

Mediations of Authorship in Postdramatic Mediaturgies
RITCS Dansaertstraat 70, 1000 Brussels (Aula 2)
Thursday 17 March 2016

09:00 - 9:20 Welcome Coffee
09:20 – 9:30 Opening Johan Callens

Session 1: Chairs Christophe Collard & Claire Swyzen

09:30 - 10:15 Bernadette Cochrane (U Queensland) "(Re-)Mediating the Reminders of Authorship"
10:15 - 11:00 Matthew Cornish (Ohio U), "Mediating Performance as Text in Postdramatic Theater: Gob Squad."
11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break

Session 2: Chairs Christophe Collard & Claire Swyzen

11:30-12:15 Jacob Gallagher-Ross (State U of NY, Buffalo), "Democratic Sounds: American Mediaturgy's Uncanny Everyday"
12:15 - 13:00 Dries Vandorpe, (PhD OSU), " From Geocentrism toward Heliocentrism – On the Necessary but Difficult Task of Establishing a More Functional Ontology of Performance"

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

Session 3: Chair Klaas Tindemans

14:00 - 14:30 Johan Callens (VUB), "Rosas: Reappropriation as Afterlife."
14:30 - 15:00 Christophe Collard (VUB), "Ecologies of Media, Ecologies of Mind: Authoring Embodiment Through Mediaturgy"
15:00 - 15:30 Claire Swyzen (VUB), "'Database Dramaturgy?': Tim Etchells and De Tijd Recombining 'Text-Data' in Real Time."
15:30 - 16:00 Coffee Break

Keynote

16:00 - 17:00 Shannon Jackson (UC at Berkeley), "Turning Tables: The Relational Construction of Form and Authorship in Cross-Arts Collaboration."
Chair: Johan Callens
17:00 Concluding remarks & drink
19:00 Dinner

Registration Details

For students and speakers participation is free. For non-students the conference fee is €25.00. This includes the conference reader (online for students), coffee breaks, a sandwich lunch and a drinks reception. All speakers and participants are kindly requested to register online before March 7 and to transfer the fee (if applicable) to the VUB's bank account via the conference link at <http://www.vub.ac.be/en/events/2016/Mediations-of-Authorship-in-Postdramatic-Mediaturgies>

More information on the Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings and on the Literature and Media Innovation project sponsored by BELSPO can be found at <http://research.vub.ac.be/clic> and <http://lmi.arts.kuleuven.be/>



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Abstracts and Bios

Bernadette Cochrane

"(Re)mediating the Reminders of Authorship"

The dramatic tradition suggests, for the most part, a progressive relationship between author, performer, producer and audience, in which the author/s originates the playtext, the performers develop a production, and the producer presents the outcome to the public. The arrival of theatrical performance and the fine art exhibition on cinema screens worldwide, the phenomenon of ‘live relay’ or the ‘as live broadcast’ in the arts, challenges this familiar perception of the author/production/audience relationship. The emergence of the ‘livecast’ (Martin) – the term remains unsettled – has modulated the once-traditional dramaturgical interaction between text, production, and audience. The ‘live relay’ tests the very way we think about theatre and performance. With its destabilization of production and audience spatio-temporal locators, the ‘live relay’ problematizes the vocabulary of theatrical description and it inflects both ontological and epistemological attitudes to the theatre-viewing of the past, the theatre-making of the present, and the interactions therein. The live relay, moreover, causes disturbances within what can be considered the authorial field.

If postdramatic theatre shifts the dramaturgical valency of playwright as creative genius to director as auteur, then the mediaturgy of the ‘live relay’ renders both of these models redundant. One of the most noticeable qualities of the ‘live relay’, being both transmedial and intermedial (Kattenbelt), is the expansion of availability achieved for audiences far and wide, with the inescapable implication for the democratization of the work. But this egalitarianism comes with oligarchical and indeed plutocratic hints and overtones. These are overtones that, in turn, inflection notions of both authorship and creative authority. This paper examines the proposition that the livecast, being both inherently postdramatic and situated within the paradigm of new dramaturgy, has given rise to new authorial voices, those of the cinematic director and the institution. These are voices that need to be accommodated within the mediated and intermedial paradigm of the live relay.

Bernadette Cochrane is the Drama Convenor at the University of Queensland. Recent publications include *New Dramaturgy: International Perspectives on Theory and Practice* (Methuen Drama, co-edited with Katalin Trencsényi) and “Screening from the Met, the NT, or the House: what changes with the live relay”. *Theatre to Screen*. Spec. issue of *Adaptation*, July 2014 (with Frances Bonner).

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Matthew Cornish

"Mediating Performance as Text in Postdramatic Theater: Gob Squad."

In confronting questions of mediatization in postdramatic theater, one does not immediately think of *text*. With so many different media at work on the postdramatic stage, it is easy to ignore writing, that ancient technology of mediation. Even when these questions are contextualized with theories of authorship, one still thinks of who (or what) is responsible for the performance itself.



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And yet, when we examine many postdramatic performances closely, we can see, I will argue, that in fact text should be of central importance to considerations of authorship and media. In this paper, I will discuss the English-German theatrical collective Gob Squad. With seven core members and a revolving array of guest artists, and using a style that relies heavily on improvisation and chance encounters with audiences or people on the street, Gob Squad typifies the mediatization and the development away from *Auteur*-led creation in postdramatic theater. Often, several layers of media, including video cameras, microphones, headphones, and projection screens, stand between the performers and their audiences. Even while the members of Gob Squad tell embarrassing personal stories in public, the performers still remain inaccessible, hidden behind layers of media. This paradox—the performance of publicness, revealing everything and nothing—allows Gob Squad to ask: How do we use technology, and how does technology use us? But there is one more layer of mediatization in Gob Squad’s work, in addition to those listed above. If you attend multiple performances of the same production, you will notice that they use a revolving cast, and that though each performance changes, all follow the same structure. You may even begin to realize that each performer has a role—not in the traditional sense of a “character,” but rather a role to play in making sure that their messy madness proceeds as planned. Like the *commedia dell’arte* performers of old, the members of Gob Squad follow basic scripts: diagrams and sketches that help them to remember how to improvise. Focusing in particular on *Western Society* (2013), and drawing on theory by Hans-Thies Lehmann, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, and N. Katherine Hayles, I will examine how Gob Squad’s scripts mediate their performances; how the performances mediate the scripts; how we in the audience understand the authorship of the performances; and how text in general helps Gob Squad to explore essential questions of technology in society.

Matthew Cornish has published essays in *Performance Research*, *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, *TheatreForum*, *Theatre Journal* (upcoming), *TDR*, and *Theater*. As a critic and journalist, he contributes to leading German theater magazine *Theater der Zeit* and has also published essays in *n+1* Online and the *New Haven Review*. Currently, he is completing a manuscript on performances of history and nation in Germany following reunification, and is also editing a collection of contemporary German performance texts. His research has been supported by a Fulbright Research Fellowship and a DAAD Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, both at the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft at the Freie Universität Berlin. As a dramaturg, Matt has worked at Yale Repertory Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, and Son of Semele, and with IAMA Theatre Company. Beginning in August, 2014, Matt is assistant professor of theater history at Ohio University, and he has also taught at Yale College, Yale School of Drama, and Mount Holyoke College. Matt received his Doctor of Fine Arts from Yale School of Drama, where he also completed an MFA in Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism.

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Jacob Gallagher-Ross

"Democratic Sounds: American Mediaturgy’s Uncanny Everyday."

This talk examines the recent efflorescence of the uncanny everyday in the media-inflected dramaturgies of New York experimental theater troupes like Nature Theater of Oklahoma and



the New York City Players. In particular, I'll discuss these artists' creative affinity for the non-signifying noise of human speech: influenced by the new ubiquity of technologies of digital reproduction, and the rise of mass surveillance culture, these companies use recording to transfix the aleatory aspects of everyday conversation, transforming spontaneous utterances into scrupulously re-enacted performance texts and conversational tangents into dramatic structure. With their use of precise archival technologies, the practices of these companies suggest those of documentary art: the prismatic verbatim plays of Anna Deaveare Smith, Rimini Protokoll's theater of experts. But these artists are not primarily concerned with collecting personal testimony *about* historical, social, or political events. Rather, in pieces like Nature Theater's *The Life and Times* or NYC Players' *Ads*, they create documentary theater that documents the processes of thought itself as it struggles into verbal form. Lingering over half-words like "um" and "uh," savoring the idiosyncratic gestures of deliberately amateurish performers, their pieces narrate narration, capture consciousness's attempts to create transmittable containers for experience. These companies thus compel us to rethink conceptions of authorship, artistic agency, and, indeed, textuality itself. They unsettle the differences between sound and sense, meaning and noise, seeking what Ranciere calls the "splendor of the insignificant". (As the queer theorist Jonathan Katz has eloquently pointed out, "what makes a noise a noise is precisely its freedom from any preordained conceptual or ideological system.") Simultaneously seeking meaning outside established structures and folding outlying sounds into enlarged regimes of the sensible, these companies continue the long American project of finding new wellsprings of artistic inspiration in the humble, accidental, and abject aspects of everyday experience.

Jacob Gallagher-Ross is assistant professor of theatre and Interim Director of Graduate Studies at UB. A contributing editor of *Theater*, his writing has appeared in *TDR*, *PAJ*, *TheatreForum*, *Theater*, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, and *Canadian Theatre Review*, and is forthcoming in *Theatre Survey*. He was a guest co-editor of *Theater*'s 2012 special issue on "Digital Dramaturgies" and will be a guest co-editor of a forthcoming companion issue on "Digital Feelings". He is a frequent contributor to the *Village Voice*'s theatre section, and also writes theatre criticism for other publications. He worked for three seasons as a dramaturg at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, where his credits include *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Matchmaker*, *Cymbeline*, and *Henry V*. While at Yale, he twice won the John W. Gassner Memorial Prize for criticism. He was the recipient of a doctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and participated in the inaugural session of the Mellon Summer School for Theater and Performance Research at Harvard University. He was for several semesters a Graduate Teaching Fellow in Yale College. He is at work on a book about American theaters of the everyday, from Thornton Wilder to Nature Theater of Oklahoma.

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Dries Vandorpe

"From Geocentrism toward Heliocentrism – On the Necessary but Difficult Task of Establishing a More Functional Ontology of Performance"

In this presentation Dries Vandorpe will summarize the research he conducted within the context of his doctoral dissertation ("The Archeology of Liveness," Ohio State University 2015) on the prevailing, yet inaccurate, paradigm that defines live performance (such as



theatre) in opposition to technologically-mediated performance (such as cinema and broadcast technologies). His dissertation investigates the history of semantic changes that the concepts of "live" and "liveness" had to undergo when they were pressed into service by scholars and professionals in Theatre Studies, Broadcast Studies and Performance Studies. It queries the oppositional relationship between "live" and "recorded"; it describes how, and under what circumstances live (as a time-based concept) counters prevailing theories about technologically-mediated forms of performance; and it explains why live (as a polar opposite of technologically-mediated performance) in theatre needs to be abandoned.

Dries Vandorpe has a significant background in communication technologies and in media production, both educational and professional, including photography, film/video, internet/multimedia technologies, computer graphics, digital animation, gaming, virtual learning environments, and theatre. He holds a PhD in Theatre (The Ohio State University, 2015), an MSc in Computing (University of Teesside, 2004), an MA in Theatre, Film and Television Studies (University of Wales – Aberystwyth, 2003), and a postgraduate degree in Multimedia Technology and Virtual Reality (Group T – Leuven Institute of Technology, 2000).

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Johan Callens
“Rosas: Reappropriation as Afterlife”

In 1990, Rosas, the Belgian dance company led by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, created *Stella: A Woman's Piece*, a dance theatre piece which initiated a sequence of closely related works, *Achterland* (1990) and *Erts* (1992), as well as drew on the earlier *Ottone, Ottone* (1988), based on Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. Typical of Rosas's work is that it muddles the discreteness of text, genre and media in crossings characteristic of adaptations: the more radical the adaptation, the more mixed or hybridized the form in a bid to undo the power that comes with exclusiveness, whether that of authorial origins or gender categories and identities. The present talk, focusing more on dramaturgical conception than choreographical execution, inflects this notion of exclusiveness, by exploring some of the interpretative ramifications of the recycled source material and by branching out into the debate over Beyoncé's reappropriation of *Achterland* and Rosas's inaugural production, *Rosas danst Rosas* (1983). As such reappropriation is shown to extend a creative artistic practice in which the adaptation of "foreign" artistic sources and media images is always already supplemented by the re-appropriation of one's own work and gender image as a woman artist.

Johan Callens holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, where he is Professor of English, and has published widely on American drama and performance. Essays of his have appeared, amongst others, in *Text and Performance Quarterly*, *Theatre Research International*, *The Journal for Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, *Modern Drama*, *The Drama Review*, *Theatre Journal* and *PAJ: A Journal of Performance & Art*. His book publications include *The Wooster Group and Its Traditions* (2004), *Dis/Figuring Sam Shepard* (2007) and *Crossings: David Mamet's Work in Different Genres and Media* (2009). More recently he coedited *Dramaturgies in the New Millennium: Relationality, Performativity, and Potentiality* (2014).



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Christophe Collard

"Ecologies of Media, Ecologies of Mind: Authoring Embodiment through Mediaturgy"

Despite being often heavily indebted to electronic mediation, the dramatic situation depicted in contemporary so-called ‘mediaturgical’ theatre productions is still, to a certain degree at the very least, performed ‘live’ on stage. If we additionally take into account its relatively stable requirements of an audience and a set duration, we could argue that the theatrical medium represents a heuristic platform to study associative thinking on behalf, precisely, of the stage functioning as *interface* facilitating co-presence across physical, technical, and referential boundaries. Contemporary critical discourses, similarly, tend to consider the ‘live’ body in performance as a cultural and biological biotope – a construction site, as it were, for the assemblage of identity and consisting of multiple foundational layers of what Wolf-Dieter Ernst has termed ‘anthropological ballast’ (2012). From this perspective, in turn, the theatre can play an additional role as pivotal platform of signification due to the *invitation* it extends from performer to spectator to connect via conscious participation in a ‘live’ event. For, if accepted, the cognitive communion that ensues will remind all participants for the event’s entire duration of its disruptive constructedness (see also Rayner, 2002). Furthermore, as recently demonstrated by N. Katherine Hayles, the kind of embodied cognition activated by ‘live’ performers in an *intermedial* setting “provides the basis for dynamic interactions with the tools it helps to bring into being” (2012). This paper will accordingly refer to dramaturge/director John Jesurun’s so-called “pieces in spaces” (1987)– i.e. stage plays where the live, the fictionalized, as well as the processes of *mediation* and *authorship* themselves all become blurred in an orgy of analogies across media, genres, and other types of referential frameworks – to highlight what anthropologist Bradd Shore calls our mind’s *ecological* inclination to fuse a boundless range of ostensibly unrelated impulses (1996).

Christophe Collard lectures in European literature, critical theory, and contemporary performing arts at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Free University of Brussels), where he equally serves as secretary of the Centre for Literature, Intermediality, and Culture (CLIC). He holds a BA and MA in English and German Literature, and a PhD in American Drama for which he studied the media and genre crossings in the work of David Mamet. Articles of his have appeared among others in *Adaptation*, *New Theatre Quarterly*, *Performance Research*, *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, and *Re-Thinking History*. He is also the author of the monograph *Artist on the Make: David Mamet’s Work across Media and Genres* (2012), which was shortlisted for the 2014 Young Scholar Book Award of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE). His current project investigates the work of contemporary American theatre director John Jesurun from the prism of ‘postdramatic mediaturgy’ within the framework of the BELSPO interuniversity ‘Literature and Media Innovation’-project.



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Claire Swyzen

"Database Dramaturgy'?: Tim Etchells and De Tijd Recombining 'Text-Data' in Real Time"

"[A] computer database becomes a new metaphor that we use to conceptualize individual and collective cultural memory, a collection of documents or objects, and other phenomena and experiences" (Manovich). Adopting the 'database' as structuring metaphor, this paper discusses two rather low-tech postdramatic performances that started from writers' notebooks and turned out as 'database dramaturgies' by staging their own hypertextual creation. In their notebooks, both Tim Etchells and Peter Handke each in his own way collected a variety of observations, citations and imaginations —often related to media society or the everyday. Despite these authorial 'origins', the performances are examples of a postdramatic shift of authorship from the dramatist to the director and/or the cast as *Auteur*. Not untypical of postdramatic devised theatre, the dramaturgical creation of Tim Etchells' *A Broadcast/Looping Pieces* (2014; UK) and *Peter Handke en de wolf* ['Peter Handke and the Wolf'] (2005; BE) by theatre company De Tijd ['The Times'] and its director Lucas Vandervost can be seen as practices of so-called 'uncreative writing' (Goldsmith): collecting, storing, selecting and recombining existent 'text-data' by the performer(s) and the director. Not only do these performances bear the traces of such a 'recombinant' dramaturgical composition process, they boldly stage it as a theatrical event in itself. The performer's speech is not determined by a plot, but prescribed by a 'protocol' that enables them to co-create—within the limits of the protocol—each specific night's text from a database of potential 'text-data'. I will accordingly approach Etchells' *A Broadcast/Looping Pieces* from the perspective of an outsider to the creative process; *Peter Handke en de wolf* from that of an insider, *in casu* that of De Tijd's former dramaturge.

Claire Swyzen is working on a PhD at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE) within an international consortium on 'Literature and Media Innovation'. Prior to her PhD research at the VUB she mainly worked as a dramaturge, taught writing and narratology and was employed in practice-based research projects of Flemish drama departments in collaboration with the Universities of Antwerp and Leuven, where she edited volumes on the status of the text in postdramatic theatre (with K. Vanhoutte) and on the use of oral sources in documentary theatre. Besides that, her texts written for the theatre have been performed and published or translated.

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Shannon Jackson

"Turning Tables: The Relational Construction of Form and Authorship
in Cross-Arts Collaboration"

This lecture places questions of media authorship within a related discussion of cross-arts collaboration. It explores a variety of institutional formats—museums, theaters, festivals, installation—and considers how conceptions of form and authorial signature change depending, in part, upon the curatorial conventions of the venue. When is a performer a collaborator, a subordinate, or a form of material? How are certain artistic contributions



foregrounded and backgrounded, celebrated or ridiculed, when similar work moves across institutional venues? The discussion will likely draw from works presented by Performatik 2014, The Builders Association, X-Apartments, and other experiments.

Shannon Jackson is the Cyrus and Michelle Hadidi Chair in the Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley, where she is Professor of Rhetoric and of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies. In the fall of 2015, she was appointed to be the first Associate Vice Chancellor for the Arts and Design. Shannon's research focuses on two broad, overlapping domains 1) collaborations across visual, performing, and media art forms and 2) the role of the arts in social institutions and in social change. Her most recent book is *The Builders Association: Performance and Media in Contemporary Theater* (M.I.T. Press, 2015). Her previous books include *Social Works: Performing Arts, Supporting Publics* (Routledge 2011), *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, and Hull-House Domesticity* (2000) and *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (2004). *Public Servants: Art and the Crisis of the Commons*, co-edited with Johanna Burton and Dominic Willson, is forthcoming from the New Museum/M.I.T. Press. Other projects include the guest-edited *Valuing Labor in the Arts with Art Practical*, a forthcoming special issue of *Representations* on time-based art, and an online platform of keywords in experimental art and performance, created in collaboration with the Pew Center for Art and Heritage. Shannon's writing has also appeared in dozens of museum catalogues, journals, blogs, and edited collections. Shannon was an Erasmus Mundus visiting professor in Paris at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Nord and at the Université Libre de Bruxelles for the 2008-09 academic year. Before moving to Berkeley, she was an assistant professor of English and Literature at Harvard University from 1995 to 1998.



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