidated the renewed interest in psychoanalytic film theory sparked by Copjec.[231] Yet for the most part, Žižek's readings of the gaze in cinema seem to focus on the actualisation of desire and the Real within the confines of the narrative relationships expounded in the films he examines. In his analysis of Chaplin's *City Lights*, for example, he writes of the "stain" presented by the body of Chaplin's tramp in the opening scene of the film, in which a crowd is gathered for the dedication of a public monument, only to be confronted by the figure of the tramp sleeping on the lap of one of the statues when the cloth is removed

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[230] Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994).

[231] Žižek's oeuvre is vast and contains many overlapping writings, but some starting points for his exposition of Lacanian theories in relation to film include: *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (London: Verso, 1989); *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock* (London: Verso, 1992); *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: October Books/MIT Press, 1992; *The Plague of Fantasies*, (London: Verso, 1997); *Enjoy Your Symptom!* (New York: Routledge, 2001); *The Fright of Real Tears*, (London: British Film Institute, 2001).

to unveil the monument.[232] Žižek writes of the significance of the tramp as an interruption in the visual field. Yet I would argue that the tramp functions in this way only for the characters in the film. As the protagonist of the film, he is the focus of our look as spectators, and serves to mediate the narrative of the film. We expect his presence because we know of an entire canon of previous films in which he plays a starring role. In Chapter Six I will return to the point of how Hulot, by contrast, thwarts such expectation in *Play Time* (compared to his previous films) through his frequent absence from the shot. But for now, let us return to the shifts in understanding signalled by Copjec. Žižek does not, for the most part, directly address how the gaze was taken up by early Lacanian film theorists and the misunderstandings perpetuated in their work.

Todd McGowan's more recent interventions more explicitly take up the trajectories laid out by Copjec and have focused particularly on the way in which the gaze expresses a relationship between the Symbolic and the Real, in contrast to early psychoanalytic film theory's focus on the Imaginary.[233] In his 2007 book *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan*, McGowan disputes the emphasis placed on the Imaginary dimension of spectatorship by earlier scholars such as Christian Metz and Jean-Louis Baudry, who wrote of the spectator's gaze, and associated it with the situation faced by the primordial subject in front of the mirror. Following Copjec, McGowan suggests that these scholars had misinterpreted Lacan's notion of the gaze, and in turn rejects their emphasis on the Imaginary experience of cinema. According to McGowan, early Lacanian film theory privileged the Imaginary misrecognition of wholeness as correlative to the cinematic experience, which at once obscured the subject's ideological interpellation in the Symbolic, and her/his incompleteness in the Real. This theory emphasised a notion of Imaginary plenitude, of the subject absent-as-perceived, but all-present as perceiver, and the illusory nature of the mastery that the child experiences in the Imaginary, which theorists like Metz correlated with the experience of cinema.[234] McGowan points out that for Metz, the experience of cinema "provides a wholly imaginary pleasure repeating that of the Mirror Stage."[235] Metz conceived of the Lacanian gaze as the mastering gaze of the spectator upon the image. Laura Mulvey's influential notion of the male gaze in cinema similarly ascribes the gaze

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[232] Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, 1–11.

[233] McGowan, *The Real Gaze.*
[234] McGowan, *The Real Gaze,* 2.
[235] Ibid.

to the spectator-subject.[236] McGowan rightly points out that in Lacan's later writings the gaze is placed not on the side of the subject, but on the side of the object/other, and corresponds to the *return* of the gaze from the field of the object other. Thus Lacan distinguished between the look, which belongs to the subject, and the gaze, which is returned from within the object field. Consequently, McGowan turns away from a theory of film spectatorship based on the Imaginary experience of cinema, focusing instead on the relation between the Symbolic, ideological experience of cinema, and the radical potential of the Real.

My reading of Lacan has led me down a somewhat different path from the one McGowan has taken. I contend that the conception of Imaginary experience that was central to the work of the early theorists, and which is subsequently maintained in McGowan's justification for moving away from the Imaginary, does not grasp the complexity of that experience and the problematic intertwining of subject and object values within the visual field. My present project is to revisit Lacan's conception of the Imaginary as a domain in which the image offered to the subject by the mirror, far from producing a sense of plenitude and wholeness, is continually contested and characterised by a play of reversal.

In order to establish the necessary connection of Lacan's conception of the gaze to the Imaginary, I begin by turning to his own writings on vision. I place his elaboration of the disruption of visual experience in "Of the gaze as *objet petit a*" in relation to his earlier theorisation of the misrecognition that positions structures the experience of subjectivity created by in his "Mirror Stage" essay and then consider how the gaze must be understood in terms of the Imaginary.

The Mirror Stage and the gaze

In *Four Fundamental Concepts*, Lacan confirms the basis of the gaze in the "split [. . .] between the return to the real, the representation of the world that has at last fallen back on its feet, arms raised [. . .] and the consciousness re-weaving itself,"[237] the constant re-assertion of the I in the face of the eruption, amidst consciousness, of the Real. He also writes, however, that this split represents a "more profound split." In so doing he

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[236] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."
[237] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 70.

alerts the reader to the fact that he is reconfiguring the paradigm of the Mirror Stage in terms of a split between the *eye* and the *gaze*.[238] As I began to argue in Chapter Three, Lacan's theorisation of the gaze and its effects seems to have its basis in the Imaginary dialectic of identification, and presents an elaboration of the relationship between representation and the Real that is expressed in that dialectic. What Lacan elaborates in his writings on the gaze in *Four Fundamental Concepts* are the visual mechanisms of this relationship, expressed in terms, on the one hand, of the subject's look and, on the other, the projection or eruption of a gaze from the side of the object that threatens to return the subject to the Real.

Towards the end of subsection three of Chapter Six in *Four Fundamental Concepts*, Lacan explicitly moves from the narcissism of the Mirror Stage and the Imaginary to which it gives rise, to theorising that which is eluded in the structure of misrecognition—namely, the gaze. He reminds us in this passage of the "essential structure" of the Imaginary order that "derives from its reference to the specular image" and the satisfaction the subject experiences in the relation to the specular image, "which gives the subject a pretext for such a profound *méconnaissanc*e [misrecognition]."[239] Lacan characterises consciousness as "irremediably limited" and governed by principles of idealisation and misrecognition, the latter of which he argues is realised as *scotoma*, or blind spot. That is, in instituting consciousness in the relation to the specular image, this misrecognition is productive of a blind spot, an elision of part of the visual field. What is elided in this formulation is the gaze, "which always escapes from the grasp of that form of vision that is satisfied with itself in imagining itself as consciousness."[240] He goes on to associate *méconnaissance* with "the philosophical tradition represented by plenitude encountered by the subject in the mode of contemplation" and asks "Can we not also grasp that which has been eluded, namely, the function of the gaze?"[241] Here Lacan unfolds his theorisation of the gaze from within the structure of misrecognition he elaborated in his earlier "Mirror Stage" essay. Following Merleau-Ponty, Lacan asserts that "we are beings who are looked at, in the spectacle of the world. That which makes us consciousness institutes us by the same token as *speculum mundi*."[242] In order to see, I am also subject to being seen, as a part of the field of the

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[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid., 74.
[240] Ibid.
[241]Ibid.
[242] Ibid., 75.

visible. Consciousness imagines itself to be separate from this field, as the locus of a mastering and alienating look.

The fundamental basis of Lacan's theorisation of the gaze in the structure of misrecognition itself is significant inasmuch as it necessitates understanding the gaze in relation to the Imaginary (rather than primarily in terms of the Symbolic and the Real). It is also important to my argument that Lacan's writings on the gaze do not present a radically different account of vision from that unfolded in his earlier "Mirror Stage" essay, but rather that the writings on the gaze in fact have their basis in what Lacan posited in his work on the Mirror Stage—a fact that is evident in Lacan's continuing focus on misrecognition in both. Reciprocally, the gaze is not altogether absent from the "Mirror Stage" essay. In Chapter Two I discussed the "dialectic of identification" that displaces the subject's look in Lacan's formulation of the Mirror Stage, and that, founded as it is on the unwelcome "dialectical effects of the Real," forms the basis for the relationship between the look and the gaze. Towards the end of the essay, Lacan addresses the issue of misrecognition in a way that foreshadows his work on the gaze. Regarding the central function of misrecognition in the organisation of the visual field (characterised by *Verneinung* or denial), Lacan writes that "its effects will, for the most part, remain latent, so long as they are not illuminated by some light reflected on to the level of fatality."[243] I would contend that this "light reflected on to the level of fatality" is in effect the gaze that Lacan elaborates in *Four Fundamental Concepts*.

McGowan notes that the early Lacanian film theorists incorrectly took their conception of the gaze from the "Mirror Stage" essay. He subsequently rejects the Imaginary altogether as the basis for theorising the gaze, and instead emphasises the version of the gaze theorised in *Four Fundamental Concepts.* In my view the two theories are by no means incompatible. The problem lies not with the "Mirror Stage" account of vision, but rather with the early theorists' failure to properly understand the Imaginary itself. Ultimately McGowan's move away from the Imaginary in theorising the gaze responds to the early theorists' faulty reading of the Imaginary.

McGowan's work has been prompted in part by Joan Copjec's revisitation of the notion of the gaze in early Lacanian film theory. Copjec contends that this theory erred in conceiving of the *screen as mirror*, and emphasises instead Lacan's more radical conception of the *mirror as screen*. She draws a distinction between the gaze as

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[243] Lacan, "Mirror Stage," 1290.

conceived in early psychoanalytic film theory and in Lacan's writings on the subject: in the former, "the gaze is located "in front of" the image" or the mirror, as that which makes *sense* of the image.[244] It is this relationship to the image that early Lacanian film theory takes as the basis for theorising the experience of spectatorship in cinema—that is, a notion of the screen functioning as a mirror. But, as Copjec points out, in Lacan's own writings, the gaze is in fact "located 'behind' the image, as that which fails to appear in it and thus as that which makes all its meanings suspect."[245] In other words, the gaze is a point of *nonsense* in the visual field that consciousness works to elide. In this understanding of the gaze, "representation appears to generate its own beyond."[246] In other words, the gaze creates a sense of something eluding our grasp behind the represented content. The mirror, as screen, provides a veil for the gaze that lurks behind representation.

There are two key implications of Copjec's emphasis on the functioning of the "mirror as screen": the first is the status of the gaze, in its positioning *behind* the mirror, is something that belongs to the unconscious; and the second is the essential relation the gaze sustains to the mirror and the *Imaginary* experience. As that which "fails to appear in [the image]" and renders all its meanings suspect, the gaze is an essential feature of the structuring of the Imaginary itself. It corresponds to a lack within the Imaginary, which must be rethought as a domain that incorporates its own failure into its structure. This is evident in the essential neurosis of the subject in Lacan's theory.[247] The subject's inability to resolve the problematic relation to the image characterises her/his Imaginary experience. Further, as Ellie Ragland-Sullivan has shown, the Imaginary remains one of the key loci through which the subject's relation to the unconscious is mediated. "Lacan described the Imaginary," she says, "as that which infuses the unconscious into consciousness to create discontinuities, inconsistencies, and interruptions."[248] In his 1957 paper "Seminar on the Purloined Letter," Lacan writes of the "decisive orientation which the subject receives from the itinerary of a signifier,"

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[244] Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 36.

[245] Ibid.

[246] Ibid., 34.

[247] Lacan, "Mirror Stage," 1288. Earlier, in describing the subject's characteristic obsession with space and the manifestation of this obsession in acts of "morphological mimicry," Lacan recalls Roger Caillois's term "legendary psychasthenia", which was once used to describe general neuroses. Lacan, "Mirror Stage," 1287.

[248] Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 152.

arguing that the "imaginary impregnations in those partializations of the symbolic alternative that give the symbolic chain its appearance [. . .] figure only as shadows and reflections."[249] To trace Lacan's argument in the reverse direction, if it is the Symbolic that is decisive and insistent, it is the Imaginary—in its play of shadows and reflections underpinned by the Real—that introduces uncertainty and un-decidability and that mobilises the subject as a constituted entity.

When McGowan emphasises the Real over the Imaginary, I believe that he misses some of Copjec's crucial observations on the nature of the Imaginary itself. While Copjec does not go on to elaborate a theory of the gaze specifically in terms of the Imaginary, her work lays the foundations for doing so. She crucially points out the discrepancy between early Lacanian film theorists' understanding of misrecognition and Lacan's own understanding of it. In the film theory of scholars like Metz, Baudry and Comolli, the subject's identification with an image was bound up in a totalising misrecognition, giving the illusion of plenitude. Copjec suggests that in early Lacanian film theory, "the process by which the subject is installed in its position of misrecognition operates without the hint of failure."[250] In early Lacanian film theory, the Imaginary was understood to produce a sense of totality and coherence that entirely and rather successfully obscures the subject's fragmentation in the Real. Yet the uncertainty that underlies the delineation of and relationship between subject and object in the Imaginary in fact produces a fantasy that is never total, and is liable to dissolve at any moment into the undifferentiated mass of the Real. Copjec notes that in Lacanian film theory, *méconnaissance* retains a negative force in the process of its construction. "As a result, the process is conceived no longer as a purely positive one but rather as one with an internal dialectic."[251] Copjec does not elaborate the nature of this internal dialectic, but I argue that the "dialectic of identification" Lacan refers to in the "Mirror Stage" essay is the basis for the disruption of the subject's misrecognition that is produced by the gaze.

The Imaginary involves the subject in a dialectic of identification with her/his specular image at the Mirror Stage, which does not allow the subject complete mastery over her/his image. The subject in front of the mirror image, far from being "absent-as-perceived", is dialectically implicated in an exchange with the field of other, in the first

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[249] Ibid., 28–9.
[250] Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 32.
[251] Ibid., 33.

instance with his specular image. The subject's identification with the specular image is dialectically undercut by the realisation that this conception of self is based "over there", in the field of the other. The subject perceives *herself* in the field of the other, laying the foundations for a dialectical relationship that thenceforth takes place between self and other. The gaze does not elide this relationship, but on the contrary, emerges from the problematic separation of subject and object that is characteristic of the subject's earliest encounters with the object world at the Mirror Stage. This is my reason for placing emphasis once more on the Imaginary experience, but for different reasons than the early Lacanian film theorists such as Metz and Baudry. As I pointed out towards the beginning of this chapter, reading the Imaginary as a concurrent order of the psyche rather than strictly a developmental stage that provides the subject a sense of unity and certainty of form, reveals its status as a paradigm in which images are not only constructed but also continually contested.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated, through readings of both Lacan's earlier work on the Mirror Stage and his later writings on the gaze, that the Imaginary is in fact crucial to understanding the status and functioning of the gaze as *objet petit a*. In arguing for the Imaginary bases of the *objet petit a* itself, I have attempted to place the gaze in relation to the problematic relationship between subject and object that characterises the dialectic of identification that Lacan writes of in the Mirror Stage essay. The connection of the gaze and its disruptive potential with the dialectical play of subject and object that characterises the Imaginary is significant inasmuch as I argue that the gaze emerges in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati (which are structured like the Imaginary) from the play of subject and object, recognition and misrecognition, and possession and separation that these choreographies mobilise. I argue that the gaze is ultimately bound up in the problematic nature of identification and looking in the works of Bausch and Tati.

The gaze as elaborated by Lacan belongs to the unconscious and must be distinguished from the effects of a spectator consciousness. As such, the gaze must be distinguished from practices of self-critical reflection in theatre—or what is often referred to as "theatricality". Such practices function to place the spectator and retain

her/his privilege as viewer, while the gaze functions conversely to *dis*place the viewer. I went on to consider how the gaze might be theorised in relation to discourses of theatricality, and how this theorisation necessitates a more complex understanding of theatricality. To this end, following Bleeker and Freedman, I considered the problematisation of theatricality (as a framework for curating the look) that is made possible by placing theatricality within the Lacanian schema and the problematic structure of identification pertaining to Lacan's Imaginary. In particular I focused on how the structure of "reflection" (inasmuch as theatricality is often associated with practices of "self-critical reflection") is complicated in the relationship of the *subject* to images in the Lacanian Imaginary, and how this relationship produces the failure of the look. Crucially, the gaze is produced not in the critical recognition of viewing habits, the conventions of staging, and the failure of signifying practices, but rather in the multiple failures of *recognition* itself that both the Lacanian schema and the choreographies of Bausch and Tati produce.

Chapter Four: The Choreographic Imaginary

Introduction

In this chapter I argue that the gaze is experienced in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati as a result of the unresolved Imaginary spaces they create, characterised by a cultural anxiety surrounding both the construction of identity and processes of identification.

In the Lacanian schema, identification is comprised of the collection of processes in the Imaginary through which a subject assumes a relationship to a world of images (including most significantly her own reflection in the mirror) and is able to construct from these images a notion of self and other. However, as we have seen, the subject's tentative conception of self is based on identification with an image that paradoxically appears "over there" in the field of the other. The Imaginary, particularly when read in relation to Lacan's later work on the gaze, is characterised by a vexed play between subject and object that continually calls its own representations into question. This play is mobilised by the psychical proximity of the Real, which threatens, through moments of incursion, to unravel subject/object divisions altogether and the self/other identifications these divisions sustain. The identifications that form the basis of the subject's consciousness are thereby undermined and the notion of an autonomous self is called into question. Subject and object values ultimately remain unresolved until the inception of the Symbolic order, where they are stabilised as *signifieds*. That is, in the Symbolic, they are no longer contested positions/bodies/entities, and become defined concepts or meanings written over by various social, cultural, and political narratives.

In the face of problematic iterations of the Symbolic, in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati under discussion, the Imaginary therefore appears as a resistive locus in its production of images in which the subject is both constituted and contested. The choreographic images of Bausch and Tati in these works are characterised by the confusion and interplay of subject and object values. This chapter I will elaborate how Bausch and Tati ultimately call into question the spectator's capacity to identify objects as well as subjects, and in so doing call into question the position of the viewer as subject in relation to the work itself as object. By reproducing the images and qualities

of movement of the Imaginary, Bausch and Tati produce an unconscious return for the spectator to the scene of her own becoming as subject.

In this chapter I elaborate the way in which the play, reversal, imbrication, and confusion of subject and object positions and relationships within the selected choreographies themselves returns the spectator to this constitutive moment in her history as a subject and contributes to the feeling of being looked at. The key structures and images that these choreographies reproduce include: 1. the negotiation of a relationship between being and seeing through the kind of exploratory gestural and spatial play repeated and rehearsed by the child in front of its own mirror image in Lacan's theory, including a play of possession and separation enacted with objects; 2. the play of *reflection* and reproduction that is initiated in Lacan's schema by the mirror stage and that complicates the processes through which the subject is able to relate to her own image; 3. the prominence of images of fortification and control; and 4. the repetitive enactment and continual renegotiation of compulsive relationships with the other.

In addition to describing the problematic relationship the subject endures with the other, the Imaginary describes the crucial role that the intersection of being and seeing plays in the construction of subjectivity. In this way, we get a sense of how the Imaginary provides a pertinent choreographic vocabulary for understanding the selected works. This choreographic vocabulary concerns the intersection of being and seeing, of embodied and visual practices, in the construction of dancing bodies and is comprised of the discovery, learning, embodiment and repetition of gestural patterns and the recognition and subversion of visual codes. Understanding how Bausch and Tati use particular kinds of choreography to prompt an unconscious return for the spectator to the gestural and spatial paradigms in which she is constituted as subject is fundamental to the way in which these works operate on politically inscribed subjectivities and introduce ethical concerns into aesthetic deliberations.

In the following sections I argue that in the works under discussion, Bausch's and Tati's sequences and routines resemble the choreographic vocabulary of the Imaginary itself. In Chapter Two I touched on Alexandra Baudelot's definition of choreography as a framework that performs the relationship between "culture and the body," depicting "founding experiences" that require the "invention of a new structure

and vocabulary."[252] In Lacan's schema, the Imaginary itself makes provision for a choreographic model insofar as it sustains a relationship between the body and culture. Indeed, the Imaginary as choreographic model undoubtedly constructs the kinds of "founding experiences" that Baudelot makes central in her definition of choreography. In Lacan's case these are "founding experiences" of subjectivity itself, through which the nascent subject negotiates her own becoming and her relationship with culture. I have also defined choreography as taking place through the intersection of and exchange between practices of looking and ways of moving, being, and becoming. The Imaginary describes precisely this intersection and exchange in the construction of subjectivity, whereby the subject arrives at a notion of self through a correlation of the image seen in the mirror with the lived experience of the body. The Imaginary choreography is typified by tentative exploratory gestures, fragmented experiences of the body, experiences of possession and separation, repetition, and an experimentation with proximity and distance to/from images, objects, and other bodies. *Blaubart*, *Café Müller*, and *Play Time* deploy choreographic sequences typified by gestures of discovering, remembering, and renegotiating, in order to explore the ways in which the body is inscribed within culture—specifically, the respective politico-cultural paradigms of post-War modernity that these works examine.

What the Lacanian schema and in particular the Imaginary also lends my analysis of the three works is a conceptual framework that accounts for the way in which totalising narrations in the construction of subjectivity ultimately are liable to fail. The Imaginary is a model that describes the various choreographies through which this failure takes place, and as such provides a useful set of mechanical images (in the sense of the gestures or mechanisms through which subjectivity is negotiated in the "scene" set out by psychoanalysis) for analysing the choreographic strategies and territory deployed by Bausch and Tati in order to disrupt cultural and political narratives.

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[252] Baudelot, "Choreographic Dispositifs," 182.

Subject, object and choreographies of play in Bausch and Tati

Let's begin with an examination of the play, reversal, confusion, and imbrication of subject and object values in their choreographies. Tati's choreographies in *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time* in particular, but also to a lesser extent in his other films, engage specifically with subject-object relationships (visual, auditory, tactile, spatial, temporal) produced by social narratives of modernity and a modernist re-structuring of space. Bausch's late seventies works focus on historical and political iterations of subject-object relationships. Her choreography of *Blaubart* in particular deals with the problems of identifying with an authoritarian male subject and a female object. Tati and Bausch remobilise a play of subject and object positions through strategies of multiplicity, simultaneity, reproduction, and discontinuity.

The play of subject and object is particularly important to Bausch's work in its interrogation of post-War identity and conceptions of self and "other". In both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* this *other* is a very particular political and sexual other repressed in the authoritarian narratives prominent in German culture throughout the first half of the twentieth century. As with Tati's films, Bausch presents several sequences in which subjects struggle to grasp objects. In this section I will address how notions of play and resistance are realised in the works of Bausch (in relation to mythic and politico-cultural narratives) and Tati (in relation to narratives of both utopian and dystopian modernity) through the elusiveness of subjects and objects at various times in their choreographies.

In Tati's work play manifests as a resistant way of looking at and engaging with the world and its objects. In *Play Time*, Hulot's clumsy and often serendipitous interactions with the new spaces and objects of modernity serve as a reintroduction to the physical world and a reappraisal of the place of the subject in the changing urban environments of post-War France. I ultimately argue that the dramaturgy of play in Tati's choreography is in this way akin to the exploratory formative play of the child at the Mirror Stage in Lacan's Imaginary.

Bausch's work highlights both positive and negative aspects of play in several sequences in which male and female characters play with the bodies of others of the opposite sex. In Bausch's choreographies play is alternately possessive and resistive; functioning both as a means to control other bodies and objects through repeating patterns and rules, and a means to transgress those patterns and rules. The

"choreographic" interest these works take in the appearance of patterns and rules in the composition of particular behaviours and relationships, as well as the enactment or "processing" of these behaviours and relationships in the form of choreographies, itself signals the intent to play. Sequences and relationships enacted often transform or progress through a number of stages in Bausch's work: at various times these sequences/relationships become music-hall routines, children's games, formal choreographies (pieces of "dance"), and violent exchanges. Where Tati's choreographies are for the most part gently paced, Bausch's find the *excess* of play through exhaustive choreographic sequences.

The play of subject and object in both practitioners' works recalls the Imaginary in the continual return of these choreographies to the moment of construction of gestural archetypes, roles, and relationships. In so doing, these works *re-mobilise* subjectivities in the face of dehumanising structures of modernity (political/narrative structures in Bausch's *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*, and social/technological/architectural structures in Tati's *Play Time*). At the same time, Bausch and Tati renegotiate the relationship between the collective and the individual (as a manifestation of the relationship between other and self) in the environments of modernity. The *dissipation* of the self in group choreographies and the questioning of the privilege of subjects/lookers both in the narratives of these works and in the audience, results in the creation of spatial "democracies" and a resistance to singular perspectives and perceptual hierarchies.

Jacques Tati's Imaginary

> [*Play Time* presents] a narrative which traverses the various facets of a mirror the director built himself, a mirror into which he insists the spectator step to take a gentle, wryly humorous, brilliantly conceived and, at times, disturbing voyage … through an era when history itself seemed to have receded before the march of architectural modernism and its associated vagaries of perception and identity.[253]
>
> —Lee Hilliker

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[253] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 327.

In *Play Time*, Tati's form of play manifests literally in an engagement with the structure of reflection and appearances, identities and bodies. Hilliker's characterisation of the landscape of *Play Time* in terms of the reflexive structure introduced by the mirror-like play of Tati's set and choreography and the subsequent difficulties surrounding perception and identity, signals the possibility of reading the space created by Tati in relation to an aesthetic framework derived from Lacan's conception of the Imaginary. Indeed, Hilliker hints at psychoanalytic resonances in associating the appearance of the past in the form of reflections of well-known Parisian landmarks "within a seemingly endless array of overlapping and interpenetrating reflections and transparencies," with the "return of the repressed."[254] Iain Borden similarly writes of the problems of perception produced by the new structures of the city, arguing that "glass and its transparency carry epistemological properties, wherein sight is deemed to produce knowledge and mastery of its object. [Tati's set] at once acknowledges and repudiates that epistemo-visual system" by physically and visually limiting the ability of both its characters and spectators to see and control the object of vision.[255]

The deviant functioning of objects and the inability of subjects (both characters in the film and spectators) to master the visual field amidst a play of reflection and displacement is akin to the predicament of the subject in the aesthetic space created by the Lacanian Imaginary. Understanding the construction of vision, as well as its limitation and failure, comportment and space in the works of Bausch and Tati as part of a kind of choreographic Imaginary is ultimately crucial to understanding the radical way in which they operate on the consciousness of the spectator. The Imaginary functions in these works as an apparatus[256] that does not permit a unity of subjectivity, based on a mastery of the visual field.

Tati creates a landscape in which objects can no longer be fixed or mastered by the subject's look, and as such, a landscape that questions the authority of the subject position itself. And subjects themselves are prone to multiplication, dislocation and disappearance. In the final sequence of *Play Time* female passengers on a bus are reflected in a window that is subsequently swivelled open by a window cleaner, giving the impression of the women swinging through the air. The passengers, as Borden

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[254] Ibid.
[255] Borden, "Tativille," 221.
[256] This apparatus is comprised of choreographic rather than technical coordinates, as I argued in Chapter Three..

notes, are "transposed from corporeal matter into the nothingness of a mirror image."[257] What is evident here is the elusiveness and displacement of the subject produced by the mirror image. One of the tenuous narrative threads of *Play Time* is Hulot's quest to meet Monsieur Giffard. At the beginning of the film, viewers and characters alike struggle to locate Hulot amidst the traffic of the airport and surrounding streets. A number of doubles appear and are mistaken for Hulot either by characters in the film, or by the spectator, anticipating the characteristic gait of Hulot well-known from his previous films. In the earlier films Hulot is a more conventional protagonist, in that the action focuses on him and largely derives from him. As Borden points out, "Hulot is not the 'star' of [*Play Time*], merely the most apparent of many characters." Indeed, he is rarely seen in close up and more often than not is filmed through a wide-angle lens so that his appearance in the scene is diminished.[258]

Hulot is conspicuously absent from the opening sequences of *Play Time*, as multiple bodies enter and leave the shot. Following the confusion of the opening scene at the airport, we finally locate the real Hulot as he gets off a bus and interacts briefly with one of the doubles seen earlier. In the next sequence, Hulot navigates his way through a car park to the doors of an office building, where he is due to meet Monsieur Giffard. He waits with the doorman as Giffard slowly makes his way down the corridor, only to be made to wait further when Giffard ushers him into a waiting room. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Hulot's subsequent search for Giffard, at first through a maze of cubicles, and then through the streets of Paris, becomes a running gag throughout the film. Giffard and Hulot have a number of near misses and their meeting is thwarted by a landscape characterised by the multiplication, dislocation, disappearance, reflection and visual fragmentation of the subjects that inhabit it. In the first half of *Play Time*, Hulot struggles to catch up with Giffard, whilst at the end of the film he struggles to catch up with Barbara, with whom he had danced at the Royal Garden Hotel the previous night. Conversely, neither Giffard nor others who mysteriously recognise Hulot (or misrecognise one of the many doubles that populate the film) in the street are able to maintain a hold of him.

Nor can the objects that populate the film's *mise-en-scène* be fixed by the look of the subject (whether character or spectator). Hilliker has observed that in *Mon Oncle*,

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[257] Borden, "Tativille," 221.
[258] Borden, "Tativille," 221.

Hulot uses objects in unusual and often unintended ways, removing them from "their usual context and casting them in another light."[259] Although Hulot is actively involved in thwarting the "usual context" of these objects in the modernist landscapes of *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time*, there is rarely a sense that he has mastered any of these objects, and for the most part they themselves pose difficulties for him and the other inhabitants of these spaces. There are several moments in which objects cannot be fixed in meaning or functionality, either through physical engagement or visual apprehension, and elude the grasp of Hulot and the film's other subjects. Objects and spaces do not function as they should. In *Play Time*, doors are slammed in silence, switchboards full of variously illuminating buttons confound users, and roundabouts become merry-go-rounds. The sequence in which Hulot is unable to operate the glass doors in the foyer of an acquaintance's apartment building and remains stuck there long after the two have parted ways has a companion gag later in the film, in which the glass door of the Royal Garden Hotel is smashed and the doorman (and later Hulot) simply holds up the handle and swings it back and forth as customers enter, as if the door were still there. The difficulty of Hulot's engagement with the glass doors in the sequence in the apartment building—and, indeed, in the earlier office building sequence, when he is fooled by Giffard's reflection in the glass doors of the building opposite—is contrasted with the simple deception of the Royal Garden Hotel sequence.

In *Mon Oncle*, the various objects found in the Arpels' ultra-modern home pose similar difficulties, not only for Hulot, but also Madame Arpel herself, who scurries between attending to guests and dealing with the often-uncooperative objects and spaces in her home. The absurd fountain in the garden goes off at inconvenient times and becomes a comical labour for Madame Arpel who turns it on and off each time guests arrive and leave. Madame Arpel switches on the fountain when her husband comes home from work, until he tells her, "It's only me". Later, during a party, Madame Arpel's guests look on as the fountain begins to malfunction, discharging discoloured water in irregular spurts. Hulot is also frequently confounded by the objects in the Arpel home: winding pathways, automatic gates, a hedge in the garden and an ultra-modern kitchen all conspire against him. At one point he accidentally drops a jug only to find that, instead of shattering, it bounces back up. He bounces it a few more times, before trying another piece of crockery, which promptly shatters when it hits the ground.

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[259] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 325.

Objects, subjects, and spaces in *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time* are all prone to difficulties of identification in the urban spaces of post-War France. As noted, famous Parisian landmarks appear only as reflections and foggy outlines in the hyper-modern spaces depicted in *Play Time*. The buildings in tourism posters for various cities all look the same, and we subsequently see the very building depicted in the posters appear in Paris, directly across the street from the building where the posters hang. Tati's urban landscape is full of recurring objects—objects that reappear in other places and in other contexts. The black foam chairs in the waiting room of the office building that reappear in several other locations throughout the film can be understood as an index of Hulot's general relationship to the objects of modernity. The chairs first reappear at a stall selling such chairs at the trade fair in the building opposite, into which Hulot mistakenly wanders in search of Giffard. We then see the same chairs on the upper floors of the building, to which Hulot accidentally takes the elevator. When an old acquaintance accosts Hulot and takes him to see his modern apartment building, they reappear again. Hulot's relationship to objects is at once formal and playful. Each encounter with an object functions as a reintroduction to the physical world. Following Hulot's own exploration of the physical properties of the chairs in the office waiting room (in which he repeatedly depresses the foam and allows it to come back to its original shape with a popping sound), the demonstration of the functioning of chairs first by the salesman at the trade fair, and then by his acquaintance in the apartment, becomes a pointlessly drawn-out re-introduction to this object, one of the many formalities that Hulot politely endures throughout the film.

Hulot thus variously endures and thwarts the formal processes of engaging with particular objects. In outlining the vicissitudes of Hulot's interaction with objects, Tati juxtaposes the routines and formalities of the modern world with moments of resistance, which themselves are by turns gently playful and aggressively ham-fisted. Throughout *Play Time* the relationship between objects, bodies and spaces is vexed and prone to failure and misapprehension. The periodic appearance of the chairs is just one instance of the collusion and continuity among corporate, consumer and domestic spaces which form part of a broader difficulty surrounding identification and identity. Hulot's interactions with these spaces and objects form part of a broader reappraisal of the place of the subject amidst the changing urban environments of post-War France.

The vexed relation of the subject to objects and spaces that is produced by Tati's choreography carries important politico-historical implications. More specifically, in

Play Time Tati operates on the fantasy of wholeness engendered politically by narratives of utopian modernism by presenting a visual field that cannot be grasped in its totality or defined through a series of coherent experiences and post-War narrations of subject/object relationships. Tati's focus on the urban environment in *Play Time* has been contextualised by Hilliker as a provocation to "an era when official policy in Paris decreed conversion to [architectural] modernism along the lines theorized by Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus architects in the twenties and thirties."[260] Michael Erlhoff similarly points out the exclusionary functioning of this kind of architectural modernism in his essay "Strange Forces—Three Possible Takes on a Spatialized Modernism." With reference to Bruno Taut's "New Building" and the popularity of "glass architecture", he describes 1920s modernism as "monumental, rhetorical, homely or purely gestic, full of outward appearance and empty social gesture."[261] In this kind of environment, he argues, "communication can be seen as something which permanently excludes all who are unable to share its resources."[262] There are several sequences in *Play Time* in which communication is prevented by the structures and spaces depicted. Indeed, the film's premise (or its plot, in a very loose sense), is Hulot's continually thwarted attempts to communicate with Giffard. At several points he finds himself in physical proximity to Giffard, only to be either completely unaware of the fact, or hindered by surfaces, spaces and objects he does not understand. Symptomatic of the exclusion produced by the urban landscapes of the architectural modernism of the '20s, as Erlhoff points out, photographs of '20s buildings and rooms are notable for the absence of people in them. He suggests that "laws are more often to be found disporting themselves [in these buildings and rooms] than living beings," and that these places "existed not for actual people but rather for ideal beings."[263]

The fantasy of wholeness offered by 1920s architectural modernism in its adoption of the Wagnerian notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) paradoxically alienated the subject from the objects of his/her environment, despite its broad aim of forming a synthetic unity of man and architectural space. Lacan's theories of subjectivity and vision, which articulate the alienation and dislocation of the subject amidst the fantasy of wholeness promised by the mirror image, are contemporaneous

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[260] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 319.
[261] Michael Erlhoff, "Strange Forces—Three Possible Takes on a Spatialized Modernism," in *Bauhaus*, ed. Jeannine Fiedler (Potsdam: Könemann, Tandem, 2006), 584.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid., 588.

with such conceptions of subjectivity. Indeed, as Susan Buck-Morss has pointed out, that the Lacanian subject's desire for wholeness must be understood in light of the modernist context in which the Lacanian model emerges.[264] Reciprocally, the Lacanian Imaginary provides a pertinent aesthetic framework for understanding the resistive work that the Bausch and Tati choreographies undertake on narratives of sensory alienation, inasmuch as the Imaginary is also characterised by the continual contestation of such narratives and cultural wholes or forms. The processes of identification in the Imaginary remain double-edged, at once the basis for the formation of the subject's identity and the locus of that which undermines it, whereby the subject is brought into traumatic encounter with the proximity of the Real that lies beneath his/her tenuous identifications. The notion of the whole or autonomous subject that is constructed at the Mirror Stage and fortified in the Imaginary, and the illusion of form and control offered to the subject in the mirror image, is continually undermined by the deviant functioning of its part-objects in the form of (variously) limbs, other bodies, concrete objects and ultimately, as I argued in Chapter Three, the Imaginary part-object *par excellence*, the *objet petit a*, which reveals the incompleteness of the subject's representations and produces the gaze. The dramaturgical emphasis on the fragmentary and incomplete in Tati's work is a direct response to the sensory and emotional alienation produced by modernity. Both *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time* explore the way in which the spaces, objects, and technologies of modernity permit or prevent certain forms of communication and the resulting change in the way people relate to one another. In Tati's films the notion of "play time" entails a process of re-acquainting the subject (both character and viewer) with urban space against the backdrop of totalising socio-architectural visions. Hulot and the spectator alike are effectively positioned in front of the mirror, forced to reconcile their fragmented experience of space with the totalising visions of unity and integration promised by the political and architectural machine of modernity.

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[264] Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October,* 62 (Fall), 3–40.

Pina Bausch's Imaginary

Bausch's choreography of *Blaubart* operates on fantasies of wholeness and control engendered by the totalitarian narratives of fascism by presenting a visual field in which the gestural aspects of her choreography cease to function in relation to the narrative whole of the Bluebeard fairy tale and its mediation of politico-sexual hierarchies in its representation of personal relationships. David Price writes of the operation of a "non-logocentric imaginary" in Bausch's work, arguing that she "stages the social inscription of the body affected by cultural symbolic structures in opposition to, and sometimes in collusion with, a somatic imaginary."[265] Price further likens the fragmentation of gesture in Bausch's work to the paradigm of the Imaginary when he suggests that "Bausch produces works that exemplify Luce Irigaray's notion of the female imaginary—an imaginary which brings into play 'scraps' and 'uncollected debris' and is not 'too narrowly focused on sameness.'"[266] What is evident in this analysis is the possibility of a formal analogy between Bausch's choreography and the concept of the Imaginary in terms of their operation on wholes. The problematic play of identification in Lacan's conception of the Imaginary is the locus of both the construction *and* disruption of wholes, in the form of the forever deferred ideal-I, which is thwarted by the continual revelation of lack in the construction of the subject's reality, and the inability of the subject to entirely resolve his/her fragmented reality "here" with the wholeness of the image "over there" in the mirror. In his "Mirror Stage" essay, Lacan points out that such a synthesis of self and image into an intelligible whole is only ever "asymptotically" gestured towards.[267]

Crucially, though Price's analysis signals the possibility for a Lacanian understanding of the space produced by Bausch's choreography, he does not go on to elaborate the structure of the Imaginary in her work or, for that matter, in psychoanalytic theory. As I mentioned earlier, in this thesis I revisit Lacan's "Mirror Stage" essay in light of his later writings on the gaze in order to reveal the play of negation that is always-already implicit in Lacan's theorisation of the Mirror Stage (and the related paradigm he would later refer to as the Imaginary). I argue that the

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[265] Price, "The Politics of Tanztheater," 328.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Lacan, "Mirror Stage," 1286.

mechanisms and dialectical complications that simultaneously posit and negate the authority of the image in the Imaginary are reproduced in the composition of images and movement in Bausch's work. Mulrooney, for example, has seen Bausch's work as a response to "the scaffolding which upholds the *authoritarian* pillars of Western society" which is based on "the 'having' mentality" and the regimentation of "barriers which keep what is 'other' firmly outside the fortress of infallible 'selfhood'."[268] Similarly, Mozingo and Mumford read *Blaubart* precisely as being an assault on this "fortress". Apart from the overt functioning of Bluebeard's castle as the site of Judith's entrapment in the narrative of the fairytale, this kind of reading has Lacanian implications too, as Mozingo points out, citing Mererid Puw Davies:

> Bartók's use of the castle in the opera "anticipates Jacques Lacan's image of the fortress for the inner reaches of the human subject (and the fortifications around it as neuroses)." As Judith attacks the fortress of Bluebeard's psyche, Bausch's work attacks the fortress of the Bluebeard fairytale.[269]

The association of the aesthetic space of *Blaubart* with the Imaginary in particular seems even more apt in this respect. In his "Mirror Stage" essay, Lacan writes comparably of the fortification of the I and its representation in dreams in the image of the fortress, the "lofty, remote inner castle."[270] Earlier, he writes also of the subject's "assumption of the armour of an alienating identity."[271] This is represented further in the rigid movements of the Bluebeard figure of Bausch's choreography, as he attempts to control and repress Judith.

Yet in the Lacanian schema, these processes of fortification are continually undermined by the proximity of the Real, manifested in the unresolved nature of the subject's relation to objects and images. I argue that the inherent complications implicit in the Lacanian Imaginary produce a locus of resistance too, inasmuch as the "fortress" is continually "under attack". Lacan goes on to write of such complications when he theorises the mechanisms of obsessive neurosis that function in relation to the fortified structures of the psyche. These complications involve operations of "inversion,

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[268] Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 42–3.
[269] Mozingo, "Haunting of *Bluebeard*," 102; Mererid Puw Davies, *The Tale of Bluebeard in German Literature: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 175.
[270] Lacan, "Mirror Stage," 1288.
[271] Ibid.

isolation, reduplication, cancellation and displacement."[272] The aesthetic space of Bausch's work is similarly characterised by inversion, isolation, repetition and displacement.

In writing of the "'having' mentality" that informs the Bluebeard narrative, and the particular post-War narrative that informs many of Bausch's early works, including *Café Müller* and *Kontakthof*, Mulrooney alerts us to a discourse of possession and the play of possession and separation that characterises Bausch's choreography.[273] This discourse of possession also has a genesis in the Lacanian Imaginary insofar as it concerns the subject's control and mastery of objects. At one point in *Blaubart*, Judith repeatedly slides her hand up and onto Bluebeard's head, only for him to push it away each time. In *Café Müller*, a man and a woman roll along a wall towards an exit in alternation, only to be thrown back against the wall by their partner, in an increasingly violent relationship that culminates with the bodies being slammed against the walls and collapsing.

In Bausch's hands this violent exchange becomes a kind of choreographed routine with repeated instances of this kind of theatrical play of possession and separation, itself reminiscent of the Freudian *fort-da* that characterises the exploratory play of the child in the Imaginary. Freud wrote specifically of a game in which his grandson throws a wooden reel (tied to a string) out of sight (expressed as "fort!" or "gone"), and then pulls it back into sight (accompanied by the expression "da!" or "there"). Freud came to associate this play with primary psychic processes and in particular repetition-compulsion. This *fort-da*, as a partial manifestation of the play of subject and object in the Imaginary, plays a crucial role in the construction of identity inasmuch as it gives rise to a primordial play of possession in which the subject asserts control over the world of objects. Concurrent with this play are the processes by which the primordial subject gains mastery over his/her own image. In his later writings on the gaze, Lacan refers to the "*belong to me* aspect of representations," whereby "as soon as I perceive, my representations belong to me."[274] This kind of mastery is never resolute, however, and objects and images alike continue to elude the grasp and look of the subject at the Mirror Stage. The Imaginary is subsequently characterised by a constant

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[272] Ibid.
[273] Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 42–3.
[274] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 81.

play of possession and dispossession born of the child's exploratory play in front of the mirror.

Bausch's choreography itself also mirrors the structure of the kind of exploratory play manifested in *fort-da*, as it pulses between constriction and release. What is highlighted is both the politico-cultural inscription of this play by the authoritarian narratives her work resists, and the fragility and precariousness of possession. This is evident in various sequences in *Blaubart* in which Judith repeatedly slips out of Bluebeard's grasp. Such sequences in Bausch's choreography present instances in which the subject can no longer control the object/other.

Ultimately, the choreographies of Bausch and Tati aggravate a dialectical relationship between *singular* subjectivity and *multiplicity* in the object field. They do so by re-empowering and *remobilising* the "other" arrested through signification (whereby the other is arrested by discourse and made to function as a *signified*), through inversions of subject-object relations and the reproduction and multiplication of gestural archetypes and identities in their choreographies. Bausch's *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* contain several sequences in which gestures and movements are reproduced as a more overt "choreography" by other members of the ensemble. Consider again the example of an early sequence in *Café Müller*, in which a female dancer in the foreground begins an extended sequence of movement that involves sweeping across the stage littered with café tables and chairs. She variously stumbles and dances as a male figure scrambles desperately to clear the café furniture from her path, collides with the wall of the theatre, and collapses to the floor. A dancer in the background mirrors the erratic movements of the dancer in the foreground, reproducing them methodically and at times mechanically (but also at times gracefully) as a gentler "choreography". The movements of the dancer in the foreground are of course already choreography, inasmuch as they have been choreographed by Bausch, but the mimicry of the dancer in the back removes us from the vitality and singularity of these movements and reveals to us more overtly their construction as choreography and as emanating out of shared cultural memories. In *Play Time* the multiplication of gestural archetypes is achieved through the numerous Hulot doubles and scores of identical businessmen and tourists that populate the city. Both Tati's *Play Time* and Bausch's *Blaubart* produce moments in which the self is rendered a recurring object in the visual field. The dissipation of the self in these choreographies corresponds to what has been described in analyses of both works as a "democratisation" of the visual field.

Jonathan Rosenbaum, among others, has pointed out how Tati's works activate a kind of comedic "democracy", insofar as Tati does not often privilege certain elements of action over others, but rather presents us with an un-distilled visual field: "The subject of a typical shot is *everything that appears on the screen*."[275] In *Play Time*, through the frequent disappearance of the protagonist Hulot, the intricate choreographies that unfold with figures in the background, and the plethora of recurring subjects and objects, Tati calls into question the place of the cinematic *subject*. Rosenbaum notes how Hulot "is often absent or only one of many possible focal points for the spectator's attention."[276] Borden has further observed how "in Tati's films it is the dispersed nature of the humour which provides critical and radical qualities."[277] Similarly to Rosenbaum's notion of a visual democracy in Tati's work, Michael Bowman and Della Pollock argue that Bausch's work "insists on a 'democracy of mortality'—on the levelling, anti-hierarchical force of, in effect, shared subjugation."[278] The particular way in which both Tati and Bausch negotiate relationships between the collective and the individual is crucial to the resistance of their choreographies to perceptual hierarchies.

In *Blaubart* Bausch highlights the repression of individual agency by the authoritarian narratives pervading Germany's political and cultural past. In several sequences the male and female ensemble members re-enact and repeat certain patterns of behaviour, seemingly compelled and haunted by recent socio-political histories. In one sequence the male ensemble members individually jump up and down on the spot, proclaiming "Ich!" ("I") in a desperate assertion of their subjectivity, and in so doing inevitably and ironically form a group choreography. This effect might be read as emphasising the extension of a social context to the actions of Bluebeard—a generalisation of a modern "Bluebeard-male" *function*—setting up a contrast between the social pervasiveness of the behaviours arising out of the narrative and the individual body's agency in the isolated gesture.

In addition to repetition, Bausch displaces the oppressive politico-sexual relations implicit in the Bluebeard narrative through mechanisms of inversion. In the opening section of the piece the Bluebeard figure is alternately controlling aggressor

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[275] Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Tati's Democracy," *Film Comment* 9, 3 (1973): 73 (original emphasis). Cited in Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor*, 252.
[276] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 319.
[277] Borden, "Tativille," 219.
[278] Bowman and Pollock, "This Spectacular Visible Body," 113.

and needy child, as he rushes in to initiate the movement of shuffling across the floor on top of Judith's body, but then lies in Judith's arms as she pulls him across the space. At other times Bluebeard appears limp and disengaged as he lies on top of Judith. What is evident throughout this sequence is that at various points each dancer supports the other's body as they traverse the space. Bausch highlights the complex participation of both dancers in perpetuating the motion. She also orchestrates moments at which "male" behaviours are reversed and performed by women, and vice versa. At one point, the women grab the legs of the men resting against the walls, aggressively pulling them away from the walls. Later, the men do the same to the women. Both the men and the women, at various points in the choreography, are immobilised and controlled or possessed by the opposite sex, like rag dolls. At one point, Bluebeard slings the women in the ensemble one by one in a bed sheet over his shoulder and swings them around, gathering their bodies into a pile on a chair. The active role of the female is also suggested, with the next women repeatedly presenting themselves for the same treatment that they have just witnessed, standing waiting with bed sheets ready to hand to Bluebeard. In another section, the men in the ensemble are immobilised while the women make them dance. What is also evident in this objectification of both the males and the females at various points in the work is the accentuation of the boundaries and physical limits of the performing bodies, as they are thrown, pushed and pulled across the space, onto the floor, and against the walls. In addition to the inversion and interplay of subject and object positions and the attendant play of possession and dispossession in Bausch's choreographies, it is the inability to associate certain meanings with certain bodies that generates a relationship between seer and seen akin to that sustained in the Imaginary. Further, it is the way in which the Lacanian model operates on narratives of psychosexual development through the thwarting of such relationships that contributes to its usefulness as an aesthetic paradigm for understanding Bausch's work. The psychoanalytic narrative is one initiated by identification at the Mirror Stage. In Lacan's model the progression of this narrative constitutes the resolution of the Oedipal complex and the subject's deflection into social and cultural signifying practices and ideologies. In *Blaubart*, Bausch's choreography contests the cultural identification of both the characters and the spectators with narratives of political and sexual oppression.

Conclusion

The works of Bausch and Tati emerge specifically in the context of historical and cultural anxieties surrounding processes of identification in the respective spaces of post-War modernity that they examine (and that I discussed in more detail in Chapter One). The play of subject and object in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati operates on and is choreographed as an explicit response to visual and physical relationships that are encoded by problematic socio-political histories. By continually questioning the ontological stability of the relationship between subject and object amidst the spaces of post-War modernity, the choreographies of Bausch and Tati undermine ways of seeing, being, and moving through space that reiterate oppressive and alienating relationships.

In this Chapter I have read the structures of multiplicity and repetition engendered by the urban landscape of *Play Time* in relation to the aesthetic characteristics and functioning of the Lacanian Imaginary and considered the way in which such structures affect the relation between being and seeing in the construction and continual renegotiation of subjectivity. I have argued that the deviant play of reflection in *Play Time* reproduces the reflexive structure of the Mirror Stage and its complex imbrication of subject and object. The glass structures that populate the landscape of the film produce a number of perceptual errors that result in an inability to fix the identity of both subjects and objects. Tati's visual field is characterised by simultaneity and multiplicity, the frequent absence of emphasis on particular elements over others (for instance, background and foreground are equally important), and the refusal of any hierarchy of subjects (in *Play Time* protagonists, supporting figures, and extras are not clearly differentiated).

In Bausch's work the act of looking, for both characters and spectators, is similarly bound up in dramaturgies of repetition and failure in the subject's relationship to the object as we are confronted with the repetitive enactment and subsequent renegotiation of compulsive relationships with the political and sexual "other".

The inability to master objects, spaces, and, indeed, other subjects becomes the focus of numerous sequences in Bausch's choreographies of *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*, which vacillate between possession and separation, touching and looking, and seeing and not seeing. Bausch's work highlights both positive and negative aspects of play and reproduces the dramaturgy of the Imaginary in its images of fortification and control

(and the failure to control), and strategies of repetition and inversion through which Bausch challenges not only particular identities, but also problematic identifications.

Through their confusion and imbrication of subject and object positions and their reproduction of the choreographic vocabulary, images, and qualities of movement of the Imaginary, these works unconsciously return the spectator to the gestural and spatial paradigms in which she is constituted as subject and bring her into an encounter with her own becoming. This is ultimately crucial to understanding how these works gaze at their spectators and why this gaze should be so disruptive. In following Chapters, I examine in greater depth how the particular formulation of gesture and strategies of spacing in these works function to thwart the spectators' processes of identification.

Chapter Five: Gesture and the Gaze

Introduction

Over the final two chapters of this thesis I consider how the choreographies of Bausch and Tati reveal to the spectator the internal lack that in Lacanian theory is the impetus of the structure of representation. This lack is not a function of the spectator's consciousness of her relationship with any specific apparatus of image-making, but rather the function of an internal lack revealed in the field of image itself. More specifically, this lack is revealed to the spectator by the performative and compositional "work" of choreographic elements such as gesture and spacing. In this chapter I will focus in particular on how the gaze, as a manifestation of the *unconscious*, can be theorised in relation to and as emerging from the functioning of gesture in both the Lacanian schema and subsequently in the Imaginary spaces produced by the choreographies of Bausch and Tati. Whilst gesture and spacing are key elements in both practitioners' work, Bausch's work provides a stronger example of the way in which gesture produces the gaze, whilst Tati's work illustrates more prominently the emergence of the gaze in relation to spacing. For this reason, the analysis in this chapter focuses more closely on Bausch's work.

I use the term gesture here to refer to an action that takes on socio-cultural, political or spiritual significance and is *apprehended*, either by onlookers or by the performer her/himself, as meaningful. In this context, an "action" can be taken to refer to a movement or sequence of movements designed or perceived to have a deliberate effect on the world. Secondly, its very status as gesture (or as gesturing), elevated from the general flow of movement, hinges on the fact that it is an act that signals its intention to "mean" (as opposed to simply "do"). Gesture is one of the main building blocks and starting points for choreography in the works of Bausch and Tati. Gestural acts become *choreographic*—that is, they begin to participate in a codified, aesthetic system of movement resembling dance—through repetition and rhythmic abstraction or exaggeration. It is when gesture comes up empty, when it continues to signal its intention to mean, but *stops* meaning, that it starts gazing—gazing back at the spectator.

In order to understand how gesture produces an experience of the Lacanian gaze in the works of Bausch and Tati, it is necessary to understand the functioning of gesture

in the Lacanian model of psychosexual development. Gesture appears in the Lacanian schema as a self-affirming act, one that is crucial in forming a relationship to images. In "Of the gaze as *objet petit a*", though he does not dwell on the point, Lacan relates the gaze to the arrest or suspension of gesture with the implication that the stability of the subject's relation to images, the relation that in fact constitutes her/him as subject, is called into question.[279] Similarly, when the signifying movement of gesture is arrested in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, another kind of movement, the movement of the unconscious, comes to be felt. Using the work of both Heidi Gilpin and Giorgio Agamben on gesture, I argue that the repetitive choreographies of Bausch and Tati reveal a lack, a "blank space"[280] in the movement of gesture towards particular meanings and as part of particular *systems* of meaning. Where Gilpin theorises gesture in terms of the relation between movement and lack, Agamben conceives it as "the other side of language." [281] I give these scholars work a more specifically psychoanalytic orientation by considering how the respective conceptions of gesture fit into Lacan's tripartite structuring of his schema in terms of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic, how gesture mediates the relationship between language and the Real. Finally, I consider the ways in which the performative repetition, fragmentation, and displacement of gesture in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati creates the potential for slippages and renegotiations of meaning.

Gesture and the Unconscious in Lacan

In the "Mirror Stage" essay Lacan theorises the essential role of gesture in the construction and fortification of the subject as an autonomous self. Lacan emphasises the constitutive function of the primordial motor explorations of the child in front of the mirror and the ensuing gestural play with the other in the Imaginary, characterised by possession and separation, inversion, repetition, isolation, and duplication. In the first instance, these explorations form part of a process through which the subject begins to associate movement (and in particular his own) with particular meanings and the

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[279] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 118.
[280] Heidi Gilpin, "Static and Uncertain Bodies: Absence and Instability in Movement Performance," *Assaph: Studies in the Theatre* C, no. 9 (1993): 95–114.
[281] Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities*, ed. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 78.

construction of identity. As such they are a crucial part of the Imaginary activity of the subject: it is through these explorations that the subject also begins to form a stable relationship to the Real. These initial motor explorations develop into more complicated forms of identity-affirming gestural play and signal the autonomy of the subject and his/her separation from the Real. Subsequently, in moments in which these explorations fail to give a sense of coherence to the subject, they also provide the locus through which the Real might be rediscovered or reveal itself amidst consciousness. The Real can be felt here because far from being completely thwarted by the subject's stability it still operates in the unconscious. While the unconscious and its contents are for the most part elided by consciousness, the unconscious continues to secretly govern the subject's psychic life (in the form of desire) and contains the possibility of the subject's dissolution altogether (through a death in the Real).

What is also important to the subject's assumption of an identity at the Mirror Stage is the subject's ability to read his/her own form, and the subject's perception of the efficacy of his/her gestures. As we saw in Chapter Four, the gaze disrupts the subject's processes of identification and sense of authority over the image. In the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, I argue that the gaze as experienced by the spectator corresponds to moments in which gesture is fragmented, dislocated, transformed and does not permit itself to be read. In such moments, gesture stops *meaning* and starts *looking*, gazing back at the spectator.

One of the key mechanisms through which this displacement of gesture is achieved in these choreographies is repetition. It is the structure of repetition in the Imaginary in Lacan's schema through which the unconscious makes itself felt. Crucially, the very necessity of repetition within this schema points to a lack at the heart of the subject's representations, one that needs to be continually addressed through the re-affirmation of one's identity through gestural and linguistic acts of possession and separation. As the embodied process of signifying the body through adherence to various visual codes, gesture operates in the space between being and seeing and is a product of the relationship between modes of being and ways of seeing. As such, it is one of the key building blocks of choreography in the works of Bausch and Tati, which investigate, contest, and renegotiate this relationship when challenging historically coded subjectivities.

Theorising the gaze from within gesturality

Gilpin defines gesturality broadly as "a sensitivity to gesture, a knowledge of gesture, and the quality or state of being gestural," and argues that implicit in this conception of gesturality is a sense of movement or orientation *towards* something, a sense of direction: a movement of "language toward a system of meaning, whether bodily, psychic, aesthetic, philosophical, or political."[282] Gesturality in this sense is teleological in its tendency and progress towards meaning and identity. Yet Gilpin also acknowledges that, "folded within all of this is the blank, a space which we overlook in our attempt to make it safe, digestible, manageable, a space which we most often choose to read as static, but which in fact is constantly moving, never quite attainable."[283] Gilpin's writing on gesturality is ripe for a Lacanian reassessment. Whilst Gilpin elaborates a notion of movement as an act of "maintenance," as that in which we engage so as to maintain a sense of unity and wholeness (a function that movement also assumes in the Lacanian schema), she also points out that this movement is always sustained in relation to a gap or hole, a negation.[284] She goes on to argue that it is an awareness of this absence or negation (as well as an emphasis precisely on movement as "maintenance") that typifies movement in the work of choreographers like Bausch.

Both the performance and composition of movement in Bausch's work always reveals an incompleteness and mutability at the heart of gesture, and ultimately, the identities it constructs. Moreover, the revelation of a fundamental lack in the gestures performed by figures in Bausch's choreography provides the means through which the work of the *unconscious* is felt. The gaze is precisely what Gilpin refers to as "the blank" in gesture, that which we overlook and "choose to read as static, but which is constantly moving, never quite attainable."[285] In the Lacanian schema, the gaze manifests as a blind spot in the visual field generated by the movement deriving from the subject's "jubilant assumption of his specular image" at the Mirror Stage. This blank or blind spot that is generated in the Imaginary negotiation of form is designated in the Lacanian schema by the impossible object, the *objet petit a*.

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[282] Gilpin, "Static and Uncertain Bodies," 95.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid, 96.
[285] Ibid., 95.

We have seen that the *objet petit a* operates in the Lacanian schema as a psychical construct emerging from a complex imbrication of subject and object fields. The *objet petit a* is not a real object but in fact corresponds to a *movement* between the two fields. As movement, the *objet petit a* is not only that which is excised from the subject; it also corresponds to the radical potential of the object field and its capacity to encroach upon and displace the subject from a position of mastery. It is the work of consciousness to imagine this movement as static, and thus to manage it, to imagine the *objet petit a* as the cast-off excess of subjectivity. But in its manifestation as the gaze, the *objet petit a* reveals itself conversely as that which is in fact "constantly moving, never quite attainable," and eludes the subject's grasp.[286] This is correlative to that dimension of gesture that Gilpin argues contemporary dance practitioners such as Bausch mobilise. The *objet petit a* of Lacan's schema represents the movement of the unconscious within the subject's gestures *towards* self-affirmation and the construction of his/her identity in the Imaginary. The gaze emerges from within this movement implicit in gesture and, in particular, the *repetition* of gesture.

The repetition of gesture in Bausch's work constitutes an arrest of its teleological movement towards *meaning*, towards being resolved as socio-cultural, political or spiritual meaning as part of a particular narrative. It is when this movement stops, the movement Gilpin refers to as being performed in order to maintain a sense of wholeness and unity (and, significantly for Bausch and Tati, identity), that the *other* movement becomes evident—the movement of the *objet petit a*, that which produces the gaze and which consciousness manages to imagine as static in its attempts to stabilise the "I".

In *Four Fundamental Concepts*, Lacan briefly articulates this relationship (between the movement of the subject and the movement of the gaze as *objet petit a*) when he suggests that the gaze works most directly in moments of arrest, corresponding to gaps in Symbolic experience:

> At the moment the subject stops, suspending his gesture, he is mortified. The anti-life, anti-movement function of this terminal point is the *fascinum*, and it is precisely one of the dimensions in which the power of the gaze is exercised directly. [287]

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[286] Ibid., 95.
[287] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 118.

Bausch's choreographies (*Blaubart* and *Café Müller* in particular) are typified by this kind of suspension of gesture. In such moments the spectator's relationship to the work is unsettled as the work looks back in its exhaustion of duration, in its repetition *ad nauseam*, in its gaps, in its stillnesses, in its tableaux. Such sequences create a psychological space, but also a visual punctuation. It becomes evident, in the systemic arrest of Bausch's work, that something is expected of the audience; this is the point at which the work looks back upon the spectator.

Let's return to the paradigmatic sequence in *Blaubart* in which Judith falls repeatedly to the floor in front of the outstretched arms of Bluebeard, who is either unable or unwilling to catch her, haunted by the narrative of Bartok's opera, and for Bausch, the authoritarian narratives of Germany's recent political history. This section in the choreography is an example of a moment in which the narrative presented in the work has come to a halt and does not progress, and in which there is a conferral of expectation from the work back onto the audience. What exactly is expected of the audience in such moments is not clear and is not guided by the work, as in moments of self-reflexive theatricality. Rather, the spectator's authority and positioning as subject in relation to the images presented on stage is called into question. The spectators are in such moments explicitly situated as durational bodies coinciding with the durational bodies of the performers, whereby the boundaries of the spectators' experience of the body and of their own bodies, and their levels of focus, are accentuated. They are made to experience their own embodiment in relation to the embodied work to which they attend. Further, there is a sense that the audience bodies are *implicated* in the display of the violent relations that form choreographic sequences in *Blaubart*, as co-presences to the violence. The aforementioned sequence is typical of Bausch's *Blaubart* choreography, which arrests the progression of the *Bluebeard* opera narrative through the obsessive actions of the onstage Bluebeard dance-theatre figure who rewinds and repeats sections of the opera and subsequently through embroiling the narrative figures portrayed by the dancers in repetitive choreographic sequences. To be sure, whether such moments are ultimately experienced in the form of a gaze that profoundly disrupts the spectator consciousness depends on the extent to which particular spectators feel displaced in these moments and feel a sense of being *seen* by the work. Specific moments may not be experienced as the gaze by *every single* spectator in *every single* performance. Nevertheless, the kinds of circumstances in which the gaze *can* be elicited

through choreography are identifiable, and I focus here on the particular functioning of gesture in the selected works.

Kommerell's gesture and the gaze

Giorgio Agamben's analysis of Max Kommerell's treatment of gesture provides another possible framework for understanding both the role of gesture in the Lacanian schema, and how the gaze can be understood to emerge from within gesture. Agamben notes that for Kommerell, "gesture is not so much prelinguistic content as [. . .] the other side of language, the muteness inherent in mankind's very capacity for language, its *speechless* dwelling in language."[288] This conception of gesture affords the possibility of theorising the gaze—that Lacan designates in *Four Fundamental Concepts* as the "underside of consciousness,"[289] that component of the Real which eludes the "figures of representation"[290]—from within the functioning of gesture and in particular its mediation of the relationship between language and the Real. Agamben notes that in Kommerell's analysis of the plays of Heinrich von Kleist, the "speechlessness" within language that is embodied in gesture

> appears on three levels: the enigma (*Rätsel*), in which the more the speaker tries to express himself in words, the more he makes himself incomprehensible (as happens to the characters of Kleist's drama); the secret (*Geheimnis*), which remains unsaid in the enigma and is nothing other than the Being of human beings insofar as they live the truth of language; and the mystery (*Mysterium*), which is the mimed performance of the secret.[291]

This triadic schematisation of the functioning of gesture in terms of the phenomena of the "enigma," the "secret," and the "mystery," I would argue, presents a structure analogous to Lacan's own tripartite model of psychosexual experience and the relation of the unconscious to each of the three orders of the psyche within this model (the Real,

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[288] Agamben, *Potentialities*, 78. In this chapter I have cited Agamben's translation and interpretation of Kommerell's work for two reasons: Kommerell's original texts are hard to find and have not been translated into English, and I am interested specifically in many of the insights Agamben's reading of Kommerell provides and the avenues it opens up for a Lacanian reading. The editor of *Potentialities* notes that the chapter cited here was originally written as the introduction of one of Kommerell's texts that was edited by Agamben—Max Kommerell, *Il poeta e liindicible: Saggi di letteratura tedesca*, ed. Giorgio Agamben and trans. Gino Giometti (Geneva: Marietti, 1991), vii–xv.

[289] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 83.

[290] Ibid., 73.

[291] Agamben, *Potentialities*, 78.

the Imaginary and the Symbolic). The "enigma", in which "the more the speaker tries to express himself in words, the more he makes himself incomprehensible," corresponds to the Symbolic and the endless chain of signifiers, and the deferral that characterises it. The "secret", as that which "remains unsaid in the enigma and is nothing other than the *Being* of human beings"[292] corresponds to the Real, while the "mystery", as the "mimed performance of that secret,"[293] corresponds to the Imaginary and the "staging" and mimetic play implicit in the Mirror Stage that attempts to account for the "secret" of the Real. If we place Kommerell's schema in the context of Lacan's, we can further understand the central role of gesture in mediating the relationship between language and the Real. Agamben writes that:

> … gesture, having to express Being in language itself, strictly speaking has nothing to express other than what is said in language—gesture is always the gesture of being at a loss in language; it is always a "gag" in the literal sense of the word.[294]

Gesture in this sense reveals and mediates a lack. For Agamben, gesture is formulated as a "gag" in two senses: first in the prevention of speaking and then in "the actor's improvisation to make up for an impossibility of speaking."[295] However, Agamben declares, "there is a gesture that felicitously establishes itself in this emptiness of language, and, without filling it, makes it into humankind's most proper dwelling. Confusion turns to dance, and 'gag' to mystery."[296] I read this gesture to be that of *identification* itself, in the Mirror Stage—the child's gesticulation in front of the mirror that confirms her own form to herself as separate from the mass of the Real. "Confusion turns to dance, and 'gag' to mystery," as Agamben puts it, inasmuch as the subject's encounter with the Real is turned, via the Imaginary, into a mimetic, choreographic affirmation of the subject's existence apart from this Real as an autonomous, gesturing subject. Yet what always remains implicit in this gesture is the radical potential of the Real, which I argue is revealed within the specific construction of gesture in the works of Bausch and Tati, in the form of the gaze.

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[292] Ibid., (my emphasis).
[293] Ibid.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid., 78–9.

Though a notion of gesturality is still implicit in an important way in Lacan's later writings on the gaze, it is his theorisation in the "Mirror Stage" essay of the reflexive structure of identification, in which the subject enters into a dialectical relation to its own image and subsequently begins to develop an awareness of "form", that lays the platform for connecting the theory of the gaze to the functioning of gesturality. This is also the reasoning behind my emphasis on the Imaginary (in addition to the Real) in theorising both the gaze and the aesthetic territory of Bausch and Tati's works, inasmuch as the Imaginary paradigm, elaborated by Lacan from the "Mirror Stage" essay onwards, provides a dramaturgical structure in which to address the *specifically* gestural and spatial play through which the gaze is elicited in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati. Gesturality, if we recall Gilpin's definition, constitutes a movement towards particular meanings. In the Lacanian schema the subject's gestural play at the Mirror Stage generates a movement towards the identity associated with first the specular "I" and then with its deflection, as Lacan puts it, into the domain of the social "I".

Agamben writes of the transformation induced by gesture—from confusion to dance, from the impossibility of speaking to a gag that masks its own status both as something that prevents speech and something that at the last minute stands in or makes up for this impossibility—in terms of a "dialectic" of gesture in Kommerell's work.[297] This dialectic of gesture is in many ways analogous to the gestural play implicit in Lacan's dialectic of identification, and it is on this level that the Lacanian resonances of Kommerell's project come into view. Kommerell describes (what Agamben identifies in his work as) the "dialectic" of gesture in terms of the "feeling of the I,"

> that in every possible gesture and especially in each of its own gestures, experiences something false, a deformation [. . . ,] a 'feeling' in which the 'I', looking at itself in the mirror, discerns a pamphlet stuck to it, even incorporated into it, and, looking outside, laments himself, amazed to see in the face of his fellow men the fullness of comical masks. . . . The disjunction between appearance and essence lies at the basis of both the sublime and the comical; the small sign of the corporeal points to the indescribable.[298]

The pamphlet stuck to the I in the mirror image is the very fact of the subject's otherness revealed to him/her in the situation of the I "over there" in the mirror. The

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[297] Ibid., 79.
[298] Ibid.

pamphlet appearing in the mirror reveals a fundamental strangeness in and detachment from the image that the subject has taken to be his/her own. The appearance of the pamphlet makes explicit the signifying function and activity of the image. In Lacan's schema it is this process of estrangement and detachment from the image that produces the dialectic of identification. What is also revealed in Kommerell's conception of gesture is the comic potential of the masks taken up by subjects in the Imaginary. The "disjunction between appearance and essence" presents an aggravation of the split of the subject experienced in the Imaginary as expressed by psychoanalysis. This disjunction produces, from within identification and all the subject's self-affirming and socially binding gestures that facilitate identification, moments in which gesture becomes and reveals itself as comical. This is particularly pertinent to the work of Tati, in which the disjuncture between appearance/display and essence/experience is the source of much of the humour (as we saw in Chapter One). Gesture begins to function in a different way here, *revealing* itself. The "small sign of the corporeal" that "points to the indescribable" in Kommerell's formulation can be read as the connotation of the Real that remains in gesture, and that produces from within gesture the manifestation of the gaze. The gaze therefore corresponds, in my Lacanian reading of Kommerell's theorisation of gesture, to the radical quality within the subject's gesture that threatens to unravel all of its identifications. The fact that it "*points* to the indescribable,"[299] aligns it precisely with the gaze, which points to the unconscious, and the Real. In Agamben's reading of Kommerell we therefore find an important link between a theory of gesture and Lacan's theorisation of the Imaginary and the gaze. In the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, as we will shortly see, gesture itself becomes the locus of a play of radical otherness and subsequently facilitates the emergence of the gaze.

This play of otherness characterises and undermines the subject's gesticulations in front of the mirror in the Imaginary. In the "Mirror Stage" essay, Lacan writes of the crucial role played by gestures and the processes by which they are formed in the psychosexual development of the subject. The primordial subject's initial experience of gesture is in the child's "jubilant assumption of his specular image [. . .] at the *infans* stage, [in which he is] still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence [. . .], [and in which] the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form." [300] Lacan writes of

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[299] Ibid.
[300] Lacan, "Mirror Stage," 1286.

a series of gestures in which he experiences in play the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment, and between this virtual complex and the reality it duplicates—the child's own body, and the persons and things, around him.[301]

When I discussed the gestural play that engages this primordial subject in Chapter Two, I showed how the continual negotiation of identity through gestures of possession and separation functioned to establish the subject's look in relation to the field of objects. Yet the efficacy of these gestures in the Lacanian schema is continually undermined by the revelation of the otherness implicit in the gestures (insofar as they are gestures that appear "over there" in the mirror) and the subsequent movement of the gaze which confuses categories of subject and object. The separation of the object, and the "belong-to-me aspect of representation"[302] that Lacan discusses in his writings on the gaze, is therefore called into question by the subject's unresolved gestural relation to the image, and ultimately the emergence of a gaze that dispossesses the subject of his/her representations. The gestural play in which the subject engages at the Mirror Stage is characterised in the first instance by a discord between the totalising form offered by the specular image and the sensory-motor experience of a fragmented body. Gesture is always other inasmuch as it is *read*—it is read within the framework of form and autonomy offered by the Imaginary and the social structure offered by the Symbolic, structures which ultimately have their basis in the fiction sustained at the Mirror Stage. Gesture appears "over there", where it is perceived as meaning. This "over there" can be the literal "over there" of the mirror image, or the reflexive structure introduced into the subject by the mirror and by subsequently sustaining a relationship to the mirror, in which the subject watches him/herself moving and perceives him/herself as form.

Though the status of gesture "over there" in the mirror relates in the primary instance to the subject's perception and understanding of his/her own gestures, it also extends to the visual framework in which we understand gestures generally, even when they are performed by other people. In the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, the gaze is elicited when gesture can *no longer* be read, and fixed as meaning "over there". That is, the otherness of gesture begins to exert the force of the Real that the act of reading works to obscure, and gesture begins to reveal a movement in excess of its

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[301] Ibid., 1285 (my emphasis).
[302] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 81.

representational status—a movement that connects it to the Real, and its manifestation in the Imaginary in the form of the *objet petit a*.

The readability of gesture

The choreographies of Bausch and Tati produce problems for readability of bodies and their gestures, in the context of a cultural anxiety surrounding both the construction of identity and processes of identification. The problematic gestural play in Bausch's *Blaubart*, for example, reflects a concern with not only particular representations, but also the cultural systems that perpetuate these representations. The difficulty of reading gesture in Bausch's work forms part of a broader discourse on practices of looking informed by problematic political narratives. In Tati's *Play Time*, the dislocation of bodies, and particularly of gestures, creates problems of identification for both the spectator and the film's characters, and is the source for much of the film's humour. In the choreographies of both practitioners, gestures are fragmented, dislocated, ambivalent and susceptible to absurd transformations.

My main argument in this chapter has been that the gaze emerges in these choreographies from the inability to see properly and accurately and the failure to read gestures and bodies. Specifically, the choreographies of Bausch and Tati produce moments in which gesture does not *permit* itself to be read. Previous commentators on Bausch have certainly hinted at the ambivalence of gesture as it moves between meanings in her choreography. Mulrooney, for instance, notes that in Bausch's choreographies "caresses easily metaphorphose into blows" and that this kind of gestural ambivalence is part of the "border hugging Tanztheater vocabulary."[303] Murray and Keefe, too, observe that Bausch's choreography vacillates between gentle floating, shuffling and stuttering movements, and more aggravated stumbling, falling and slamming movements, and in so doing inhabits the territory between tenderness and aggression.[304] Sequences frequently become violent through repetition, as in a sequence from *Café Müller* in which a male is repeatedly made to hold his female partner up off the floor in his arms. The sequence begins with a third (male) figure positioning the first man's arms and then placing the woman into his arms in a series of "steps" or "moves"

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[303] Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 124.
[304] Murray and Keefe, *Physical Theatres*, 78–9.

that become increasingly frantic. The woman keeps falling out of the man's arms and the couple revert to a standing embrace, before they are once again positioned by the third figure. Eventually, the two figures are left to perpetuate the choreography themselves, which in its frantic repetition loses any vestige of tenderness between the figures. Both *Blaubart* and *Kontakthof* contain sequences in which a group of males touch a single female body, with the increasingly frantic touching moving from tenderness to aggression, then violence. As I see it, the transformation of gesture in Bausch's choreography not only mobilises multiple meanings, but creates moments in which gesture refuses to be read altogether, and that it is here that the radical activity of Bausch's choreography on spectator consciousness is to be situated.

Like the theme of inscrutability that I have identified in Poe's stories and in Lacan's reading of them, [305] the gaze can be experienced in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati when gesture refuses to be read, and its signifying function is thwarted. It is then that the unconscious begins to manifest in the form of a lack that *gazes* back at the spectator. In these choreographies, gesture is purloined and displaced from its politico-cultural narrative context. It appears fragmented, multiplied and dissociated from its meanings. The refusal to be read is also important for the construction of space and the work of *spacing* in Tati's work, with the result that it produces a visual field in which we are made to feel that we can never see everything. Significantly, the characters in *Play Time* are also unable to see for much of the film, their vision impaired by the landscape. Even Hulot, who is privy to the poetics of this impairment, is prone to misapprehension. As I pointed out in Chapters One and Two, the landscape of *Play Time*, made up of doors, windows, glass structures, ambiguous signs and labyrinthine spaces, is characterised by a difficulty regarding the identification of bodies, spaces and gestures. The works of both Bausch and Tati, then, deal in an important sense with an inability to read and locate gesture. Neil Bartlett argues that Bausch's works chronicle "what the memories and gestures of our time look like, feel like."[306] Yet if Bausch's

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[305] In the introduction to this thesis I made reference to Edgar Allan Poe's short stories the "Man of the Crowd" and "The Purloined Letter", the latter of which provides a central metaphor in Lacan's theorisation of the unconscious. As I pointed out, "Man of the Crowd" begins with the phrase "es lässt sich nicht lesen," or "it does not permit itself to be read." Poe, *House of Usher and Other Writings*, 131. In Lacan's reading of "The Purloined Letter", the letter in question likewise does not permit itself to be read.

[306] Neil Bartlett, "Watch 'em and Weep," *The Guardian*, 10 February, 2005, http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2005/feb/10/theatre3, accessed 24 August, 2014, quoted in Murray and Keefe, *Physical Theatres*, 80.

work is about this, it is also about the *failure* and dispossession of these gestures and the meanings they project; the *inability* to remember or embody something resolutely (what gestures "feel like"); and, as I have argued thus far, the *failure* to read gestures (what gestures "look like"). The characters in these works perform sequences that are seemingly traces of gestural memories that cannot be attained.

Writing about the politics of the body in Bausch's *Tanztheater*, David Price cites Johannes Birringer's argument that "in Bausch's works we are confronted directly with the gesture of conventions and internalized norms we no longer see."[307] Price goes on to cite Hilton Als, who argues that "Bausch penetrated 'the meaning of gesture as gesture and how that gesture is utilized in defining one's role."[308] In ultimately rendering gesture indeterminate, Bausch, rather than merely confronting us with gestural "conventions and internalized norms we no longer see," contrives moments at which the body and its gestures resist meaningful resolution by the look of the spectator—at which visual mastery over the body is denied. Price himself goes on to point out,

> Observers of Bausch's works admit that there often appears to be an excess of signs on the stage, a surplus of signifiers which puzzle, disturb, and in many instances, remain indecipherable. [Bausch's works present] a confluence of disparate images, objects and signs.[309]

Price refers to these strategies as corresponding to "dream-like elements"[310] in Bausch's work and writes of the functioning of a "non-logocentric imaginary."[311] In this way he hints at the possibility of an analysis of the *unconscious* in Bausch's gestural imagery and its manifestation through an aesthetic space akin to the Imaginary.

Repetition, the Imaginary and the unconscious

In the Lacanian Imaginary, it is repetition that sustains the relationship between gesture and the unconscious. The Imaginary, Ellie Ragland-Sullivan points out, "accounts for (1) what in language makes it mean more than it says, and (2) why miscommunication

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[307] Birringer, "Dancing Across Borders," 86–87, quoted in Price, "The Politics of Tanztheater," 325.
[308] Hilton Als, "Pina und Kinder," *Ballet Review* 12, 4 (1985): 79, quoted in Price, "The Politics of Tanztheater," 325.
[309] Price, "The Politics of Tanztheater," 328.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Ibid., 323.

is the most telling aspect of 'communication'." The Lacanian Imaginary is "that which infuses the unconscious into consciousness to create discontinuities, inconsistencies, and interruptions."[312] This is an alternate understanding of the Imaginary to that of the Lacanian film theorists discussed in Chapter Three, who understood the Imaginary as functioning like a veil or mask that obscured the functioning of ideology. By contrast, I argue that what the Imaginary attempts to mask, and frequently fails to mask, is not ideology but the Real. As such, it presents the locus in which the unconscious erupts amidst consciousness. The Imaginary consequently provides a dramaturgical framework in which to locate the choreographic strategies through which, in the works of Bausch and Tati, the unconscious is evoked in the form of the gaze that disrupts acculturated practices of looking.

In the Lacanian schema, repetition provides one of the main mechanisms through which the "dramaturgy" of the Imaginary is negotiated. Most significantly for the subject, repetition connotes the split from the Real and thereafter the workings of repression. "[I]t is necessary," Lacan writes, "to ground this repetition first of all in the very split that occurs in the subject in relation to the encounter."[313] He further argues that the essential experience of the subject is as a split between the mechanisms of consciousness, which work to establish the "I", and the incursions of the unconscious that threaten to unravel the "I" and the identifications in which it is based:

> this split, after awakening, persists—between the return to the real, the representation of the world that has at last fallen back on its feet, arms raised [. . .], and the consciousness re-weaving itself, which knows it is living through all this as through a nightmare, but which all the same [. . . repeats that] *it is I who am living through all of this, I have no need to pinch myself to know that I am not dreaming.*[314]

Repetition is the key mechanism in this split, structuring both consciousness (in the frantic efforts of the ego to affirm and re-affirm the autonomy of the subject) and the unconscious (in the recurrence of traumatic "encounters"). Repetition therefore figures importantly in mediating the relationship of the subject to the unconscious.

Ciane Fernandes attributes the phenomena of incompleteness and multiplicity in Bausch's work to the "arbitrariness and unrest of the *sign*" and writes that the sign in

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[312] Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan*, 152.
[313] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 70.
[314] Ibid.

Bausch's work is "marked by repetition and transformation."[315] She associates the detachment of meaning achieved through repetition with Lacan's conception of the "signifying chain". Fernandes points out that in Lacan's formulation, "language does not communicate a clear meaning" and the signifier generates multiple and ambivalent meanings rather than "conveying an *a priori* signified."[316] Citing Lacan's own association of gesture and language,[317] Fernandes associates the radical capacity of Bausch's work with its participation in and highlighting of the signifying chain, and further suggests that repetition becomes "dance's self-reflexive tool: repetition explores the repetitive nature of the Symbolic order."[318] I argue that repetition functions in a far more radical way in Bausch's work—to produce not only moments of self-critical reflection on signifying practices and an awareness of the possibility of multiple and ambivalent meanings, but also moments in which gesture stops *meaning* altogether and starts *looking*, gazing back at the spectator. Further, I would argue that repetition in Bausch's work not only explores the "repetitive nature of the Symbolic order," but also the organisation of *vision* through the primary play of identification in the Imaginary. As we saw in Chapters Three and Four, this play involves the continual questioning of the subject's status as an autonomous being, and consequently produces obsessive gestural efforts on the part of the subject in order to reaffirm and actualise his/her agency and identity as subject. Ultimately it is this return to the limits of subjectivity and a return to the first principles of vision as a mechanism for negotiating subjectivity that produce the spectator's encounter with the unconscious in Bausch's work.

Unlike Fernandes, who argues that "through movement repetition, dance actively works through language, formally incorporating and exploring the power of the Symbolic order over 'motor manifestations,'"[319] I maintain that it is the (corpo)Real[320] in Bausch's work, connoted and exposed within the Imaginary space of her choreographies, that repetition uncovers. I agree with Fernandes's point that "within the signifying chain [. . .] spontaneity and mechanization are not antagonistic but co-exist

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[315]Ciane Fernandes, *Pina Bausch and the Wuppertal Dance Theater: The Aesthetics of Repetition and Transformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 15–16.
[316] Ibid., 17.
[317] Ibid., 16–17.
[318] Ibid., 35.
[319] Ibid.
[320] What is implicit in this term is the connotation of the Real that is attached to the subject's motor explorations—explorations that belong to and form a crucial part of the work of the Imaginary.

and intervene with each other,"[321] but I argue that this interplay belongs to the Imaginary in Lacan's formulation.

While Fernandes does acknowledge the significance of the Imaginary, writing in passing that "suspensions of action reconstruct the first split between self and other" (which is endemic to the Imaginary), for the most part she associates repetition with "the irretrievable fall into the Symbolic."[322] Fernandes locates the unconscious in Bausch's work as a function of the relationship between the Symbolic and the Real, the latter of which Fernandes notes is "paradoxically… encountered in the (repetitive) failures of the Symbolic."[323] Though Fernandes links repetition to the search for "completeness" that originates in the "split between self and other" marked by a recognition of the mother's absence[324], she fails to grasp how the Imaginary has scope for conceiving the particularity of the mimetic strategies of Bausch's choreography or this choreography's construction and transaction of the look. Also missing from Fernandes's work on repetition and the unconscious is a convincing account of how the problematic nature of primary identification in the Imaginary mobilises and calls into question Symbolic iterations and mediates the subject's relation to the unconscious.

Whereas Fernandes emphasises the Symbolic in her analysis of Bausch's work, I argue the Imaginary provides a more useful dramaturgical framework for understanding Bausch's choreography, in that it offers an always-already problematic structure of identification that is akin to the structuring of identification in Bausch's work. Bausch's work reproduces the structure of Imaginary identification in terms of both the ontological status of gesture, and the particular gestural, spatial and visual mechanisms through which identity and identification is negotiated and called into question. These spatial and visual mechanisms include the play of subject and object, possession and separation, recognition and misrecognition, inversion and so on, which I described in Chapter Four as tropes of the Imaginary. It is ultimately the reflective play of identification and lack in the Imaginary that unravels the gaze from within language, and that I argue is the locus of Bausch's operation on problematic visual relationships emanating from authoritarian political narratives. And while Fernandes does touch briefly on the self-reflexive effect of repetition on the spectator's experience of "dance's

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[321] Ibid., 39.
[322] Ibid., 87.
[323] Ibid., 84.
[324] Ibid., 79.

temporal and visual means,"[325] what she does not do is extend the application of the Lacanian framework to a theorisation of *vision* in Bausch's work, which I argue is a continual and key locus of exploration for Bausch, as evidenced in both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*. In the Lacanian schema, the concepts of the Imaginary and the gaze as *objet petit a* not only account for the mobilisation of signifying processes, but also situate this activity within a theoretical discourse of vision.

Fragmentation and displacement

The critique of presence mounted through the fragmentation and displacement of gesture in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati is crucial to the way in which these choreographies challenge the subjectivity of the spectator and her/his capacity to identify with the bodies represented on stage/screen. The figures of *Café Müller*, as Heathfield points out, are anonymous and indeterminate "ciphers for fleeting embodiments of sense-relation fragments" tending an "incomplete play, a relay, conducted by absenting agents, in the space between self-knowledge and self-loss, remembrance and forgetting."[326] Through these figures or traces of figures, Bausch deconstructs gesture and identity in a landscape typified by the incomplete, the unresolved and the interrupted. Presence is embroiled in an economy of traces, of gestures, memories, and identities. The isolation, multiplication, illegibility of gesture in these works is part of their questioning of the self and processes of becoming—and in particular the formation of the self through oppressive political gestures of possession and control in the context of the authoritarian political narratives that I discussed in Chapter One.

In the sequence from *Blaubart* (described in the introduction to this thesis) in which Bluebeard stands with arms outstretched in front of a repeatedly falling Judith, Bausch presents us with an unresolved gestural relation effectively suspended between the memory of an authoritarian politico-cultural past and an uncertain future characterised by both the rehearsal of oppressive relationships and the possibility of renewal and change. This rehearsal for the sake of change, this re-staging and re-enactment, gives rise to a dual temporality in the performance of gesture, suspended

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[325] Ibid., 40.
[326] Heathfield, "After the Fall," 191.

between its status as memory and a renewal in the present. Bausch's work at once presents a historicisation of gesture through a critical reflection on signifying practices, whereby gesture becomes rehearsed, an object from the past; and uncovers the mutability of gesture, and finds in the act of performance, the possibility for change. This experience of a dual temporality in the performance of gesture is heightened through its fragmentation into disparate parts. Bausch's choreography of *Café Müller* is characterised by images of separation, and visual and spatial discontinuities that constitute a separation out of gestural bodies into choreographies, into traces of meaning, identities and narratives. Discrete choreographic sequences are emphasised over and against fully formed identities. The gesture is unresolved in Bausch's work, never able to stand for itself, but rather mobilised in an economy of social and politico-cultural pasts and futures.

In *Blaubart*, there is an overt fragmentation not only of gestures, but also of the narrative setting of the piece, in the form of the tape recording of Bartók's opera, sections of which are played and replayed obsessively. Gestures are rendered incomplete in the act of performance amidst both a physical space and cultural framework that inhibits freedom of movement. Arms outstretched, bodies falling, and bodies smashing into walls are recurring image-fragments in *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*. As Johannes Birringer points out, "[the] borderline in Bausch's tanztheater is the concrete human body, a body that has specific qualities and a personal history—but also a body that is written about, and written into social representations of gender, race, and class."[327] The gesture functions between an acculturated history of embodiment and a renewed engagement with *space*.

The spatial dislocation and reproduction of gesture reconfigure the notion of presence in Bausch's work. In one sequence in *Café Müller* a female body walks lightly over another body, aided by a male figure who lifts her up, her feet just managing to touch the body underneath. The male figure then places her at the feet of the body underneath to repeat the sequence. This sequence is later reproduced in the background, behind the revolving glass doors at the back of the performance space that frame the action, while a woman dances in the foreground. The dislocation of the gesture and simultaneity of actions are typical of Bausch's choreographies, which deconstruct our

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[327] Birringer, "Dancing Across Borders," 86.

expectations of presence and the perceptual hierarchies that organise the construction of presence in the visual field.

Similarly to Bausch's work, in *Play Time* gesture appears dislocated, situated amidst an economy of gestural parts or fragments. In one sequence, the torso of a travel agent is seen behind a desk, sliding from side to side. We are then shown a view from outside the building, where the back of a large board only allows us to see a pair of seemingly disembodied legs, moving from side to side. In another sequence, a Hulot double rifles through some confidential files at a stall in the trade fair. In a sweeping motion, he places some of the files between his arm and torso, and leaves. The real Hulot later inadvertently repeats this sweeping gesture with a pamphlet, and is mistakenly apprehended by the stall owner as the thief. It is only when the salesman at the stall realises that Hulot is much taller than and looks completely different to the man who stole the files, that Hulot is cleared. Tati comically explores in this moment the formation and breaching of gestural codes. In this sequence, the reproduction and highlighting of a single gesture is the grounds for the mistaken identity. Tati's work, from *Jour de Fete* through *Trafic*, is concerned primarily with the ability of objects and spaces to transform gesture or introduce divergent readings. This is evident in another early sequence in *Play Time*, in which Hulot sits in a waiting room at an office building. A second man enters, and sits down on another of the vinyl-coated foam chairs. As the seat of the chair is depressed, a whooshing sound is heard. Hulot then gets up and sits back down, recreating the sound, as if in acknowledgment, or a kind of exchange of greeting. The playful manifestation of the action of sitting as a gesture of greeting is typical of the treatment of gesture in Tati's choreography. Bodies and identities are located in the work of both Tati and Bausch amidst a kind of gestural unconscious comprised of traces of gestures, incomplete or interrupted or only partially seen. The deconstruction of subjectivity through the displacement, isolation, and multiplication of gesture is ultimately a function of the work of *spacing* and the redistribution of bodies within the urban environment Tati examines. In Chapter Six, I turn my attention to how spacing challenges visual hierarchies and the positioning of the spectator as subject in the choreographies of Tati and Bausch.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered how the gaze might be theorised in relation to gesture and in so doing more broadly theorised the relation between the gaze and the body, returning indirectly to the theme explored in Chapter One, of the interrelation of ways of being and looking in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati. I examined the theorisation of gesture in Lacan's "Mirror Stage" essay, and how gesture is figured in relation to the visual paradigm Lacan elaborates in both this essay and his later writings on the gaze. Further, I explored the Lacanian resonances of the work of Gilpin and Kommerell on gesture, in elucidating how gesture mediates a relationship to the unconscious. Gilpin and Kommerell both point to a radical character in the operation and performance of gesture and in this chapter I considered how this radical character might be related to, and in some ways consonant with, the operation of the gaze in the Lacanian schema. In so doing I elaborated how the unconscious manifests in the performance of gesture in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati. To this end I engaged with Fernandes's Lacanian reading of Bausch's work and its strategies of repetition, and argued that it is the Imaginary rather than the Symbolic that provides the more useful dramaturgical framework for understanding the way in which gesture and repetition function in both Lacan's schema and the aesthetic territory created by Bausch's work, and the way in which they mediate a relation to the unconscious. In particular I placed emphasis on the ambivalence and inefficacy of gesture both at the Mirror Stage and in Bausch's works, and argued that the gaze is produced in these works in moments in which gesture does not permit itself to be read, and instead begins to itself look back upon the spectator.

My analysis of the choreographies of Bausch and Tati has focused on the nature of gesture in these choreographies: fragmented, dislocated, ambivalent and susceptible to absurd transformations. I argued that gestures are *purloined* from their politico-cultural contexts and begin to perform in excess of their signifying function and, in so doing, reveal a lack within gestural systems inherited from and encoded by problematic narratives.

What is also significant in the fragmentation and isolation of gestures in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati is their impact on the readability of bodies as wholes. In these choreographies, gestures break down bodies and ultimately identities as

wholes. In Bausch's *Blaubart* the isolation and repetition of gesture renders certain behaviours and roles interchangeable and dissociates them from the narrative identities to which they initially belong. In Tati's *Play Time* various bodies remain unresolved through either their fragmentation (the audience only sees part of the body) or their multiplication across the landscape in various forms. The partial presences created by the choreographies of Bausch and Tati function as part of a critique of historically coded subjectivities in their works, and on the way in which modes of being structure ways of seeing.

Chapter Six: The Work of Spacing and the Gaze

Introduction

In this chapter I examine the effect of "spacing" on perception and the role that spacing consequently plays in the construction and contestation of subjectivity in *Play Time*, *Café Müller,* and *Blaubart*. Ultimately, I intend to show that spacing—that is, the positioning of bodies, objects, surfaces, and environments and the continual negotiation of the distance between them—is one of the main choreographic strategies through which these works elicit the gaze. The theoretical basis for this argument lies in an examination of how Lacan himself conceptualises the gaze as a function of spacing. As we have already seen, consciousness is structured by the *spatial* distribution of subject and object. The creation and management by consciousness of the space between subject and object plays an important role in the "becoming" of the subject. The gaze collapses this space and in so doing calls into question the autonomy of the subject and the visual practices of identification through which this autonomy is established—that is, the way in which the subject, through the act of looking, separates and elevates herself as consciousness from the world of objects that make up the visual field.

As I began to argue in Chapter Four, the works being discussed interrogate both the space/s between the subjects and objects represented within their choreographies, and the space between the spectator (as subject) and the work itself (as object). The positioning of and relationship between the subjects and various mechanical, corporeal, and architectural objects that are represented in the choreographies themselves ultimately provides spatial coordinates through which the spectator is able to read and position herself in relation to the images that make up the work. We have already seen that at various points in *Blaubart*, *Café Müller*, and *Play Time*, the subjects represented are dispossessed of, distanced from, or otherwise unable to grasp or retain objects. By contesting the relationship between subject and object within their choreographies, Bausch and Tati continually call into question the spatial coordinates through which the spectator is able to apprehend the image. They do this with respect to both the unfolding of gestural sequences and the construction of the spaces in which these sequences take place, through processes of contraction, expansion, fragmentation, dislocation/incongruity, repetition, multiplication, and duration. In this Chapter I focus

on how these choreographies make use of the fluidity and continuity of space. By contracting and expanding the spaces between bodies, choreography is put to work to create faulty or misleading coordinates for both characters and spectators. Choreography here entails the displacement and reproduction of bodies, surfaces/facades, and objects across spaces. Through such processes, I argue that space is not only performed, but itself begins to perform in these works. It refuses to simply be read as part of the *mise-en-scène* and begins to protrude. It stops *meaning*—that is, it stops participating in economies of meaning-making—and starts *looking*, back at the spectator. By producing difficulties of seeing, recognising, and reading, space harasses the spectator in these works and impinges on the stability of her position as viewer. This destabilisation can be seen to take place through the confluence of three different kinds of space in these works: the physical space between bodies, the psychological space in which the political and cultural memories that are particular to each practitioner's work are played out, and the psychical space in which the spectator is fundamentally constituted as subject. Through choreographic interventions into the physical spaces of post-WWII modernity, these practitioners also examine and renegotiate psychical and psychological spaces, of both characters and spectators. In his theory of the Mirror Stage, Lacan provides a model of subjectivity that accounts for how physical space (between subject and mirror image) is correlative to and crucial in the formulation of psychical space. This is another important aspect of my proposition to return to the Imaginary as the basis for understanding the gaze. It allows us to understand the gaze, which is ultimately a challenging of *psychical* space (in which the subject is constituted as an autonomous being), as a function of the performance and modulation of *physical*, choreographic space.

Continuing work begun in Chapter Five, I elaborate in this chapter how the work of spacing functions specifically to create a discord between gestural parts and narrative wholes in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati by revisiting many of the sequences already discussed in the course of this thesis. Through the aforementioned processes (contraction, expansion, fragmentation, and so on) these choreographies create a world in which the parts are excessive—that is, there are too many of them, they are displaced from their usual location, or don't work as they should—and no longer correspond to the whole. In so doing, they disrupt not only the coherence/structuring of problematic politico-cultural narratives, but also the rigid and alienating social and perceptual

"machines" that such narratives give rise to in their distribution of bodies, objects and spaces.

In this Chapter I also revisit the figuring of the machinic in these choreographies that I discussed in Chapter Two. Here my intention is to examine how *perception* is implicated within the machinic in the worlds represented by both practitioners, and specifically how they use *spacing* to intervene in the normal functioning of perceptual machines. Through displacement, multiplication, and repetition in space, the parts of the machine become excessive, malfunctional and dissociated from the functional whole. By intervening in the relationship and flow between the functional components of the machine (bodies, objects, spaces), these choreographies disrupt the capacity of the respective narratives they examine to comport bodies in particular ways and to position the look of characters and spectators alike.

Spacing and the Gaze as *objet petit a*

We have seen that the gaze can itself be theorised as a function of space. In his essays on the gaze, Lacan writes of how the subject manages, for the most part, to elide the gaze and the terror of being seen through the formulation of "I see myself seeing myself."[328] I noted in Chapter Three that Lacan refers to this as a trick, or sleight, of consciousness.[329] The placement of the I at a distance, as the one doing the seeing, retains the privileging of the I and maintains the space between subject and object fields that is collapsed in the gaze. The gaze is always-already present in the structuring of vision, but only becomes apparent and disruptive to the subject when the subject is unable to rationalise the experience of being seen in this way—as "I see myself seeing myself". When the gaze is experienced as disruptive, the subject has the "sensation of being absorbed by vision" and unable to position herself as "I".[330]

In *Enjoy Your Symptom!* Slavoj Žižek briefly associates the *objet petit a* with the "curvature of space" itself.[331] Žižek points out that in its very formulation, the *objet petit a* constitutes a bend or displacement in the space of desire.[332] What Žižek's

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[328] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 80–81.
[329] Ibid., 86.
[330] Ibid., 80
[331] Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, 56; 74–5.
[332] Ibid., 74–5.

characterisation of the *objet petit a* highlights is the possibility of figuring the gaze (as a manifestation of the *objet petit a*) in spatial terms. The gaze, I would argue, specifically functions in a displacement or manipulation of space as it is conventionally organised by consciousness. We have also seen how the *objet petit a* is embroiled in a play of proximity and distance that its formulation as a fantasy construct in fact produces. This is the result of the formulation and subsequent functioning of *objet petit a* is defined by both its separation from the subject and the omnipresent threat of its return. The distancing or separation of the *objet petit a* from the subject is constitutive for the subject. When the *objet petit a* comes too close—that is, when it threatens to appear in the space of the subject—it undermines the privileged position and autonomy of the subject. The manifestation of the *objet petit a* in the form of a gaze that disrupts the subject relies in an important sense on its disruption of the spatial distribution of subject (here) and object (over there). The gaze must consequently be understood as a function of not just a look, but a distribution, a play of spacing that associates it with the operations of the Imaginary. The gaze as *objet petit a* emerges in moments at which the space between subject and object is compromised. As I have argued, the play of subject and object positions within Bausch and Tati's images themselves in turn thwarts the spectator's capacity to position herself as subject in relation to the work as object and returns the spectator to the scene of her own becoming.

Space, vision and subjectivity

Bausch's *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* and Tati's *Play Time* share a concern with the way in which experiences of and in space shape constructions of subjectivity and permit the subject to take up certain positions (and prevent her from taking up others). As part of their broader questioning of the place of the subject within the politico-cultural spaces of post-War modernity, these works interrogate not only the capacity of characters to position themselves in relation to their surroundings, but also the capacity of spectators to position themselves in relation to the images that make up the work. Through the confusion of the key coordinates through which the spectator is able to apprehend space as meaning, these works reveal to the spectator the inadequacy of her own look.

With regard to *Play Time*, difficulties of looking are created by the manipulation of the space between bodies, the condensation and displacement of spaces within the

built environment, the questioning of performative modes and functional categories of space, the frequent absence of a protagonist that mediates our experience of space, and the discord between space and sound. With regard to the two works by Bausch, I also focus on how the fluctuation of the space between bodies creates difficulties of reading and the confluence of physical, psychical and psychological space in her choreographies. In the work of both practitioners, space is revealed as something that cannot be controlled, that is continually in flux, and that functions as part of a performative process—that is, it is continually renegotiated through the act of performance and is as much a part of what is being choreographed as the bodies that inhabit it.

The space between bodies and the condensation and displacement of space in *Play Time*

> What does vision mean for Tati? Distance. It is a magical phenomenon that creates space between bodies. Vision is the distance between bodies.
> —Michel Chion[333]

As Chion points out, in Tati's films, vision is inherently tied up in the space between bodies and the manipulation of distance.[334] Developing this notion, I argue further that space produces a *contestation* of vision in these films, and does not allow the audience to understand it (space) as being representative of a coherent whole. Through the relationship between the bodies that inhabit his hyper-real landscapes, Tati reveals a visual field in which distance or lack of distance are embroiled in an aberrant play of perception and often present faulty or misleading spatial coordinates. We have seen this in the sequence in *Play Time* in which Giffard stands behind Hulot in the reception area of the office building, and Hulot mistakenly follows Giffard's reflection in the glass windows of the building opposite and leaves the office building for the trade fair. The woman seated on a rotating chair in the middle of a four-sided desk at the centre of the maze of cubicles in the office space presents another such example. Hulot tips his hat each time he sees her from a different angle as he hurries around the outskirts of the maze. What is illustrated in such sequences is the crucial role that the space/s *between*

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[333] Chion, *Films of Tati*, 67.
[334] Ibid.

bodies play in characters' visual apprehension and understanding of urban space as a whole. The ability of the spectator to apprehend space is also called into question, and, in Tati's films, space quite often does not allow us to perceive it as part of a whole. Due to the large moveable glass structures that reappear in different locations and the other repeating or dislocated elements of the landscape (including multiple figures that resemble the protagonist Hulot), it is hard for the spectator to get a sense of the structuring or layout of the space as a whole. Even the so-called establishing shot during the opening credits doesn't give us an overview of the space, but rather starts with the camera slowly panning across the sky, before suddenly cutting to an image of one tall glass building against the sky.

Tati variously stretches and compresses the space in which gestures are enacted and understood. On the one hand, Tati dilute/s this space by displacing its contents to other locations (as when the same or similar-looking objects or gestures are seen in multiple, seemingly continuous spaces). On the other hand, Tati condenses space by restricting, enclosing, compartmentalising, and overpopulating the spaces he depicts. This is evident in the multiple figures and later crowds that pass through the airport in the opening scene, marking out specific trajectories dictated by the layout of the space and its cubicles and thoroughfares. It is again evident in the maze of cubicles in the office building and the display booths of the trade fair, where Hulot is first swept up by a crowd into an elevator, and later has difficulty getting his bearings in the traffic of bodies along the aisles of the display floor. It is ultimately the viewer's inability to apprehend space in its entirety in Tati's urban landscapes that produces moments in which this space looks back at the viewer. That is, it reveals to the viewer the inadequacy of her look and displaces the viewer from the position of mastery that situates her as subject.

In both *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time* the alternate dilution, condensation and ultimately confusion of the visual field through the play of spacing forms part of a broader thematic focus on the conflicting relationships of modern subjects to the urban environment. In confronting what Lee Hilliker identifies as the "evolving technological-social nexus"[335] of post-War France, these films examine the way in which technological and architectural spaces moderate the experience of *social* spaces and reorganise the relationship between the various performative modes through which we

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[335] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 318.

inhabit these spaces – between work and leisure, and between living and travelling. The separation and confusion of different kinds of spaces and the encounter that the body has with these spaces are among the central themes of both *Mon Oncle* and *Play Time*. The glass exteriors and also the interior décor and design elements of the office building, the trade fair, and the apartment complex render these spaces more or less continuous with one another.

Iain Borden notes how the soundscape of *Play Time* enacts a demarcation and subsequent interrogation of spaces inside and outside, private and public.[336] I argue that the aural as well as visual questioning of these spatial categories (along with subject/object categories pertaining to the bodies that inhabit these spaces) ultimately functions to displace our look by thwarting and/or removing the coordinates that position it.

In *Play Time*, the redistribution and reorganisation of space is routed in part through the figure of Hulot, although, crucially, he is less in control of this appropriation of space in *Play Time* than he is in the previous Hulot films. Steve Neale has characterised the typical protagonist of film comedy as a "naive or 'idealistic'" outsider who "re-order[s] the initial elements of the narrative" (in Hulot's case a techno-cultural narrative, as Hilliker identifies) as a matter of ethical necessity.[337] Central to my treatment of the gaze and its emergence against and in relation to Hulot's look, is the characterisation of Hulot as a re-organiser of space. With his look, Hulot actualises novel spatial experiences within the technological and architectural landscape. In a symbolic moment towards the end of *Play Time*, amidst the chaos of the Royal Garden hotel, an American tourist appoints Monsieur Hulot the architect of the space (with a paper hat) after a series of problems and the gradual collapse of the restaurant causes the real architect to leave in frustration.[338] The restaurant space is "redesigned" by Hulot, who accidentally pulls down the rafters and a section of the ceiling when he reaches up to remove one of the decorations for one of the other guests. The figure of Hulot in a dramaturgical sense moderates the spaces we see in the film. By contrast, his long periods of absence from the frame (in all the major spaces we see in the film: the airport, the office building, the trade fair, the Royal Garden hotel, and the street/s)

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[336] Borden, "Tativille," 223.
[337] Steve Neale, *Genre*, (London: British Film Institute, 1980) 25.
[338] The fact that the one who bestows power upon Hulot is an American tourist is perhaps additionally significant given the aforementioned "American accent" of the new technologies of modernity.

expose the viewer to the gaze of an un-distilled visual field in which there is no protagonist to mediate her experience of space. The visual field in *Play Time* is characterised by both the saturation and absence of particular details. Tati presents a visual field that either shows too much or too little, and that begins to gaze back at the spectator in the confusion of the key loci through which both the subject's look and aural apprehension of space are routed and coordinated.

The soundscape of *Play Time* mediates our experience of space. Borden notes for example how the sounds of footsteps or the opening and closing of doors frequently gives *identity* to bodies and spaces in the film.[339] By contrast, in the trade-fair scene, in which a man dressed like Hulot rifles through a drawer and takes some papers from a stall, a moment of *mistaken* identity is juxtaposed with the *absence* of sound. The stall at which this scene takes place offers for sale a door that closes in "golden silence". Whilst the selling point for the door is the peacefulness it affords, a side effect is that it erases the aural identity of the person using it. As the salesman at the stall demonstrates the door to a potential customer, he notices the man rifling through the drawer and walking away with some papers. The salesman later mistakenly apprehends Hulot on the basis of identifying a gesture with a distinct aural component: the thief's gesture of sweeping the papers under his arm with a loud slap, which Hulot unwittingly reproduces moments later. In addition to producing errors of identification among characters, sound variously draws attention to and works against our visual understanding of space. This becomes particularly significant in the context of Tati's emergence and departure from silent film comedy traditions. Like the protagonists in the films of his predecessors, Tati's main character Hulot rarely speaks. Despite this, the other sounds in the film are crucial and Hulot's silence in fact serves to highlight them. For Tati, the introduction of sound not only creates a range of new dramatic and comic possibilities for communication, but also radically reorganises the entire visual paradigm of silent film comedy itself. The interaction and discord between space and sound is one of the ways in which space begins to impinge on the spectator in Tati'.

The crucial role of sound in regulating space for spectators and characters alike is evident right from the outset in *Play Time*. As the instrumental music dies down after the opening credits, the first sound we hear is the perfectly synchronised shuffling movement of two nuns entering the shot and the sound of their rhythmically flapping

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[339] Borden, "Tativille," 222–3.

headdresses. We see them through the glass windows of a non-descript building as they make their way through the corridor and into the foreground. We then cut to the inside of the building, and see the nuns walk through a large, sterile-looking space and leave through an exit located in the midground. The gaps between four cubicles at the side of the space provide entrance and exit routes for several figures and segment the space into four levels of depth. The space is bookended by a couple seated on a row of conjoined chairs in the immediate foreground, and three women wearing uniforms, standing at the glass windows right at the back of the space. After the nuns, the next sound we hear is the muffled murmuring of the couple seated in the foreground, followed by the sound of a service trolley being pushed by a figure who enters through a passage at the side of the space, slightly deeper in shot than the murmuring couple. This figure then leaves through an exit three quarters of the way deep in the shot. We then hear various footsteps: some squeaky and intermittent, some shuffling and extended, others hard and sharp; some receding and others becoming more prominent as an assortment of differently attired figures walk in different directions between foreground and background. Our attention is drawn to the horizontal plane through the ubiquitous, glossy linoleum floor and the way in which different feet interact with it.

 In a scene mostly devoid of dialogue and music, the sounds of movement are emphasised and mark out the space for us. Later in the sequence, in an adjacent space that is clearer in its identity as an airport reception area, we see an important official approach the screen as he is escorted through the space and an airport employee concurrently tries his best to organise a noisy crowd of American tourists in the foreground. Here, sound reveals space as something that cannot be controlled. The airport employee is the first of several figures throughout the film that to varying degrees of success facilitate the way in which characters and spectators experience space. Towards the end of the film, a drunken and boisterous American tourist haphazardly attempts to establish a new, playful order amidst the rubble and collapsed rafters of the poorly-constructed, once-elegant restaurant at the Royal Garden Hotel. Again, the noisiness of the scene coincides with the failure to control and order space. As I will discuss shortly, this type of failed composer/conductor of space also appears prominently in the two works by Bausch—usually in the form of an overwhelmed male figure.

 To return to my discussion of the sequence at the airport, whilst we are watching the important official, the airport employee, and the crowd of tourists in foreground, the

first of the many Hulot-like figures that populate the film stumbles into shot in the background and drops his umbrella on the hard floor of the airport. The sound of the umbrella hitting the floor causes the other figures in the shot to turn and look. At this moment our attention as spectators too is drawn further back into the shot. Through this sequence, in which our attention is guided back and forth between the foreground and background, Tati signals to us that for the remainder of the film we will need to watch on multiple planes, and establishes space and *spacing* as central concerns of the film. The sharp sound of the umbrella falling provides an exclamation point to a long opening sequence in which we hear various sounds and rhythms and see a number of bodies enter and exit. With this sequence, Tati also contests the visual/narrative hierarchy of silent film comedy, which Tati's work has common roots with, and which conventionally focuses on a central comic figure around whom the rest of the action and shot are organised. When Tati's familiar protagonist finally makes an appearance in *Play Time* after a long opening sequence from which he is absent, it is only in the form of a double, relegated to the background. This tells us that we should not expect the visual field to be organised like silent film comedy, nor, indeed, like any of Tati's previous films. By operating on the spaces in which bodies and gestures are performed and read/received, Tati operates on the organisation of the spectator's look. It is in denying the spectator the conventional frames and cues that organise her look, that allow the spectator to discern the identities and locations of bodies and their relationship to the landscape, and that allow the spectator to assume a stable position of viewership and identify with images and narratives, that space begins to gaze.

Bausch's activation of the space between bodies and the convergence of physical, psychological, and psychical spaces

Bausch's *Café Müller* is also in one sense about re-organising the physical spaces in which bodies and gestures are performed and read/received as a way of representing and operating on psychological space—the unconscious in which cultural memories play out. As the figures dance into and around the litter of tables and chairs on stage, they grapple not only with the difficulties presented by the crowded set, but also with traumatic cultural memories of separation, exclusion, oppression/repression, and loss, that have profoundly impacted the way in which people are able to relate to one another

and to occupy space. The subject's visual and physical relationship to space/s is of prime concern in Bausch's choreographies of both *Café Müller* and *Blaubart*, which create enclosing and stifling theatrical spaces haunted by memories of oppression, alienation and violence. Through challenging, reorganising, and overdetermining these spaces, Bausch challenges the memories these spaces mediate. Bausch challenges the stability of the spectator's position as viewer by bringing about the confluence of three different kinds of space: 1) *physical* space, pertaining to the distance between bodies— both between performing bodies themselves and in their relation to spectators—and the relationship of these bodies to objects within the world being constructed; 2) *psychical* space, pertaining to the structural spacing that takes place at a fundamental level in the mind of the subject (in this instance, the spectator) through the operations of consciousness and the unconscious—including the sense of autonomy derived from the delineation of self and other, and the work of condensation and displacement in the figuring of the unconscious; and 3) *psychological* space, pertaining to both the mental/imaginal space in which the memories and cultural and personal histories that envelop subjectivity are activated and rehearsed, and also the subject's memories of lived experiences of particular physical spaces.

Bausch's early choreographies explore political and sexual relationships as a function of space: the positioning of bodies, and in particular the proximity or distance of these bodies to and from each other, is crucial to Bausch's intervention into the political narratives that situate these relationships. As I pointed out in Chapter Four, in both *Café Müller* and *Blaubart*, Bausch's choreography vacillates between the union and separation of bodies, and features sequences involving the possession and dispossession of bodies. Bausch's choreographies figure the space between bodies as the locus of a failed relationship. Through the repeated performance not only of bodies, but of the *space* between bodies, Bausch ultimately creates space within the totalising systems of meaning making that frame these bodies. The space between bodies is a space of memory and desire, a space of lost connection and ultimately a lack that is unable to be resolved.

As with the multiple organisers of space that feature in Tati's choreography of *Play Time,* in both *Café Müller* and *Blaubart*, the space between bodies and objects or bodies and other bodies is often facilitated by another. This figure is quite often, in Bausch's choreographies, a clumsy and haphazard male who struggles to manage this space. The man clearing tables and chairs at the start of *Café Müller* provides one

example. Another example of this type of figure appears later in the piece, in the sequence that I discussed in Chapter Five, in which a female dancer is repeatedly placed into the arms of a male dancer by a frantic and compulsive third figure, only for the pose to collapse and revert to an embrace between the man and the woman.

What I wish to highlight here, is that these facilitator figures, by turns forceful and ineffectual in their attempts to position bodies, draw our attention to the space between bodies as 1) something that is constantly being operated upon and 2) something that cannot be contained or controlled. The connection between bodies in *Café Müller* in the form of clutching embraces is often elusive and clumsy. In similar sequences throughout *Blaubart*, Bluebeard is at various times rendered clumsy, inept and heavy-handed as he struggles to manage space and the bodies and objects in it. In the opening sequence, for instance, Bluebeard must run back and forth between the tape player that needs rewinding, and his compulsive possession of Judith. In other sequences Judith repeatedly slips out of Bluebeard's grasp. These sequences are both parodic of narratives and gestures of rigidity and oppression, and diffuse the relationships these narratives generate through spacing. The narratives and the rigid relationships they produce no longer seem inevitable and hierarchical in these choreographic sequences, but rather, through the effects of a spacing that cannot be tamed, become malleable. As Bausch's choreography pulses between constriction and release, space is being compressed, diluted, and renegotiated.

When I write of "spacing" and the "work" of spacing rather than merely "space," I mean that space is not simply constative or representational in Bausch's choreography. It is instead part of a performative process in which the choreography operates on and through space, and on the way in which *performed* space organises the act of looking—both within the theatre and in the broader gendered and politicised cultural environment in which the kinds of relationships Bausch depicts are internalised and habitually performed. In the sequence from *Blaubart* that I described in the introduction, in which Judith repeatedly falls in front of the outstretched arms of Bluebeard, the undulating space between bodies over time creates not only a physical space, but also a psychological space in which the choreography looks back at spectators.

Indeed, spacing, repetition and duration are interrelated aspects of the dramaturgy through which gesture is fragmented, dislocated, and rendered excessive in Bausch's work. In Bausch's repetition of particular choreographic sequences, what is

being repeated, in addition to the actions that comprise the sequences, is space and spacing itself. We are repeatedly shown the space between bodies, and between actions. It is in this repetition that space becomes operative and, moreover, begins itself to *perform*. This space between bodies (and significantly also the time between bodies— the time it takes to complete actions and interactions, to traverse space and connect or communicate with other bodies) also has a significant bearing on the functioning of gesture and the way in which the audience is able to read gesture. In Bausch's choreographies, the work of spacing stops facilitating the subject's processes of identification and instead begins to thwart and disrupt these processes. The space between bodies is the locus of a failed relationship not only between figures in her work, but also between the spectator and the choreography: the failure of the spectator to read bodies, objects, and images, and to fix and resolve meaning. By operating on the physical space between the bodies represented within the image, the choreographies of both Bausch and Tati challenge the psychic space in which the spectator's subjectivity is constituted. This space plays an important role in the construction of vision and the positioning of the look—a look that is authoritative and can rely on the ontological stability of what it perceives.

The space between seer and seen

In Chion's discussion of a sequence involving an elusive wasp in *Jour de Fête*, he extrapolates two rules of visuality in a Tati film: "He who sees is no safer than he who is seen [. . . and] the object of your sight (in this case, the wasp) is a sign that travels to and fro between the seer and the seen."[340] In the sequence that Chion describes, François the postman (the protagonist, played by Tati) rides along a village road on his bicycle. A man positioned in the foreground with his back to the camera watches at a distance as François waves his arms frantically to shoo the wasp away, as he rides his bicycle. The wasp can be heard but not seen. The buzzing sound gets closer to the camera and eventually we see the man in the foreground struggle with the wasp. In reading Chion's characterisation of the relationship between the man in the foreground, the wasp and François, it becomes apparent that Chion is referring to the man as the

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[340] Chion, *Films of Tati*, 67.

"seer", François, the postman, as the "seen", and the wasp, curiously, as "the object of [the seer's] sight," which is a "sign that travels [. . .] between the seer and the seen."

That Chion refers to the wasp as the "object of [the seer's] sight," operating "*between* the seer and seen"[341] distinguishes the wasp as something *other* than seer or seen. What Chion refers to as the object of sight supposes a third category between seer and seen and to some extent provides a useful framework for expressing the paradox implicit in the gaze. The object of one's sight must also by definition be something belonging to the domain of the seen. Yet in this sequence the wasp is *not* seen, only heard. In other words, it is something, an object, belonging to the domain of the seen "over there" (to recall the Lacanian division of subject-seer and object-seen), but which cannot in fact be seen. It is a part of the seen that escapes our look, and the look of the figures in the shot. It is additionally a part of the seen that travels between seer and seen—that is, it reappears in the domain of the seer (the man in the foreground). In these senses the wasp seemingly resembles our description of the gaze as *objet petit a*.

The fact that this object, the wasp, corresponds to something real for the figures in the film, something that threatens to penetrate the physical boundaries of the subject (it could go up either of the figures' noses or in their ears or eyes), means that it could be regarded as a representation of the abject rather than strictly an *objet petit a*. The abject is a physical reminder or threat of the fluidity between the subject and object (specifically the inside and outside of the body), while the *objet petit a*, is the psychical construct that occupies the space between subject and object, but which in fact cannot correspond to anything in the Real. However, the fact that the wasp remains an impossible-to-grasp, unseen object in the film for both spectators and characters, operates in the space between seer and seen, and does not allow the seer a stable position of viewership, means that it in effect functions as an imaginary object. In this regard it can be correlated to the *objet petit a* of Lacan's schema. Ultimately, whether the wasp is regarded as abject or as *objet petit a*, the broader "rule" of visuality that is extrapolated by Chion from this example leads us to the space in which the *objet petit a* operates, inasmuch as the space between seer and seen is a space of uncertainty in Tati's work, a space in which the object of sight is both elusive and radically disruptive to the seer. The undecidability of this relation between seer, seen and the space in between, when extended to the relationship of the spectator to the choreographic image, is the

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[341] Ibid., (my emphasis).

territory in which the gaze functions. While Chion himself never writes of the Lacanian gaze or the *objet petit a*, his description of the visual paradigm of Tati's films offers a clue to the dramaturgical space in which the gaze is made manifest.

Chion offers the notion that "A film by Tati does not follow you with its eyes."[342] Indeed, I would suggest that instead of following you with its eyes, it momentarily surprises you with its gaze (which Lacan situates in opposition to the eye, as we saw in Chapter Three). Chion himself distinguishes "protruding cinema," which "seduces" the spectator through editing, whereby "the idea here is to force the spectator to drown himself in the eyes of the actors"[343] from the "protruding anti-cinema" of Tati which "digs out a particular image and the audience is asked to linger on that detail."[344] Tati exposes space and the work of spacing to the viewer rather than omitting it or pre-determining it by way of editing. In Tati's work, it is not that which is between the cuts that eludes us and corresponds to the profoundly disruptive potential of the gaze, but that which is omnipresent in Tati's wide shots, that which we are exposed to continually (but are disturbed by moment-to-moment, in some moments more than others), that corresponds to the character of the gaze and the viewer's "death" outside of the Imaginary through her exposure to the Real. Chion goes on to argue that

> no blur is permitted in the image itself. If there is any sort of blur, it is our perception of things that is at fault and nothing else. 'It is not me,' says the image, 'who hides, erases, blurs, or distorts things, but you.'[345]

Crucially, it is very literally this provocation by the image that constitutes the gaze in the Lacanian schema, whereby the image places into question the Symbolic structuring and practices of looking inherited and sustained by viewing subject—structures and practices upon which the interpellation of the viewer as *subject* relies. Yet despite the onus the image places on the subject and the inefficacy of her strategies of looking, and despite the way in which the gaze is specifically experienced as a failing on the part of the spectator as *subject*, there is nevertheless something deviant about the construction and operation of the image itself that brings about this experience. The work of spacing within the image, is exacerbated in Tati's wide shots which, like Bausch's theatre

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[342] Ibid., 69.
[343] Ibid., 68.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Ibid., 73.

works, offer no release or moments of punctuation for the spectator. Further, it is crucial to its elicitation of the gaze that spacing makes itself evident, shows itself as it works—space itself, as it is manipulated, as it is performed, begins to look back at the spectator. Here we can recall Lacan's dictum regarding the gaze that we encountered in Chapter Three: that "not only does it look, *it* also *shows*."[346] The gaze constitutes a moment in which the object field not only looks back, but also, in so doing, shows the subject's lack to her. The radical character and deviant functioning of space in these works harasses the spectator and impinges on the stability of her position as viewer by demonstrating to the spectator the inadequacy of her own look.

The machine of choreography

In Tati's films, acts of perception take place within (and are determined by) techno-social systems—by which I mean the combination and configuration of technology and social practices and spaces in the particular visions of modernity these choreographies explore. As I touched on in Chapter Two, the role of technology in shaping perception and embodied practices is not so overt in Bausch's works. Nevertheless, her work takes place in the context of and is informed by the broader aesthetic discourses of modernity, including, as McCarren's study chronicles with regard to twentieth century dance in general, the implication of dancing bodies within the discourse of the machine age. The broader notion of the machinic as a system comprised of ordered, designed, repeating, somewhat automated relationships also provides a pertinent framework for understanding the way in which choreography itself functions in the works of Bausch and Tati.

The machinic appears on three levels in the works of Bausch and Tati: the teleological, perceptual machine that situates bodies, spaces and objects and generates practices of looking informed by problematic politico-cultural narratives; the formal machine of *choreography* (to which the work of spacing belongs), in which the parts or components of the perceptual machine are manipulated, repeated, displaced, and re-ordered, and which produces new concatenations of bodies and techno-social environments; and, finally, representations of the mechanical and the specific aesthetics and imagery of the machine age in the choreographies themselves.

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[346] Ibid., 75.

The perceptual machine of *Play Time* is created by the overbearing architecture of the *mise en scène* and the new spaces of urban living and work that create new visual trajectories and relationships. Bausch's two works deal with the perceptual and relational systems produced by the *mechanisation* of desire and interpersonal relationships by National Socialist narratives of oppression. In *Café Müller* and *Blaubart*, Bausch explores the perceptual machine generated by the complex constellation of ideology, memory, and desire in post-War Germany, and the way in which it functions to situate bodies and mediate their relation to other bodies, objects, and spaces. Both practitioners share an overt thematic concern with the mechanisation and place of the *body* within the new political, cultural and physical spaces of modernity, and the impact that this mechanisation has on the transaction of vision and on the way in which people relate to one another. It is the work of spacing that ultimately mobilises lack within these machines.

Through the work of spacing and duration, the choreographies of Bausch and Tati intervene in and disrupt the functioning of the broader behavioural and perceptual machine of modernity that situates bodies, spaces, and objects, and governs the nature and scope of their relationships. In all of his films, Tati shows bodies functioning as part of a larger physio-economic system. This is most evident in *Jour de Fete*. Under the pressures of modernisation and the visions of efficiency presented in an American film that is screened at a visiting fair in his local village, Francois the postman develops and is subsumed by a new system of postal delivery. Francois's bicycle is, as Chion notes, "anthropomorphised" after he falls off it and continues to roll along as if Francois were still riding it.[347] What is evident in several moments in Tati's films is the fluidity between machines and human bodies and the frequent undermining of categories of subject and object. In *Play Time* Hulot's reconciliation with the urban environment is decidedly more difficult. Nevertheless, he (and sometimes the other bodies in the film) is the locus of an ongoing synthesis-conflict between the body and the technical apparatus of space, a relationship that is alternately discordant and characterised by fluidity. In the *rapprochement* of bodies and architectural/technological spaces, the body is occasionally swallowed by space or its architectural structuring (becoming a part of the rhythm of the space), and at other times is cast in conflict with the design of the space. Here I return briefly to McCarren's contextualisation of twentieth century

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[347] Ibid., 22.

practices of choreography in relation to the discourses of modernity and in particular the machinic, in which she observes that "between machines' not-quite-human functioning and humans' not-quite-machine-like performance, choreographers, philosophers, writers, filmmakers, and artists have situated dancers."[348] What is evident in McCarren's placement of the dancer in this aesthetic space between the mechanical and the human, is the connection between choreographic and the mechanical, and the way in which *choreography* itself might be thought of as machinic.

The nature of Tati's choreography itself as a perceptual machine is evident in the final scene of *Play Time*, in which a busy roundabout is transformed for the viewer via a series of gestures into a merry-go-round. A woman bounces on the back of a motorcycle; a cement truck with a rotating red and white striped barrel enters the roundabout; for the first time, children appear; the colour scheme becomes decidedly brighter; two cars in a garage alternate up and down on hoists. The sequence I mentioned in Chapter Two, in which the window of an adjacent building, rotating as it is being cleaned, reflects a busload of American tourists, metaphorises the displacement of subjectivity in the film amidst the play of reflections. What I wish to highlight here, is the mechanical nature of this displacement. The image of the passengers on the bus, amounts to the co-opting of one kind of literal machine, into another machine. This mechanical displacement illustrates the broader perceptual machine of modernity. As the cleaner swivels the window, we see the reflection of the bus also tilted up and down, evoking an image of a fairground ride. The passengers tilt their heads and hold on to the hand rails as the bus "goes up", and sigh with relief when the bus "comes down". By embellishing the visual effect with his choreography of the movements of the passengers on the bus, Tati overtly comments on the perceptual machine he is setting up through his choreography as part of an interrogation of the relationship between bodies, spaces, surfaces and objects of modernity.

The machinic and the gaze

The gaze is a function of a choreographic machine that produces, through the work of spacing, an irreconcilable difference between the part and the whole, and that does not allow for totalising visions. Through the work of spacing, Bausch and Tati literally

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[348] McCarren, *Dancing Machines*, 12.

stretch the space between the part and either the visual or narrative whole it belongs to. Drawing on the more radical components of Lacan's theorisation of the Imaginary, I have argued that the Imaginary created in these works is an aesthetic paradigm that does not permit a unity of subjectivity, based on a mastery of the visual field. I would like here to expand on my earlier point about how space typically in Tati's choreography does not permit the viewer to understand it as representative of a whole. Tati's choreography at the airport sets up a machinic assemblage of uniformed bodies, rectangular architecture and intersecting trajectories. What is not initially clear, through either the architecture or the choreography, is that the building where the scene takes place is an airport. Tati's characteristic wide shot allows us to witness the work of spacing: repetitions, undulations, intersections, collisions, near misses, dead ends. As we look upon the multilayered choreography, there is always a sense of something eluding us—some choreographic exchange or moment of significance or meaning that we missed because we were engaged by another gesture. Tati's choreography ultimately produces a perceptual machine in which something always escapes our look, a machine susceptible to misrecognition. It is in this perceptual machine, this experience of never being able to see everything (and subsequently of a totality that eludes us), that the gaze emerges.

For the most part the machine does not work in Tati's films, or at least fails to work in a way that affords any sense of mastery to the figures implicated in it. The part does not correspond to a whole, and the machine can never be comprehended in its entirety. Tati creates a discrepancy between the functioning of parts and the overall function of the machine. In an early sequence in *Play Time*, Monsieur Hulot waits inside the entrance of a large office building with a door man who fumbles with a switchboard—we are confronted with a mess of illuminated buttons emitting various noises, and neither we nor the doorman are certain about how the system actually works, or to what end. That is, the part does not make sense in relation to the whole of the building. In another sequence that I touched on in Chapter Five, in which an employee in a travel agency moves spider-like from side to side on his chair, the spatial separation of the top half of the travel agent's body, which serves customers and answers the phone, and the disembodied bottom half moving from side to side, enacts a separation between functionality and mechanism that is typical of Tati's choreography. This disjuncture in causal logic and the perceptions produced is the result of a visual field over-determined with multiple, disparate parts. Similarly, as I pointed out in

Chapter Five, in Bausch's choreographies the space inserted between gestural parts and narrative wholes is operative, productive of a discordance in the logic of the sexual and political relationships being represented in these gestures and narratives. It is this disruption of spatial logic that ultimately elicits the gaze and does not allow for totalising visions—for Bausch, authoritarian visions producing narratives of oppression and control in German culture in the early twentieth century, and for Tati, architectural visions producing the containment of the modern subject.

The sight gags that dominate Tati's films are frequently based on the foibles of the mechanical and the machinic in relation to both the new objects and technologies of modernity and the implication of bodies within mechanical processes and interactions. The territory from which the gaze emerges in his films is created by the space that Tati inserts into these processes, as in the case of gags that trail off or remain incomplete. Chion notes Tati's propensity to "dilute" his gags in this way.[349] In the restaurant scene towards the end of *Play Time,* the same dish is seasoned several times by different waiters and presented to various couples, but we are subsequently never shown what happens to the dish and whether it is ever consumed by anybody. Similarly, what starts off as a simple near-miss gag towards the beginning of the film in the office building, when Hulot cannot seem to get a hold of Monsieur Giffard, develops and is extended spatially and temporally—it soon extends beyond the confines of the office block and into the city (characteristically diluted by Tati's wide shot), and continues for much of the film's duration.

In reorganising the components of the techno-social machine of urban living, Tati also locates new configurations of exchange. One example of this is seen/heard in the sequence in which Hulot and a businessman, who sit together in the waiting room of an office building, exchange greetings through the whooshing sound made by the chairs. In another sequence that takes place in the labyrinthine office space, parcels are sent and phone conversations had between colleagues enclosed in cubicles in close proximity to one another. Hulot's journey through the urban landscape facilitates a compositional, choreographic attention to these kinds of collaborative social machines. Tati's thematic and formal interest in and interrogation of the automatic or mechanical itself lies in its capacity to transform space and alternately intensify and dilute or nullify gesture. The exhaustive and nullifying potential of the mechanical, and its capacity to

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[349] Chion, *Films of Tati*, 27.

transform through repetition and duration, features even more prominently in Bausch's intervention into internalised gestural relationships in her strategies of multiplication, repetition, dislocation, and duration.

Spacing in Bausch's choreographic machines

The compulsive energy of many of the frantically repeated choreographic sequences in both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* is characterised by a conflict between the mechanical and the emotional—between culturally inherited, internalised, and automatic gestural relationships, and the functioning of desire between bodies. The connections, interactions, transitions and arrangements that make up Bausch's choreographic representation of particular cultural and personal narratives are necessarily double-edged manifestations of the mechanical and the emotional. In *Blaubart*, the combination of repetitive choreography (simultaneously a manifestation of personal yearning and cultural compulsion), contemporary figures, a compulsive, historical musical setting, and the broadcast of this setting through a tape deck on a cart that is wheeled across the set, creates a space in which the human and the mechanical flow into each other and implicate each other. In *Café Müller*, the revolving doors at the back of the set along with the "revolving", cyclical action in the foreground—bodies slamming against walls, figures picking other bodies up and placing them elsewhere, the processual embrace that always overflows—suggest the machine or machinic.

Similarly to Tati's works, which document the failures of the collaboration between spaces, bodies and objects are mediated by deviant gestural bodies that usurp the causal mechanisms structuring the visual field and the cultural narratives. In the opening sequence of *Blaubart* that I mentioned briefly earlier in this chapter, we see a frenzied Bluebeard figure running back and forth between gratification on the floor with Judith and the literal machine (the tape recorder) that perpetuates his fantasy but needs constant rewinding. What I want to highlight here, is how the functioning of the broader emotional and politico-cultural machine represented by the compulsive behaviour of Bluebeard towards Judith, spurred on by a musical setting that stands in for a recent political history of oppression, is interrupted by the space and time inserted between its functional components. It is the space inserted between each of Bluebeard's "attempts"

that creates the possibility for the overdetermination, variation, and confusion of gestures and their significance to the Bluebeard narrative.

Duration and the gaze

The gaze, as is implicit in Lacan's own theorisation, does not simply function in relation to space in Bausch's choreographies, but also to time. Heathfield argues that *Café Müller* "seduces its spectator into a [. . .] reverential temporality"[350] and that Bausch's choreography suspends "the predominant cultural orders of time—linear, progressive and accumulative" and "plunge[s] us into the suppressed orders of temporality in contemporary Western capitalist cultures."[351] These suppressed orders of temporality entail "time as it is lived in felt experience, in the folds and flows of phenomenal relation."[352] Ultimately, I would suggest that the gaze emerges from this sense of time as it is lived in felt experience, the omnipresent work of *duration*. The gaze in Lacanian theory activates a shift in time or "orders of temporality" itself by producing an experience of the Real that prefigures the separation of subject and object. As we saw in Chapter Five, Lacan crucially theorises the gaze in relation to a state of arrest, as a terminal point at which the death drive manifests most potently.[353] What becomes evident in this state of arrest in not only a sense of space being operated upon and reciprocally operating on the structure of identification, but also, the operation of time. Following Derrida, Herbert Blau describes spacing as a "transgressive interval that, leaving only a trace, constitutes memory."[354] Blau further characterises psychic space as something "more or other" than physical space.[355] The work of spacing in Bausch's choreographies in particular precipitates the trace of an *unattainable* memory that places the gestural expression into a chain of supplements. The spatial and visual are inextricably linked to temporal constructions in the Lacanian framework.

In Tati's films, if Monsieur Hulot reorganises space, he also reorganises the temporal experience of urbanity. Implicit in the "corrective discourse" Hilliker

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[350] Heathfield, "After the fall," 192–3.
[351] Ibid., 190.
[352] Ibid., 192–3.
[353] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 121.
[354] Herbert Blau, "Spacing Out in the American Theater," *The Kenyon Review*, New Series, vol. 15, no. 2, Theater Issue (Spring 1993): 27.
[355] Blau, "Spacing Out," 27–8.

identifies with Hulot, which Tati centres "at a sociohistorical crux of the postwar era,"[356] is an intervention into experiences of *time* in the changing spaces of post-War France. As I noted in Chapter One, duration is central to Tati's engagement with urban identity, and his films highlight a discrepancy between experiences of time within the spaces of post-War France. Tati's engagement with these spaces in all of his films is characterised by a juxtaposition of duration and brevity. In *Jour de Fête* and *Mon Oncle*, this manifests more overtly in the clash between the old and the new, characterised respectively by the lackadaisical and the efficient, the extended and the constantly interrupted. This relationship is mediated in *Mon Oncle* by Hulot's inquisitive look and his contrasting rhythms amidst the modern spaces of the Arpel neighbourhood and the rustic village in which he lives. In *Play Time* the urban landscape produces conflicting experiences of time, some of which are fleeting or truncated while others are uncomfortably drawn out. Towards the beginning of the film, when Hulot enters the office building for an appointment with Monsieur Giffard, he is kept waiting in the corridor with the doorman until Giffard arrives. In this sequence, and indeed throughout the film, duration is often made apparent through the recurring and at times continuous soundtrack of footsteps. This is the case in the airport scene, where numerous figures enter and depart the space but little happens in the way of plot. In the sequence in the corridor with Hulot, Giffard and the doorman, Giffard's slow, even footsteps create a sense of waiting. The audience must also wait in this moment, along with Hulot, first as the doorman navigates the large switchboard full of buttons and flashing lights, and then for the duration of Giffard's walk through the long corridor from one end of the building to the other, as he slowly emerges from the background into the foreground, and ultimately escorts Hulot into another waiting room. This is in stark contrast to Giffard's later elusiveness as he hops from one cubicle to another and Hulot is unable to locate him. Likewise, the swarm of tourists and businessmen hardly have any time to stop as they are shepherded from one space to another. As noted in Chapter One, from time to time we momentarily see reflections, in the city's numerous glass windows and doors as they are swung open, of old Parisian monuments that are otherwise absent from the landscape. These reflected images have been associated with the recession of history in the wake of architectural modernism.[357] Tati's choreography alternately highlights a

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[356] Hilliker, "Hulot vs. the 1950s," 60.
[357] Hilliker, "Modernist Mirror," 327.

loss of time and an excess of time, in the instantaneous, interrupted and all-too-brief interactions of people on the one hand, and the long, drawn-out complications and deferral of communication on the other. In *Play Time*, the *look* is a sustained look, and the repetition of space and the stretching out of time are something that the spectator *endures* as part of a visual field in which these elements no longer serve teleological narrative ends. The operation of *spacing* and *temporality* become omnipresent; space and time begin to gaze back at the spectator in excess of their capacity as signifiers.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that an experience of the gaze in a Lacanian sense in the works of Bausch and Tati is inherently tied to the way in which these works operate through and upon spacing. In the Lacanian schema, it is the space between self and other in which the *objet petit a* operates, and which is crucial to positioning the subject's look in the Imaginary. I subsequently argue that it is in modulations of this space in the Imaginary worlds created by the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, that the *gaze* emerges. I have argued that the deviant operation or "work" of spacing and gesture undermines the construction and reception of identities and images in these choreographies and challenges the spectator's processes of identification and recognition. Through the repetition and undulation of spaces between bodies, and durational exposure to space that is not organised according to the conventions of plot, this space, which normally functions "invisibly" to organise the visual field, begins itself to look, in excess of its signifying function. Space itself begins to perform, to *show* in a way that is unsettling to the spectator as subject. In *Play Time*, Tati questions spatial categories through the condensation and dilution/displacement of space in its various *performative* functions—the way in which it serves particular modes of *performing*, such as leisure and work. The discord between space and sound is at once jarring for the spectator and the source of much of the film's humour and forms an important part of Tati's reimagining of and departure from the aesthetics of silent film comedy. In *Blaubart* and *Café Muller*, physical, psychological, and psychical spaces converge in Bausch's repetitive choreographic sequences. Through choreographic interventions into the physical spaces between and around bodies, Bausch also

examines and renegotiates psychical and psychological spaces, of both characters and spectators.

In the second half of this chapter I argued that in the choreographies of both practitioners, spacing intervenes in the flow and functioning of perceptual machines. Through the work of spacing, the parts of the machine are dissociated from and no longer correspond to a functional whole. Within this machine, there is always the sense of something eluding our look. The gaze emerges from both the circumstance that one can never see everything in these choreographies, and the performative activation of the spaces between bodies, objects and surfaces through sequences that modify, repeat and stretch out this space over time.

Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the way in which Pina Bausch's late-seventies works *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* and Jacques Tati's 1967 film *Play Time* use choreography to intervene in the visual regimes, imagery, and embodied practices belonging to particular versions of post-World War Two modernity. Bausch's choreographies from the period can be seen as responses to the cultural pervasiveness of the authoritarian narratives of National Socialism and their post-War ramifications for interpersonal relationships. Tati's *Play Time* examines the effects of rapid urbanisation in post-War France and the new spaces, social arrangements, rhythms, comportments, and visual practices that arose as a result.

I have argued that in these works, *choreography* provides both a critical framework for reading bodies and a means of interrogating and undermining the very frames through which we look and are able to read bodies on stage. The practice of choreography in the work of both artists must be understood in the context of their broader discourses on subjectivity in post-World War Two modernity. In these works, choreography functions at once as a becoming and a death, a process or medium for both the construction and dissolution of the subject. This takes place both at the level of the bodies represented on stage/screen as well as those of spectators. One of the central arguments of this thesis has been that in these works, choreography not only induces particular kinds of looking in the spectator, but itself "looks back", and thereby denies the spectator critical frames of reference. The works' utilisation of choreography thus presents a challenge that penetrates to very heart of the spectator's subjectivity itself, by thwarting the politico-culturally encoded practices of looking that sustain this subjectivity. At different times, choreography functions in these works both to position spectators critically in relation to the action and images on stage and thereby invite reflection on the spectators' own 'becoming' as historically coded subjects, and to thwart the ability of spectators to position themselves at all in relation to the action and images on stage.

In this thesis I have drawn on insights from Jacques Lacan's work on the gaze in order to describe this peculiar reversal of the look and its radical capacity to operate on and reconfigure modes of spectator consciousness in the selected works. Lacan's

concept of the gaze accounts for just why such a reversal of the look should be so disruptive to the subject. As I explained in Chapter Three, the gaze disrupts the very structuring of consciousness itself in terms of a hierarchical relationship between subject and object, as well as the historical narratives that code this relationship. What is especially significant is that this gaze is different both from discourses of self-critical reflection and awareness, and from the kind of intersubjective gaze, involving performers themselves looking back at spectators, often described to be taking place in contemporary performance practices across dance, theatre, and cinema. In both cases—self-critical awareness/reflection and intersubjective gazing—the privileged position of the one who looks is retained, whilst the gaze in a properly Lacanian sense is an attack precisely on this kind of distance. Using the concept of the gaze, I have endeavoured to move beyond analyses of Bausch's works that emphasised the self-reflexive and critical capacities of Bausch's choreographic images through which the spectator becomes aware of her own ways of watching, and argue instead that the radical extent of the relation of these images to the spectator is in fact in the creation of moments in which the spectator is unable to position herself as looker and subject.

The selected works

I chose to focus on these specific works from Bausch and Tati because of their prominent use of choreography to examine the construction and transaction of "the look" and its relationship to ways of being and moving within the changing spaces of post-World War Two France and Germany. It is these works from their respective canons in which their choreographic discourse on vision is most fully elaborated. The analyses of Climenhaga, Mulrooney, Hoghe, and Birringer, which deal with Bausch's works from this period, have variously touched on the way in which these works interrogate ways of watching.[358] Bausch's two late seventies works *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* in particular are emblematic of her concern in this period with the cultural construction of vision, issues of visibility, and the difficulties involved in looking. Furthermore, these works represent a key moment in the development of Bausch's distinctive choreographic practice and vocabulary in response to such concerns. Both

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[358] Hoghe, "The Theatre of Pina Bausch," 73; Birringer, "Dancing Across Borders," 88; Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 122; Climenhaga, *Pina Bausch*, 1–2.

works are typified by frequently jarring, violent, and repetitive sequences, and linger on several key images, including: female dancers who are prevented from seeing by their male counterparts, by the darkness and physical layout of the spaces they inhabit, and by their hair being draped across their faces; both female and male dancers repeatedly falling and colliding into each other and into the walls of the set, unable or unwilling to look at each other during the playing out of interpersonal relationships; and several sustained moments in which female dancers individually and collectively look back at their male oppressors. Both Mulrooney and Climenhaga have noted this period in Bausch's work as corresponding to a watershed moment in her canon, emblematic of new possibilities and the emergence of a distinctive choreographic practice.[359]

Meanwhile, *Play Time* remains Tati's most definitive work and represents the apotheosis of Tati's choreographic system deployed in relation to the urban spaces and visual and gestural paradigms of post-War France. *Play Time* most clearly bears out Tati's acute awareness of the way in which movement and vision define each other within the urban landscape. *Play Time* also marks a shift in Tati's choreographic language in relation to his protagonist Hulot—in place of the more free-flowing, music-hall-inspired slapstick sequences in which Hulot found himself implicated in his earlier films, are more sustained moments of stillness, looking, and observing. In *Play Time*, Hulot appears much more stifled by the urban environment, and is frequently absent from the shot or obscured from view by the landscape.

What is further significant about the selected works by both Bausch and Tati is that their discourses on vision and the developments in their choreographic practices take place specifically in relation to the changing physical and cultural spaces of post-World War Two modernity and the totalising political narratives that dominated these spaces in their respective national histories. In Chapter Two I discussed how the narratives of the machine age (regarding wholeness, productivity, efficiency) and the experiences of subjectivity that they produced gave rise to particular iterations of the choreographic in the selected works by both Bausch and Tati. I touched on the mechanisation of bodies in these works and the figuring of choreography as a metonymic practice of examining and dismantling wholes by isolating, dislocating, repeating, stretching, and transforming parts. I discussed, for instance, how in Tati's films, choreography emerges as the natural and inevitable outcome of modernity, as the

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[359] Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 114; Climenhaga, *Pina Bausch*, 1.

body finds itself entrenched in the new spatial arrangements, technologies, and rhythms. The immediate response to the cultural and political situation of post-War modernity in Germany also produces a specific choreographic language in Bausch's late seventies works, as I have touched on above with regard to the kinds of sequences and images that appeared in these works, typified by loss, separation, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Her later works have less of a sense of operating in relation to the kinds of rigid and totalising political narratives she seems intensely concerned with in both *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*.

Nevertheless, whilst this historical context is important to these works, elaborating a detailed social history is not ultimately the primary focus of this thesis. This project is primarily an investigation into philosophical aesthetics and spectatorship, and the way in which choreography functions in particular ways in the selected works. My interest in social histories extends only to the way in which these histories have informed particular choreographic practices, produced certain kinds of choreography, and conceptions of subjectivity. Whilst I have touched on changes in Tati's choreographic practice across his films, there is certainly scope for future work with regard to how Bausch's choreography changes across her oeuvre through analysis of the later works.

Choreography

In the works under discussion, the act of looking is at once something that is subject to scrutiny and repeated thwarting, and something that becomes a powerful tool, one that provides a locus of resistance to the political and cultural narratives affecting the body. In this latter capacity, in *Blaubart*, as I touched on above, the female characters at various points in the work look back at their male counterparts and the oppressor Bluebeard and through this sustained looking are able to both examine and remove themselves from problematic, habituated patterns of behaviour and oppressive and often violent interpersonal relationships. In *Café Müller*, characters that are for the most part distanced from one another and even when in contact appear disconnected from the interaction, alternate between an inability to see—in some sequences dancers' eyes are closed as they stumble through the space and into each other, whilst the space is also unhelpfully dark and littered with café tables and chairs—and moments of sustained

looking in which they are able to examine their behaviour. In both works, the repetition of sequences of movement and the displacement and reproduction of actions in different parts of the space and at different times in the piece allows characters and spectators alike the chance to "look again and again," as Bausch herself puts it.[360] In *Play Time*, the look is positioned as resistive and empowered as a critical tool at three levels: 1) at the level of the protagonist Monsieur Hulot and his acquaintance, the similarly perpetually curious American tourist Barbara, who both possess a lingering look that is at once susceptible to perceptual errors and capable of grasping the beauty and absurdity of the spaces of modernity and the interpersonal relationships these spaces create—both characters seem to look longer and more frequently than the other bodies present in the hypermodern vision of Paris constructed by Tati; 2) at the level of a series of observers placed within the shot by Tati—for instance, the murmuring couple in the foreground of the airport scene who watch the contrasting comportments and rhythms of the various figures that enter and exit the space; and 3) at the level of the spectators, who are shown, through Tati's repeating choreographies and prominent use of wide shots, the peculiar mechanics underlying interpersonal relationships in Tati's heightened version of the landscape of post-War urbanised Paris.

In this regard, in addition to demonstrating how the look functions as a locus of resistance to the political and cultural narratives affecting the body in these works, I also showed how the choreographed body itself reciprocally functions as a means of interrogating and reorganising perception. The repetitive choreographic sequences of both practitioners not only induce in spectators a more scrutinising look, but through their frequent illegibility and their transmutation of gesture, often undermine the authority and critical capacities of that look. The act of looking in these choreographies is tied to the ways in which the body is articulated and able to move in the changing environments of modernity—looking, like moving, is fraught with difficulties and interruptions. Chapters One and Two explored the intimate connection between ways of being and possibilities of seeing in these works, highlighting how gestural practices and articulations of the body give rise to and are reflective of visual practices. To this end, I focused on the notion of choreography itself in these works as a framework for exploring the relationship between seeing and being. Choreography describes not only a

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[360] Quoted in Birringer, "Dancing Across Borders," 91.

set of strategies for being in these works—that is, the being of performers in the *mise-en-scène* of theatrically and cinematically-framed spaces—but also, crucially, the means by which the spectator's look is both curated and challenged. The operation of choreography is necessarily implicit in existing Tati scholarship that focuses on perception and perceptual error as the source of much of his comedy, in so far as such scholarship makes broad reference to the slapstick sequences through which this confusion is created, to Tati's unique physical characterisation as Monsieur Hulot, and to the precisely choreographed and stylised gestures of the other inhabitants of the ultramodern spaces Tati depicts. What is missing in this scholarship, however, is an overt and rigorous analysis of the importance of the choreographic to Tati's exploration of perception, and the specific choreographic practices through which Tati challenges the spectator's ways of looking. On the other hand, whilst Bausch scholars have broadly touched on choreographic practices and strategies with regard to *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*, none have done so explicitly in terms of the notion of choreography as an overarching critical concept and framework.

This thesis has sought to show how in both practitioners' works, choreography functions at once as an embodied practice that explores the way in which bodies learn and process behaviour through performance and a visual practice that operates through the recognition and contestation of patterns of behaviour and codes. It is a practice that not only draws the dancer and spectator alike into an encounter with their own processes of becoming subjects, but also provides a framework for exploring and understanding the relationship *between* modes of being and ways of seeing. Choreography takes on further significance to these practitioners as a system of composing with "parts" or "moves" that are then rehearsed over and over again. I showed how both Bausch and Tati take this conception of the choreographic to obsessive lengths, using choreography as a metonymic practice that uses fragmentation, dislocation, and repetition of parts (gestures, limbs, sequences of movement) in order to contest the coherence of politico-aesthetic wholes in the context of modernity and its prevailing cultural narratives of wholeness and productivity.

The Refusal to be Read

I began this thesis with a discussion of how the refusal to be read might be figured as a resistive act in the field of vision—how objects, bodies, gestures and spaces resist the economy of the look and its oppressive historical iterations and instead displace the subject by returning a gaze. My analysis of the way in which the works of Bausch and Tati operate on practices of looking focuses on two key components of their choreographic systems: the functioning of *gesture* and *spacing* (which in turn articulate and define the boundaries of *objects* and *bodies*). I proposed that in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, gestures and spaces stop *meaning* and start *looking*, gazing back at spectators. In their fragmentation, repetition, multiplication, displacement and extension over time, gestures and spaces begin to *perform* in excess of their capacity as signifiers. That is, they stop being part of particular systems of meaning and become something else—functioning (however momentarily) only in the realm of the aesthetic, which in this instance is the choreographic. At moments when gestures and spaces resist and challenge the spectator's attempts to read and identify them, they can no longer be circumscribed as objects in the field of vision by the spectator's look. By applying Lacan's theorisation of the gaze as a thwarting of the normal functioning of subject-object relationships routed through the authoritative look of the subject, I argue that in such moments gestures begin to effectively gaze back at the audience, which ultimately produces a reassessment of the audience's place and identity in relation to the image, as viewers and subjects of a particular historical context. In the choreographies dealt with in this thesis, the *look* is a sustained look, the repetition of space and the stretching out of time are something that the spectator *endures*, as part of a visual field in which these elements no longer serve teleological narrative ends.

Gesture

A significant point made in Bausch scholarship concerns the way in which her sequences engender multiple meanings/readings (Hoghe 1980, Fernandes 2001,

Mulrooney 2002, Mumford 2004, Murray and Keefe 2007).[361] My argument here has sought to show that the transformation of gesture through choreography not only mobilises multiple meanings but creates moments in which gesture refuses to be read altogether. I would also argue that it is here that the radical activity of Bausch's choreography on spectator consciousness is to be situated. In the Lacanian schema, gesture appears as a self-affirming act by playing a crucial role in the subject's derivation of a sense of self from her relation to the mirror image (and this sense of self is precisely what is at stake in the gaze). The frequent dislocation, transformation, and unreadability of gesture in the selected works by Bausch refuses to provide this affirmation of self through coherent modes of being. The function of gesture in this way returns the spectator to the grounds of her own becoming. Further, through the frequent thwarting of its function as a coded system of movement, gesture undermines the entire economy of looking. Whilst on the one hand Bausch locates the act of looking as a potentially resistive act, on the other hand she contests the capacity of looking to function as an oppressive and historicising act—something that consigns the object being looked at to history, to particular economies of meaning pertaining to the historical context in which the look is cast. In the refusal to be read, the object reveals its otherness and the radical potential of this otherness to defy the economy of the look instituted by the subject. The refusal to be read is a refusal to be placed as the object of the subject's look, and deciphered or rendered as meaning/s. Paradoxically, this refusal to be *read* is concomitant in Lacan's conception of the gaze with a kind of radical *showing.* As I articulated in Chapter Three, Lacan attributes the disruptive potential of the gaze specifically to the fact that "*it* shows".[362] And what it shows is the unconscious. In Chapter Five we saw that, in the choreographies of Bausch and Tati, the refusal to be read is itself a performative act in which the workings of the unconscious become apparent. I focused in particular on how the deviant functioning of gesture, space and time produces a revelation or staging of the unconscious in these works.

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[361] Hoghe, "The Theatre of Pina Bausch," 73; Fernandes, *Bausch: Aesthetics of Repetition*, 17; Mulrooney, *Orientalism and Bausch*, 124; Mumford, "Bausch Choreographs *Blaubart*", 48; Murray and Keefe, *Physical Theatres*, 78–9.

[362] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 75.

Spacing

In Chapter Six I elaborated how the gaze operates, both in the Lacanian model of subjectivity and in the selected works, as a function of *spacing*. In *Play Time* and in Bausch's choreographies of *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*, space is not simply constative or representational. Space is instead part of a performative process through which the choreography operates on visual and embodied relationships. I used the term spacing to refer to this process and in particular to the way in which *performed* space organises the act of looking. In the choreographies under discussion, space is not only performed, but itself begins to perform. It refuses to simply be read as part of the *mise-en-scène* and begins to protrude.

In Lacan's theory of psychosexual development, consciousness is defined in terms of the spatial distribution of subject and object. The subsequent disruption of the space between subject and object by the gaze calls into question the autonomy of the subject and the visual practices of identification through which this autonomy is established. When the subject is no longer sure of the ontological stability of space and the distinction between herself and the world of objects, her position as seer is called into question.

Lacan's concept of the Imaginary is crucial in that it describes the initial processes through which *physical* space (between the subject and her own mirror image) translates into *psychical* space (in which the subject is constituted as a consciousness). What the Imaginary ultimately allows us to understand is how the gaze, which is a challenging of psychical space, comes about as a result of the performance and modulation of physical, choreographic space. Through choreographic activations of the physical spaces of post-World War Two modernity and the spaces between bodies, Bausch and Tati also renegotiate the psychical spaces in which the spectator as subject is constituted (in relation to objects and images) and the psychological spaces in which personal memories and cultural histories are played out.

My Emphasis of the Imaginary

In this thesis I have sought to make a case for a return to the Imaginary as the basis for Lacan's theorisation of the gaze, and, crucially, as that which places the gaze in relation

to choreography. Because of erroneous and reductive understandings of the Imaginary in early psychoanalytic film theory, much contemporary Lacanian film theory has sought to move away from the Imaginary in theorising the gaze. It has been my contention here that Lacan's later work on the gaze does not represent a departure from his earlier work on the "mirror stage," but rather offers an elaboration of it. Through close readings of key papers from both phases of Lacan's work I set out to show not only that the Imaginary already contains within it and underneath its identifications the structure of the gaze, but also that the Imaginary is absolutely crucial to understanding how the gaze emerges in relation to the body and its processes of becoming. The Imaginary in Lacan's schema presents us with a quintessential choreographic model that operates at the grounds of subjectivity and describes the situation in which the subject is constructed as a function of a relationship between the moving body and the image, between acts of becoming/being and seeing, and, ultimately, between subject and object.

In Chapter Four I argued that the selected case study works by Bausch and Tati can be understood by reference to the Lacanian Imaginary as a dramaturgical framework. In particular I showed how their choreographies could be understood as a restaging of the problematic scene of identification and the exploratory formative play of the child at the Mirror Stage described by Lacan. These choreographies reproduce the structure and imagery of the Imaginary in their play of subject and object positions (through sequences that explore the formation and potential reversal of these positions within the respective political contexts of post-War modernity that these works examine), possession and separation, recognition and misrecognition, and identification and alienation, in their repetitive enactment and continual renegotiation of compulsive relationships with the "other", and in their refusal to fix meaning.

The Gaze in Film Studies, Theatre and Performance Studies and Dance Studies

I have distinguished my understanding of the gaze in several key senses from the way in which this concept has been previously theorised and deployed within the disciplines of Film Studies, Theatre and Performance Studies, and Dance Studies. Contrary to the frequent use of the term "gaze" in both generic and Lacanian senses across these

disciplines to refer to spectatorial practices and the pleasure the viewer obtains by looking at the work of art, it is important to recognise that the gaze as Lacan describes it in fact comes from the side of the object and functions to thwart the subject's look rather than to enable it. Among the disciplines mentioned above, it is Film Studies where the concept of the gaze has had its most prominent impact. Early psychoanalytic film theorists such as Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry, and Jean-Louis Comolli popularised an understanding of the gaze that pertained to the way in which the spectator's look facilitated her interpellation into ideology.[363] In the work of these theorists, the gaze was understood as something belonging to the spectator. Meanwhile, Laura Mulvey's very influential essay on the male gaze, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,"[364] also popularised an understanding of the gaze as something belonging to the spectator. Later Lacanian film scholars like Joan Copjec and Todd McGowan have identified this mis-conceptualisation of the gaze, and pointed out that in the properly Lacanian sense, the gaze belongs to side of object.[365]

Another problem with early psychoanalytic film theorists' use of Lacanian theories was the way in which they understood the Imaginary to operate. These theorists drew on Lacan's Mirror Stage essay (combined with Althusser's writings on ideology) in equating the situation of the spectator in cinema with the situation of the subject at the mirror. Whilst I have argued in this thesis that the case study works of Bausch and Tati do return their spectators to the scene of becoming elaborated by Lacan in the Mirror Stage essay, my work differs from that of Metz, Baudry, and Comolli in terms of my understanding of what this return to the mirror entails for the spectator. As I mentioned in the previous section, I argued that part of the problem with these theorists' use of Lacan was their misunderstanding of the Imaginary as a paradigm that offered the subject the satisfaction of a totalising experience, rather than one which continually threatened to undermine the subject's identifications. Whilst McGowan's work responds to the misconception of the gaze in the work of earlier psychoanalytic film theorists like Metz and Mulvey, he ultimately retains the understanding of the Imaginary perpetuated by these theorists, in terms of the illusion of totality and

[363] Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," 14–76; Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," 39–47; Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism," *Screen* 12, 1 (1971): 27–38.
[364] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."
[365] Copjec, *Read My Desire*; McGowan, *The Real Gaze*. See also Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*; and Zizek, *The Fright of Real Tears*.

coherence that the Imaginary offers to the nascent subject. Correctly concluding that this kind of experience is antithetical to the gaze as Lacan describes it, McGowan subsequently turns away from the Imaginary in theorising the gaze and focuses instead on the relationship between the Symbolic and the Real. In this thesis I have placed a renewed emphasis on the Imaginary and the problematic structures of identification it describes in theorising the gaze. McGowan takes his lead, at least in part, from Copjec's seminal treatment of the gaze in cinema. Yet McGowan overlooks the Imaginary aspect of Copjec's theorisation of the gaze, and in Chapter Three I drew on Copjec's observations to develop a conception of the gaze in terms of the Imaginary. Specifically, by elaborating the Imaginary bases of the *objet petit a* itself in Lacan's writings on the gaze, I argued that the gaze must be understood in relation to the problematic relationship between subject and object that characterises the process of identification in the Imaginary.

In Chapter Three I also considered the implications of the status of the *objet petit a* as *internal* to the structure of representation. The gaze *as objet petit a* is not correlative to a look positioned "outside" the image or the apparatus, but rather presents the internal limit of the image itself and denies any position of mastery. As such, I argued that the gaze must be distinguished from the kind of aesthetic self-consciousness and self-critical reflection that is common in both the practice and discourse of contemporary theatre and also dance. In the discipline of Dance Studies, Jenn Joy has raised the issue of how choreography "looks" in her important book *The Choreographic*. Crucially, Joy writes of the way in which choreography flirts with the boundaries of the intelligible and the unknowable, and this is precisely what I argue is at stake in the properly Lacanian gaze. However, Joy's analyses of the gaze at work in examples from contemporary dance works nevertheless either involve the way in which these works both themselves display and facilitate among spectators a heightened consciousness—the kind of experience of "seeing oneself seeing" that Lacan describes as being antithetical to the gaze—or involve sequences in which dancers look back at each other or at spectators. As I mentioned in the introductory section of this Conclusion, the gaze is neither self-conscious, nor inter-subjective—that is, it is not a case of dancers themselves looking back at spectators from a knowing position "outside" the fictions they are representing.

In Chapter Three I considered how the gaze is different from particular discourses of theatricality and briefly placed the gaze in relation to the development of

the concept of theatricality within the discipline of Theatre Studies. One of the crucial moments in Lacan's writings on the gaze, particularly for how the idea has been taken up in Theatre Studies, is his association of the gaze with "showing".[366] I considered how the selected case studies share a pre-occupation with display and showing. Erika Fischer-Lichte, Barbara Freedman, Michael Fried, and Maaike Bleeker have written about the relationship between showing and gazing. Despite the complexity of their formulations of theatricality, their discussions of works that gaze remain bound to some extent to these works' practices of "self-critical reflection" in relation to "the semiotic habits that make up the discourse of the theatre,"[367] as Bleeker puts it. Crucially, amidst the shared thematic focus on showing in the selected Bausch and Tati works, I argue that the kind of showing that is crucial to the functioning of the gaze in the properly Lacanian sense is not related to the self-consciousness of either the work at large or the individual performers, but rather has to do with a showing of a lack at the heart of representation, that comes from choreography itself. As I have mentioned above, this lack is revealed to the spectator through the illegibility of gesture and spacing and their refusal to be circumscribed as aesthetic objects by the look of the spectator. What is shown to be lacking is not only the spectators' subjectivity and look, but the representational systems that produce these subjectivities and practices of looking.

Differences Between Bausch and Tati

I have described many of the commonalities between the choreographic systems of Bausch and Tati when elucidating how they each use choreography to produce an experience of the gaze and reveal to the spectator the lack at the heart of culturally and historically specific systems of representation. There are, of course, crucial differences between the works of the two practitioners that have been encountered over the course of this thesis that I would like to briefly reiterate here.

One of the key differences, as I discussed in Chapter One, is the way in which the selected works figure *history*. Whilst *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* are comprised of the staging of cultural memories that linger uncomfortably, Tati's films (reaching their conceptual and compositional apotheosis in *Play Time*) chronicle the recession of

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[366] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 75.
[367] Bleeker, *Visuality in Theatre*, 8.

history, and way in which the modern, in the form of narratives of progress, inserts itself into the teleological structure of history itself. Despite this difference in the *kinds* of histories the two practitioners are dealing with, and indeed the differing place these histories occupy in the cultural psyche of their respective characters and target audience, the works of both practitioners ultimately challenge the spectator's subjectivity in relation to modernist formulations of history. In particular they challenge the spectator's ability to position herself as a consciousness within the teleological narratives of particular iterations of modernity that oppress and alienate modern subjects. Both Tati and Bausch emphasise the renegotiation of *interpersonal* space within the new gestural paradigms produced by these narratives of modernity. Yet despite the characteristic comicality, fragmentation and incongruity of gesture in *Play Time*, it in his manipulation of spacing that the gaze seems to most potently manifest. No doubt, as was demonstrated in Chapter Six, spacing is not separate from the functioning of gesture (the two are inextricably intertwined in the dramaturgy of repetition) in the works of Bausch and Tati under discussion, but in *Play Time* there is a greater sense that the gaze emerges from the inability to apprehend the vast spaces of post-War modernity that he exposes us to in his long takes with wide angle fields of view and overpopulated choreographies. In part this is due to the fact that Tati focuses much more on the problems generated by the changing physical, *geographical* spaces of modernity than Bausch's works. It has also to do with the nature of Bausch's choreography and in particular the way in which she approaches gesture.

In *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*, in which gesture is repeated exhaustively, there is a greater sense that the gestures themselves seem to "look" back at the spectator—that is, in refusing interpretation, they also refuse to be circumscribed as aesthetic objects by the spectator's look and in this way interrogate or call into question the authority of the spectator as viewer and ultimately the spectator's position as subject. Again, this difference is also partly a function of the location of Bausch's work (specifically, the early theatre works that I discuss here) in a more abstract, clearly compositional space— Bausch's works do not reproduce historical or real-world spaces, but rather assemble elements, fragments, and memories of such spaces in a heightened theatrical space of play. Whilst Bausch's choreographies unfold in spaces that are always-already abstract, Tati's films represent real-world spaces or at least start with spaces that resemble real spaces—even if his choreography ultimately renders these real spaces absurd and abstract.

The Question of Medium-Specificity

I argue that despite the differences in the kind of spaces surveyed by Bausch and Tati in these particular works, the essential experience of the gaze that emerges in cinema and theatre is not fundamentally different and is not tied to the specificity of these media and how they produce images. The gaze, as I have argued, ultimately emerges not from imagined spaces outside the frames of theatre and cinema respectively, but from real space—as a lack *within* the visual field itself. That is, the gaze emerges from the situation that we can never see everything, but this is not a function of spaces that are not available to us to view, but rather, our inability to apprehend the space we can freely see, due to the way in which bodies, gestures and spaces are choreographed—the simultaneity and disconnection of multiple bodies, gestures and spaces; the gaze is the *internal* lack of the visual field. In *Blaubart* and *Café Müller*, the gaze emerges from the fact that we see too much (and paradoxically, at the same time, not enough) and for too long. Tati's *Play Time* replicates this in the predominant use of wide shots and saturation of choreographic details and in this sense produces the gaze in a similar way to Bausch's work. It is the manipulation of space *within* the frame that produces the gaze in *Play Time*. The refusal of gesture and space to be read in these choreographies and the subsequent refusal of these choreographies to lend themselves to definitive interpretations is a product of either too many meanings or none at all; the gaze functions in both of these ways *at once*—that is, whether there is too much to see or not enough, what *gazes* is ultimately the lack at the heart of the representational systems that Bausch and Tati construct and the way in which these systems organise gesture and space. This lack is simultaneously the result of the overdetermination of the gesture and space, and their emptying of meaning through exhaustive repetition and stretching out over time. The experience of seeing too much (which goes hand in hand with not being able to see everything), derives from the repetition of signifying elements such as gestures, bodies and spaces in the playing out of relationships *ad infinitum*.

My discussion of Bausch's two late seventies works *Blaubart* and *Café Müller* and Tati's *Play Time* ultimately focuses on how these works deploy the *choreographic* in order to challenge the spectator's position as viewing subject. I have argued that the gaze manifests in these works as the *performative* production of a lack inasmuch as it is

produced in the *work* of choreography itself. Contrary to the theoretical trajectories explored by early psychoanalytic film theory on the gaze, I do not consider the screen of cinema to be of central importance to the operation of the gaze in Tati's work. I argue that the gaze emerges in Tati's film not from the spectator's relationship to the screen (and therefore the medium-specificity of the way in which the "image" is constructed in film), but from the aesthetic dimension of choreography itself— from the movement of the choreographed body, the spectator's inability to fix the identity of subjects and objects, and from the legibility of gesture and spacing.

Similarly, I do not consider the lack of a screen and physical immediacy of the bodies presented by theatre to be significant to the way in which Bausch's works elicit the gaze. I argue that the gaze is a not a function of the visceral qualities of these works, but rather emerges from the way in which their compositional/choreographic strategies and the ambivalence of their sequences function to reveal a lack at the heart of representational systems. Further, in deploying Lacan's notion of the gaze in order to understand the implications of Bausch's choreographic strategies and sequences for the spectator, I argue that the radical potential of such strategies and sequences is not limited to their capacity to invite the spectator to critically assess the signifying practices and representational apparatus of theatre. Instead, it extends to challenging the subjectivity of the spectator herself, and bringing her into an encounter with her own becoming as a subject.

In this thesis I have examined the way in which the selected works of Bausch and Tati use choreography to intervene in visual hierarchies and interrogate the relationship between being and seeing. I have argued that these works create moments in which images look back at spectators in the radically disruptive way described by Lacan in his seminal writings on the gaze. To this end I have explored the usefulness of selected coordinates in Lacan's work for describing the choreographic systems apparent in specific works by Bausch and Tati. Lacan's writings ultimately offer not only a set of theories for understanding the transaction of vision in these works and the extent of their impact on spectator consciousness, but also a choreographic model and collection of dramaturgies that are consonant with the dramaturgies in works by Bausch and Tati and that illuminate the performative strategies through which they achieve this impact.

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