Old Quarrels, New Liaisons

On the Vexed Relationship between Theater Studies and Literary Studies

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It is a widely held but oversimplified assumption that the development of theater studies in the second half and – as far as Flanders is concerned – in the last decades of the twentieth century as a more or less "autonomous" discipline usually went along with a separation within or even a departure from literary studies departments. There is some truth to this opinion, insofar as, until the 1970s and even the 1980s, theater had indeed traditionally been treated as one of the three key literary genres, next to literature and poetry. This approach also implied that theater was subjected to the textual bias that largely prevailed in the scholarly domain of philology.[1] Theater was considered at best a dramatic text, a specific sort of literary production for which only a philological analytical apparatus and vocabulary would be needed. Even while there was a certain intuition amongst philologists that drama texts had to be "performed," this primarily meant that they should be presented in a declamatory mode, precisely because they consist of a specific type of literary language, one that is devised to be spoken out loud and in front of a public. Yet this view hardly ever went along with the awareness that also the non-verbal aspects of such declamatory performances had to be taken into account. This lack of attention for corporeal gestures or positioning in space is fairly remarkable, given that these embodied aspects were often explicitly "texted" in stage directions or even part of the main text, as in the work of Samuel Beckett or the French absurdist theater.

Even though drama texts like Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953) or Eugène Ionesco's *La Cantatrice Chauve* (*The Bold Soprano*, 1950) quickly found their way into the literary canon, their specific *theatrical* dimension was never really recognized. The same holds for the study of pre-modern theater traditions, such as classical tragedy and comedy, medieval and Renaissance theater, or the Baroque *Trauerspiel*. While these traditions have always gained the interest from literary scholars and philologists, it was only by the late twentieth century that the research focus gradually shifted from an exclusive attention for their merely literary, rhetorical, or allegorical dimensions to the question of their performative potential. Especially in the case of the aforementioned pre-modern theater traditions, in which non-verbal rituality and ceremonial elements are manifestly

present, one may wonder why it took so long to acknowledge that the sophisticated scenography and spatial dramaturgy of the work can hardly be isolated from its overall meaning.

The history of the emancipation of theater studies from its previous colonization by literary studies may seem to lie far behind us, given the unprecedented number of theater studies departments all over the world.[2] However, it is important to remember that, like all emancipatory stories, the manner in which theater studies sought for autonomy within academia is not a straightforward teleological narrative culminating in a clearly circumscribed scholarly discipline that would have its own fixed set of analytical tools and which would tear itself completely loose from its philological origins or its roots in literary studies. Such a linear narrative nevertheless does seem to dominate the common view on the relationship between literary and theater studies; a view that tends to stress the separation of both disciplines while losing sight of their liaison. It seems therefore timely to rethink the mutual positions and possible cross-connections between literary and theater studies. It is this project, which per definition entails a collective challenge for both the scholarly *and* artistic community, to which this article wants to contribute by discussing several key developments within Flemish academia and the performing arts scene, while also situating these against the background of larger international tendencies. Retracing the methodological provenance of literary and theater studies as well as their eventual divergence might, paradoxically perhaps, help to reconsider what both domains have to offer to each other and to seek for new liaisons.

Shifts in the Academic and Artistic Landscape

One possible way to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of how theater studies emancipated itself from literary studies is to ask whether this process only consisted of the alleged separation from the previously hegemonic but increasingly inadequate philological gaze, or whether the burgeoning of theater studies owed much to several fundamental shifts taking place *within* literary studies itself. This begs the question of how and in what measure both the object of research and methodological approaches in literary studies have changed during the past few decades. And, more specifically, which developments occurred so that now, in retrospect, it becomes clear that the alleged opposition between theater versus text has actually come to overshadow a much more refined perspective on the imbrications between the performing arts and literary studies. To what extent do recent findings in both literary and theater studies

illuminate the theatrical and performative qualities of literature as well as the enacted literary dimensions of theatrical performance?

In the 1970s and 1980s, a range of theoretical schools within the humanities (including structuralism, semiotics, Russian formalism, discourse analysis, and narratology) had started to flourish in literary studies departments, also at Flemish universities. Interestingly, this input of – especially French – theory in philology and literary studies led to a radical dismantling of the text as an enclosed and stable object of research. The seminal writings of authors such as Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Roman Jakobson, Algirdas Julien Greimas, Vladimir Propp, Tzvetan Todorov, Yuri Lotman, or Julia Kristeva resulted in an increased interest in the dynamics of textual and especially intertextual processes. This particular focus ultimately paved the way for an enlarged field of study in which literature lost its privileged status and became a semiotic and discursive object among others. No longer the exclusive mode of textuality, the literary text was now approached as a specific form of communication or discourse; as a particular realization of sign processes and codes. Conversely, both older and new strategies for literary analysis were now applied to topics other than solely literary artifacts, ranging from advertising media to film and, of course, theater.

It is remarkable to see that early introductions to theater studies from the 1970s or the early 1980s – such as the works of Tadeusz Kowzan, André Helbo, Anne Ubersfeld, Patrice Pavis, or Keir Elam[3] – attempted to define their "new" topic of study (that is, theater) by drawing on the very same theoretical frameworks that also steered the innovations taking place in literary studies at that time, most notably semiotics/semiology, narratology, communication models, and – in the case of Keir Elam – speech act theory. These early generations of theater scholars certainly did try to delineate their field by stressing the difference between a written, dramatic text and what they either called "representation" or "performance text."[4] However, despite these efforts to see the staging of a play as a text in itself, they hardly managed to shed off the old dichotomous logic that considers performance as the secondary "live" realization of a preceding textual basis or "score," which continued to furnish the primary source.[5]

A major shift that would radically destabilize the established approaches to the scholarly study of theater occurred, as Erika Fischer-Lichte has pointed out, when "Western art experienced a ubiquitous performative turn in the early 1960s" (18). During that period, artists such as John Cage, Marina Abramović, or Anna Halprin began to experiment with new forms of expression that could no longer

be considered as artworks in the traditional sense of the term, as they rather constituted events in which the act became far more important than the alleged meaning that art ought to convey. Broadly speaking, the performative turn entailed a shift from representation to performance, which obviously posed great challenges for scholarly research as well. The predominant text-oriented approaches pursued by philology were no longer sufficient to understand the innovating tendencies that profoundly reshuffled the arts scene and which necessitated new methodologies and a broader scope of research. From this perspective, it was the performative turn in the arts that fostered the emancipation of a more or less autonomous research model that would allow to examine theater and performance in their own specificity.

The performing arts scene in Flanders too experienced its own performative turn, even though it arrived with a delay of roughly two decades when compared to Germany or the United States. Without suggesting any simplistic causal relation, the sudden upsurge of creative energy in Flemish theater and dance during the early 1980s, which is often referred to as the "Flemish Wave," does seem to have been a crucial impetus for the establishment of complete programs in theater studies at the Universities of Antwerp, Ghent, Brussels, and Leuven.[6] Spearheading efforts to introduce at least a few courses on theater had already been undertaken by Carlos Tindemans (Antwerp), Jaak Van Schoor (Ghent), Dina Hellemans (Brussels), and Ludo Verbeeck (Leuven), who – it must be noted – were in fact literary scholars or even philologists. But it was the rejuvenation of the Flemish performing arts that appeared to create the right climate for the institutional anchoring of theater studies in Flanders (Van Kerkhoven, "Het dubbele misprijzen"; De Vuyst).

I will discuss later how the theoretical and critical elaboration of the concepts of performativity and performance raised the discussion between literary and theater studies to a higher level and paved the way for more constructive collaborations. But before doing so, it is important to emphasize that the evolution towards such a renewed liaison between literary and theater studies also found a strong catalyst in the genuine renaissance of the Flemish performing arts scene, which had already fostered the very emancipation of theater studies in Flanders. To understand this complex dynamic of con- and divergences, it is first necessary to clarify the ambivalent stance of the artists commonly associated with the "Flemish Wave" toward the function of language and text in theater.

The Renaissance of the Flemish Performing Arts

While it is often thought that the "Flemish Wave" inaugurated a radical move away from what for good or bad reasons had been coined "text theater," most of its prominent representatives were (and still are) very keen to experiment with language and text. Breaking with traditional dramatic formats may certainly have led to a rejection of dialogical interaction as the primordial basis of the theatrical event,[7] but it did not correspond to a complete dismissal of language and textuality as such. On the contrary, the early work of theater artists such as Jan Decorte, Guy Cassiers, Jan Lauwers, Ivo van Hove, or Lucas Vandervost – to name only a few of the pioneers of the "Flemish Wave" – readily testifies to a continued interest in using text. Yet they did deeply expand the scope of traditional drama by meticulously reworking not only theater plays, but also novels, poetry, or other genres. By developing new styles of writing, these artists created pieces that often lacked a coherent plot and rather emphasized the sonic materiality of language or explored the complexities of human communication.

Various Flemish theater scholars and critics have contributed to chronicling the history of these early days, while at the same time contesting the label of the "Flemish Wave" for its tendency to generalize what was in fact a highly heterogeneous rejuvenation of the performing arts (Laermans and Gielen; Van den Dries, "Het Vlaams theater"). Just as the very notion of the "Flemish Wave" tends to level out internal differences within this development, there is a persistent inclination to commemorate it only as a radical turn away from text and language in favor of an outspoken focus on bodies and images, as if text had dissolved into corporeality and visuality altogether. Selective memories are responsible for downsizing the breadth of these innovations to a clear-cut opposition between a so-called "logocentric," text-oriented dramatic theater versus a bodily, performance-oriented theater in which text is supposedly reduced to a merely peripheral element. These new theatrical practices, however, did not only liberate the materiality of bodies, things, and spaces from the hegemony of a logocentric dramaturgy; they simultaneously achieved a greater autonomy for language and text. Exemplary in this regard is Jan Decorte's 1981 staging of Heiner Müller's *Hamletmaschine* (*Hamletmachine*, 1977), which far from simply doing away with everything associated with drama and repertoire, rather aimed at the systematic deconstruction of the dramatic canon.[8] Decorte also continued Müllers dismantling of canonical texts by reworking Goethe's *Torquato Tasso* (1983) or Friedrich Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena* (1981). Subjecting these plays to an exhaustive and exhausting dramaturgical dissection, Decorte disrupted the text's classical purpose of serving as a vehicle for communication,

using it instead as an instrument to question hierarchical systems of power, including the function of the author (Van Kerkhoven, "De beide emmers").

Next to Heiner Müller, various other German authors were embraced by the young generations of Flemish theater artists that emerged during the 1980s and 1990s. The apparent interest in the writings of Botho Strauß, Peter Handke, or Thomas Bernhard even impelled dramaturge Marianne Van Kerkhoven to identify what she, not without a sense of irony, called a "German Wave" in Flemish theater ("Die deutsche Welle"). With that in mind, it is perhaps not entirely coincidental that the writings of these authors also received considerable attention from researchers working in literary studies. To be sure, their interest in these dramatic texts may not have been exclusively fueled by the ways in which they were staged in Flanders, as it also followed from the theoretical deepening of their discipline that – as I explained earlier – went beyond the borders of traditional literary analysis. But the fact that several Flemish theater directors started to favor the plays of these German authors certainly intensified the appeal of their writings for literary scholars. The manner in which the undoing of classical drama in literary texts like those by Handke or Müller inspired new theater practices and how, in turn, these theatrical experiments aroused the interest of literary scholars to explore new textual genres constituted a sort of doubled-sided interaction that prefigured the present state of affairs in which – as I will discuss in more detail below – the boundaries between writing, interpretation, and performance have more than ever become permeable.

The (De)Valuation of Text

What Erika Fischer-Lichte described as the "performative turn" in the arts is closely linked to Hans-Thies Lehmann's famous heralding of the "paradigm of postdramatic theater" (24). Both notions were introduced to grasp the radical innovations that reshuffled the Western performing arts scene from the late 1960s onwards, for which the emergence of performance art and the concomitant attention to the artist's body as a means of expression were a crucial impetus. With his category of postdramatic theater, Lehmann intended to show how an increasing number of theater artists had been renouncing the structural principles of classical drama (such as the adherence to coherent narratives, the primacy of text, or recognizable characters), exploring instead various other parameters constitutive of theater, including space, sound, body, and – indeed – also text.

While Lehmann was definitely not the first to identify this move away from drama, his book is undoubtedly the most elaborate study of the tendencies that lie behind the general label of postdramatic theater.[9] Lehmann's work had an enormous resonance amongst theater scholars (especially after it was translated in English in 2006), but within that process, his central thesis became subject to a certain reductive misreading. Postdramatic theater came to stand for a complete devaluation of the (dramatic) text or even of language as such, in favor of theatrical practices that thrived on the sensuous (often visual and sonic) qualities of the work or the raw materiality of the body.[10] If this were the case, Lehmann's study would have had a pivotal function in the split between theater and literary studies, whereas actually the opposite is true.[11] As he writes quite unmistakably in the "Prologue" to his book:

> the new theater *text* … is to a large extent a "no longer dramatic" theater text. By alluding to the literary genre of the drama, the title "Postdramatic Theater" signals the continuing association and exchange between theater and text. Nevertheless, the discourse of *theater* is at the center of this book and the text therefore is considered only as one element, one layer, or as a "material" of the scenic creation, not as its master. (Lehmann 17)

In this sense, Lehmann should be regarded more correctly as a matchmaker between theater and text, and, by extension, between theater and literary studies. It is nonetheless true that in his book Lehmann does commit a certain kind of patricide of one of his academic fathers, Peter Szondi. As Lehmann explains, while Szondi discerned in his influential *Theorie des modernen Dramas 1880-1950* (*Theory of Modern Drama 1880-1950*, 1956) "a crisis of drama" in modern theater, his only response was to foreground Brechtian epic theater as "a kind of universal key for understanding the recent developments" (Lehmann 29).[12] For Lehmann, this perspective was far too limited in order to arrive at a genuine understanding of the aesthetics of other theater practices that question in a much more fundamental way the narrative logic and dialogical mode that still prevailed in Brechtian theater, albeit in "alienated" forms. It is Lehmann's sweeping critique of Szondi's privileging of epic theater as the primary and virtually only answer to the crisis of classical drama that, amongst other reasons, may have nourished the misunderstanding that Lehmann equated postdramatic theater with an outright devaluation of the text. A closer look, however, shows that Lehmann's analysis of theater and performance practices since the 1970s is focused on the dismantling of the narrative core of the dramatic model as well as

on the relocation of the function of speech and text in the larger context of the performance, but definitely not on the *elimination* of text as such in favor of theater's sensuous dimensions.[13]

Lehmann's role in the rapprochement between literary and theater studies becomes particularly evident when he states that one of postdrama's key characteristics is that it turns theater into "the site of a narrative act," constituting what he calls "postepic narration" (109). The key feature of postepic narration is that "one often feels as though one is witnessing not a scenic representation but a narration of the play presented" (ibid.). Lehmann emphasizes that this act "is categorically different from epic theater and the epicization of fictional events," even if he does avow that "it shows some similarity to those forms" (ibid.).[14] To distinguish this postepic approach from a Brechtian epic theatricality, Lehmann points out that "the post-epic [sic] forms of narration are about the foregrounding of the personal, not the demonstrating presence of the narrator, about the self-referential intensity of this contact: about the closeness within distance, not the distancing of that which is close" (110).[15]

One of the primary examples that Lehmann discusses to flesh out this notion of postepic narration is Jan Lauwers' production *Invictos* (1991).[16] Instead of staging an existing theater play, Lauwers' piece is based on Ernest Hemingway's short story *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (which itself tells the story of another writer) as well as on A.E. Hotchner's 1966 biography of Hemingway. Fragments of these texts were put together in a sort of textual montage, which lacked the narrative continuity and plot-structure of classical drama. According to Lehmann, *Invictos* is representative of what he calls "postepic narration" because "the action (already fragmented and riddled with other materials anyway) appears only in the form of an account being given: narrated, reported, casually communicated" (108). The postepic nature of this production derives not only from the fact that it presents a *theatricalization* of telling (rather than showing or enacting the events), but also – and more importantly – because it engages the audience in a real-time diegetic process. This is realized through the alteration of speaking and reading, the relaxed mode of acting, as well as through the figure of "the Director" who introduces scenes and navigates as a moderator through the piece. Rather than adhering to a Brechtian distance, Lauwers' *Invictos* thus installs what Lehmann describes in the quote above as "closeness within distance."

Two important qualities of postdramatic theater – not the least in its "Flemish" forms – have come to the fore that are relevant to start rethinking the relationship

between literary studies and theater studies. The first is the manifest presence (and even prominence) of language, even though text is no longer – or not in the first place – used in its dialogical form and as the primary carrier of dramatic action. Language is very often foregrounded in the form of *narration*, like in the example of Jan Lauwers.[17] But language can also become prominently present as a performative account of the multiple discourses circulating in contemporary society. The German theater director René Pollesch, for instance, often construes his texts by assembling and sampling heterogeneous discourses, combining popular writings with intellectual theories on media, politics, sociology, or economy, such as those by Jean Baudrillard or Giorgio Agamben. These accumulated writings are then "quoted" by actors who explicitly do not "appropriate" the text in a personal way, but act more like non-individual performers of discursive events (see Laermans).

The choice for telling as a postdramatic mode of theatrical performance may be further related to a second striking tendency in Flemish theater. This tendency, which I also briefly referred to earlier, is the apparent predilection among theater artists to work with literary genres other than only theater (or drama) texts as such. The Flemish theater director Guy Cassiers, for example, is well-known for his longstanding interest in reworking complex novels into theater productions, including Marcel Proust's entire cycle *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*, 2002-2004), Jeroen Brouwers' *Bezonken rood* (*Sunken Red*, 2004), Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (2009), or Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (The *Man without Qualities*, 2010-2012).[18] Cassiers' theatrical stagings of these often dense and intricate literary works can hardly be called dramatic adaptations in the traditional sense of the term, even though most of his pieces do feature clearly identifiable characters and a relatively straightforward storyline. Yet his renowned implementation of video projections and digital technology can be understood as a creative reading and transgeneric translation of narrative structures into theatrical events.

Other theater companies, such as tg STAN, ward off the use of visual or other media technologies, and rather focus on the medium of language itself. They too broaden the scope of possible texts to stage in the theater, reworking not only literary writings like Thomas Mann's weighty tome *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*, 2010), but also the transcripts of a trial, or political and philosophical texts.[19] Tg STAN's approach to acting deviates from traditional role-playing or impersonation and rather corresponds to the particular mode of narration or even reporting that Lehmann calls "postepic."

Figure 4.1. Damiaan De Schrijver, Sara De Roo, and Peter Van den Eede in *We hebben een/het boek (niet) gelezen* (2010). Coproduction tg STAN, De KOE, Dood Paard, and Maatschappij Discordia. © Sanne Peper

As also Luk Van den Dries and Thomas Crombez observe, the members of tg STAN "'present' rather than perform the text, both to each other and to the audience" (425). If there were anything dramatized in tg STAN's work, it would be the dramaturgical process of analyzing and interpreting complex and multi-layered literary texts itself. Quite often, their hermeneutical raids on the text become part of the piece, with some discussions even starting to resemble those commonly held in literature classes. Variations on this procedure can be found in productions by companies like De Parade or Braakland/ZheBilding, in which the actors' readings of novels such as W.G. Sebald's *Die Ausgewanderten* (*The Emigrants*, 2005) or Albert Camus' *L'Étranger* (*The Stranger*, 2004) – not by coincidence literary texts with intricate narratorial structures – were theatricalized, mixing narrative and dramatic moments in ways that blurred the transition between diegesis and mimesis.[20]

The Broadening of Narratology and the Literary

It is obvious that the diverse forms of "presenting" the text and foregrounding the act of speaking and reading itself provide an appealing research topic for literary scholars versed in narratology and discourse analysis. But it also goes the other way around, insofar as the methodological approaches and conceptual tools of literary studies can be of great help for theater scholars dealing with such "diegetic" dramaturgies, which foreground the act of narration rather than (mimetic) acting as such. Especially narratology, which since the 1980s has been one of the main subdomains in literary studies, has undergone several developments during the past few decades that seemed to open the door to new approaches to (postdramatic) theater. It was most notably with the shift from a purely literary to a transgeneric and transmedial narratology that narratologists increasingly began to recognize that theater is not "the other of narrative, that genre in which action was supposedly directly enacted on stage (rather than represented in the words of a narrator) and which lacked the figure of a narrator persona" (Fludernik 355).[21] Instead, narrative and theater were realigned in such a manner that made it more than ever necessary to leave behind the narratological concepts and models that were also used in early theater studies and which still adhered to the old dichotomy between the dramatic text and its performance "text" as well as to the distinction between the mimetic and the diegetic mode for either drama or fiction respectively.

Literary scholars have indeed been increasingly exploring the theatrical potential of diegetic forms of narration in the context of theater. Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer, for example, argue that the staging of narration "serves to change not

only the forms, but also the functions of narrative and narrativity in drama, foregrounding the act of storytelling by making it theatrical and thus privileging diegetic narrativity" (348). In their 2014 text "Narratorial Strategies in Drama and Theatre," literary scholars Gunther Martens and Helena Elshout further dissect this so-called "diegetic narrativity." They more specifically present four case studies in which they identify "the multiplication of rival narrating instances on the scene (e.g. video screens)," which in their view "allow for a broader variety of narratological strategies than has been accounted for in discussions of narrativity in drama" (92). According to Martens and Elshout, one of the key distinctions in narratology that postdramatic theater puts under pressure is the distinction between the intradiegetic level of the "told" and the extradiegetic level of the "telling." Narratologist Gérard Genette had already done something similar for literature in his work on metalepsis, which is the rhetorical term for the deliberate transgression of the threshold between different layers of narration. By inserting the narrator into the story or by having characters refer to an external reality outside the narrative, the enclosed nature of the fictional world is disrupted, much like in the postdramatic performances I referred to above, or as in those discussed by Martens and Elshout.

The point is that such narratological discussions of postdramatic theater demonstrate to what extent the conceptual vocabulary of contemporary narratology can be useful for analyzing performances with a strong diegetic tendency. Conversely, postdrama contributes to more recent developments in narratology that expose the limitations of traditional narratology's theoretical apparatus for examining narrativity in drama. Postdramatic theater more specifically concurs with contemporary narratology because of its capacity to blur the neat distinction between inner and outer levels of narration. For example, one of the cases that Martens and Elshout discuss is Guy Cassiers' staging of Robert Musil's novel *The Man Without Qualities*, which I also mentioned earlier. They observe how, in the piece, "video is not used to widen the epic scope (e.g. through flashbacks)" or to objectify and alienate the individual case by relating it to a larger, historic (epic) perspective (91). Instead, the audience is confronted with a double image of the comical character of General Stumm, whose presence on the stage is redoubled on a video screen showing an extreme close-up of his head. As Martens and Elshout write, "the extreme close-ups serve the (rather traditional) function of suggesting subjective point of view (thought processes). At the same time, the technological redoubling points to a satirical framing agency: the fish-eye lens applied to the comical character of General Stumm signals a distorted worldview. Thus, the transmediality of the performance … aligns itself with the

satirical point of view developed by the novel's narrator." (ibid.) In this sense, Cassiers' particular use of video makes the moment of extreme interiority and the satirical framing of that same inner perspective coincide.

Thus, by extending its scope from narrative texts (prose fiction) to "performance texts," contemporary narratology is challenged to refine its own tools and to leave behind obsolete notions of drama and of narrativity in drama in favor of an advanced understanding and analysis of postepic (post-)drama. This, in turn, can help theater studies to gain more insight in the complex layering and distribution of narratorial voices in postdramatic performances that, in their renouncement of traditional dialogical formats, also disrupt the classical unity between actor and character. As certain strands within postdrama explore new ways for the actor to embody a multiplicity of voices, these dispersed modes of narration might be most fruitfully illuminated through a cross-disciplinary angle that draws on both literary and theater studies (see also Lehmann 148).

This kind of interaction between narratology and theater studies is of course not unprecedented. As indicated in my discussion of theater semiotics, already in the 1970s and 1980s there were various narratological concepts that informed the analysis of dramatic action, such as Propp's and Greimas' actantial models and roles.[22] From the 1990s, however, narratology began to develop into an increasingly specialized domain with a highly elaborate system of conceptual categories, which at first went along with a more exclusive focus on literary narrative texts. It was only after the turn of the millennium that literary scholars gained a renewed interest in applying their theories and methodological tools – narratology in the first place, but also discourse analysis – to other genres, like theater and poetry, as well as to non-literary texts. Put otherwise, the awareness grew that not only narrativity, but also "literariness" as such are principles that recur in non-literary phenomena and in different sorts of discourse, ranging from political or cultural theory to documentary material and media discourse.[23] Ultimately, to call texts "literary" is primarily a matter of the contexts in which they appear or in which they are deliberately put. This constitutive role of context for literature is nicely illustrated by the work of the American writer and performance artist Kenneth Goldsmith. While his books frame their content as literary by the very fact of being presented as a literary book, he actually "wrote" them by re-using and sampling a broad range of existing writings or oral communication, including political reporting, daily talks, radio traffic information, and texts from the Internet.

Figure 4.2. Dr. Kenneth Goldsmith. Photograph © Janet Jarman

Kenneth Goldsmith's work provides an interesting case that might be exemplary of a relatively recent tendency in literary studies, one that may invite yet another renewed rapprochement with theater studies. When Goldsmith reflects on his peculiar "un-creative" citational practice as an "author," his comments bespeak a strong interest in the cognitive and emotional processes involved in the acts of reading, writing, and also listening. For instance, explaining why he once transcribed an entire day of radio traffic information, Goldsmith said it reminded him of "sounds from his childhood" and that listening to the traffic reports on that same radio station "can still make him cry, even today" (Chadwick and Meyntjens n.p.). For this reason, Goldsmith claims that "all his writings are autobiographical" (ibid.), even though he obviously practices a form of literary appropriation. On further consideration, however, one can surmise that Goldsmith's "authorship" is not based on the urge to produce a finished work that bears his signature, but rather on the feelings and memories that arouse when he creates his books. This brings Goldsmith's approach close to the recent interest of literary scholars in what is called cognitive narratology. Cognitive narratology expands the focus of literary studies from a purely textual analysis towards the mental activities and affective states of being that writing and reading provoke, while it also intends to use the knowledge of how narrative works to gain deeper insight into our relation with the world as well as how we understand ourselves and others.[24] In this respect, cognitive narratology entails a much larger scope of interest, since it not only aims to probe how narratives construct meaningful worlds, but also makes the opposite move by using narratives to get access to both the mental and bodily experience of the world.[25]

Similarly, in theater studies, there has been an emerging interest in the cognitive and affective dimensions of performance, which makes it fairly remarkable that, until now, there has been hardly any sustained dialogue between these strands of research and cognitive narratology (see, e.g., McConachie and Hart; Shaugnessy). This is a missed opportunity, given that both domains do share the same interest in devoting a more profound attention to the reception of either the theatrical or the literary work. This is also the common ground that theater scholar Karel Vanhaesebrouck identifies in theater studies and cognitive narratology. In theater studies, he argues:

> The emphasis has radically shifted from the production side, where a play is required to be a coherent arrangement of narrative elements, to the reception side of the communication schema, in which the viewing

> of the actual performance – and not the reading of a text – acts as the drive for interpretation. (Van Haesebrouck n.p.)

Cognitive narratology, then, could help to deepen this concern with the role of the receiver in co-constituting the work, insofar as "cognitive narratologists stress the importance of the context in which the spectator operates as a watching entity, as the cornerstone of the analysis of artistic products" (ibid.). This perspective may be of particular interest for research on participative forms of theater and performance, in which cognitive and emotional processes are triggered (and perhaps also manipulated) through artistic strategies as well as narrative processes that actively involve the audience. But it could also be a relevant approach for dramaturgy, since it can help to uncover the performative potential of textual material by shedding light on how a given performance takes shape through a reciprocal process of artistic production *and* spectatorial reception.

From the standpoint of cognitive narratology, both the production and the reception of a literary work are indeed performative processes to the extent that they act upon each other and trigger actual effects that exceed the confines of the printed page. In this respect, the writings of Goldsmith are a case in point, since they clearly demonstrate that "literary" production can be far more and something completely different than the product we conventionally call "literature." His ready-made texts unveil instead the close intertwining of performative production and reception, especially given that he considers his books as manuals with the incentive to repeat the process of citation and recontextualization that he himself engages in. Put otherwise, Goldsmith invites his readers to participate in the performative gesture of writing-through-reading, rather than merely consuming the embalmed result.

Even if new tendencies such as cognitive narratology or recalcitrant approaches to literary writing such as Goldsmith's may urge us to rethink the very definition and scope of literature, they ultimately do seem to lead back to the concept of performativity, which begs the question as to how literary studies can accommodate the notion of performance. Already in 1995, Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick stated in their introduction to *Performativity and Performance* that the widespread interest in performativity has brought about a "theoretical convergence" between various domains in the humanities, including literary studies, linguistics, philosophy, and of course performance studies (2). In their opinion, one of the most pressing issues that follows from this convergence

is precisely "the oblique intersection of performativity and the loose cluster of theatrical practices, relations and traditions known as performance" (ibid.). Therefore, I will revisit in the next section somewhat older yet still ongoing debates on the nexus performance/performativity in order to assess to what extent the conceptual ties between both notions may furnish a common ground for theater and literary studies.

Between Performativity and Performance

In light of the performative turn in the arts I referred to earlier in this article, the linguistic concept of performativity and the artistic practice of performance seem to make a perfect couple that would facilitate various cross-connections between literary studies and theater or performance studies.[26] The various theorizations of performativity, however, are marked by what Jonas Barish has termed a "anti-theatrical prejudice," as they often explicitly exclude theater, performance, art, and fiction from the genuine effects of performativity. Already in J.L. Austin's seminal conceptualization of performativity as the potentiality of language to intervene in the world and to constitute reality, the real-felt effects of these so-called speech acts emphatically do not apply to the words that are spoken on a stage or written in literary texts.[27] Likewise, while Judith Butler's famous refunctionalization of performativity as a formative factor in the ongoing construction of gender does take into account the constitutive role of embodied and theatricalized performance, she is careful to distinguish performativity from performance, noting that "the reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake" insofar as the latter often "works to conceal, if not to disavow" the operations of performativity, which she describes as "opaque, unconscious, unperformable" (Butler 234).

Despite these apparent denouncements of the close ties between artistic performance and performativity, there is no doubt that especially the poststructuralist elaboration of performativity as well as the renewed perspectives on language fostered by it have exerted a tremendous influence on the humanities in general and on performance and theater studies in particular.[28] While the concept of performativity has its primary origins in philosophy of language, pragmatic linguistics, and discourse analysis, it was poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and Judith Butler who expanded its radius by uncovering how both speech and written language are governed by linguistic mechanisms that elude the control of allegedly sovereign subjects of speaking, writing, and reading (see Culler). Derrida's and Paul de Man's sweeping critiques of Austin's purist and exclusionary concept of performative speech acts were

indeed part of a vast deconstructive program that has turned the acts of writing and reading into never-ending hermeneutical dramas. By stressing the eventfulness of both textual production and the reception of meaning, they pointed to the unstable nature of signification as well as to the slippery business of understanding. Quite a few of our contemporary postdramatic theater artists seem to have digested this poststructuralist legacy, given that they no longer treat texts as self-contained plots that could be reproduced (and interpreted) by sovereign subjects. Instead, they turn various kinds of textual material into battlefields of words *and* bodies. Knowing very well that, both in real life and on the stage, it is hard to distinguish between – to use Austin's terminology – felicitous and infelicitous speech acts, these artists open up a productive rift between language that does not always enact what it means and bodies that resist what is imposed on them through speech.

Besides Derrida's and de Man's poststructuralist rethinking of language, it was above all Judith Butler's theorization of performativity that harbored a great appeal for theater and performance studies. By focusing on performative bodily acts and ongoing processes of embodiment in specific socio-historical, cultural, and institutional situations, Butler showed in her 1993 book *Bodies that Matter* that language does not only intervene in the world, but also serves to sustain and reinforce a naturalized reality, including gender divisions or, more broadly, subjective identities. In Butler's view, the compulsory repetition of certain denotative utterances (most notably those linked to gender, race, class, etc.) cannot be isolated from bodily behaviors or performative contexts, which are often also remarkably theatrical.[29] Despite her wariness to grant an emancipatory potential to performance as a willful act, Butler does avow that cultural performances – and the popular practice of drag serves as her case in point – do have the ability to critically reflect, subvert, and even transform the ingrained conventions that steer both the bodily and linguistic formation of gender and subjectivity. Butler's attention to the intertwining of language and bodies thus helped to discern the various connections between the primarily theoretical orientation of poststructuralism and the ardent interest in the body of theater and performance studies.

It is clear that the notion of performativity received concerted attention from various branches in the humanities during the second half of the twentieth century. And even though the interdisciplinary scope of theater and performance studies has ensured that the writings of Austin, Derrida, or Butler found their way into these fields, the very linkage between performativity as a theoretical

concept and the actual practice of performance (whether artistic or otherwise) still seems to be in need of further exploration. The "oblique intersection" between performativity and performance, which Parker and Segwick considered as one of the most pressing questions in the mid-1990s, continues to be a crucial matter even today, not in the least because it might furnish the key to a more productive cross-disciplinary dialogue between literary studies and theater studies. For this reason, it is useful to dig a bit deeper in the ongoing debate on how performativity relates to performance.

The stakes of this discussion are perhaps most clearly articulated by theater scholar W.B. Worthen. In his 1998 article "Drama, Performativity, and Performance," Worthen argues that the most crucial question to ask is "how can dramatic performance be conceived not as the performance *of* a text but as an act of iteration, an utterance, a surrogate standing in that positions, uses, signifies the text within the citational practices of performance?" (1102). In Worthen's view, the performativity of theater comes to the fore when "dramatic performance … becomes an act in which an understanding of the text emerges not as the cause but as a consequence of performance" (1101). It is not a coincidence that Worthen's primary cases are productions of old or modern classics by playwrights such as Shakespeare, Ibsen, or Albee. Their dramatic writings carry the weight of historic authority, which challenges theater artists to find their own position toward these texts and to recalibrate their meaning through the particular way of staging them. However, when Worthen expands this argument in his 2010 book *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance*, it becomes clear that, instead of reducing the gap between textual narrative and embodied performance, he ultimately reinforces it by claiming that "the constraints of a play's licensed uses … lie largely outside the text, in part because theatre resignifies the properties of all its signs" (22). In this manner, Worthen continues to operate with and within the classic dichotomy between text and performance that is partly responsible for the unproductive split between literary and theater studies.

Theater scholar and artist Julia Jarcho goes a step further in her recent book *Writing and the Modern Stage*: *Theater beyond Drama* (2017). Instead of considering dramatic writing as a pretext for an ongoing process of performative resignification – as Worthen does –, Jarcho is interested in approaching "writing as a disruptive theatrical force in its own right" and to look at "texts that do theatrical work on the page" (xiii). While Jarcho agrees with Lehmann, Worthen, and others that contemporary theater aims to go beyond drama, she refuses to consider the dramatic text only in function of its enacted performance. She

proposes the concept of "negative theatrics" to elucidate how recent playwriting is driven by "the desire to push *against the experience of the present*" (xiv). Whereas phenomenal presence is often regarded as the primary hallmark of live performance, this particular quality is – according to Jarcho – fiercely contested in theater work in which the "writtenness [of texts] is never superseded," insofar as it is rather "*as writing* that they lodge a complaint against the here-and-now" of the theatrical event (ibid.).[30]

The emphasis that Jarcho places on the "writtenness" of the text correlates to Lehmann's notion of postepic narration, which I discussed earlier in this article. In both cases, it is the self-conscious and demonstrative act of narrating a written text that takes center stage. The most interesting aspect about Jarcho's approach is that she theorizes the narrative consciousness of theater as a contestation of its alleged presentness. This, in turn, ties in with earlier debates on the presumed ephemerality of live performance, in which performance scholar Peggy Phelan played a particularly influential role. In her widely cited essay "The Ontology of Performance," Phelan draws attention to the vanishing point of performance, the ephemeral moment when the possibility of a non-reproducible, singular appearance is briefly touched upon before it gets either irrevocably lost in disappearance or subsumed in the transformative mode of textual or filmic representation. "The performative speech act," Phelan writes, "shares with the ontology of performance the inability to be reproduced or repeated" (149). It is the old dream of a pure presence perhaps, which neither produces nor leaves traces that can be reiterated, that ultimately leads to the effacement of any kind of textuality within performance.[31]

The radical program advocated by Phelan has found widespread resonance both in theater and performance studies, but it is arguably difficult for literary scholars to connect with, precisely because it seems to erase any trace of textuality from performance. At the same time, however, the object of literary studies has changed to such an extent, and often in a comparably radical way, that the gap between both fields might be less profound than commonly assumed. Literary scholars and authors have been exploring the limits of writing, shifting their focus from an exclusive preoccupation with "the written" to a fairly strong investment in *the act of writing itself*, where "the act" can stand for a complex performative apparatus, involving different instances of writing and re-writing, as in the case of Kenneth Goldsmith. In this sense, it is the very conception of literature itself that has moved a long way from the idea that "literary" works only include written and printed texts produced by an individual "original" subject and meant to be

read by single readers individually. Instead, by paying more considerate attention to the performativity of processes such as writing and reading, literary studies too has known its own performative turn and one that could, in fact, benefit from a more sustained dialogue with theater and performance studies.

Yet it is also important to realize that the increased interest in the performativity of literature is not a recent phenomenon, as authors have always been searching to enrich their literary production with media that are more "lively" than mere print. It is certainly true, however, that literary research has only gradually turned its gaze toward literature-as-performance and began to demonstrate a more than secondary fascination with performative formats like authors' speeches, radio talks, or any other kind of appearances by writers who "perform" their literary output in public space.[32] While digital and social media provide additional means for authors to reveal how their writings are sometimes "under construction" in a very literal way (for example, when the writing is done on online platforms that provide readers or co-authors with access and the possibility to intervene); they also leave the safe boundaries of their writing rooms to read their texts on stage, to deliver speeches, or to present performance-lectures. Writing literature is, in this sense, intricately connected to performing literature just as much as the written text on the page is increasingly recognized to be performative in itself, since it engages readers in the temporary process of construing an imaginary world that, even if momentarily, might actually seem to be present. Conversely, as I have tried to show throughout this contribution, theater artists have turned the reading of novels, media, public discourses, and theory into a crucial element of their creative practice, one that is no longer only a part of the preparatory dramaturgical research but which is also self-consciously exposed on the stage through various strategies such as postepic narration, hybrid scripts, or deconstructive adaptations.

Based on these considerations, it appears that the nexus of performance and performativity continues to furnish the most promising source for the interdisciplinary scholarly interactions between literary and theater studies, not to mention the opportunities it might provide for more intensive collaborations between artistic and academic research. As each of these fields work from different disciplinary backgrounds and topical concerns, identifying a common ground between them might foster a genuine two-way exchange of conceptual tools and methodologies. Moreover, one could also ask whether the attention for the performative aspects of writing vis-à-vis the literariness of theater should not lead to a heightened awareness of how scholars themselves partake in the

business of performativity. It certainly raises the question whether it would be imaginable to measure the efficacy of their "performances" in other ways than mere bibliographical output?

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[1] I am using the term "philology" here not to refer to a specific branch of literary scholarship, but as the general name of the study programs at Belgian universities where, until the Bologna Declaration was implemented, students enrolled for Germanic, Romanic, or Classical Philology. These programs, in which students typically chose to focus on two languages, combined literary studies with a strong historical focus (which, in the late 1970s, shifted towards textual criticism, structural poetics, and narratology) as well as linguistics. Since the early 2000s, primarily German literary scholars have been calling for a so-called "Re-Philologisierung" ("rephilologization") of their discipline by seeking for productive dialogues between literary studies and other domains within the humanities (including cultural studies, theater studies, film studies, etc.) with the aim to exchange their respective methodologies (see, e.g., Erhart). This article may be situated in the context of such a dialogue, but in this introductory paragraph, the term philology only refers to the specific historical period before literary studies and linguistics (and after that cultural studies and also theater studies) began to distinguish themselves.

[2] The substantial growth of theater studies departments does not mean, however, that the value of the field within academia can be taken for granted. Both theater and literary studies are increasingly under pressure to justify their scientific value in the face of the growing expectation that academic research should have a direct usefulness for society and humanity. Not only the exact sciences, but also other fields within the humanities, such as communication studies, seem to meet this demand for immediate applicability. The academic study of theater and literature, however, obviously serves other needs than the concrete functionality of other disciplines, which is why it would be wrong to measure them according to the same standards. See also the contribution of Pascal Gielen and Nele Wynants in this issue.

[3] The works I have in mind here are more specifically Kowzan's *Littérature et Spectacle*, Helbo's *Sémiologie de la representation*, Ubersfeld's *Lire le théâtre*, Pavis' *Problèmes de sémiologie théâtrale*, and Elam's *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*.

[4] This generation of theater semioticians used the term "representation," rather than performance, to refer to the staged enactment of a drama text. See, for instance, the first chapter in Anne Ubersfeld's *Lire le théâtre* (*Reading the Theater,* 1977), which is titled "Texte-Représentation" (Text-Representation, 13-57). With regard to the notion of "performance text," Patrice Pavis provides a useful definition in his *Dictionary of the Theater*: "The semiological notion of *text* has given us the notion of *performance* (or *stage*) *text*: this is the relationship of all the *signifying systems* used in performance, whose arrangement and interaction constitute the mise-en-scène" (261).

[5] Marvin Carlson makes a similar observation when he writes: "Even the semiotic theorists of the 1970s and 1980s, although they made a clear distinction between the literary text and the performance text, almost universally assumed that the latter was derived from the former, in linguistic terms translating that text into another linguistic code or codes, those of theatrical presentation" ("Postdramatic Theatre" 578).

[6] For more on the establishment of theater studies at Flemish universities, see the article by Luk Van den Dries in this issue. In his contribution, Karel Vanhaesebrouck compares these developments with the situation in Wallonia, whereas Christel Stalpaert discusses how dramaturgy began to play an increasingly prominent role at Theater Studies programs, due to the renewal of the Flemish performing arts from the 1980s onwards.

[7] In his *Theorie des modernen Dramas* (*Theory of Modern Drama*), Peter Szondi speaks of the "Alleinherrschaft des Dialogs" (the absolute power of dialogue) as the most constitutive aspect of modern drama (15).

[8] Jan Decorte can be considered the godfather of the 1980s generation and his staging of Müller's *Hamletmaschine* has become an iconic example of the radical experiments Flemish theater began to explore around that time. The writings of Heiner Müller were not only highly influential for Decorte, but also for various other theater artists working in Flanders. For more on Decorte's staging of Müller's text, see Van den Dries, "Heiner Müllers Hamletmachine."

[9] Another and earlier study dealing with the same tendency is, for instance, Gerda Poschmann's *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext* (*The No Longer Dramatic Theater Text*, 1997).

[10] One such example of a reductive reading of Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theater* can be found in a 2011 article written by playwright Natalie Meisner and theater scholar Donia Mounsef. The authors claim that, in Lehmann's view, postdrama entails "a complete rupture with the dominant forms of modernism," which would include traditional drama, even though they refrain from explaining their understanding of the term "modernism" (29). Yet it tellingly leads them to claim that "declarations of entropy, death, post-, and ruptures help define a movement paradigmatically but, at the same time, risk foreclosing upon otherwise syntagmatic sites of productive frictions" (29). As such, Meisner and Mounsef fail to recognize that Lehmann also writes that postdrama "does not mean … an abstract negation and mere looking away from drama" (27). As Lehmann goes on later in the book, "*post*dramatic theater, again and most definitely, does *not* mean a theater that exists 'beyond' drama, without any relation to it. It should rather be understood as the unfolding and blossoming of a potential of disintegration, dismantling and deconstruction within drama itself" (44).

[11] Another remarkable issue is the fact that the concept of "postdramatic theater," which in Lehmann's view is inextricably linked to the actual *practice* of theater and performance, is also used in literary studies as the term for a specific *textual* subgenre of drama (post-drama). This is particularly striking considering the misunderstanding of Lehmann's thesis about the refunctioning of text in postdramatic theater (see, e.g., Klessinger). I will come back to this issue later in this article.

[12] Peter Szondi's 1956 study *Theorie des modernen Dramas 1880-1950* remains an impressive work of reference for the study of modern and contemporary drama and for the "crisis of drama" that would later give rise to postdramatic theater.

[13] To counter this misunderstanding of postdrama as a categorical renouncement of text, Claire Swyzen and Kurt Vanhoutte edited the volume *Het statuut van de tekst in het postdramatische theater* (*The Status of the Text in Postdramatic Theater*, 2011), for which they invited Flemish theater as well as literary scholars to respond to the question "what would happen if one would put the drama – the text actually – back into postdramatic theater?" (11). The book endeavors to rectify the wrongful view that text and language no longer have a role in postdrama with a range of contributions discussing the textual experiments of prominent Flemish directors or theater collectives, including Jan Decorte, De Tijd, or Tg STAN.

[14] Again it becomes clear that Lehmann does not regard postdrama as a complete break with previous traditions, but rather as a radical change that, besides innovation, reworks several conventions constitutive of classical drama, including the function of narration.

[15] While Lehmann has been criticized for allegedly neglecting the political dimensions of postdramatic theater, it is interesting to note that he does not hesitate to stress the critical potential of this postepic narrativity when he claims that, when "the moment of narration returns to the stage," it "asserts itself against the fascination of bodies and of media" (109). For more on the politics of postdrama, see Jürs-Munby, Carroll, and Giles.

[16] In his book, Lehmann repeatedly refers to various theater artists or groups from Flanders as well as the Netherlands, which might suggest how the renewal of the Flemish performing arts scene had a modest influence on his thinking on postdramatic theater.

[17] On the dramaturgical prominence of speaking and reading in Lauwers, see also Hauthal. For a more international perspective on the "pleasure of narration" in post- (and even post-post)-dramatic theater, see Pavis, "Writing at Avignon."

[18] The years that are mentioned are those in which Cassiers staged the novels as a theater piece, not the years in which the novels were written. Other authors whose writings Cassiers has reworked for theatrical stagings include Joseph Conrad, Leo Tolstoy, Marguerite Duras, Klaus Mann, Hugo Claus, and others.

[19] Tg STAN's staging of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* was mockingly titled *We Did (Not) Read a/the Book* (2010), and was created in collaboration with the Dutch theater collectives Dood Paard and Maatschappij Discordia. For *The Monkey Trial* (2004), tg STAN used the transcripts of the 1925 Scopes Trial, in which a biology teacher was taken to court for teaching Darwin's evolutionist theory of mankind's origins in class. All works by tg STAN are documented on their website and descriptions are also available in English: http://www.stan.be/en/page/productions (Accessed 28 October 2017).

[20] On the website of Braakland/ZheBilding (which is now called "Het nieuwstedelijk" ["The New Urban"]), one can find a description of their staging of Camus' *L'Étranger* that comes remarkably close to Lehmann's view on postepic narration: "Since a few years, Stijn Devillé and Adriaan Van Aken [the artistic coordinators of the company] develop ways to stage literary texts. For them, theater is not only the place of theatrical action, but also a place for literary speech: the theatrical aspect is not situated in the action, but in the act of speaking, which changes, influences, transforms the characters while speaking … The very fact that people themselves speak (and what they say!) to each other, and in the presence of an audience, can be the germ of real drama. It is a slow, subtle, and poetical approach to text and drama." http://www.braaklandzhebilding.be/dp/node/592 (Accessed 28 June 2017, own translation).

[21] Transgeneric and transmedial narratology is based on the assumption that narrative structures are not only at work in literary texts but also in other genres and media. Narratological concepts can therefore be applied to various forms of narrative representation across different media. For more on the relationship between narratology and performance or theater, see Fludernik; Nünning and Sommer. Also worth consulting is the instructive digital manual "The Living Handbook of Narratology," developed by the Interdisciplinary Centre for Narratology of the University of Hamburg (http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/, Accessed 27 November 2017).

[22] See Greimas' *Sémantique structurale* (*Structural Semantics*) and Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*.

[23] This broadened application of the label "literary" is obviously also reflected in the theater of René Pollesch. By sampling different kinds of textual material and by presenting these on theater stages, he similarly attributes a certain kind of literary quality to them. Other theater artists who also play with the mixing of various discourses in their work include Milo Rau, Christoph Marthaler, or Elfriede Jelinek.

[24] According to narratologist David Herman, cognitive narratology addresses "two broad questions" that in his view are "centrally relevant for research on the nexus of narrative and mind." These include: "(1) How do stories across media interlock with interpreters' mental states and processes, thus giving rise to narrative experiences?; (2) How (to what extent, in what specific ways) does narrative scaffold efforts to make sense of experience itself? The first question bears on stories viewed as a target of interpretation; it concerns ways in which interpreters use various kinds of semiotic affordances to engage with narrative worlds (or 'storyworlds'). The second question concerns how narrative constitutes a resource for interpretation, providing a basis for understanding and characterizing the intentions, goals, emotions, and conduct of self and other." (Herman, "Cognitive Narratology" n.p.)

[25] As David Herman claims, "narrative constitutes a logic in its own right, providing human beings with one of their primary resources for organizing and comprehending experience. Put briefly, story logic enables people both to build and to comprehend storyworlds, by virtue of which experience itself can be structured and rendered cognizable, manipulable, liveable." (Herman, "Narratology as Cognitive Science" n.p.). See also Bernaerts et al.

[26] Next to theater studies, I also include performance studies, since both domains have been dealing with the relationship between performance and performativity. It is especially through this issue that the influence of performance studies on theater studies has been most identifiable, even if these fields do have different institutional and intellectual background. It would lead me too far, however, to go deeper into these differences.

[27] As Austin writes in *How to Do Things with Words*, "a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy" (22).

[28] For more on the influence of the poststructuralist rethinking of the mechanism of language on the humanities as well as theater and performance studies, see Carlson, *Performance* 123-143; Wirth; Fischer-Lichte 23-36; Schechner 123-169.

[29] Butler's assumption that the performative effect of linguistic utterances stems from their compulsory repetition is based on Derrida's view that language is subject to a general iterability or citationality, which he regards as the founding principle that makes signification possible in the first place. This comes close to Richard Schechner's notion of "restored" or "twice-behaved behavior," which he defines as "physical, verbal, or virtual actions that are not-for-the-first time; that are prepared or rehearsed" (2013, 29). The main difference is of course that Derrida assigns iterability to linguistic utterances, whereas Schechner is referring to performance as action and behavior.

[30] Jarcho traces the emergence of this so-called negative theatrics back to modernist writers, such as Henry James, Gertrude Stein, and Samuel Beckett, while her contemporary cases continuing this legacy include Suzan-Lori Parks and Mac Wellman. Other authors that probably could be ranged under the same label would be Heiner Müller, Georg Büchner, or Elfriede Jelinek.

[31] I thank the reviewers of this text and the editor of this issue for pointing out that Phelan's ontologization of performance's ephemerality has been fiercely contested, probably most convincingly by Rebecca Schneider in *Performing Remains*. Despite these contestations, however, various scholars and practitioners still hold on to this idea of ephemerality as live performance's distinctive characteristic.

[32] The renewed interest by literary studies in the entanglement of textuality and performance has incited new lines of research that intend to broaden the traditional scope of the field. With respect to the context of Flanders, at least two research projects conducted at the KU Leuven are worth mentioning here: Tom Willaert's media-archaeological investigation of "The Phonograph and the Gramophone in Dutch Literature (1877-1935)" as well as Cyril de Beun's project "The Literary Speech: The Performance of Writing through Literary Production." It is this type of research that exemplifies how the very idea of literature-as-performance is attracting increased attention in literary studies.

Dramaturgy in the Curriculum

On Fluctuating Functions, Dramaturgy as Research, and the Macro-Dramaturgy of the Social

Christel Stalpaert

In his contribution to the edited volume *Dramaturgies in the New Millennium*, French theater scholar Patrice Pavis posits that the widely varying definitions given to dramaturgy have turned it into a "confused and tormented landscape" (14). Dramaturgy can mean not only dramatic writing for the theater, but also text analysis and literary advice in service of the director, or it can refer to so-called "production dramaturgy," which intends to inform a broader public on a performance's meaning. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, the scope of dramaturgy has broadened only further to encompass other strands, such as dramaturgy as research, corporeal dramaturgy, or dramaturgical figuration – each of which I will discuss in more depth throughout this article. The Flemish essayist and dramaturg Marianne Van Kerkhoven (1946-2013) was astutely aware of these diverging functions of dramaturgy and she never ceased to reflect critically on the role of the dramaturg both in her writings and in her own dramaturgical practice.[1] In this introduction, I first want to present Van Kerkhoven's foundational redefinition of dramaturgy as an open-ended and necessarily flexible process, which has proven to be highly influential not only in Belgium but also in other European countries. As I will argue, her view has important implications for the study of dramaturgy in university curricula, while it also laid the groundwork for some of the more recent developments in the field of dramaturgy that I will trace in the course of this contribution.

Looking back on her collaboration with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker between 1985 and 1990,[2] Van Kerkhoven describes her dramaturgical practice as having a *process-based* character ("Le processus dramaturgique" 20). This means that it is only towards the end of the creative process that a concept, a structure, or a more or less definite form slowly starts to appear, since these aspects are neither known nor put forward from the beginning (20-21). In this respect, Van Kerkhoven's approach differs from the Brechtian conceptual dramaturgy that was very popular in those days. While avowing that she – just like Brecht – favors a conceptual take