Nostalgia for the Present:

Historical Time in Contemporary Performance

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Nostalgia del presente

En aquel preciso momento el hombre se dijo:
Qué no daría yo por la dicha
de estar a tu lado en Islandia
bajo el gran día inmóvil
y de compartir el ahora
como se comparte la música
o el sabor de una fruta.
En aquel preciso momento
el hombre estaba junto a ella en Islandia.

- Jorge Luis Borges (1981, 61)

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Nostalgia for the present

On exactly that moment that the man said to himself:
What would I not give for the happiness
to stand at your side in Iceland
at the beginning of a great immovable day
and to share the present
like you share music
or the taste of a fruit.
On exactly that moment
the man was with her in Iceland.

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the question of whether and in which ways four performances by the contemporary artists Ivana Müller and Bojana Kunst, Marina Abramović, Jérôme Bel and Ilya and Emilia Kabakov relate to the "nostalgia for the present" of the Western late capitalist society of the spectacle (Svetlana Boym and Fredric Jameson), which is caused by the lack of a historical dimension in the contemporary experience of time. The notion of "nostalgia for the present" is explored in the broader framework of the performance theories of Amelia Jones, André Lepecki, Peggy Phelan, Philip Auslander and Steve Dixon, as well as the theories of the philosophers Henri Bergson and Sylviane Agacinski. The performances are investigated through the analysis how they 'stage the present' by manipulating the *presence* and *liveness* of both themselves and the audience. This will be further explored by examining how these performances shape one's perception of the *passage of time* (Agacinski) and – possibly – of *duration* (Bergson). Ultimately, this thesis answers the question whether the four performances are compatible with the notions of *reflective* or *restorative nostalgia* (Boym) and whether their 'stagings of the present' thus produce the problem of "nostalgia for the present". In the conclusion it is argued that only the performances by Bel and the Kabakov's are able to do so, by stressing the importance of historical time and the ethics of remembering and forgetting.

Section 1   Introduction: Nostalgia for the Present

I.   What is Nostalgia for the Present?

The word 'nostalgia' is a pseudo-Greek concept meaning "longing (*algia*) for the return home (*nostos*)" which was coined in 1688 by the 19-year old Swiss student Johannes Hofer (1669-1752) in his medical dissertation, *Dissertatio medica de nostalgia, oder Heimwehe* (qtd. in Boym 2001, 3). Hofer diagnosed this 'disease' with soldiers who fought for their country, whilst being displaced far away from home (3). "One of the earliest symptoms is the sensation of hearing the voice of a person that one loves in the voice of another with whom one is conversing, or to see one's family again in dreams" (3). According to the Russian American literary theorist and media artist Svetlana Boym (1966-), nostalgia is a "disease of an afflicted imagination, incapacitated by the body" (4). It is said to:

> [P]roduce "erroneous representations" that caused the afflicted to lose touch with the present. The patient acquire[s] "a lifeless and haggard countenance," and "indifference towards everything," confusing past and present, real and imaginary events (3).

Thus, nostalgia has only one remedy: "the return home or sometimes merely the promise of it" (Hutcheon 1998). However, that which used to be an individual emotion expressed by homesick soldiers and later on by romantic poets and philosophers (Boym 2001, 14), evolved in modernity from a curable *maladie du pays* to an incurable historical emotion, *un mal de siècle* (xviii). Thereby, according to Boym, the 'object of longing' of nostalgia shifted from a lost space to a lost time (7). "The understandings and meaning of time changed particularly radically, (…) following the invention of the mechanical clock in 1354 and its placement in public (Dixon 2007, 515). After the Enlightenment, "the idea of progress (…) became a new theology of "objective time", and "[w]hat mattered in the idea of progress was the improvement in the future, not reflection on the past" (Boym 2001, 10). Boym considered modernity's nostalgia as "rebellion against the modern idea of time", and which consisted of the desire "to obliterate history and turn it into private or

collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition" (2001, xv).

However, nowadays, in postmodernity, the object of longing for nostalgia has become the present itself instead of the past, therefore defining the *structure of feeling* of the contemporary society.[1] Boym aligns the global epidemic of contemporary nostalgia with a vanishing present,[2] for what is to be experienced as "the present", as in one's reality, nowadays has become ambiguous (351). This is caused by time being commodified in late capitalism: time is money. Boym argues that "[t]he present costs as much as the past [and] [t]ransience itself is commodified in passing" (38).

Also globalization and the heterogeneous temporalities and spaces in which one is mentally present but physically absent, play a great role. The virtual realities of media-technologies that have hastened and differentiated the ways of communicating, influence one's sense of *co-presence* and *liveness*. And not only does the "[e]lectronic mediation traverses national borders, creating different kinds of virtual immigrations" (349), but moreover, according to Boym, "the disease of this millennium [is] chronofobia or speedomania" (351). This severely influences one's subjectivity and experience of time and history. "Nostalgia for the present" is to be defined as an "effective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world" (xiv). Boym states that it "inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals" (xiv).

This fragmented world Boym refers to is the 21st century Western late capitalist society of the spectacle.[3] According to the American Marxist theorist Fredric Jameson (1934-), the contemporary society lives in the 'multinational capital stage,' where postmodernism as cultural period prevails (1999, 35). Just like Boym, Jameson considers the postmodern nostalgic for the present, which he states is caused by its caricature of

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[1] This concept is coined by the Welsh Marxist theorist Raymond Williams (1921-1988) in *Marxism and Literature* (1977). "We are (…) defining a social experience still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic and even isolating but which in analysis (…) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies" (132).
[2] Boym considers Charles Baudelaire, Friedrich Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin all three nostalgic for the present, "yet they strive[d] not so much to regain the present as to reveal its fragility" (2001, 23).
[3] This is a combination of two different theories with regard to our contemporary age. The first is Fredric Jameson's notion of 'late capitalism' and the second is Guy Debord's notion of the 'society of the spectacle'. In this thesis, "Western late capitalist society of the spectacle" applies to Europe and North America.

historical thinking (1999, 286). He states "it is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place" (ix). In this respect, one could ascertain that postmodern culture bases its history on popular images and stereotypes that may be considered "false" representations of the past. Following the French Marxist theorist Guy Debord (1931-1994), this is attributable to "the spectacle [which] is *capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image" (1994 [1967], 24). Consequently, the postmodern culture gains a "false" memory. Jean Baudrillard (1926-2007) argues that "there was history, but there isn't anymore" and so now "forgetting is as essential as the event" (qtd. in Dixon 2007, 540). This form of amnesia is enhanced by the personal photos and information shared online by the members of the contemporary society that are supposed to function as 'certificates of presence' (Barthes (2000 [1980], 87). Nevertheless, not only has the contemporary society in that sense lost all privacy and has turned into a permanent panopticon, it has also changed society's perceptions of "actual" past and present, for the "sharing" online seems to problematize the experience of the present, which is by then already defined as past. According to the American performance scholar Herbert Blau (1926-2013):

> [This] mediatizing of culture is not only a matter of how it is represented, or who represents it, but how that is factored into a virtual ontology of distraction, which bears upon what we think and how we see ourselves in time. Or, for that manner, out of time, because our sense of temporality is increasingly preempted by the allure of the televisual, and with it telepresence, which may encounter time in its occurrence, but not in any perceptible cycle of duration, stasis, motion, or decay (2011, 252).

Also the Internet plays a part in problematizing one's sense of temporality. The Internet as a virtual reality "rather than extinguishes time, (…) helps construct a permanent present and unbounded, timeless intensity", which erases the dimensions of past and future that let time pass (Virilio qtd. in Dixon 2007, 517). This is caused by computer memory being "independent of affect and the vicissitudes of time, politics and history" (Boym 2001, 347). By contrast, in "real" life instead of virtual life, how does one determine what is the past, present and future when heterogeneous times coexist? The swaying back and forth between the commodified and heterogeneous times of the present

in "real life" and the seemingly "continuous present" of virtual life – which erases the dimensions of past and future that let time pass – cause the contemporary society to continually experience a radically shortened present and therefore enhances "nostalgia for the present".[4] In other words, in the effort to seize control over time, we live in a seemingly permanent and heterogeneous present at the same time, the future is now, and the past is dead or irrelevant.

This raises the question of how contemporary performance reacts to and plays with this phenomenon. Main characteristics of performance are *co-presence* and *liveness* and to build a temporal and temporary community with its audience in the present, whilst combining a duality of invoking history and anticipating the future at the same time. In general, a spectator may surrender to the *passage of time* proposed by the performance and experience *duration* which, according to the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), is the process of memorization through which the past permeates into the present. However, it could be discussed as whether performance still operates this function.

## II.	The Relation of the Performances to Nostalgia for the Present

In this thesis I will discuss how four contemporary performances engage with the "nostalgia for the present" of the Western late capitalist society of the spectacle. However, they do not thematize and discuss "nostalgia for the present" in an explicitly intentional programmatic manner. Rather, they contribute to a discussion about this notion through their 'stagings of the present' and through the ways in which they deal with the individual and cultural history of their audiences and thus try to attribute meaning to this present through these histories. The performances I will analyze belong to different disciplinary formats of performance; namely performance art, dance, installation art and a performance which includes theoretical self-reflexive discourse. I will analyze their 'stagings of the present' under certain aspects, namely by how they

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[4] The break between a past and a radically shortened present is discussed as a "historische inhaal-ervaring" by the Dutch historian and philosopher Frank Ankersmit (1945 -) in his book *De Sublieme Historische Ervaring* (2007, 420-1).

manipulate the presence and liveness of both themselves and the audience and how this, consequently, influences one's perception of the passage of time and possibly of duration.

Firstly, the performative dialogue "Finally Together On Time" (2011) was created by the Croatian choreographer and performance theorist Ivana Müller (1971-) who is known for her critical views on expanded choreography. For this project she collaborated with the Slovene philosopher Bojana Kunst (1969-) who specialized in a philosophical approach to performance studies. "Finally Together On Time" was presented on the 20th of November 2011 in the context of a residency at *Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers* in Paris and as a part of the Performance Studies international (PSi) Conference in Greece during the same month. This scripted conversation in 'synchronous time' between the physically present Kunst and the virtually present Müller indicated the problem of being present in the same time and space while collaborating and, in doing so, addressed the problem of the capitalization of time.

Secondly, the long-durational performance art piece "The Artist Is Present" (2010) was created by the Montenegran performance artist Marina Abramović (1948-) who became well known for her controversial works in which she used her body as medium to make provocative statements. In "The Artist Is Present" Abramović was physically present and sitting silently on a chair during opening hours from the 14th of March until the 31st of May 2010 at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. "Visitors were encouraged to sit silently across from the artist for a duration of their choosing and to become participants in the artwork" (Jones 2011, 18). This encounter with Abramović was part of a larger retrospective of her career. MoMA promoted the encounter by putting forth the artist's own claims about the transcendent and mythical effects of her presence. Abramović stated on her website that "it's a very simple exchange; if you give me your time, I'll give you experience" (Abramović 2013).

Thirdly, the performance "The Show Must Go On" (2001) was made by the French choreographer Jérôme Bel (1964-) who considers himself more a philosopher of dance than a choreographer (Gladstone 2011). In this performance nineteen performers of the *Schauspielhaus* of Hamburg, dressed as readymade ordinary people and mirroring the spectators, danced to nineteen very well known pop songs from the audience's past which were played in their entire length by a DJ who sat in front of the stage at a technician's

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table.[5] This seemingly postmodern spectacle is based upon both collective and individual memories, through the usage of both the well-known songs and the movements and images that the performers danced to it (Etchells 2002). It has been presented widely on the international scene of dance and theatre.

Finally, the 'total installation' "The Happiest Man" (firstly presented at the Jeu de Paume in Paris in 2000) was created by the Russian artists Ilya Kabakov (1933-) and Emilia Kabakov (1945 -) who became well-known for their works about longing for another place and time, mostly related to Russia. In this installation, the Kabakov's manipulated one's individual and collective memories as well. The installation was placed from 27th of March until the 21st of April 2013 in the gallery Ambika P3, in the basement of the University of Westminster in London, and consisted of a large constructed cinema where clips were projected featuring rare Russian propaganda films from the '30s until the '50s. In the cinema one could surrender to the propaganda clips that were shown in a loop creating an "ever returning past" in one's present. However, inside the cinema, there was a little house, rather, a bunker, where the "happiest man" lived, as this man was given the luxury of watching the projected clips on a continuous loop through his window. The clips became his everyday reality which defined his existence.

III.   Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia: Collective and Individual Myths

All four performances propose a different temporality as a counter reaction to the speed of contemporary life in which late capitalism and postmodernism are the governing forces. Additionally, their content evolves around criticism regarding the experience of historical time in the contemporary "age". Nevertheless, Müller & Kunst, Abramović, Bel and the Kabakov's all differently manipulate the experience of the present through their 'stagings of the present' in their performances. Either they try to let the audience reflect on the quickly vanishing present or they wish to restore this "lost" present. Thus, the performances mentioned are either comparable to *reflective* or *restorative* myths.

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[5] Although I have seen this performance in 2011 during the Holland Festival at the Stadsschouwburg Amsterdam, in this thesis I will analyze the registration of the performance which was made in December 2001 at the Teatro Nacional São Jão in Porto, Portugal, and which consisted of a different cast.

Boym differentiates between restorative and reflective nostalgia through their sense of historicity and "discreteness" of the past. Nevertheless, these are not absolute types, but rather tendencies (2001, 41).[6]

Restorative nostalgia is a "trans-historical reconstruction of a lost home" that attempts to supplement the memory gaps, and therefore focuses on the notion of *nostos* (the return home) (xviii). "These gaps are mended through a coherent and inspiring tale of a recovered identity" (53). In general, this type of nostalgia does not consider itself to be nostalgia, but rather 'truth' and 'tradition,' which are mostly "invented traditions" in order to enhance its seemingly "historical" significance and character (41-2). And consequently this type serves to protect this absolute 'truth' and wants to function as a national memory (41). Its single plot of national identity, consisting of "collective pictorial symbols and oral culture", is meant as a return to its 'origins' (49). "The past for the restorative nostalgic is a value for the present; it is not a duration but a perfect snapshot" (49).

The "collective mythology" of Roland Barthes (1915-1980) seems coherent with Boym's restorative nostalgia. In his "Mythologies" (2009 [1957]), Barthes reveals the process of myth-making in French mass culture by deciphering the symbols and signs of national myths. In doing so, he exposes an ideology that shaped his perception of his contemporary world. Barthes claims that mythology "is a part both of semiology inasmuch as it is a formal science, and of ideology inasmuch as it is an historical science: it studies ideas-in-form" (135). I align his mythologies with restorative nostalgia, for Barthes considers only *bourgeois myths* (Right-wing myths) myths that reflect and produce ideology. "The bourgeoisie hides in the fact that it is the bourgeoisie and thereby produces myth; revolution announces itself openly as revolution and thereby abolishes myth" (173). Barthes claims that Right-wing myth "takes hold of everything, all aspects of the law, of morality, of aesthetics, of diplomacy, of household equipment, of Literature, of entertainment" (176). In contrast, "Left-wing myth is always an artificial myth" (176), and therefore inessential and thus remains a tactic, instead of a strategy"

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[6] In her earlier work *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (1994) Boym differentiated between "the *utopian nostalgic* (the reconstructive and totalizing nostalgic) as the one who sees exile, in all the literal and metaphorical senses of the word, as a definitive falling from grace, and the *ironic nostalgic* (who is inconclusive and fragmentary) as the one who accepts (if not enjoys) the paradoxes of permanent exile" (284).

$(174-5).^{7}$

Boym's reflective nostalgia is similar to Barthes' Left-wing myth. It is "more concerned with historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude", in which "[t]he focus (…) is (…) on the mediation of history and the passage of time" (2001, 49).[8] The concept of reflective nostalgia is based on the *algia* (the longing itself) and calls the truth of the restorative nostalgia into question (xviii). It does "not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home; it is enamored of distance, not of the referent itself" (50). It revolves around individual stories that consist of details and signs (49). It cherishes "shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space". And while "[r]estorative nostalgia takes itself dead serious; [r]eflective nostalgia (…) can be humorous and ironic" (49). Reflective nostalgia functions as a social memory and is marked by a collective framework (53). However, it is paradoxical that "longing can make us more empathetic toward fellow humans, yet the moment we try to repair longing with belonging, the apprehension of loss with the rediscovery of identity, we often part ways and put an end to our mutual understanding" (xv). So, according to Boym, the *algia* is what "we" share, not our *nostos*.

The "individual artistic mythology" of the Swiss curator and art historian Harald Szeeman (1933-2005) seems compatible with Boym's reflective nostalgia. Szeeman states that artists "create their own sign systems, which take time to be deciphered", (Obrist 2008) for "these are kinds of myths unknowable to anyone but the artist himself" (Birnbaum). At first sight, the performances mentioned above seem to correspond with Boym's reflective nostalgia and Szeeman's "individual mythology". However, as I will elaborate in the conclusion, some of them seem to contain restorative characteristics as well.

IV.   Construction of this Research

The aim of this thesis is to analyze whether and in which ways the performances, as either reflective or restorative myths, are able to produce the problem of "nostalgia for

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[7] Barthes refers here to the notions of 'tactic' and 'strategy' in the *Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) by the French historian and philosopher Michel de Certeau (1925-1986).

[8] Boym coined the term 'off-modern' which she associates with reflective nostalgia. "Off-modern art explores the hybrids of past and present" and the artists as off-modernists "mediate between modernists and postmodernists, frustrating the scholars" (2001, 30-1).

the present" through their 'stagings of the present' and thus contribute to a discussion about this problem.

"Nostalgia for the present" is partly based upon the heterogeneous times in which one is mentally present, but physically absent. As a result, one may wonder whether this present still consists of a "here and now", or that only the "now" defines a present. As I will show in the analyses (section 3), the 'stagings of the present' in the performances of Müller and Kunst, Abramović and Bel all seem to focus mostly on a "now", for their performances could have taken place "anywhere", in any institution. Only the installation of the Kabakov's is dependent on its own created space which partly defines their 'staging of the present.' Nevertheless, all the spaces where the performances took place, should be taken into account as "*contexts* for remembrances and debates about the future, not *symbols* of memory or nostalgia", because "[m]emory resides in moving, traversing, cutting through place" (Boym 2001, 77, 80). And thus is dependent on the experience of the passage of time, for "the depth of time succeeds the depth of sensible space" (Virilio 2012 [1984], 77). So, although it is important to note spatiality as a related element, it is beyond the scope of this thesis, for this thesis will focus on time and history experienced in the performances mentioned exclusively. The research question of this thesis is:

> How do the contemporary myth-makers (Müller & Kunst, Abramović, Bel and the Kabakov's) manipulate *presence* and *liveness*, as well as, consequently, one's perception of the *passage of time* and possible *duration*, in order to shape the spectator's experience of the present? In other words, does their 'staging of the present' produce "nostalgia for the present"?

I will answer this question in five stages. The first two involve the theoretical framework around the concepts *presence*, *liveness*, the *passage of time* and *duration* (section 2). In the first part of the framework I will outline different notions of presence and liveness with regard to performance, that used to be both time- and space-related concepts, but seem to have become merely time-related and mostly dependent on the activity of the spectator, rather than on the activity of both the spectator and performer.

The second part of the framework is centered on the experience of time and history which I approach from two theoretical perspectives. Firstly, the solipsistic notion of duration of Henri Bergson will be elaborated, which is the process of memorization

through which the past permeates into one's present. This notion of duration is solely time-related, it contains no spatial element, and no clear borders between the past, present and possible future can be demarcated. The passage of time will be elaborated according to the theory of the French philosopher Sylviane Agacinski (1945-), who discusses the individual experience of time and history in the context of the collective experience of time and history in the *media age* the contemporary society lives in. Her notion of the passage of time is both time- and space-related and tries to clarify the borders between the past, present and possible future.

The third and fourth stages of the argument entail the analyses of the four performances (section 3). Firstly, I will analyze how Müller & Kunst, Abramović, Bel and the Kabakov's 'stage the present' by manipulating the presence and liveness of both themselves and the audience. Secondly, I will analyze how this influences one's perception of the passage of time and possible duration.

The final stage in answering the research question in the conclusion (section 4) consists of a discussion whether the four contemporary performances are compatible with the notions of reflective or restorative nostalgia and whether they, as myths, produce the problem of "nostalgia for the present".

My thesis ends with an appendix that consists of a remark on the literature with which I have analyzed the experience of historical time in the performances.

Section 2   Theoretical Framework: The 'Staging of the Present'

I.   The 'Problem' of *Presence* and *Liveness* in Contemporary Performance

The notions of presence and liveness used to be both time and space-related in the discourses revolving around performance art, such as art history and performance studies. It is explained by the American art historian Amelia Jones (date of birth unknown) that "claims of presence and authenticity are extremely common in discussions of performance art" in these discourses (2011, 17):

> Performance is about the 'real-life' presence of the artist (…). Nothing stands between spectator and performer. (…) "Presence" as commonly understood is a state that entails the unmediated co-extensivity in time and place of what I perceive and myself; it promises a transparency to an observer of what "is" at the very moment at which it takes place (17-8).

However, Jones is critical of these notions of presence that are dependent on both time and space, as, for example, the "mystifying" and phenomenologically founded notion of presence by the German theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte (1943-). Fischer-Lichte argues that "moments of presence (…) happen when the performer brings forth his body as an energetic body that releases energy and allows it to circulate in the space and to energize spectators so that they sense the performer as well as themselves not only as intensely present, but as embodied minds" (2007, 42). Fischer-Lichte's claim of a "mystical transferal of life force" in live performance is (2011, 18), according to Jones, reminiscent of modernist thinking that yearns "for a more truthful experience, found often among "primitive" cultures", for apparently liveness is "the confirmation of presence" (21, 25).

Contrasting Jones, also the American performance scholar Peggy Phelan (date of birth unknown) honors the idea that "a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame can have an experience of value which leaves no visible trace afterwards" (1993, 149). Her ontology of performance is a "maniacally charged present announcing itself at the very moment presence plunges into disappearance" (Lepecki 2004, 132). Thus,

"presence resists reproduction by embracing the realm of absence" (5). According to Phelan:

> Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of it own ontology. Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance (1993, 146).

Phelan thus states that the ephemerality, the transience of both the performer's and spectator's body is the fundamental ontological condition of performance.[9] However, "their ephemerality makes them forever inaccessible to full knowledge" and, according to Jones, "this would be to throw our hands up and admit defeat at the hands of time" (2011, 25). Nevertheless, "writing about [performance] necessarily cancels the "tracelessness" inaugurated" within Phelan's performative promise (1993, 149). Consequently, inscribing the presence of performances into history is a (related) "problem".

The Brazilian-American dance scholar André Lepecki (1965-), who investigates "how the presence of the body leaves its mark on critical theories and performing practices" (2004, 1), states that "in order to make dance "stay around" longer to impede the extinction of yesterday's dance, dance theory has found its model in the highest aspirations of photology: the illumination and arrest of presence for the sake of History" (130). This he contributes to the "hope" that "documentation of dance would "correct" or "cure" dance's flawed materiality" (130). However, "the problem dance puts before writing is of how movement and words can be placed under arrest; [d]ance confronts us with the impossibility of such project" (129).

Luckily, "dance's self-erasure has been recently reformulated as a powerful trope for new theoretical (as well as performative) interventions in dance, and in writings on dance, beyond the documental tradition" (131). This is caused by the influences of the

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[9] Phelan sides her ontology of performance with ephemerality and disappearance with regard to Derrida's critique of presence. However, by inscribing the historicity of both the performer's and spectator's body in her notion of presence, she differs from Derrida's presence which may better be aligned with a process-notion of presence instead of an ontological notion (Lepecki 2004, 5).

deconstruction of presence inaugurated by Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). Lepecki states that:

> Derrida's critique of [metaphysical] presence implies that any signifying element (in a dance, in a text) is always already inhabited by and referring to another set of references, traces of traces of traces, in an endless play of *différance*. Derrida coined this "neographism" to refer precisely to the "movement of the trace" as a deferring-differing detour. This characteristic of *différance* makes any "structure of presence" (…) an always fleeting deferral (of itself) by the means of the unstoppable signifying movement of the trace. In this movement, presence differs and defers from itself, thus establishing the epistemological basis for the displacement of "objective" description under the logic of the Derridean trace – not only is the dance fleeting in eternal deferral but the observer is always in difference with his/her own presence (2004, 134).

Therefore, not only the dance – as object – is in motion, but the spectator is as well. Consequently, according to Lepecki, "Derrida's notion of writing as difference", in the form of on-the-spot dance criticism, "offers dance studies a set of "signs" as elusive as those dance steps to which they refer; [b]oth writing and dancing plunge into ephemerality" (133). Hence, Jones argues that "presence only exists as a fantasy or a construct to anchor us (phantasmagorically) in the now, and [that] (…) Derrida notes that as soon as we admit nonpresence into the *instant*, we admit that there is duration to the blink, and it closes the eye" (2011, 19). She also argues that this is exactly the paradox that "haunts performance studies and other discourses (such as art history) seeking to find ways to historicize and theorize – to exhibit and sell – live performance art" (18). This paradox is based on the fact that both performance studies and the commercial market place try to analyze and sell performances – that provide "authentic" presence – as a 'frozen object' or a 'frozen commodity' in time, as a consequence of late capitalism (42).

Another consequence of late capitalism in performance is the usage of media which changes the concepts of liveness and presence as well. The American media and art theorist Philip Auslander (1956-) states that it is the common assumption that "the live event is "real" and (…) mediatized events are secondary and somehow artificial reproductions of the real" (1999, 3). For example, Phelan identifies live performance with intimacy and disappearance, and media with mass audience, reproduction and repetition (39-40). However, according to Auslander, live performance has become mediatized

itself, for it uses all kinds of media (19923, 7).[10] Consequently, from Phelan's point of view, this would mean that live performance "loses its ontological integrity" (42). This statement by Phelan to Auslander thus "reflects an ideology central to contemporary performance studies" (42).

Moreover, Auslander states that "mediatized [performance] replaces the live within cultural economy, the live itself incorporates the mediatized, both technologically and epistemologically" (39). Thus, "in response to the oppression and economic superiority of mediatized forms, live performance has tried to become as similar to these forms as possible" (7). Therefore, contrary to Phelan yet similar to Jones, Auslander doubts whether "any cultural discourse can actually stand outside the ideologies of capital and reproduction that define a mediatized culture; (…) [i]n our period of history, and in our Western societies, there is no performance that is not always already a commodity" (40).

In summary, the notions of liveness and presence have shifted "from the ontological to the temporal" (Blau 2011, 244), and consequently, contemporary "live performance emerge[s] not as a condition of physical proximity and co-presence, (…) but as a correlate of time (Bay Cheng 2010, 86). The English digital performance scholar Steve Dixon (1956-) additionally argues that "for the spectator, liveness is just "being there", whatever performance form (live, recorded, telematic, or their combination) is being watched" (2007, 129). The same goes for the presence of the spectator, which he aligns with the 'locus of human agency,' which is "the interest and command of attention of the spectator" (132). The 'locus of human agency' has become a more common form of presence in contemporary performance than the necessity to share the same space and time (127).[11]

These developments in contemporary performance are related to "nostalgia for the present" in two ways. Firstly, there has come into being a difference between physical/bodily presence and mental presence, almost a Cartesian division. The shift to

[10] The staging of media in theatre is discussed by the Dutch performance scholar Chiel Kattenbelt as *intermediality* in "Intermediality in Performance and as a Mode of Performativity" (2010, 29-37).

[11] In her article "Presence in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation" (1997) Jones argues that being present in a live performance, in the sense of sharing the same space and time as the performer, even seems to enhance the difficulty of seeing historical patterns afterwards, for one has been embedded in it (12).

merely time-related notions of presence and liveness seem to focus mostly on the mental aspect of presence and the liveness of the spectator, which seem to have become the most significant prerequisites in order for an event to be "a performance". This enhances individualism which seems compatible with the Western late capitalist society of the spectacle. Still, liveness and presence remain prerequisites in order to experience a 'present' as in a 'reality,' although – with regard to the observations noted above – this is solely the present and reality of the spectator. It could be postulated whether the contemporary seemingly solipsistic notions of presence and liveness do not problematize the relative meaning of this present and thus reality which are defined by a solipsistic experience of time's passage and history too, instead of a shared history with collective referential points.[12]

Secondly, with regard to the aesthetics of contemporary performance, Dixon argues that "the deconstructive influence on performance has led to work characterized more by the aesthetics of absence than the aesthetics of presence" (2007, 133). Also the absence of presence applies to "nostalgia for the present", which alludes to Plato's allegory of the cave, where the presence is absent and is only known through its shadows on the wall. This creates the problem of representation, which could be aligned with the "function" of the contemporary (social) media for example. Thereby, following Jameson, the nostalgic for the present bases oneself on "false" representations (of the past) which, again, makes one lose touch with the present (1999, 284). However, as will be elaborated in section three, the absence of presence in contemporary performance does not necessarily make one lose touch with the staged present. The absence of physical live bodies and the presence of representations may reveal "the reality of illusions (the live) [and] the illusion of reality (the mediatised)" (Kattenbelt 2010, 35).

II.   The *Passage of Time* and Possible *Duration* in Contemporary Performance

Although liveness and presence are prerequisites of creating a present, the meaning of this present seems to be defined by the experience of a past, for if there is no past one will

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[12] This will be elaborated in the next paragraph of the theoretical framework.

experience the present only as instantaneities. At least, that is the perspective of Henri Bergson and Sylviane Agacinski.

The solipsistic experience of time's passage and history will firstly be elaborated through *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (2001 [1910]) by Bergson. In this book, Bergson discusses the common "confusion between (…) *concrete duration* and the *abstract time* which mathematics, physics and even language and common sense, substitute for it" (vii). According to Bergson, "[w]e cannot measure time, we cannot even talk about it, without spatializing it" (Mullarkey 2000, 19). Bergson argues that when one speaks of time it is generally thought of as "a homogeneous medium in which our conscious states are ranged alongside one another as in space, so as to form a discrete multiplicity" (2001 [1910], 90). However, time "conceived under the form of an unbounded and homogenous medium is", according to Bergson, "nothing but the ghost of space haunting the reflective consciousness" (99).

Bergson argues that the only reality which we "all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis (…) is our own personality in its flowing through time – our self which endures", our duration (2007 [1912], 6-7).[13] "[This] might well be nothing but a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another, without any affiliation with number: it would be pure heterogeneity" (2001 [1910], 104). Thus, it is comparable to a "transition," (…) a "change," a *becoming*" (Deleuze 1988 [1966], 37). Thereby has the process of duration "no hint of predictability or linear determinism" (Mullarkey 2000, 9), which measured time does have. According to Bergson, pure duration is:

> [T]he continuous life of a memory which prolongs the past into the present, the present either containing within it in a distinct form the ceaselessly growing image of the past, or, more probably, showing by its continual change of quality the heavier and still heavier load we drag behind us as we grow older. Without this survival of the past into the present there would be no duration, but only instantaneity (2007 [1912], 26-7).

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[13] This notion of duration is psychological. In his writings after *Time and Free Will* (1910), Bergson changed his duration into a metaphysical notion.

Bergson considers duration a process which is reminiscent of a continuous present in which the past permeates but whereby no clear borders between the past, present and possible future can be demarcated.

> My present, at this moment, is the sentence I am pronouncing. But it is so because I want to limit the field of my attention to my sentence. This attention is something that can be made longer or shorter, like the interval between two points of a compass. (…) The distinction we make between our present and past is therefore, if not arbitrary, at least relative to the extent of the field which our attention to life can embrace (1946, 151-2).

In Mullarkey's reading of this passage, Bergson relativizes the definition of the present by the last sentence which shows that "what is at issue need not necessarily be which portion of the past is being retained, but rather which present is being attended" by the person in question (2000, 18). Therefore, the present Bergson expands on could be interpreted as a predecessor of Steve Dixon's notion of 'presence,' being the 'locus of human agency.'

Nevertheless, Bergson considers the word 'present' as relative and multiple as the word 'space', for in this sense it is an object that is "supposedly held in common by all subjects and by any one subject over time" (18). And that is oppositional to his notion of duration.

> [When] [a] violent love or a deep melancholy takes possession of our soul: (…) we feel a thousand different elements which dissolve into and permeate one another without any precise outlines, without the least tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another; hence their originality. We distort them as soon as we distinguish a numerical multiplicity in their confused mass: what will it be, then, when we set them out, isolated from one another, in this homogeneous medium which may be called either time or space, whichever you prefer? A moment ago each of them was borrowing an indefinable colour from its surroundings: now we have it colourless, and ready to accept a name (Bergson 2001 [1910], 132).

This statement may be related to Bergson's critique of 'social life' in general, in which representational symbols, like the word 'present,' substitute individual reality. And, for example, a personal feeling like duration experienced during a performance becomes, when explained in language, a mere representation of that feeling. Bergson elaborates

that, nevertheless, "the self refracted (…) is much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general and language in particular, consciousness prefers it, and gradually loses sight of the fundamental self" (2001 [1910], 128). He argues that thus "[t]he greater part of the time we live outside ourselves, hardly perceive anything of ourselves but our own ghost, a colourless shadow (…); we live for the external world rather than for ourselves; we speak rather than think; we "are acted" rather than act ourselves" (231). In contrast, Bergson argues in favor of the "dreamer", for "[t]he imagination of the dreamer, cut off from the external world, imitates with mere images, and parodies in its own way, the process which constantly goes on with regard to ideas in the deeper regions of the intellectual life" (136-7). Thereby, in a dream one no longer measures duration, but rather feels it (126).

Nevertheless, it could be postulated whether in the contemporary age it is still possible to be the dreamer Bergson discussed one hundred years ago. The social life of the contemporary society seems to have become most significant. As a result of social media, one seems to interact nowadays mostly with 'second selves.' Moreover, the contemporary society lives in an age controlled by the clock, which severely problematizes Bergson's duration. Just like all the apparatuses the contemporary society uses to establish itself as subjects today that promise speed and efficiency. Therefore, according to Bojana Kunst, nowadays:

> Duration becomes apparent when something does not work, stops or hardly moves, (…) [for] it shows that we ourselves are actually not moving, but are being moved, that our inner perception of time (the time of someone who freely and flexibly projects their own subjectivity) is, in fact, heavily, socially and economically conditioned (2010a).[14]

In *Time Passing: Modernity and Nostalgia* (2003) Sylviane Agacinski explores the relationship of time to movement and the conditioning thereof in a historical and culture critical context, namely in the contemporary Western-European society where transience and ephemerality prevail over lasting durations.[15] According to Agacinski, this is due to the media that compress time to events (169). "They call into question the usual

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[14] Here Kunst does not discuss Bergson's *duration*, but the length of a moment.

[15] Agacinski discusses the contemporary age as modernity, whereas Boym and Jameson consider it postmodernity.

relationship to duration by continually invalidating one piece of news with the next one" (2003, 168). She considers the audio-visual media the universal clocks and, additionally, the tools for communication the contemporary "time-machines" (46). "Time, mediatized and universalized, imposes on our lives the time of information, in the same way that others lived according to the rhythm of the sun, the seasons, the needs of the harvest, the hunt, or the herd, and all the tasks that imposed their rhythms on humans" (47). Consequently, Agacinski discusses the present as a:

> [P]assageway [that] has not yet entered into a bygone past, and (…) is already no longer current; [i]t is simply displaced, outmoded, anachronistic, as if by multiplying the rhythms, the speeds, the histories, modernity opened the impossibility of a present and established us in a world of bric-a-brac (59).

She suggests that the contemporary society thus is in search of the present, which she aligns with durations and movements (19), for the "modern temporality is the endless interlacing of the irreversible and the repetitive" (12). Following Boym, contemporary nostalgia thus is "a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values; it could be a secular expression of a spiritual longing, a nostalgia for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history" (2001, 8).

Agacinski adopts the concept of *passage* as her central metaphor, and "explores its relationship to philosophy and metaphysics" (Dixon 2007, 537). "Being (…) is no longer beyond time, or outside all time, that is, eternal; it exists in its own *passage*" (Agacinski 2003, 21). Therefore, "the meaning of time for a modern society is no longer measured by its movement against either the unchanging metaphysics of traditional religion or the optimistic ideologies of historical progress" (Christensen 2004). Instead, "the modern meaning of time is located in an intellectual openness to the uniqueness of each moment, a receptive awareness of time's irreversible flow of imaginative opportunities" (Christensen 2004).[16]

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[16] This is reminiscent of Frank Ankersmit's statement that "the tempo of historical change is, nowadays, only to be measured *within* ourselves, by remembering *where* we were before; the historical change has become 'internalized', it has become a *personal experience*" (2007, 414). However, Ankersmit still thinks a historical experience is different than a nostalgic experience, for in a nostalgic experience past and present have already separated and the experience is mainly focused on the past. In contrast, he states that "in a

However, the architects of our society have deployed an economics according to which time must be productive, useful and profitable. "We must forever "gain time", because time itself gains us something else" (Agacinski 2003, 6). That is why Agacinski states that "*to give* our time, to spend it or lose it, to let it pass, are now the only ways of resisting the general economy of time" (6), for "our contemporaries dream (…) of finally becoming available to time and not of being continually deprived of it" (169). Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) is seen by Agacinski as the perfect example of a *passeur de temps*, a "stroller", who is in search of the present time.

> The stroller's idleness is similar to the idleness of a reader or someone at a play or movie. Each of them yields to the rhythm of a movement that is not their own. In forgetting his own movement, and thus his own time, the stroller embraces the time of things (56).

The *passeur de temps* is "the one by *(means of) whom* something passes, he himself is the "place" of the passage", for "we cannot simply see time pass: it passes *by (means of) us*" (50). However, searching for the present time, the *passeur de temps* seems to pass through actual space in which he encounters traces of the past that "take possession of him" (52). The *passeur's* relationship of time to movement seems based by Agacinski on the "reciprocal relationship between time and movement" in Aristotle's *Physics* (40), in which Aristotle states that "[we] not only measure movement by time, but also time by movement" (*Physics* IV, 220b). Agacinski elaborates that Aristotle locates temporality as a point of interference between a subjective soul and an objective movement (2003, 41). "Time is neither objective nor subjective; it is the result of the encounter between the soul that "numbers" and the movement that is "numbered" (45-6). In doing so, Aristotle's duration is the product of an operation of measurement in which the quantity of time prevails over its quality, for he considers time the number of movement (40). Thus, contrasting Bergson, Aristotle's and Agacinski's notions of time are "inseparable of space" (5).

Agacinski also states that an "event must happen somewhere to someone in order to be put in relationship to another event and for a chronology to be established" (41).

'historical experience' the break between past and present is experienced, which results in a past as historical object on which one may contemplate" (419). Nevertheless, precisely the point of "nostalgia for the present" is that these two experiences have merged in postmodernity.

Thus, Agacinksi considers the passage of time both a "continuity and succession" (2003, 40), whereas Bergson considers duration a "continuity and heterogeneity" (Deleuze 1988 [1966], 37). Bergson argues that "succession can only be thought through *comparing* the present with the past" (2001 [1910], 116). "[W]hen we add to the present moment those which have preceded it, as is the case when we are adding up units, we are not dealing with these moments themselves, since they have vanished for ever, but with the lasting traces which they have seem to have left in space on their passage through it" (79).

However, Agacinski states that "in its objective reality, movement is also the condition for the possibility of a common experience and a shared time" (2003, 46). These movements may function as "reference points for counting cycles and measuring duration" (46). These are reference points with which a collective chronology may be established; therefore "[t]ime is not a private measure but the product of human conventions" (46). However, this objective reality seems to be only a present, a reality, like the present constituted by liveness and presence. But, "[a]wareness of time is neither pure nor originary, and it cannot be separated from the empirical contents that structure it" (33). Thus, "we cannot speak of *the* time, as if it were homogeneous, unifiable by a single measure and a single history" (47). This is due to remembrance which poses the problem of who the subject of time is, whose time it is precisely that has passed, whose time is remembered and which one thus is nostalgic for.

Thus, what the notions of duration by Bergson and the passage of time by Agacinski have in common is the importance of one's individual past. In both notions the subjective experience prevails over the (seemingly) "objective" measurement (Agacinski) and this is the main point of reflective nostalgia with which everyone longs for a "different" time and mythologizes one's own history. However, with their notions of movement, Agacinski and Aristotle create the possibility of a collective experience which may provide "shared references", for time is not only given a rhythm by institutions and laws, but also by ceremonies and rites (Agacinski 2003, 46), like performances. Here Boym fits in, because she considers "nostalgia for the present" "an effective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world" (2001, xiv).

Finally, I would like to argue that during the experience of a performance both Bergson's duration and Agacinski's passage of time, and consequently an individual and collective experience of the present, may alternate. Kunst states that:

> By experimenting with duration and movement, (…) performances [may] open up the problematics of dispossession and non-operativity, not because nothing is happening, but because the redundant time generated interferes heavily with the inner processes of subjectivisation: we are suddenly left with time, which means that being is potentially possible without self-actualization, (…) for duration does not enable actualization but throws us into pure potentiality, into what could happen (2010a).

In the next chapter will be discussed how the performances of Müller and Kunst, Abramović, Bel and the Kabakov's stage the present, by manipulating the presence and liveness of both themselves and spectators in order to influence one's perception of the passage of time and possibly of duration.

Section 3   Performance Analyses: The 'Stagings of the Present'

I.   The 'Problem' of *Presence* and *Liveness*

In 2011, Müller and Kunst presented "Finally Together On Time", which consisted of a scripted conversation in 'synchronous time' between a virtually present Müller and the physically present Kunst, reminiscent of a Skype conversation or a conference call. In this performative dialogue, Kunst sits on a chair on the right side of the stage and faces the public, intermittently turning her head slightly to her right, as if she could see and converse with her interlocutor. A water pitcher is placed next to the chair. She wears a black sweater, color-coordinated with the black curtains of the stage. Next to her, on the left side of the stage (from the audience's point of view) there is placed, slightly further upstage, a white screen on which Müller's image is projected. She sits on an identical chair and an identical water pitcher is placed next to her on the floor. Müller wears a white shirt, which complies with her own background. Her chair is slightly turned towards Kunst. The performance "begins" when both women set their timers on their mobile phones which will provide them with cues to which they may react. On the first cue, their attempt to say "hello" simultaneously to each other and the audience unfortunately fails.

Kunst turns towards the audience and explains that they have met each other eight years ago when Müller interviewed her on the relationship between the body and mind during research for her new performance. Then and there they promised to each other to come together to make a joint project. Müller states that "what helped us in keeping that promise were the invitations of different institutions, like here for example, to make a project and although most of the time it was either you [Kunst] or me that was invited, we always managed in some way to involve each other in the project".[17] Hardly ever, however, were Kunst and Müller able to be simultaneously present in the same space and time. Thus they decided that their project should deal with the difficulty of sharing the same space and time while collaborating. This overall serves as a critique on the

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[17] All the quotes of Müller and Kunst that are not referenced in the text are part of their performative dialogue.

capitalization of time. "Finally, after all these years, this is our chance to be together in the same space and time and interestingly enough we are here today to perform a dialogue on Time, and as always; we are doing it right here and right now, but as you can see, we are actually not exactly together in the same space and at the same time".

Both Müller and Kunst perform live, for they are in synchronous time, although one of them is physically present and the other virtually. However, when Müller and Kunst decide to take a small break of thirty seconds during their dialogue, Kunst walks up to the screen and stands still "next" to Muller who also rises from her chair. But Kunst walks back to her chair before the thirty seconds are over, while stating "I can always trick you". Kunst might be referring here to the fact that Muller cannot see her, for she is looking into the 'eye' of the camera, but, as it will turn out, that is not the point of this statement. Kunst's claim indicates that Müller's image was pre-recorded. Therefore, it would be possible for the "actual" Müller to be *at this moment* in a different space and time. However, Müller's image is still live, for both Kunst and the audience "make it live" or "believe" it is, in order to grasp the content of the dialogue. In addition, Müller's image does certainly contain a sense of presence. Steve Dixon explains that when both the screen with a person and a live person become active, "the one we watch more (our attention will always flit between them) the one with the most presence, is the one engaged in what we find personally the more interesting or emotive activity" (2007, 132). In this sense, "presence in relation to audience engagement and attention is dependent on the compulsion of the audiovisual activity, not on liveness or corporeal three-dimensionality" (132). Thus, Müller and Kunst are equally present.

However, the fact that Müller actually is present in the same space and time as Kunst, but is sitting behind the screen on which her pre-recorded image is projected, is part of their dramaturgical strategy. Kunst explains that – practically speaking – Müller will not be able to attend the PSi-conference on "Synchronous Time" in Athens the next week due to her pregnancy. Therefore, they pre-recorded her image in order to perform the same performative dialogue "on time" during the conference the next week. Thereby, in doing this, they continue their tradition of never appearing publicly in the same space and at the same time. "As you can see, it is all together very complicated and it just goes

to show that artists often need to do opportunistic compromises in order to be present in 'con-temporary' times".

Müller asks Kunst whether she should feel successful, for she has less time than others. Kunst explains that this means that she might be in a better social position, but in general being busy gradually excludes one from being synchronous with the others. "We become synchronous with ourselves, by never being exactly in the 'present' with the others; therefore we are exclusive, elite, and belong to the 'projective future'; we become a project and then we slowly become a brand".

In her 'long-durational' performance "The Artist Is Present" (2010), Abramović was physically in the presence of others in the MoMA for almost three months during all opening hours. In this performance Abramović sat silently on a chair and the visitors of the MoMA were given the option to sit across her in order to engage with her liveness as well as experience her presence. Thus, in this performance liveness was the 'affirmation' of presence. Or at least, that is how the MoMA sold the performance to the audience.

The encounters between Abramović and the visitors took place in the atrium of the MoMA. There Abramović and the visitor sat on facing chairs. Surrounding this encounter was "an expanse of (initially) empty space, cordoned off by white tape on the floor and a Hollywood flood of lights from four stands at the corners of the box" (Levine 2010). In this lit square the visitors could engage with her liveness as well as experience her mythical presence. The mythical effect of Abramović' presence is, according to herself, an energetic exchange which consists of a state of consciousness and being present in the "here and now".[18] In order to gain this state of consciousness, Abramović has to "empty herself" to be able to live in the present time. In general, Abramović' presence is a "mystifying" and phenomenologically founded notion and seems compatible with Phelan's and Fischer-Lichte's notions of an almost "transcendental" presence. Her aim in every performance is to bring herself and the audience in the same state of consciousness and to be present in the "here and now" in order to provide the audience with a shared experience. "This", she states, "may open up the audience's

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[18] All the quotes of Abramović and MoMA-curator Klaus Biesenbach that are not referenced in the text are derived from the documentary *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present* (2012) which is produced by Show of Force and directed by Matthew Akers and Jeff Dupre. Akers and Dupre captured Abramović on film in the months prior to and during her retrospective in the MoMA.

emotions, but that is exactly what we are looking for". She attributes the opened up emotions to the fact that "it is not about me when they [the visitors] sit in front of me; very soon I become the mirror of their own self". However, inevitably, with regard to the physical difficulty of this long-durational performance, she states that "it is hardest to do something that is close to nothing; there is no story to tell, there are no objects to hide behind, it will be just the gaze and pure presence".[19]

Yet, Amelia Jones states with regard to Derrida's deconstruction of presence, that paradoxically "in its desire to manifest presence, [Abramović] points to the very fact that the live act itself *destroys presence* (or makes the impossibility of its being secured evident)", for "the live act is always already passing and the body in action, understood as an expression of the self, is thus representational" (2001, 18, 26). Thus, "the event, the performance, by combining materiality and durationality (…) points to the fact that there is no "presence" as such" (18). Consequently, Jones claims that both liveness and durationality destroy presence, and as a result that Abramović has enacted her presence, which consequently turned her act into theatre. According to Jones, "[b]y "delivering" Abramović to us, *The Artist is Present* end[s] up exposing the lie of the promise of live art to secure presence" (26).

Nevertheless, in the weeks before the ending of the performance the queues for a possible encounter with Abramović became tremendous. Abramović fell victim to her own hype. Many (international) visitors spent the night out on the street to gain a "good number" in the morning. These were provided in order to prevent total chaos. More security rules were instituted and were explained to every visitor separately waiting in line in order to encounter Abramović. Visitors who would not act according to these rules were removed from the premises by the security immediately. Thereby, the fact that many celebrities like Björk, Lou Reed, Rufus Wainwright, Lady Gaga and James Franco witnessed her and the piece, seemed to confirm that "you really wanted to be present". Philip Auslander explains that "live events [still] have cultural value: being able to say you were physically present at a particular event constitutes valuable symbolic capital" (1999, 57). So, luckily, all the visitors who encountered Abramović were photographed

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[19] Therefore Abramović decided after two months to get rid of the table which was placed between her and the visitor. She sensed the table blocked the flowing energy.

and archived in the world wide web.[20] In this way, this performance is compatible with André Lepecki's notion of "photology", which he conceives as "the illumination and arrest of presence for the sake of History" (2004, 130). This is reminiscent of Abramović' own statement that she experiences her 'retrospective,' situated "in the most important context for a living artist" (referring to the MoMA), as a true milestone in her career. "I am 63 now, I don't want to be alternative anymore. Some people think of me as the grandmother of performance art. (…) It is my task to set the history straight. Performance will become mainstream art, and I feel responsible for it".

Hence, "The Artist Is Present" did not only consist of an encounter with Abramović. This encounter was part of a retrospective of her performance career in which five historical performances were re-performed by the next generation of performance artists. On the entire 6th floor of the MoMA were video-projections and objects shown in chronological order which were part of former performances. According to Jones, the retrospective as a whole, reflected "Abramović' interest in (often her own) performance histories, and her claims for the authenticity of live art and the emotional impact of durational performance" (2011, 17).

MoMA-curator Klaus Biesenbach stated with regard to the encounters with Abramović that "she virtualizes time, it is not ephemeral, not just rushing by, it is time as an unbearably large object you cannot move in, but are caught in". This reminds one of Jones' statement that it "is precisely the material forms, static and commodifiable, of works of art that make the stakes of art criticism, theory, and history so high in their attempts to ward off embodiment and durationality" (20). Jones' critique of "The Artist Is Present" points to her broader quest "of how histories get written, and why we continue (in the (…) postmodern age of the 21st century) to fall back on mystifying language of presence and energy exchange" (42). She concludes that the ideological implications for such claims of presence are the result of the conditioning and centrality of the market place (42). "[A]ll cultural expressions are tied to the market place in late capitalism, [and] [these] questions of history in relation to performance art (…) are extremely important politically" (42). Here the theories of Auslander and Jones collide with Phelan's.

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[20] The website "Marina Abramović Made Me Cry" contains portraits of many highly emotional visitors who sat with Marina. Beneath every portrait is written how many minutes had passed before this particular visitor started to cry: http://marinaabramovicmademecry.tumblr.com/

Abramović "enacts" the transcendental presence elaborated on by Phelan, nevertheless, Auslander and Jones prove Phelan wrong in the sense that this long-durational performance has, indeed, become a commodity.

Although Abramović' own manifesto states that an artist should not compromise to the art market, nor idolize her- or himself,[21] in "The Artist is Present" she in fact became the personification of time, which was to be worshipped by its "believers". She became a star. One review ironically stated: "Only in the artist's presence can one receive her prophecy" (Chase 2010). In that sense, Abramovic' presence may be described as "mystical" and not as "mythical". Additionally, "[t]hese celebrity icons provide deities to worship from afar and inspire individuals to themselves enter the world of image and spectacle, becoming part of the action" (Best 1990, 140). In the documentary, Biesenbach admits that the retrospective in its core was a huge self-portrait. Therefore, finally, one may wonder whether exchanging "a gaze" with a live portrait of Abramović provided the "true" presence both Abramović and the MoMA promised.

The French choreographer Jérôme Bel understands very well that "theatre is both a constructed frame and game so that people can look at other people" (Etchells 2002). "The Show Must Go On" (2001) explicitly deals with the presence and liveness of both his performers and audience. However, this is done in a quite deceptively transparent manner in order to enforce the political implications of this performance.

The performance starts in a pitch black theatre. On, or in front of, the stage a rumbling sound is heard. Then music starts to play. A female voice sings: "Only you, you're the only thing I see, forever, in my eyes, in my words, and in everything I do, nothing else but you. (…) There's only you tonight, what you are, what you do, what you say". The duet, sung by Maria and Tony in *West Side Story*, is played in its entirety while the theatre remains veiled in darkness. The audience seems baffled. When the song ends, the rumbling noise reoccurs. As "Let the sun shine in" from another musical, *Hair*, is played, the technician, who is also the DJ sitting in front of the stage, brings up the lights quite slowly. He becomes visible along with the empty stage and its proscenium arch. This song too is played in its entirety and there appears to be a collective reluctance in the

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[21] She read her manifest out loud for an audience in Italy in *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present* (2012).

audience. There is a general understanding that the musical score of Bel's performance will consist of highly popular songs from the past that are all going to be played in their entire length. And, in addition, nobody has appeared onstage so far. When the second song ends, the audience sees for the first time, because the stage is now illuminated, that the DJ actually changes the CD's, waits until the CD is recognized by the player and presses play. On behalf of Bel, the DJ decides which music will be played and which the audience has to endure. It is the DJ who determines the framework and time of the action onstage. "Like God he separates darkness from light, and creates a world [of performance]" (*All Art Begins With Not Knowing* 2002). The next song he plays is "Come together" by The Beatles. Nine and a halve minutes after the start of the performance, during the first chorus "come together, right now, over me", twenty people enter the stage.

These are the performers of the *Schauspielhaus* of Hamburg who are dressed as ordinary people, intended as a mirror to the spectators. The performers are positioned in a semicircle while looking at each other and at the audience in a slightly theatrical fashion. Since the performers mostly stay on the spot, they become objects or an installation the audience can look at and contemplate on. The performers appear before the audience in their perfections and in their defects. Still, somehow, they come across as being "comfortable in their own skins, resigned to the act of being watched" (Etchells 2002). At that point, the spectators are silent voyeurs, for they are still covered in darkness and thus, in a way, the performers look onto a fourth wall. Albeit the audience knows that the performers cannot see them extremely well, the mutual gaze of the performers and the audience confirms their mutual liveness.

Nevertheless, one may doubt whether the mutual liveness also provides mutual presence in the form of energy exchange, as explained by Fischer-Lichte, or that, in contrast, the performers and the audience are "just" both live, in synchronous time, and both present with their 'locus of human agency.' Although this shared space/time frame is supposed to be Fischer-Lichte's and Phelan's ideal situation, no explicit interaction or flowing energy is felt. The audience and performers simply gaze upon each other. Bel is stripping the conditions of 'being live and present' entirely to its "core", which results in a situation wherein both the performers solely mirror the audience and the other way

around.

The next song played by the DJ is "Let's dance" by David Bowie. During the verses the performers remain static, but when Bowie sings "let's dance, put on your red shoes and dance the blues, let's dance to the song they're playing on the radio", they all start to dance in their own significant ways. The audience now feels relieved – for the spectators had bought a ticket for a dance-piece, they thought – and starts to cheer and applaud. At the end of each chorus the performers stop, stand still, gaze at the audience, breathe heavily and wait for the next chorus in which Bowie will summon them to dance again. Thereafter, "I like to move it" by Reel 2 Real is played. All of the performers dance non-stop varying movements, however, each performer only dances his or her significant movement like swaying with arms and legs or swinging their genitalia; clothes are taken off and put on again. This creates a furore among the audience. The performers dance for the total duration of the song, and, additionally, they constantly smile; a smile the audience (hopefully) understands not to be sincere, for performing these movements the total duration of the song actually is quite tiring. Thereby, if it wasn't eminent until now, at this moment it has become clear that the performers will do exactly what the lyrics of the songs tell them to. Thus, the performers seem not to be allowed to stop moving, for they "like to move it, move it". When the song finishes, the audience applauds and keeps on cheering. However, the performers do not react. They stand still and again gaze at the audience.

At this point, most of the spectators surrender to Bel's strategy of playing all the songs in their entire length and letting his performers literally enact the lyrics. The audience begins to "passively" consume the spectacle as the late capitalist ideology tells them to. They stay together, live and present in this particular time and space frame, for getting out of this frame, or to stop it, seems impossible. In Guy Debord's words, "the concept of the spectacle is integrally connected to the concept of separation, for in passively consuming spectacles, one is disengaged from actively producing one's life" (Best 1990, 133). Nevertheless, Bel now calls for an active audience, which does not make the performance lose its spectacular character. On the contrary, the audience becomes an active spectacle themselves.

Halfway during the performance the performers leave the stage. It is during the absence of the performers that a large part of the audience becomes more visibly and audibly active by starting to perform itself. During "Yellow Submarine" by The Beatles, "La Vie En Rose" by Edith Piaf and John Lennon's "Imagine" the spectator's – chronologically covered in yellow and pink light and darkness – clap their hands to the beats, wave their arms and lighters and sing along with gusto. The performance has turned into one big musical-party and the audience becomes the postmodern spectacle itself. However, whether the audience really "enacted" or performed the songs lyrics in the sense of "imagining all the people" or grasped the content of "we all live in a yellow submarine", may be doubted. Because when Simon & Garfunkel are played, after the words "this is the sound of silence", the music is paused by the DJ but immediately thereafter no one seems to listen to the sound of silence. Instead, someone shouts: "Oh, come on". The music is turned back on, however, since the audience immediately becomes noisy again, it is turned off once again. This makes another part of the audience partly loses its presence (as in attention), for their presence is accompanied by embarrassment and reflection.[22]

Immediately thereafter is played "I'll be watching you" by The Police and the performers of the *Schauspielhaus* return to the stage. All nineteen form a line on the edge of the front-stage and stand very close to the audience while looking at them when Sting's lyrics are heard: "You belong to me, my poor heart aches, (…) every vow you break, every smile you fake, I'll be watching you". During the absence of the performers, Bel made the audience and performers exchange place, for he had provided a sphere in which a large part of the audience seemed to had 'forgotten' his rules of the game. Some of the "original" performers grin and some look upset. However, the fourth wall completely tumbles when the lights in the theatre are turned on. For the first time a mutual co-presence – in the sense of an interacted gaze – is experienced and it is not a comfortable one, since it exposes the "superficial" character of co-presence, for the performers and audience now literally mirror each other. In doing so, Bel exposes "the ideology of watching" and lets his audience "experience the Self" with great intensity

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[22] A notable story that goes around about this performance is that during the opening night in Paris one critic slapped another as audiences booed and stormed out.

(Spångberg 2001), for reflection on what had just happened now begins to surface. "In an age where everything is surface, artifice or façade", this seems to be "the invisible moment of authenticity or truth" Bel was looking for (*All Art Begins With Not Knowing* 2002).

The Kabakov's also play with surface, artifice and façade in their 'total installation' "The Happiest Man" (2013). On the cinema-screen clips are projected featuring Russian propaganda films from the '30s until the '50s. The clips shown on the screen are surprisingly joyful and powerful. They portray the "old" Russia of collectively owned agriculture in an idealized, beautiful and romantic light in which everyone works together and sings in harmony. "Flush-cheeked, flaxen-haired young women dance and sing in unison amidst shining fields of wheat [where] bales are rolled, hay is forked" (Pilger 2013). All is choreographed, even the routes of the harvest-cars, while jolly men play the guitar or accordion. The clips, which run in a loop, were selected from communist propaganda films and are reminiscent of contemporary "Hollywood musical, with all the make-believe that both entail" (Cumming 2013). The fact that the images on the screen are not in sync with the sound, which runs faster than the images and is poor quality, enhances their historical 'aura.' Following Auslander, here "film is represented as the realm of memory, repetition, and displacement in time" (1999, 15).

However, the visitor-as-performer in the installation may decide to become "the happiest man" and to watch the clips out of a small house that is built within the cinema. The house consists of one room in which a dinner table is set for four and is lit by a lamp hanging from the ceiling. A suit is draped on the chair facing the screen and a jacket hangs on a small hook on the door. The room also consists of a large cupboard and two small ones on which books and postcards from different countries and times are shown, as well as a clock that does not move; time stands still. A bed and a couch are placed in the corners of the room. The house smells of human presence and the floor creaks when one explores it, while, in contrast, the floor of the cinema slightly bounces.

If one wanders slowly through the room and pays more attention to the objects that are there to be found than to the images on the screen – which can be seen through the window of the house – the screen becomes somewhat like a large TV. The clips transmitted into the room remain to be seen in 2D. Therefore, again referring to

Auslander, "often [we] perceive reality only through the mediation of machines (…); [t]hese frameworks (…) perform our perception of the world" (1999, 32). This seems compatible with the fact that the contemporary context has become the 'televisual' and that the expectations of the contemporary audience are formed by the mediatized (2, 158). However, when one takes a seat on the chair on which the suit is draped or sits on the arm-rest of the couch and then watches the clips on the screen, one gets dazzled by an optical illusion. If one sits on one of these two spots, the screen of the cinema fills the totality of the window and in that way the images of the screen become 3D. Due to this 'total immersion' the images encompass the reality of the "happiest man".

The narrative of the installation of the Kabakov's thus is dependent on interaction with the visitor who is live and present. Nevertheless, the liveness and presence of the installation itself is not dependent on the liveness and presence of the visitor. The installation does exist on and in itself, it also runs when there are no visitors present. The "total installation" seems more compatible with a 'happening' than a long-durational performance or an iterated theatre piece. Thus, the visitor-as-performer may choose to solely watch the clips from the cinema chairs and to stay aware of the space between the truth (the fact that these films were made during the most violent years of Stalinist rule) and fiction (the clips themselves). Nonetheless, as a Benjaminian "stroller", one may frequent the little house, where one can become the "happiest man", due to the dissolved gap between truth and fiction, which consequently turns the images into reality. When the images of the screen become everyday reality the shock is tremendous, for one immediately remembers having seen the "false" representations of Russia of that time (fiction) in the cinema. And these have now transformed into a certain "truth" in the house. Due to this immersion, the truth feels more absent and the fiction more present than ever and in that way, following Kattenbelt, the Kabakov's reveal "the reality of illusion (the live) [and] the illusion of reality (the mediatised) (2010, 35).

II.   The *Passage of Time* and Possible *Duration*

Müller and Kunst link being visually (the mediatized) and physically present (the (a)liveness) to the two concepts of time in ancient Greece, namely *Chronós*, which is

related to the continuity of time, and *Kairòs*, which is the moment one has to grasp. The visually reproduced Müller compares herself to Chronós, for she will last in this temporal mode as long as she can be reproduced. She will never age and will stay pregnant forever and will always be at "our" disposal to play and replay her. "I will never forget my lines and my quality of presence will always stay equal; I will never be able to surprise, but I will always stay reliable". In contrast, Kunst compares herself to Kairòs. She is alive and caught permanently in-between two of Müller's sentences. She always has to catch the right or opportune moment to speak. She has to master her time of speaking (not too fast, not too slow), because she always has to refer to her cue. "Every time we do this lecture I will always change, I will age, I will never be able to repeat myself exactly, I will be in the position to change my text, because I'm alive; I'm fragile, but I can surprise".

In this dialogue, Kunst's (a)live body operates simultaneously with the prerecorded double of Müller. The passage of time of the performance is therefore also "doubled as past and present passages are visually (screen) and physically (stage) enacted" (Dixon 2007, 537). In doing so, the performance engages with what Agacinski describes as "the perennial philosophical problem and feat of "being in time and surmounting its temporality" (537). Agacinski elaborates that "[t]o salvage what passes, the eye of the spirit, or the philosopher's gaze, must itself become an absolute eye, capable of *seeing its own passage*, simultaneously engaged in time and assembling time, simultaneously passing and not passing" (2003, 22). This is of the essence in the dramaturgical strategy of Müller and Kunst, for their performative dialogue (the being in time) points to the broader question (with which they surmount their temporality) how to be, in the contemporary age, in the same time and space while collaborating, because "collaborability" measures the artist's currency as the intensity of being in the present time, or in the contemporary" (Cvejić 2010, 5).

Through emptying out the concepts of presence and liveness in this dialogue, Müller and Kunst only stage the 'present' which they share with their spectators. The experience of a (shared) past is not of importance for their performance, because the main point of the dialogue consists of a demonstration of the problem that "collaboration as a specific time mode (…) equals actualization" which resulted in "an obsession with present time" and consequently time-management (Kunst 2010b, 28, 23). This is put

across by Kunst's and Müller's list of all of the times necessary to fulfill the promise of being "finally together on time:"

> 376 hours of work for which nobody paid us; 36 hours of work that we officially counted and that we did get paid for; 530 hours of reading, mostly on planes, trains and in other public transportation; 2093 minutes of audio-visual material, viewed either on your or on my computer; countless hours of time spent on the internet; in total at least 15 days in which we were supposed to work together, that we canceled; hours of shows made together - none; books written together - none; proposals made together - plenty; minutes of synchronous public appearance - none.

Their dialogue juggles with the idea that one spends much more time on collaboration outside of the project than during the actual project. But "it is only through collaboration, on the constantly changing map of places, that people can actually become visible in the present time, where they constantly add to the temporal flow of money, capital and signs" (Kunst 2010b, 25). Thus, Kunst considers collaboration "very frequently used as a synonym for co-operation" (24). Consequently, the subjectivity of the artist is no longer understood as singular and self-centered. In contrast, "contemporary production consists of sharing linguistic and cognitive habits (i.e. affective and intellectual exchange of knowledge); which [are] the constitutive element[s] of post-Fordist production of labour" (25).

Thus, Kunst states that she, as Kairòs, comes very close to this post-Fordist mode of production, since, with her creativity, she has to catch the right moment, she should not endure, always change and never repeat herself. Müller, as Chronós, would "personify" Fordist labor. However, "not really being there" by having an immaterial appearance which consists of 'bits' and the option that she can disappear any moment (Müller disappears from the screen), her work is additionally immaterial and she is not getting paid at all (Müller's image comes back to the screen). In that sense she perfectly fits the post-Fordist working condition as well.

Furthermore, with regard to post-Fordism, the "problem" of deadlines is discussed in the dialogue. Müller explains that in the corporate world you can lose a job if you miss your deadline, however, "in our working context it is very unlikely that you get kicked out of the project just for being late; in fact, being slightly late might confirm our

freedom as creative workers to escape dominant patterns of efficiency and constant delivering of a result". Nevertheless, the art market does expect one to actively produce and to deliver a product. But Müller "resists" and therefore is late, which is reminiscent of Agacinski's statement that the only way to resist to the general economy of time is to "lose" time (2003, 6). Müller elaborates in the dialogue that:

> With that I express that I don't want to be exploited in the temporality of the product based art market. This [is] an active position. But for that I have to invent other modes of production in which I can be late and resist. And here we have a bit of an irony. What the market actually loves, is me being actively involved in the production of resistance, me being revolutionary.

In sum, Kunst argues that "in order to open up time, we have to take time out of the obsession with presence and participate in the time what has yet to happen" (2010b, 28). A lasting duration is what Müller and Kunst plea for: "it is the duration that shows that we ourselves are actually not moving, but are being moved, that our inner perception of time is, in fact, heavily, socially and economically conditioned" (2010a).

With regard to the perception of socially and economically conditioned time, many art critics doubt whether it was possible to experience a transformation in the "spectacular situation" of "The Artist Is Present", which was based on being together with Abramović in the "here and now". It is highly probable that Abramović has experienced time's passage much more intensely than the visitors who encountered her. Especially in the weeks prior to the end of the retrospective when she daily experienced extreme pain after having been seated for almost three months. While, in contrast, the museum visitors were obliged to stick to the strict rules of the museum, such as spending not more than fifteen minutes across Abramović, in order for every visitor to have an opportunity to experience the piece. If a visitor is aware that she is not allowed to spend more than fifteen minutes in the lit square, it may be assumed that one will structure one's experience beforehand and will therefore be overwhelmed by "spectacular" and dramatic emotions instead of Bergson's duration for example, with which the past life of the spectator rushes into the experience of the present. Nevertheless, many visitors claimed that the experience actually was transformative. "Being radically present herself, the artist invite[d] us to be present to each other" (Levine 2010). The compulsory

presence to each other was the result of the tremendous queues in order to sit with "celebrity" Marina. However, according to Kunst, in that way "during the redundant time that is passing, we are somehow emptied out, jammed, trapped in waiting" (2010a), which has nothing to do with duration.

By contrast, one may wonder *if* and, if so, how often during those three months Abramović has experienced Bergson's duration or that in contrast she has only been live those months, for Amelia Jones already exposed the fiction of her presence. In the documentary film *Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present* (2012), Abramović explains that the public and its presence strengthened her to "endure" and that through this long-durational performance, "performance has become life itself". So, although Abramović was the personification of time for the audience which the spectators could "worship" and gaze upon, as a human being, Abramović had the passage of time on her side. One could state that Abramović herself has indeed experienced duration when her long-lost partner Ulay encountered her. That made her cry and was internationally acclaimed as the dramatic highlight of the performance. This may have been the result of her past life rushing into her present when she saw him, for they do share a history and not a brief encounter. A brief encounter between strangers only relies on the importance of an "equal" presence and liveness, not on the importance of a shared history that gives meaning to this shared present. Thus, in the end, the brief encounters between Abramović and her visitors have been nothing more than a shared "gaze" onto one another as objects.

By contrast, in "The Show Must Go On", Jérôme Bel does not only play with individual and shared presence and liveness which are the conditions of constituting a "present" in the performance, but also with individual and shared cultural history, which gives meaning to that present. In the beginning of the performance, when the performers of the *Schauspielhaus* are still absent and during "Let's Dance" by David Bowie and "I Like To Move It" by Reel 2 Real, when the performers are actually present and "moving", the audience experiences time's passage, because it is obliged to listen to the songs in their entire length. However, when one surrenders to this and to the literal enactment of the lyrics by the performers, the experience may start to become transformative. This is due to the fact that, now, one considers the 'strategy' of the performance known and therefore gets the time to anticipate the song's words to come;

an air of expectancy. Thus, during the next songs; "Ballerina Girl" by Lionel Ritchie, "Private Dancer" by Tina Turner and "Into My Arms" by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, personal memories may begin to surface, for all of these songs belong to the audience's past. One's individual past and present seem to form "into an organic whole", for by recalling the notes of these tunes; they "[melt], so to speak, into one another" (Bergson 2001 [1910], 100).

      As one's personal memories of the past mix with one's experience of the present Bergson's 'endosmosis' may come about. This is "an intermingling of the purely intensive sensation of mobility [duration] with the extensive representation of the space traversed" (112). This is caused by the fact that the duration one experiences during these scenes appears not to be only constituted by the song's lyrics, but also by the dances of the performers. These dances are not really "aesthetic" or high maintenance dances which a layman could never copy. Instead, the choreography consists of dances of 'ordinary' people. It is composed of movements that many of us make in everyday life, like, for example, not-so-great ballerina-movements or dancing all alone in one's room as a private dancer or wrapping arms around the one you love. During these scenes there is an interaction between one's personal memories related to the songs one hears and the dances one sees. Thus, "the heterogeneous moments of which permeate one another [duration]; (…) can be brought into relation with a state of the external world which is contemporaneous with it, and can be separated from the other moments in consequence of this very process" (110). Furthermore, Mullarkey explains that "[b]y projecting our *durée* into space and thereby giving this 'symbolic medium' the appearance of its own temporality, we inevitably have this projection turned back upon ourselves as we introject the various quantitative and homogeneous attributes of this medium" (1999, 21). And, to quote Bergson once more: "Duration thus assumes the illusory form of a homogeneous medium, and the connecting link between these two terms, space and duration, is simultaneity, which might be defined as the intersection of time and space" (2001 [1910], 110).

      This case of 'endosmosis' also reveals how closely related Bergson's duration and Agacinski's passage of time – in which the experience of time is inseparable of space – seem to be. The dances of the performers consist of movements through the space

onstage, and, according to Agacinski, in its "objective reality", these movements are "also the condition for the possibility of a common experience and a shared time" (2003, 46). Nevertheless, the intensity of the experience of these dances and the memories they trigger cannot be a collective experience but belong to the personal soul. The spectators have different pasts, but share the present of the performance. Nevertheless, the movements in their "objective reality" may function as reference points with which a collective chronology may be established. This chronology is made more explicit through the fact that one has to wait for the DJ's CD-change after the ending of each song. The CD-changes provide the rhythm of the performance and thereby act as an indicator for a literal "before" and "after". Therefore these intervals cannot be experienced as a Bergsonian duration, for defining a moment as "before" or "after" measures duration, which is not compatible with Bergson's theory. However, when a new song is played, again 'endosmosis' may occur. All in all, it seems that in "The Show Must Go On" Bergson's duration in the form of 'endosmosis' and Agacinski's time's passage are not only closely related, it seems that they also may co-exist in these scenes, or at least alternate in the experience of these scenes.

Bel explicitly deals with both the individual and collective experience of the present and past, and the individual and collective liveness and presence of the performers and audience. During the absence of the performers, the audience takes on their role and consumes the nostalgic sounds. Although it would seem possible to again experience duration during the songs of The Beatles, Piaf and Lennon in the darkness of the theatre, this is hindered by the noisy audience which is working very hard to show that it is present and live. This makes another part of the audience lose its presence. This is reminiscent of Bergson's critique of social life, which deprives one of the rich colors of a feeling like nostalgia, for due to its projection into space, it makes one stand "before [one's] own shadow (…) which [is] (…) the impersonal residue, of the impressions felt (…) by the whole of society" (2001 [1910], 133). This is the outcome of the fact that what is being produced onstage, in the absence of the performers, is "the act of remembering" (Kruschkova 2002). But that no longer works, except on the outside, in a very superficial way.

The superficiality of memorization is enforced by Bel's appeal to the collective history of the Western late capitalist society of the spectacle. With songs like, for example, Céline Dion's "My Heart Will Go On", both personal and collective memories are invoked. The movements of the performers do not literally enact the songs' lyrics anymore, but rather the performers 'move' into well-known images and iconography. The ten performers split into five couples that lean onto the ship's rail and pretend to be flying like Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio in the movie "Titanic". The audience starts to laugh and applaud, for they all remember this scene plus the collective "horrific" feelings in the cinema when the Titanic sank, thus ending the the monumental love between "Rose" and "Jack". During Céline Dion's dramatic 'bridge' the couples rotate following the movement of the camera. One of the dancers falls down and the other half of this couple tries to hold on to him, enacting the Titanic's crash. The couples hold this pose for the rest of the song. "Through repetition by illustration, both in the images and in enacting the song's lyrics which spells out the impossibility of deciding between what is performative and what is referential, Bel ironises on the way our perception of the imaginary is reduced by stereotypes and the influence of the media" (Kruschkova 2002).

This is reminiscent of Fredric Jameson's view on the postmodern as "nostalgic for the present" which is caused by its caricature of historical thinking, for postmodern culture bases its history on popular images and stereotypes of which "Jack" (Leonardo DiCaprio) and "Rose" (Kate Winslet) are great examples. Also the deliberately superficial display of the pop songs complies with Jameson's view. However, Bel lets his audience acknowledge and reflect upon the historicity of this "operation" and thus the performance is "a process of reification whereby we draw back from our immersion in the here and now (not yet identified as a "present") and grasp it as a kind of thing – not merely a "present" but a present that can be dated" (Jameson 1999, 284).

Finally, in "The Happiest Man" by the Kabakov's, both personal and collective memories are invoked as well and used as a screen in a literal way (the clips) and figuratively (the individual mind). What the Kabakov's project "installs" is not space, but time (Boym 2001, 326). "If Past and Future are embodied in the installation in the shapes and location of the objects, the Present is personified by the visitor herself" (326). According to Steve Dixon, the clips as "time-based projections [work] in conjunction

with the live bodies of the performers (…) [and] [may] disrupt (…) time's linearity to achieve moments (…) of extratemporal "catharsis" (2007, 524). The 'extratemporal' "relates back to prehistoric (and well as some modernist notions of time)" and, in a way, to the French cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) (522). He conceptualized "societies that refuse to accept history" as they operate "with reference to a mythic order that is itself *outside time*" (Agacinski 2003, 8). This is reminiscent of Agacinski's claim that being "is no longer beyond time, or outside all time, (…) [but] exists in its own *passage*" (21). Practically, the 'extratemporal' is based on slow-motion movement and repetition, that both "contribute to a sense of time's disruption" (Dixon 2007, 523). In combination with live performance – which is in this particular situation the live performance of the visitor herself – this may spark "a feeling, not of time standing still or going backward or forward, but of the extratemporal – of stepping to one side or outside of time" (537). Ilya Kabakov himself states that their installations "incorporate other temporalities and cheat linear time and the fast pace of contemporary life" (1992, 168).

With regard to the experience of the temporality proposed by the clips, it must be explained that Bergson felt disdain for "technological intervention into the arts believing that pure perception allowed by intuition, unaided by machines, was what mattered" (Dixon 2007, 525). However, when the cinema-visitor watches the clips for the first time (which all the visitors would seem to firstly do before they visited the little house of the "happiest man"), I would nevertheless like to argue that they may inaugurate Bergson's duration. The images constitute a continuous present in which the visitor-as-performer's past permeates through invoking personal memories. At this moment the images' political implications are still left out of the perception. Before these implications become apparent, it seems the visitor-as-performer surrenders to the aesthetics of the images that enhances memorization. Therefore, with regard to Bergson, if one differentiates "the object through the effort to experience it, to sympathize with its movement, (…) [and] at one and the same time, *integrate* [one's] movement into its own: [one] has participated in its becoming" (2007 [1912], xvii). Hence, "two durations", namely the duration of the clips and the duration of the performer, "resonate or attune themselves as one" (xvii).

Once one has spent quite some time in the cinema-chairs, it becomes apparent that the six clips in total run in a loop. The continuous present and the resonating durations stop, for the projected images are already known and therefore do not invoke the same memories anymore, because "[t]he periodic return of the same occurrence (natural or artificial) allows observers to define by convention or to construct a periodicity or a rhythm" (Agacinski 2003, 42). A chronology is set up in the performer's mind. This seems compatible with Bergson's 'problem of the pendulum:'

> As the successive phases of our conscious life, although interpenetrating, correspond individually to an oscillation of the pendulum which occurs at the same time, and as, moreover, these oscillations are sharply distinguished from one another, we get into the habit of setting up the same distinction between the successive moments of our conscious life: the oscillations of the pendulum break it up, so to speak, into parts external to one another: hence the mistaken idea of a homogeneous inner duration, similar to space, the moments of which are identical and follow, without penetrating, one another (2001 [1910], 109).

When watching the clips for the second time, one consequently starts to reflect on the clips as a "past experience presented as present" (Dixon 2007, 525). And in combining a present experience (stage) with a past experience (film), "time thus (…) becomes present as a spatial element" (525). Thus, due to reflection, some awareness of the horror – of the forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture – behind these propaganda films begins to surface.

However, if the visitor frequents the little house, one will encounter new memory triggers, namely the anachronistic objects that are there to be found. The objects are "on the verge of becoming allegories, but never symbols" (Boym 2001, 319). According to Ilya Kabakov, in their installations "nothing personifies time à la Dali; time hides in the configuration of objects" (1992, 168). The Kabakov's make the visitor-as-performer imagine the lives of these objects, which is triggered by the fact that they come across as historical ruins, however ordinary and unremarkable. If one, while wandering through the house, imagines the lives of these objects and does not pay too much attention to the images on the screen, this may elicit a different state of consciousness which seems comparable with daydreaming. "[O]r, as in Russian, *v polu-sne* ("half dream, half wakefulness"), [which] is the artist's preferred state of mind; [i]t does not preclude

reflection, but combines it with affection and allows for forgetfulness and lucid recollection" (Boym 2001, 326). So although the Kabakov's constructed a setting which is historically remote and placed in a geographical past which the Western stroller is not familiar with, they appeal to the "inner exile" of the Western stroller, the "stranger" who is nostalgic for lost human habitats and a slower pace of time (326).

If one, consequently, takes a seat on the chair on which the suit is draped or sits on the arm-rest of the couch and then watches the clips on the screen, one may be overwhelmed by the optical illusion. This is not only caused by the fact that the images of the screen fill the totality of the window and in that sense the images – as "false" representations of the past – turn into reality. Moreover, one has let time pass during the strolling around, and, consequently, whenever one takes a seat and becomes totally immersed by the images that one has just watched as a cinema-visitor, the past of these images is again presented as present. Because of the political implications of the clips, this is almost an unnerving experience, since they turn into the "reality" of the "happiest man". This is part of the great political 'tactic' of the Kabakov's.

Due to the differences in experiencing the 2D-images in the cinema and the 'total immersion' in the house, the Kabakov's expose the disparity between truth and fiction, and between art and propaganda. This is the result of the way in which they produce and use different spaces in the same storage, namely the private sphere of the little house of the "happiest man" and the public sphere of the cinema. It is precisely this division which reveals the ethics of remembering and forgetting and exposes ideology. The Kabakov's show the difference between the isolated ideology presented by the clips, the immersed ideology of the "happiest" man and the objectified ideology of the exile who becomes aware of the mythical status of the ideology and its past as one remembers it. Thus, this installation "is a surrogate museum as well as a surrogate home; it is as much a memory museum as it is a museum of forgetting; (…) [The] Kabakov['s] work with the aura of the installation as such, and with the drama of captured, or constipated, time" (Boym 2001, 318).

However, precisely the fact that the "inside", the private sphere, of the little house and the "outside", the public sphere, of the cinema are preserved together in the same storage, the basement of the university, reveals that nowadays there is no apparent

division anymore between the two. The "inside" of the contemporary society has become its "outside" too, for it is publicly exposed. Privacy has become virtual, a space of projection and interaction and "[b]eing at home in this self-imposed panopticon scenario means being watched or being a voyeur" (Boym 2001, 349). Consequently, individual and collective memories have merged in the big database of the basement, which is reminiscent of a technological storage that does not differentiate between the private and the public sphere.

Section 4   Conclusion: Historical Time in Contemporary Performance

In this conclusion, I will firstly analyze how the 'stagings of the present' by Müller and Kunst, Abramović, Bel and the Kabakov's relate to Boym's notions of reflective and restorative nostalgia. As I have stated in the introduction, restorative nostalgia is a trans-historical reconstruction of a "lost home" [*nostos*] (2001, xviii). It considers itself truth and tradition and aims to function as national memory (41). By contrast, reflective nostalgia focuses on the mediation of history, the passage of time and the irrevocability of the past (46). It is based on the *algia* (the longing itself, the imperfect process of remembrance) and calls the truth of the restorative nostalgia into question (xviii).

Secondly, the final step towards answering the research question depends on the analysis of the ways the performances, as restorative or reflective myths, contribute to a discussion about "nostalgia for the present". In the introduction I explained that in our mediatized Western late capitalist society of the spectacle both the virtual realities and the realities of everyday life lack a historical dimension. The virtual realities consist of a permanent present and thus erase notions of the past and the future that let time pass and make change possible. By contrast, in the reality of everyday life, time has become commodified which enhances heterogeneous, albeit ephemeral, temporalities. All in all, in this society, historical time has been halted. The motion of history has been stopped, the future is now, which is the consequence of the urge to seize control over time. What is debated in this thesis is whether the performances discussed challenge this urge and whether they can restore, or at least provide a reflection on, historical time through proposing a different temporality.

Thirdly, in the appendix I will reflect upon the outcome of this research and make a remark on the literature with which I have analyzed the performances.

The performative dialogue "Finally Together On Time" (2011) between the virtually present Müller and the physically present Kunst discussed the problem of sharing the same space and time while collaborating in the contemporary age. The performance served as a critique of the capitalization of time, and, with regard to collaboration as co-operation, as a critique of the post-Fordist mode of production. Through emptying out the

concepts of presence and liveness, for they were equally present and live in synchronous time (albeit they didn't share the same space and Müller's image was pre-recorded), Müller and Kunst aimed to only stage and to only be in the present time with their spectators. It was not their intention to let their audience experience a past in the sense of Bergson's duration, for the experience of a past was not of relevance for their "main point", which solely consisted of indicating the problem of sharing the present time together. Thus, as representatives of the contemporary immaterial workers, they called the 'truth' of Western late capitalism into doubt.

This is a characteristic of Boym's reflective nostalgia. Nevertheless, Müller and Kunst tried to institutionalize their critique through presenting the dialogue at *Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers* in Paris and as a part of the Performance Studies international (PSi) Conference. Following Barthes, in that way they aimed to turn their left-wing myth into a 'strategy' instead of a 'tactic.' However, they announced their dialogue openly as "revolution" and, according to Barthes, in doing so they abolished myth, for the strategic right-wing myth hides in the fact that is myth – because it considers itself the truth – and in that way produces myth (2009 [1957], 173). Thus, Müller and Kunst indicated the problem of "nostalgia for the present" in their performative dialogue through their critique, but they did not produce "nostalgia for the present" with their performance. Their dialogue, as reflective myth, remained "informational" and consisted of "truth" for many, but was not transformative. Yet, perhaps, Müller and Kunst did not aspire their performance to be transformative, since it initially wasn't meant for a large audience, but an *oratio pro domo*, created for their fellow immaterial workers.

In "The Artist Is Present" (2010) Abramović was physically in the presence of her visitors in the same space and time for a "long-durational" period of time, namely for three months during the opening hours of the MoMA, which is approximately 731 hours and thirty minutes. But, by being merely live and enacting her presence, Abramović made her visitors exchange a gaze with her live portrait. Because of the international praise for her performance, the waiting-lines in the final month of the exhibition to "sit with Marina" became enormous. Consequently, the visitors were only allowed to encounter Abramović for fifteen minutes max. Thus, Abramović became the personification of time

who could be worshipped by her followers. In that way, encountering Abramović prompted a religious connotation. Consequently, in all probability, the star-struck visitors who have encountered Abramović in the spectacular situation of the MoMA did not experience the transformative powers of time's passage or duration brought about by her liveness and enacted presence.

Although the documents, photographs and relics of former performances displayed on the 6th floor of the MoMA mythologized Abramović – which seems compatible with Harald Szeeman's "individual mythology" – they did not enhance the reflective character of the retrospective. This was due to the fact that Abramović proclaimed the wish "to set the history straight and let performance art become mainstream art" with her retrospective. Through the institutionalization of her "authentic" presence as "frozen commodity" (Jones 2011, 42), she coupled 'eternalization' with renewal, for a new generation gained access to her legacy of performance art. Thus, although I doubt whether she intended to, Abramović' "The Artist Is Present" appeared to be a pertinent example of Boym's restorative nostalgia. On the surface, Abramović did produce the problem of "nostalgia for the present", but was not able to turn the performance into a transformative experience, for she turned the present into perfect snapshots, literally through the portraits of her crying visitors. Consequently, the retrospective in its entirety became a well consumable "nostalgic artifact" (Boym 2001, 38).

In "The Show Must Go On" (2001), Bel played with the co-presence and liveness of both his performers and audience in the theatre by letting them literally "gaze" upon each other. At the beginning of the performance, the performers onstage seemed to mirror the spectators, albeit (almost) as objects, who danced to well known pop songs and enacted the lyrics of these songs. The songs were played in their entire length by the DJ/technician who embodied late capitalism and as the architect of this performance determined (on behalf of Bel) the frame and game of the performance. When one understood Bel's strategy, the performance may have started to become transformative. The songs may have invoked personal memories in the sense of Bergson's duration. However, during the absence of the performers, Bel let his performers and audience exchange places and in doing so he enhanced the collectiveness of the process for the

present that is, or "should be", a shared experience in the theatre. The audience became more audibly and visually present through starting to perform itself by clapping their hands to the beats, wave their arms as well as their lighters and sing along quite loud. Bel transformed the initial individual experience of time and history (based on duration) to a collective experience (through Agacinski's passage of time) and, consequently, turned his audience into a collectivity that sang and played along. However, when the "original" performers returned and gazed upon the audience with the lights of the hall turned on, this worked confrontational, because cleverly, in this way, Bel exposed 'the ideology of watching.' Bel successfully challenged the urge to seize control over time by imprinting upon his audience that it was firstly the object of history (mirrored by the performers), then the subject of history (during the absence of the performers) and finally again the object. Moreover, by letting the audience relive its past during the absence of the performers, the audience created its own collective history.

Thus, although Bel used characteristics of restorative nostalgia, he did so in order to enforce the performance's reflective character. Bel played with collective pictorial symbols like the well-known songs from the past of Western late capitalist countries and with the dances and images the performers "portrayed". In that way, the single plot of "our" Western collective past was reduced to "our" Western late capitalist identity. The ideological purpose of this (on the surface) postmodern spectacle was to hold a mirror up to the public and reveal the "kitschiness" of the present time of the contemporary society. Bel created a shallow past which relied on abstractness and which was memorized and excessively mythologized by substituting the individual character of experiencing the past and present by a collective experience. Nevertheless, this performance was not kitsch at all.

On the contrary, it revealed the fantasy of the "age" by letting his audience reflect upon this "kitschiness" at the same time. For, with regard to Barthes, Bel let his audience reveal the process of myth-making by deciphering the symbols and signs of this "(inter)national myth" themselves, which made the performance such a painful experience. All in all, Bel produced the problem of "nostalgia for the present" and made his audience think and reflect on it. "The Show Must Go On", as reflective myth, gave thought to its audience through its "form of deep mourning that performs a labor of grief

both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future" (Boym 2001, 55).

The Happiest Man" (2013) by the Kabakov's, as 'total installation,' was anyhow live and present physically, for it also ran when no visitors were present. However, its narrative was dependent on interaction with a visitor-as-performer who was also live and present. If the visitor-as-performer surrendered to the aesthetics of the propaganda clips screened in the cinema, one may have experienced Bergson's duration, for the clips may have triggered personal memories from the past – most likely due to the clips' historical aura – which permeated into one's present. Nevertheless, when the clips were watched for the second time, since they ran in a loop, reflection upon the images may have come about, for they were made during the most violent years of Stalinist rule.

As a Benjaminian "stroller", one could frequent the little house, where one could become the "happiest man", due to the dissolved gap between truth and fiction caused by the 'total immersion' of the images. Thereby, in the little house of the "happiest man", the visitor-as-performer could imagine the lives of the seemingly anachronistic objects and in doing so the visitor let time pass. The Kabakov's exposed to their strollers, their *passeurs de temps*, the disparity between truth and fiction, and between art and propaganda, which was the outcome of the thin dividing line that they created between the private (intimate, domestic) sphere and the public sphere (cinema) which were both stored in the same dark storage, the basement of the university. Memories were preserved under the roof of the university, the place of all knowledge. Ultimately, they showed that this division between the private and the public sphere did not exist.

Whether the clips from the old propaganda films containing the "false" representations of Soviet Russia from the '30s until '50s were compatible with restorative nostalgia by the Kabakov's remains ambiguous. However, they were not meant as a reconstruction of a lost home, Russia. Rather, the Kabakov's focus was on the mediation of history and the passage of time and they thus used the restorative (propaganda) clips in order to enhance the installation's reflective character. The Kabakov's installation ultimately was "about the selectivity of memory; (…) [the] total installation[s] [was] a cautious reminder of gaps, compromises, embarrassments and black holes in the foundation of any utopian and nostalgic edifice" (326). That is how the Kabakov's produced the problem of "nostalgia for the present". They staged a present which is given

meaning through the importance of the past even though it is mythologized, and let their visitors-as-performers experience this feeling and reflect on the ethics of remembering and forgetting. This reflection upon amnesia made the audience aware of it and thus made clear what the painful consequences of seizing control over time imply.

The performances by Bel and the Kabakov's, which were able to produce the problem of "nostalgia for the present" and let their audiences experience this problem and reflect on it at the same time, used characteristics of Boym's restorative nostalgia in order to enhance their reflective character. These performances nevertheless are and remain reflective, for they did not pretend to rebuild "the present" through an inspiring tale of a recovered identity like restorative nostalgia would (2001, 49). By contrast, both the performative dialogue of Muller and Kunst and the long-durational performance of Abramović focused mostly on their own identities and their position as artists in the Western late capitalist society. All in all, it is quite striking that the performances which were able to generate the problem of "nostalgia for the present" were the two performances in which the myth-makers themselves were physically absent. Bel and the Kabakov's were present in absence and have forced their spectators and visitors to reflect upon the ethics of remembering and forgetting and in doing so revitalized historical time.

So, now that I have answered my question in the affirmative: yes, by creating the problem of "nostalgia for the present" performance can enrich us with an awareness of historical time, perhaps I may offer a thought on the necessity of future research. This type of research is more necessary than ever, for the problem of historical time, or rather the contemporary lack of it, will not disappear. After all, it is a defining characteristic of "our" society. Thereby may this problem become seemingly less relevant as during the recent decades the entire globe was already engulfed by the tsunami of the new media and their cult of the 'present' as a consumers paradise, in which every want is immediately responded to and in which everything goes. However, unfortunately, no one has time to reflect on the problem of historical time, for all are obliged to constantly produce "the show" which "has to go on".

Moreover, the possibilities to engage in this type of research and performance making are becoming more and more limited due to the budget cuts which are now radically transforming the art world. This may be the next phase in what could be

interpreted as the conflict between the architects of our society who have stopped time, and the artists who by reintroducing the historical dimension into performance finally make the point that human power is temporary and thus limited; and that it should remain so, for this is precisely what defines "us" as human beings. Alas, the prospects of this conflict are rather bleak. However, it is the creative nostalgia which "reveals the fantasies of the age and it is in those fantasies and potentialities that the future is born" (Boym 2001, 351).

Appendix

If I now, at the end of this thesis, reflect on the theories with which I have analyzed the experience of historical time performance, I find it striking that the duration's experienced in "The Happiest Man" by the Kabakov's and "The Show Must Go On" by Bel in the forms of 'endosmosis' and the 'problem of the pendulum' (which is a form of 'endosmosis' too) both are Bergson's forms of duration which are dependent on, or influenced by, a spatial element. Although Bergson's notion of duration still is very relevant, not only because of the technologies which center on his idea of the virtual realities of consciousness (Boym 2001, 50), but most of all because the experience of a lasting duration is almost completely absent in contemporary everyday life, spatiality is more important than I initially considered.

Although the contemporary notions of liveness and presence are mostly time-related and dependent upon mental activity, one mustn't forget that our bodies, as historical ruins, still inhabit a space. This is "the reality of being in time" (Blau 2011, 253). Consequently, Agacinski's notion of time's passage, with regard to her "stroller" and a present relying on movements and durations – of which the movements in their objective reality may be experienced collectively due to its spatial element – perhaps seems to comply better with contemporary life and consequently with the analysis of contemporary performances than Bergson's duration.

Both "The Show Must Go On" and "The Happiest Man" rely on the importance of an individual history (Bergson) and a collective history as well as an individual

memory that is partly defined by collective reference points (Agacinski). The Kabakov's and Bel expose with pasts and histories as desiderata in their performances that postmodernism is not just an optional style, but is the cultural dominant of late capitalism (Jameson 1999, 45-6). They use postmodernism as an attempt "to think our present of time in History" (46).

However, in this thesis the experiences of time and history have been analyzed with theories by modernist thinkers Bergson and Agacinski. The outcome of this research would have been different if I had analyzed the performances with postmodern theories. But, the theories of these modernist thinkers reflect the perspective of the author of this thesis; for what does the passage of time "mean for us if neither eternity nor history any longer gives meaning to that passage" (Agacinski 2003, 10)?

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