THE THEATRICALITY OF THE *PUNCTUM*:
RE-VIEWING ROLAND BARTHES' *CAMERA LUCIDA*

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Introduction—Roland Barthes and I

> Thus it would be wrong to say that if we undertake to reread the text we do so for some intellectual advantage (to understand better, to analyze on good grounds): it is actually and invariably for a ludic advantage: to multiply the signifiers, not to reach some ultimate signified.
>
> Barthes (1990), 165

It was in 2012, whilst developing a performance about falling, that I was first introduced to Roland Barthes' concept of the *punctum*: the emotionally bruising, affective detail of a photograph that breaks through the field of signification (*studium*) to prick or wound the viewer. I was researching photographs of bodies caught in the act of falling when I came across Andrea Fitzpatrick's compelling article on art after 9/11. Fitzpatrick (2007) adopts Barthes' dual terms of *studium* and *punctum* to analyse the 'movement of vulnerability' in Richard Drew's controversial *Falling Man* photograph, which depicts a man leaping from the World Trade Center. Through a comparison with Yves Klein's *Leap Into the Void* (1960) Fitzpatrick manages to explore a crisis of subjectivity and the rupture of meaning in images of falling (85–86).

The concept of the *punctum* appears in Barthes' last book *La Chambre Claire: Note sur la photographie* (1980) (translated into English by Richard Howard as *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1981]). What initially struck me about this book was Barthes' exploration of his theory of photography's affect in the autobiographical reflections on the death of his mother and his search for her in a pile of old photographs. As I read the book for the first time, I felt like Barthes was articulating the pain I felt when looking at pictures of my own mother, who died when I was 14. Drawing on Fitzpatrick's article and responding to Barthes' mournful reflections in *Camera Lucida*, I developed a performance lecture, *The Punctum*, that weaved together an introduction to Barthes' photographic theory; a series of live staged falls; and a photograph of my mother to stand in for Barthes' absent Winter Garden Photograph.
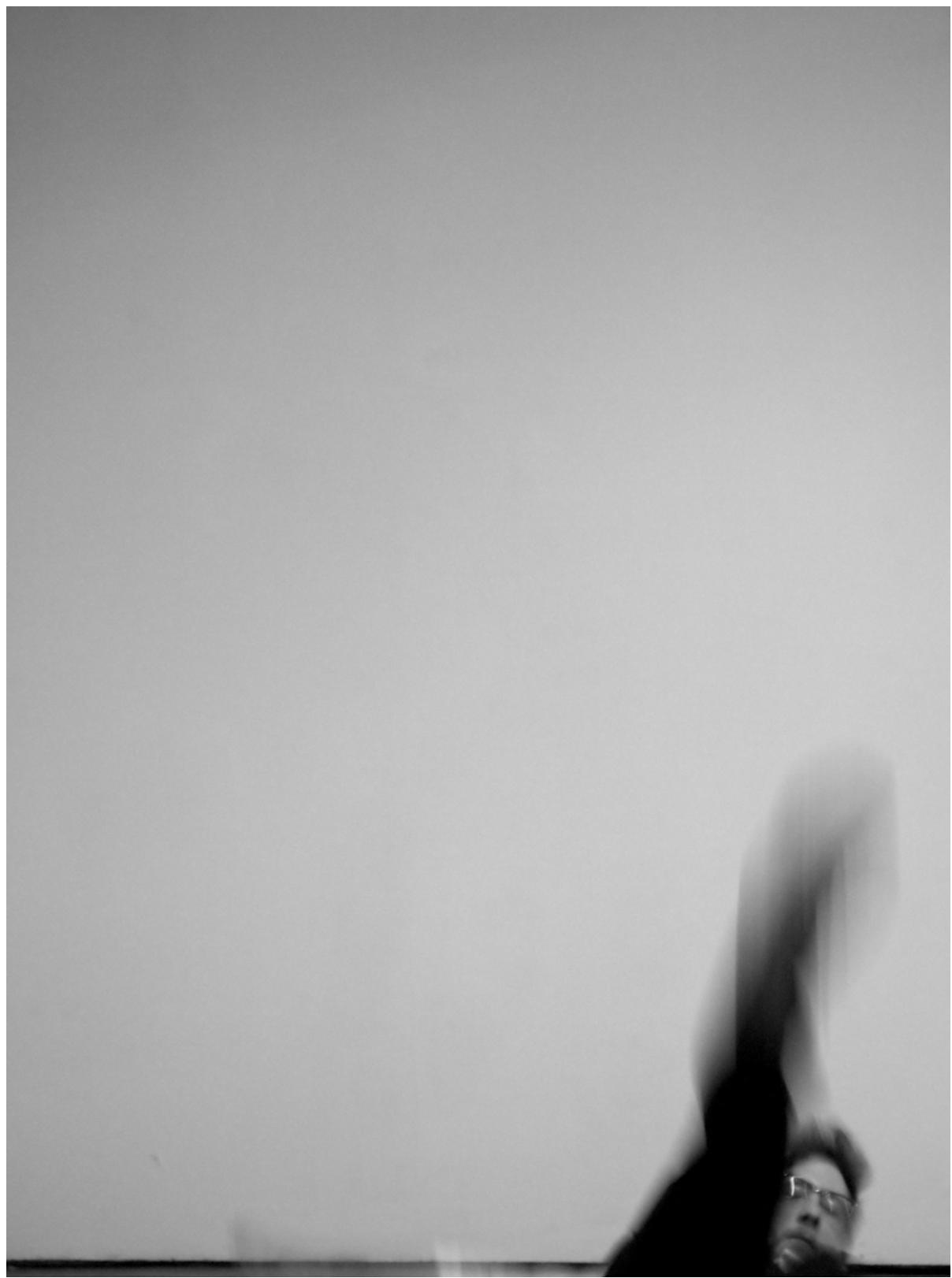
Figure 1: 'The Punctum *a lecture performance on falling and photography…'. Image credit: Beth Savage.*

Since this first encounter with Barthes' *punctum*, it started to surface everywhere in my subsequent reading on theatre and performance. Of course, Barthes' term appears in performance books that deal specifically with photography such as Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked* (1994), Rebecca Schneider's *Performing Remains* (2011), Dominic Johnson's *Theatre & The Visual* (2012), and Joel Anderson's *Theatre & Photography* (2015). However, I have been more interested in work that has transposed Barthes' concept of the *punctum* directly onto the experience of watching live theatre and performance (see Bottoms 1999, 2007; Bleeker 2008; Duggan 2012). In these instances, the *punctum*'s affects in performance often seem to occur when the 'reality' of live bodies draw attention to their material presence in a way that breaks the field of representation. There is sometimes something missing in these transpositions, however. As if the act of applying Barthes' term loses something in the process of naming (as Barthes himself writes, on attempting to locate the *punctum*, 'what I can name cannot really prick me' [Barthes 1993, 51]). A more suitable response to theorising the *punctum*'s unspeakable affects as they relate to theatre and performance might then be to investigate them through an embodied performance practice.

My research project for the last two and a half years has been to explore Barthes' *Camera Lucida* as a set of implicit instructions for making performance. This project has necessitated a series of iterative re-readings of the text, whereby I return to *Camera Lucida* at the start of each stage of devising. As Barthes writes in the quotation from *S/Z* that heads this essay, this process of re-reading has not facilitated a better understanding of his work (*per se*) but it has allowed its signifiers to multiply (as each re-reading further complicates Barthes' dense text). This has culminated so far in two performances made in response to Barthes' book with a third practical project planned for 2017. This process, of devising performance in response to Barthes' book, has intensified the proliferation of *Camera Lucida's* 'meanings'.

In Kate Briggs' article "Practising with Roland Barthes" she reflects on the task of translating Barthes' lecture course *The Preparation of the Novel* and argues for translation as a 'productive practice' that 'is its own way of doing research, of arriving at new knowledge of the work in question: knowledge that springs from the translator's speculative inquiry into the manner of its making' (Briggs 2015, 128–129). My research is, in a similar way to Briggs, an experiment in practising *with* Barthes: where *with* suggests not only a kind of application of theory (and perhaps not even this) but a collaboration alongside him. *Roland Barthes and I* are exploring *Camera Lucida* as it relates to performance practice. Although, my own speculative inquiry is not the attempt to *translate Camera Lucida* into performance, as such, but perhaps, following Matthew Goulish, a version of creative response which 'proliferates', 'multiplies out' from 'miraculous (exceptional, inspiring, unusual, transcendent, or otherwise engaging) moment[s]' that I encounter in Barthes' text (Bottoms and Goulish 2007, 211). Thus, my practice attempts to explore the importance of Barthes' work to theatre and performance studies, whilst also exploring what theatre and performance does to *Camera Lucida*: how it transforms the text, arrives at new knowledge, offers new perspectives (multiplies its signifiers).

Perhaps this focus on *Camera Lucida's* 'miraculous moments' has something in common with Barthes' concept of pathetic criticism—where a reader approaches a work through its affective or powerful moments of pathos. In *The Preparation of the Novel* Barthes writes that pathetic criticism
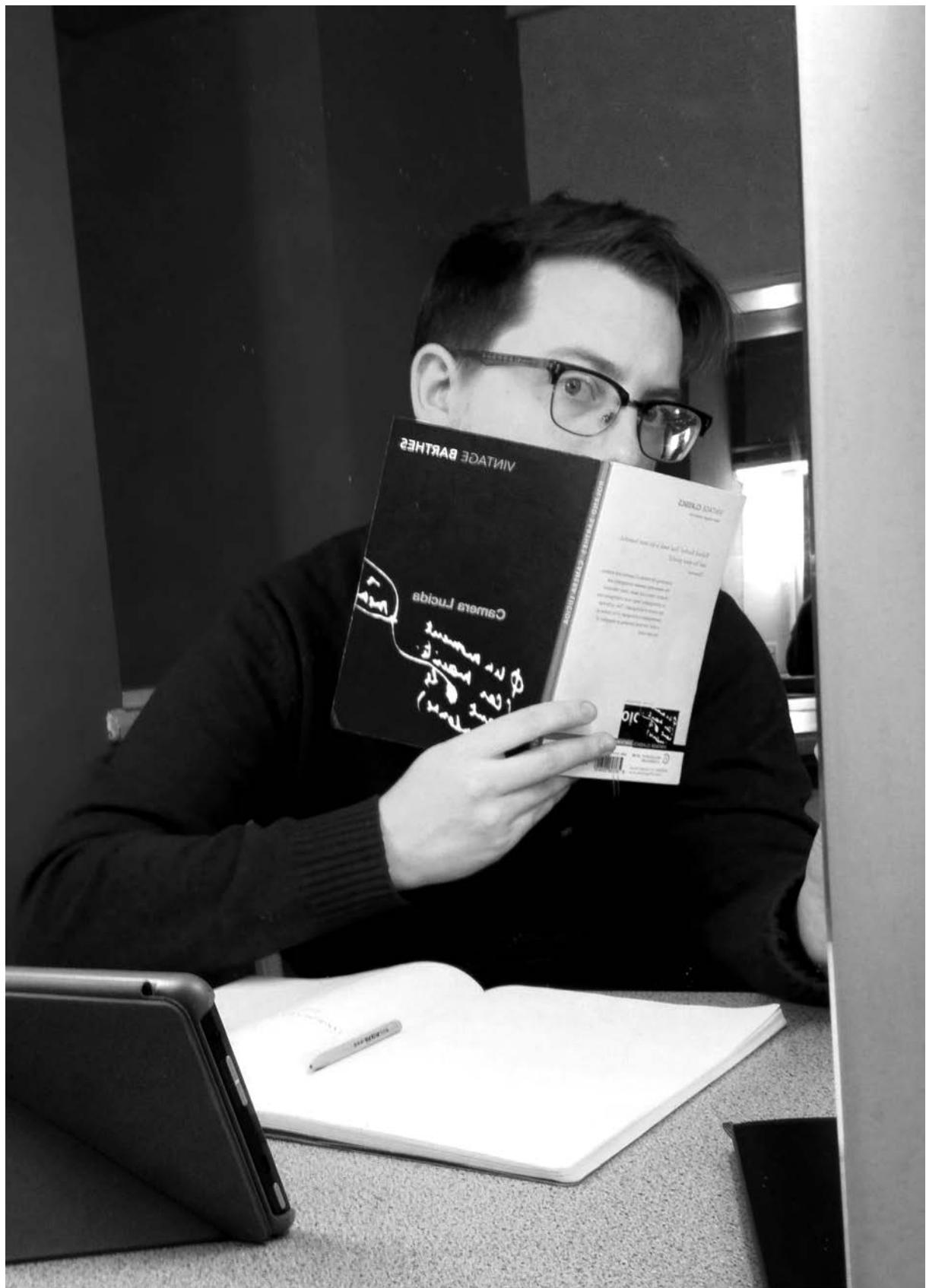
Figure 2: 'posing with Camera Lucida...'

could eschew (the novel's) logical units in favour of the '*power* of its moments' and that this would re-construct works based on their affective meaning. Barthes continues:

> I know there are pathetic elements in *Monte-Cristo* from which I could re-construct the whole work… presuming we'd be willing to devalue the work, to not respect the Whole, to do away with parts of that work, to *ruin* it… in order to make it live. (Barthes 2011, 108)

In my re-reading(s) of *Camera Lucida*, I have attempted to respond to the book's affective moments in order to re-construct it in the form of performance. Barthes' writing encourages this approach: often, he uses language to evoke a particular kind of affective space, where the text can be encountered through a series of pathetic moments. Interestingly, in *The Preparation of the Novel*, Barthes manages to identify pathetic criticism as a mode of reading and then adapt it into a practice of writing. I hope to do something similar in my practice: to develop performances that encourage the audience to approach them based on the affective *power of their moments.*

Specifically, my annual re-encounter with Barthes' rich text, and my performance responses to it, have currently led me to hone in on ideas of theatricality in the book. This writing seeks to re-view debates on theatricality and anti-theatricality in and around *Camera Lucida*. By exploring Barthes' conceptualisation of the pose I will discuss how my own performance practice might re-theatricalise the *punctum* and challenge a supposed antitheatricalism in Barthes' text. Additionally, I will argue for Barthes' book as an example of philosophy as performance and for the ways in which pensiveness in performance practice might be explored as a mode of performance philosophy.

Part One: Textual Poses

According to Michael Fried, Barthes' *Camera Lucida* is an exercise in '*antitheatrical* critical thought' (Fried 2008, 98). Fried's reading of *Camera Lucida* centres on Barthes' descriptions of the accidental nature of the *punctum,* a detail that is 'not, or at least not strictly, intentional' (Barthes 1993, 47). Fried develops this claim to argue that if the photographer's intentions are too easily discernible in a photograph, it becomes artificial and loses its affective force. In other words, if the photograph 'shows itself being seen' it displays an artificiality, a theatricality that must be overcome (Fried 2008).

It is true that Barthes treats theatricality and artifice with suspicion in *Camera Lucida*. The book is a search for an 'authentic' encounter with the 'essence' of his mother through photographs of her. He celebrates his mother's ability to be photographed 'without either showing or hiding herself' avoiding 'the tense theatricalism' of the pose (Barthes 1993, 67, 69). This is a theatricalism that transforms a subject into an image, a process that Barthes himself cannot avoid when being photographed ('I lend myself to the social game, I pose, I know I am posing, I want you to know that I am posing' (Barthes 1993, 11) and later; 'each time I am (or let myself be) photographed, I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity' (Barthes 1993, 13)). Whilst this suggests that Barthes should dislike the frontal pose of portrait photography (due to its inherent theatricality) instead he argues that the power of the photograph is 'of looking me *straight in the eye*' (Barthes

Figure 3: 'the portrait's inherent theatricality…'

1993, 111). Barthes desires a frontal pose that separates the subject's 'attention' from the beholder's 'perception': in other words, the viewer may perceive something in the subject's look that is entirely subjective (Barthes 1993, 111). This, according to Michael Fried, is how the photograph avoids theatricality. Fried argues that the *punctum* functions as a guarantee of antitheatricality: the non-intentional, accidental detail *and* the photographed subject's 'authenticity'; the naïve non-performance of a pose (Fried 2008, 102, 109–111). As a result, Fried writes, Barthes' fascination with photography is borne from its ability to '*overcom[e]* theatre in and through the *punctum*' (Fried 2008, 111).

Since Plato this derogatory coupling of artifice and theatricality has been well rehearsed in the antitheatrical traditions of Western thought and in Fried's earlier discussions of theatre's degenerative effect on art (see Fried 1967). Yet *Camera Lucida*'s supposed 'antitheatricalism' is contradicted by Barthes' earlier writing on theatre: in particular, Barthes' essay on Baudelaire's theatre, from 1954. In this essay, Barthes desires bodies that are 'touched… by the grace of the artificial' (Barthes 1972, 28). Barthes is searching for a powerful theatricality, a 'radiant perception of matter, amassed, condensed as though on stage' (Barthes 1972, 28). Ironically, Barthes does not find this theatricality in Baudelaire's *plays* but, rather, it 'explodes… wherever we do not expect it' in Baudelaire's other writing (Barthes 1972, 28). For Barthes, Baudelaire's theatre is so concerned with hiding its artifice (in order to present fully-formed fictional worlds) that it loses its potency. In fact, in this essay, Barthes has no time for art *without* 'sensuous artifice', arguing that theatricality must be protected, must 'seek refuge' from the '*petit bourgeois* sensibilit[ies]' of the 19th century stage (Barthes 1972, 26, 30–31).

While Barthes' essay on Baudelaire was written over 25 years earlier than *Camera Lucida* (and the powerful affect of theatricality is distinct from his concept of the *punctum*) they both share a concern with the 'disturbing corporeality' of bodies and their dual position as both absent and present (Barthes 1972, 27–28). As Timothy Scheie argues, in his excellent book *Performance Degree Zero*, Barthes' decision to abandon critical writing on the theatre after 1960 is nevertheless replaced by the 'figurative and textual theatre[s]' of his later writings (Scheie 2006, 63). So while the literal live performing body is absent from Barthes' later works, he is fascinated with the body's 'elusive double… neither living nor dead, neither present nor past' (Scheie 2006, 19). This is echoed in Rebecca Schneider's claims that *Camera Lucida* is actually an exploration of the theatricality of photography. Referencing Barthes' conception of photographic presence as deferral, she writes that 'by turning the evidentiary claim that "X is here before the camera" into a winking clone of "X is dead"… lies photography's essential theatricality—it both is, and is not' (Schneider 2011, 143).

The idea of the body's theatrical double is reflected in Barthes' writing style. Although Barthes' ideal *photograph* may be one that 'overcomes' theatre in order to arrest the viewer with an 'authentic' encounter, on re-viewing *Camera Lucida*, it is possible to discern the graceful artifice of theatricality in Barthes' *writing*. The narrator of *Camera Lucida* is aware of being read: he poses for the reader. As Scheie has argued, Barthes' last book shares similarities with his unconventional autobiography *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* where he instructs the reader to consider the text 'as if spoken by a character in a novel' (Barthes 1977, 2). Similarly, Scheie writes that *Camera Lucida* is 'distinctly theatrical' in its deliberate and methodical reasoning (Scheie 2010, 170–71). There is also theatricality in the way that the book continually draws attention to its novelistic form. This is

Figure 4: 'he transforms himself in advance into an image…'

captured in Barthes' first line ('One day, quite some time ago, I happened on a photograph of Napoleon's youngest brother' [Barthes 1993, 3]) but also recurs throughout part two of the book, where Barthes evocatively describes the *mise-en-scène* of his encounter with the Winter Garden Photograph: 'there I was, alone in the apartment where she had died, looking at these pictures of my mother, one by one, under the lamp light, gradually moving back in time with her' (Barthes 1993, 67). Margaret Olin, Geoffrey Batchen and Jean-Michel Rabaté have all highlighted *Camera Lucida's* form as somewhere between the theoretical text and autobiographical novel (see Batchen 2009 and Rabaté 1997). At times Barthes poses as the Proustian narrator, at other times as the semiotician in search of a new language (or a 'kind of philosophical detective' (Batchen 2009, 10)). Beryl Schlossman takes the theatrical metaphor of Barthes' posing further by arguing that the luxury and artifice of his writing stages a 'theatre of subjectivity' (Rabaté 1997, 146). In this sense Barthes is practising the kind of performance of self that he describes in the photographic pose where he 'transform[s himself] in advance into an image' (Barthes 1993, 10).

We could also say that as well as the textual posing of *Camera Lucida* being theatrical, the book is also performative (in the Austinian sense that the words perform actions). Barthes' descriptions of the *punctum* bring about *punctum*-like effects. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Barthes' descriptions of the Winter Garden Photograph. He decides to omit this image of his mother as a child arguing that 'it exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture… for you no wound' (Barthes 1993, 73). Yet, in his ekphrastic descriptions of the image, he invites the reader to invest it with their own *punctum*. For me, I fill the space left by the Winter Garden Photograph with an image of my own mother as a child. In this sense, it could be said that the book is an example of philosophy as performance: it performs thinking and practices its theories through writing. In its efforts to describe the affective force of photography, Barthes' book creates an affective encounter between writer and reader. To return to the quotation from *S/Z* that starts this essay, the 'ludic advantage' of re-reading *Camera Lucida* (its playful pleasure) is that Barthes' writing arrests the reader, it pricks us, bruises us through the perception of a 'sensuous artifice'. In other words, Barthes' writing explores the theatricality of the *punctum* in the theatrical split between Barthes and the narrator of *Camera Lucida*.

As Jean-Michel Rabaté argues: *Camera Lucida* is 'a novel about Barthes' mother's death, [that] is also a theoretical piece documenting the impossibility of writing a novel about the mother's death' (Rabaté 1997, 8). It is this dedication to a praxis of writing that is often present in Barthes' later works, from *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975) and *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975) to *A Lover's Discourse* (1977), but it is perhaps most clearly articulated by Barthes in his lecture course on *The Neutral* at the *Collège de France* in 1978. The structuring of these lectures, around a randomly ordered series of 30 'figures', clearly takes inspiration from John Cage's aleatory practices in composition. As Barthes himself notes: 'the sequence of fragments… would put "something" (the subject, the Neutral?) in a state of continuous flux… relation to contemporary music, where the "contents" of forms matter less than their circulation' (Barthes 2005, 10). In this example, Barthes explores the self-proclaimed role of the 'intellectual as artist' (Barthes 2005, 17) that resembles Laura Cull's arguments for the performance art credentials of Henri Bergson in her definition of performance philosophy (Cull 2012, 24). Barthes continues these experiments in form in *Camera Lucida*, exploring a theatre of subjectivity in his playful performance of thinking.

Figure 5: 'I fill the space left by the Winter Garden Photograph with an image of my own mother as a child...'

Given Barthes' focus on the pose in his discussions of photography (and *Camera Lucida's* textual posing discussed above) I would like to discuss an instance of posing from my most recent performance made in response to Barthes' book—*Kairos*.[1] In the light of Fried's arguments—that photography must escape the inherent theatricality of the pose—what are the implications of staging the pose in theatre: to re-theatricalise it in the affective space of live performance? How might this offer a re-viewing of Barthes' suspicion of theatrical posing?

Taking direct inspiration from Barthes' idea of pathetic criticism; for *Kairos* I developed 12 fragmentary performance 'moments' based around a series of conceptual terms derived in response to *Camera Lucida*. These were titled: absence; air; desire; ecstasy; fragment; grain; haiku; intractable; kairos; mother; pose; unspeakable. The material (lasting roughly 1 hour) was performed four times over the course of four hours (to mirror the 48 sections of Barthes' book) and the audience were welcome to enter the space at any time and leave at any time (encouraging a mode of spectatorship that did not respect the whole). Each of these sequences were performed in a random order dictated by the shuffling of 35mm slides in an old slide projector—which projected the titles of the sections onto a blank notebook. I started the performance dressed in a similar outfit to Robert Wilson in Mapplethorpe's portrait of Wilson and Philip Glass (1976) and with each repetition I shed layers of clothing until the last sequence was performed fully naked. This structure created the possibility of viewing each section more than once: each time in a different context, with my body in increasing states of undress and exhaustion. As such each 'repetition' of the sequence aimed to be a variation due to the changing sequence of the material, the effects of tiredness on my body and the shifting make-up of the audience in the space.

The material I developed in response to these titles ranged from choreographed movement, to text and task-based actions. At times I attempted to create material based on my existing understanding of the terms (so 'grain' became an exploration of the material textures of the voice, or 'air' explored the specific aura of a face); at other times there was a more literal response to the word in the title (so for 'haiku' I read a series of haiku poems, and 'unspeakable' I sat in silence for a moment). I hoped, however, that the surface-level literalness of some of the sections was complicated by the shifting order and context in which they were performed, as well as by the non-narrative, task-based nature of the piece.

During the 'pose' section of the performance I performed a movement sequence of stilled poses drawn from photographs from *Camera Lucida* and other images that have entered into the research process.[2] The individual poses, all situated around a wooden chair, were combined to fluidly transition from one position to the next. While this created the effect of a 'movement' sequence, I attempted to hold each pose for a significant amount of time so that the 'stillness' of it would register. To stage the still pose in performance immediately complicates the notion of stillness. As André Lepecki has discussed in relation to dance: 'the still-act does not entail rigidity or morbidity it requires a performance of suspension' (Lepecki 2006, 15). The still-act explores a tension between movement and stasis and as Rebecca Schneider observes: the often reinforced oppositions between moving and still, living and dead, theatre and photography are worth challenging. Problematising Barthes' conflation of theatre and photography with death, she writes

Figure 6: 'the still-act does not entail rigidity or morbidity it requires a performance of suspension...'
Image credit: Beth Chalmers.

that 'photography and performance share […] the rowdier processional or street theatre legacy of theatrical irruption—instability, repetition, the ambulant freeze, the by-pass… the shared pre- and re-enactment of tableaux vivants, or living stills' (Schneider 2011, 144). What Schneider is addressing here is the tendency to think of photography as a 'violent stilling'—the death of theatre's liveness—and she counters this in the compounding of ambulant and freeze, living and still, theatre and photography. In *Kairos*, placing the still poses 'in time', as temporary *tableaux vivants*—in what Schneider might call an ambulant freeze—invokes the liveness of the photographic pose, and its theatricality, in another medium.

These poses were inherently citational—in that they were re-enactments of the 'original' photographs. The section also referenced other moments of the performance as the pose sequence was looped three times and performed a total of four times throughout the piece. In this sense, the poses explored what Schneider terms the 'theatricality of time' in that they called backward and forward to their citational references (Schneider 2011, 6). Inspired by Barthes' desire for the frontal pose of portrait photography, I 'delivered' each pose to an individual audience member, making eye contact with them as if their eyes were imaginary cameras. In these moments of eye contact, I attempted to keep my facial expression as neutral as possible in order to explore Barthes' split between attention and perception discussed above. However, these moments could be described as encounters with the theatricality of the pose, in the terms discussed by Maaike Bleeker, as my actions in this moment, drew attention to the act of looking and made the 'seer aware of his or her position relative to the work' (Bleeker 2008, 34). There were also times when this reciprocal gaze, between myself and the audience member, provoked a shared smile; breaking the neutrality of my expression and highlighting our co-presence in the shared space and time of the performance. Far from Barthes' split between the look of the subject in a photograph and the beholder's perception, there was instead a shared encounter in the here and now of performance. After the first loop of movements, I turned the chair to the back of the space and delivered the sequence of poses facing away from the audience. If the direct eye contact drew the audience's attention to the act of looking, I hoped that this playful reversal of the poses might encourage a consideration of the viewer's privileged position of distance. The theatricality of the distant body is explored by Barthes in his description of a drag performance at a Parisian nightclub. He argues that there is an intoxicating theatricality in the 'totally desirable and absolutely inaccessible' body that is 'seen from a distance in the full light of the stage' (Barthes 1976, 128). Whether my facial expressions were neutral or not (and whether I was facing the front or the back of the space) there is no denying that in the last cycle of poses, my naked body (showing itself in the full light of the stage) added a provocative theatricality to the sequence. The body, re-enacting poses with utility, was made double by references to vulnerable/desirable/ abstract/tortured/male/female bodies.

Figure 7: 'I turned the chair to the back of the space and delivered the sequence of poses facing away from the audience...' Image credit: Julia Bauer.

Figure 8: 'references to vulnerable/desirable/abstract/tortured/male/female bodies...' Image credit: Julia Bauer.

Pensive Performance: A Conclusion in Suspense

I have tried to explore the ways that theatricality figures in *Camera Lucida* through the concept of the pose and my own embodied encounter with Barthes' text. *Camera Lucida* explores a theatrical kind of textual posing that contradicts Fried's placement of Barthes' text within the tradition of antitheatrical critical thought. Furthermore, if Barthes' book is re-viewed in the context of his earlier writing, then it is possible to make a link between the graceful artifice of theatricality and the dual posture of the photographic referent (as argued by Scheie and Schneider). To stage the pose in performance, as I explored in *Kairos*, highlights its citationality and the tensions between stillness and movement, intimacy and distance, and the provocative theatricality of bodies in the live encounter.

One audience member who saw *Kairos* commented that the slow and methodical task-based progression of the piece created a kind of pensive mood in the performance. Perhaps focusing in on the pensiveness of performance, through Barthes, can contribute to discussions of how performance thinks. It is possible to explore pensiveness in *Camera Lucida* by returning to Barthes' split between attention and perception. Referring to two of André Kertész's photographs, Barthes asks of the first (of Piet Mondrian in his studio [1926]) 'how can one have an *intelligent air* without thinking about anything intelligent?' (Barthes 1993, 111–113). In the second, of a boy holding a puppy (1928), Barthes describes a 'lacerating pensiveness' of the boy's face even though 'he is looking at nothing' (Barthes 1993, 113). In other words, Barthes celebrates a fissure between the posing subject's attention (or intention) and the beholder's interpretation of their expression. Barthes' description of this as a 'pensiveness' in the image of the boy illuminates his earlier claim that the photograph is subversive 'when it is *pensive,* when it thinks' (Barthes 1993, 38).

In *S/Z,* his in-depth analysis of Balzac's short-story *Sarrasine*, Barthes discusses the notion of the pensive text. Quoting the last line of the story: 'and the Marquise remained pensive' (Balzac in Barthes 1990, 216) Barthes argues that by concluding the story with the Marquise deep in thought, the reader is left in a state of suspension: not knowing anything about what she is thinking. The Marquise's pensiveness at the end of *Sarrasine* offers an 'infinite openness' for Barthes, where meaning is kept 'free and signifying' (Barthes 1990, 216). Perhaps pensive *performance* might similarly suspend meaning in the act of thinking. This is what Barthes loves about Kertész's images of Mondrian and the boy: they create a zero degree, a neutral space of interpretation: 'if only photography could give me a neutral, anatomic body, a body which signifies nothing... my body never finds its zero degree' (Barthes 1993, 12).

Whilst the theatrical body rarely (if ever) offers up 'a body which signifies nothing', there are some contemporary performance practices where a kind of ambivalent approach to character could have a similar effect to Barthes' pensive subject (in that they keep meaning 'free and signifying'). Ex-Goat Island performer Karen Christopher has written on the company's performance style noting that 'when I play a character I play a series of gestures and sounds... what we do is task-based and we do not "pretend"' (Bottoms and Goulish 2007, 84). The result of this task-based approach to character is what Stephen Bottoms terms the company's affective/affectless dramaturgies. When discussing a movement sequence from the company's 1996 performance *How Dear Me to Me the Hour When Daylight Dies,* Bottoms argues that the performers exude a kind

of 'anti-presence' which suspends meaning, where 'the use of a deliberately blank, unemotional facial glazing, means that there is no sense of these movements offering outward expressions of inner selves' (Bottoms 1999, 425). Goat Island's performance style explores a pensiveness similar to that described in Barthes' description of Mondrian's portrait—where there is a split between attention and perception. However, this pensiveness is not without its theatricality. Christopher describes a theatrical 'multi-vocality' in her approach to character when she writes that:

> it is a specific thing I do when I complicate myself with more than one voice. Like a series of transparencies sliding over each other, we are trying to enact a kind of simultaneity of being. I am neither a representation of [the character], nor am I solely myself. (Bottoms and Goulish 2007, 84)

Perhaps, then, the *punctum* can be re-theatricalised through an exploration of the pensive in performance. By approaching performance through a play of presence and anti-presence, affect and affectlessness, character and self, it is possible to explore performance's zero degree: an affective theatricality that suspends meaning. Perhaps pensiveness in performance might be described as a mode of performance philosophy: a pensive performance is a performance that thinks, and in the act of thinking suspends meaning. In this sense, it may be close to what Laura Cull terms 'performance as thinking' in an exploration of performance's philosophical modes, where she argues for 'an embodied encounter with the resistant materiality of performance's thinking' (Cull 2012, 12). The *punctum* in performance, then, might be thought of as a kind of theatricalised pensiveness that stages an encounter with performance's thinking. The inherent theatricality of the pose is an apt space in which to explore this pensiveness: in the suspension of movement, of subject and of meaning.

Figure 9: 'with the Marquise deep in thought, the reader is left in a state of suspension: not knowing anything about what she is thinking...' Image credit: Julia Bauer.

Notes

[1] Kairos was originally made for Buzzcut Festival in Glasgow in April 2016 and was subsequently performed at Outskirts Festival at Platform in Easterhouse (April 2016) and at Live Art Bistro in Leeds (June 2016).

[2] The photographs that I developed poses from were—from *Camera Lucida*: James Van der Zee's *Family Portrait* (1926); Alexander Gardner's *Portrait of Lewis Payne* (1865); Robert Mapplethorpe's *Self-Portrait* (1975); Robert Mapplethorpe's *Philip Glass and Robert Wilson* (1976). The other photographs included an image of one of the Abu Ghraib prisoners that Rebecca Schneider discusses in *Performing Remains* (2011) and the image of Alan Kurdi, the refugee child who washed up on a Turkish beach in 2016.

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Biography

Harry Robert Wilson is a performance maker and researcher based in Glasgow. He has an MA and an MPhil in Theatre Studies from the University of Glasgow. Harry has shown performance work at Battersea Arts Centre (London), the Arches, Buzzcut Festival (Glasgow) Summerhall (Edinburgh), DCA and GENERATORProjects (Dundee) and DEFIBRILLATOR Performance Art Gallery (Chicago). Harry has taught on the Theatre Studies course at the University of Glasgow and on the Contemporary Performance Practice course at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He is currently undertaking an AHRC funded, practice-as-research PhD project at the University of Glasgow exploring the relationships between performance and photography.