

Dramaturgy in the Curriculum

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

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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

on the material, Van Kerkhoven nonetheless prefers to keep the dramaturgy *open* throughout the entire rehearsal process. In the Brechtian tradition, in contrast, the overarching staging concept is developed before rehearsals begin, as the director has already decided on a particular interpretation of the drama text. As Van Kerkhoven explains, in a Brechtian model of dramaturgy, “one knows in advance where one wants to end; one plots a path to arrive at this result” (20).³ In her own process-based dramaturgy, on the other hand, everyone involved in the creative process has a voice in developing the production’s grounding concept: not only the dramaturg and the director or choreographer, but also the performers, dancers, scenographer, and even the technicians.⁴

In her 1994 essay “Looking without Pencil in the Hand,” Van Kerkhoven further suggests that dramaturgy does not proceed according to fixed laws or preconceived sets of tasks, except for the one and perhaps only rule that “every production forms its own method of work” (140). In this sense, she regards the dramaturg as a “fluctuating function,” which obviously complicates any attempt to define what a dramaturg is or does (“Van de kleine en grote dramaturgie” 68). Even by the end of her career, Van Kerkhoven would claim that she still did “not know properly what dramaturgy is” (“European Dramaturgy” 7). Nevertheless, she emphatically regards this uncertainty as a productive force:

Not only the subject but also the object is constantly moving, not standing still. If there is one thing we can say with certainty about dramaturgy, it is that it is movement itself, a process. (ibid.)

The flexible and fluctuating approach to dramaturgy advocated by Van Kerkhoven raises pressing questions on how dramaturgical skills can be taught in the context of higher education and in university courses specifically devoted to dramaturgy. If we agree with Van Kerkhoven that dramaturgy does not obey to any fixed laws or preconceived tasks, how then can educators provide students with the necessary instruments to cope with this inherent versatility? In other words, how can one train students to find their own way in the widely varying and – following Pavis – even “tormented” dramaturgical landscape?

More recent publications on dramaturgy complicate these questions even further. During the past few years, dramaturgy has been receiving increasing scholarly attention in theater, dance, and performance studies, with quite a few authors pointing to both the ethical and political implications of dramaturgical practices. Taking into account the transnational challenges posed by Western globalization,

for instance, theater scholar Kati Röttger asks: “how do we equip current students to become dramaturgs of the future?” (179). On a programmatic note, Röttger proposes that the future of dramaturgy resides in pursuing “a dramaturgy of difference in universal teaching” (180). Katharina Pewny, in turn, draws on Jacques Rancière’s critique of Nicolas Bourriaud’s notion of relational aesthetics to foreground the aesthetic, social, and intersubjective dimensions of what she calls “relational dramaturgy” (“Relational Dramaturgies” 84). Such standpoints are indicative of a growing awareness that dramaturgical practices not only reflect but also have the potential to impact on larger cultural, societal, and political concerns.

Both Van Kerkhoven’s proposition for flexible, process-based dramaturgical practices and the recently renewed interest in the socio-political ramifications of dramaturgy furnish the background for my main concern in this article in which I will look at the relationship between dramaturgy and academia in Flanders. Next to considering how dramaturgy slowly grew into a legitimate area of research at different Flemish universities, I want to devote specific attention to this development from an educational point of view. This seems particularly urgent given the increasing demand for dramaturgs who can adapt swiftly to greatly different production formats and distinct modes of dramaturgical labor. Focusing on the universities of Antwerp and especially Ghent, where dramaturgy has been a sustained part of the Theater Studies programs, I will address how the course modules on dramaturgy at these institutions have attempted to prepare students for the requirements posed by the field.⁵ This brief survey of how dramaturgy has been taught at Flemish universities is anything but exhaustive, yet it might be inspirational for similar curricula beyond the region of Flanders, which I hope to demonstrate when considering the international appeal of Flemish approaches to teaching dramaturgy.

Broadening the scope of my discussion, I go on to focus on how the 1999 Bologna Declaration, which became effective in Flanders in 2004-2005, importantly expanded the profile of the dramaturg and gave rise to two new “types” that I will describe as the “researcher-as-dramaturg” and the “dramaturg-as-researcher.” The close connection between dramaturgy and research already evident in these terms indicates how theory and practice increasingly feed into one another, with the figure of the dramaturg often occupying a so-called “bridging” function. Dramaturgy, however, furnishes a bridge not only between theory and practice, but also between what Van Kerkhoven termed the “micro-dramaturgy” (*kleine dramaturgie*) of actual productions and the “macro-

dramaturgy” (grote dramaturgie) of the social realm.⁶ Probing this linkage between artistic practice and our present socio-political reality, I want to ask how dramaturgy (both on the level of profession and education) ought to respond to our current digital and neoliberal era in which flexibility has turned into an economical trademark. This will lead me into a consideration of the ethics of dramaturgy in terms of a relational “response-ability,” in which the function of the dramaturg might dissolve but not disappear.

The Study of Dramaturgy

According to its dictionary definition, dramaturgy refers in the most traditional sense to the “dramatic composition” of a play.⁷ Yet ever since Gotthold Ephraim Lessing wrote his influential collection of essays *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (The Hamburg Dramaturgy), the modern notion of dramaturgy also includes the *study of the craft of dramatic composition*.⁸ It was primarily in this particular sense (that is, as the study of staging practices) that dramaturgy gained its first foothold in the relatively young theater studies curricula at Flemish universities during the mid 1980s. At that time, the so-called Flemish Wave was invading the stages of various newly established art centers (such as the Kaaitheter, Vooruit, Victoria, and Nieuwpoorttheater), which consolidated the work started by earlier experimental venues, such as Proka in Ghent.⁹

While it was not until the 1980s that Flemish universities would accommodate their own theater studies program, the pioneering theater scholar Jaak Van Schoor proved to be prescient in claiming as early as 1967 that the study of drama should liberate itself from the literary tradition, so that “a right place was assigned to the creative priority of the acting and the interpretation of the drama on the stage in particular” (“De dramatische wetenschap” 188).¹⁰ For Van Schoor, all modes of expression (verbal, textual, corporeal, sensory, or otherwise) were interwoven acts of theatrical composition. Describing theater as a “culture of the play,” he claimed that “theater only becomes richer (and more complete) through the powerful sign of the word, [but], in essence, it does not carry its stamp” (189).¹¹ When, in 1986, a Center for the Study of Drama and Theater got certified at Ghent University, which one year later became a licentiate degree (third cycle) in Theatre Studies,¹² Van Schoor devised a course called “Dramaturgie en Media” (Dramaturgy and Media). While focusing on the “dynamics of tension in theater performances” (RUG, *Speciale Licentie Drama en Theater. Infobrochure* 11), Van Schoor aimed to introduce students first of all to the multifaceted craft of analyzing the dramatic structure of a text. The study of dramaturgy thus meant to become skilled in identifying sets of dramaturgical

compositional devices, such as space and time (chronotope), tension, the dramatic construction of characters (focalization, anatomy, proliferation), and ways of using language.¹³

Wrestling itself loose from under the auspices of literary studies, the study of dramaturgy at Ghent University not only encompassed the formal analysis of the dramatic text, but also the study of “drama as a performable/actable entity” (RUG, *Speciale Licentie Drama en Theater. Infobrochure* 11). Next to understanding the meaning of a dramatic text, dramaturgy also had to uncover its interpretative possibilities in a performance context. In line with this view, Van Schoor’s “Dramaturgie en Media” did not focus predominantly on, for instance, Shakespeare’s Elizabethan drama or the Greek tragedies, nor did it only deal with theater.¹⁴ While reading materials did include drama texts by Samuel Beckett, Hugo Claus, or Eugène Ionesco, he envisaged from the very beginning an intermedial and interdisciplinary approach to theater in general and dramaturgy in particular. The study of dramaturgical compositional devices was therefore also transferred to the practice of screenwriting in order to understand how film scripts work and with particular attention for the adaptation from literature to theater and film. As such, students were also required to read texts by Jean-Luc Godard, Wim Wenders, and Peter Greenaway (Van Schoor, “Studiefiche Dramaturgie” 2000-2001). The intermedial and interdisciplinary vision established by Van Schoor continued to steer the further development of Theater Studies at Ghent University when a fully-fledged Theater Studies program was institutionally embedded in the Arts Department in 1991-1992 and when dramaturgy was taught in the program’s third year.¹⁵

In 1994-1995, the Universities of Ghent (UGent), Antwerp (UA), Brussels (VUB) and Leuven (KU Leuven) joined forces to establish what was then called an interuniversity Certificate Specialized Study in Theater Studies and which would later be renamed an Advanced Master’s Degree.¹⁶ Dramaturgy as such was not included as a separate course in the curriculum, but was part of “Dramatekstanalyse” (Dramatext Analysis), a course taught by Luk Van den Dries.¹⁷ At the University of Antwerp, Van den Dries had already been teaching a separate course on dramaturgy since 1992, when he took over the module from Carlos Tindemans who had introduced it in 1978 when he became the first full-time Professor of Theater Studies. But Van den Dries also brought his expertise in dramaturgy into other courses, such as “Dramatekstanalyse,” which according to the course description focused on dramaturgical compositional devices in view of concrete staging practices, as the overarching intention was “to develop a

dramaturgical starting point for a performance concept” (“Dramatekstanalyse” 10). The primary handbook used for this course was the German theater scholar Manfred Pfister’s *Das Drama: Theorie und Analyse* (1977), which provided a framework for the systematic study of plays, not only in their textual but also in their performative dimensions. As Pfister himself explains, his book aims to offer “a descriptive and communicative poetics for a historically and typologically extremely diverse corpus of dramatic texts” (*Drama* 1). It presents, in the form of a diagram, a repertoire of codes and channels that are employed in dramatic texts, but which reach beyond the purely textual realm, as it also includes visual, haptic, acoustic, or other codes (8). Drama is, in other words, considered a “multimedial dramatic text” that contains “more information than the literary text” (10). Consequently, amongst the dramaturgical compositional devices Pfister discusses are the use of dramatic figures, choruses and songs, film projections, loudspeakers on stage, etc.

As the performing arts scene in Flanders underwent an allegedly unprecedented creative rejuvenation in the 1980s and 1990s, the study of dramaturgy began to develop “new ways of understanding its own parameters” (Mangan 167). Various directors and choreographers, who were later labeled as the Flemish Wave, preferred what Marianne Van Kerkhoven termed a process-based dramaturgy above a dramaturgy that starts from one preconceived and seemingly fixed idea. The emergence of these more flexible and inquisitive approaches to dramaturgy was of course not limited to Flanders, but rather an intrinsic part of a larger and international paradigm shift within the Western performing arts scene, which Hans-Thies Lehmann famously dubbed the era of “postdramatic theater.” According to Lehmann, the main characteristic that differentiates postdrama from classical drama is that “the traditional hierarchy of theatrical elements has almost vanished: as the text is no longer the central and superior factor” (3). In a joint article with German theater scholar Patrick Primavesi, Lehmann rightly observes that postdrama demands “new dramaturgical forms and skills” in order to support “a practice that no longer reinforces the subordination of all elements under one (usually the word, the symbolic order of language), but rather [pursues] a dynamic balance to be obtained anew in each performance” (“Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds” 3). In this sense, a realignment of theory and practice seemed to impose itself on dramaturgy as well as the study thereof.

Practicing Dramaturgy

The reverberations of the Flemish Wave as well as the rise of a postdramatic theater aesthetic strongly impacted both the teaching and research on dramaturgy at the Universities of Ghent and Antwerp.¹⁸ Throughout the years, various colloquia, workshops, or doctoral schools were organized at several institutions and venues, often with Lehmann himself as a contributing guest lecturer.¹⁹ Moreover, in order to furnish students with the dramaturgical skills required for the changing theater scene, the dramaturgy-related courses offered at Ghent University and the University of Antwerp increasingly acknowledged the primordial importance of grounding dramaturgical education in concrete artistic projects. As a result, the dramaturgy course in the Specialized Theater Studies program steadily evolved towards a more practice-based seminar run by dramaturgs who were professionally active in the field of theater, both in Flanders and the Netherlands.

The intention to hire staff members with an active dramaturgical practice and to confer to them the task of familiarizing students with the possibilities and principles of dramaturgy was a completely unique approach in Flanders at the time. In 1998-1999, for example, the Specialized Study in Theater Studies offered a course module on dramaturgy with Bart van den Eynde, who was then working as a dramaturg at one of the Netherlands' leading companies Het Zuidelijk Toneel. Together with the students, he embarked on a dramaturgical research trajectory on Flemish writer Peter Verhelst's drama text *Romeo en Julia (studie van een verdrinkend lichaam)* (Romeo and Julia [Study of a Drowning Body], 1998). In his course description, Van den Eynde makes an interesting case for the practical rather than the academic purview of dramaturgy:

The emphasis in the dramaturgical research does not lie on the academic comprehensiveness, but on the theatrical relevance. Not the literary analysis is paramount, but the making of the right choices in function of the creative process: directing, acting, design, (in RUG, *Speciale Licentie Drama en Theater, Infobrochure*, 1998-1999, n.p.)

When dramaturg Erwin Jans took over the course in 1999-2000, he similarly wanted to confront the students with “practice-oriented dramaturgical work” (in UGent, *Theaterstudie. Een voortgezette opleiding, infobrochure* 1999-2000, 12). Based on his work at the Ro Theater in Rotterdam, he chose *The Oresteia* as the main topic for the dramaturgy course. Students explored with Jans the various stages of a dramaturgical process, including the “choice of translation, adaptation

of the text, division of roles, and the consequences of doubles,” while also the “design, scenography and costumes, [and] rehearsal process” were topics of attention (ibid.). Jans’ approach to dramaturgy resonates with Van Kerkhoven’s concept of a process-based dramaturgy, especially when he asserts in a later course description that dramaturgy always entails “a ‘processing’ of texts, ideas, concepts, images, stories, histories,” emphasizing how “this process is always fragmentary and incomplete, and occurs scattered across the many conversations and discussions between director, designer, dramaturg, actors, technicians, production, publicity” (in UGent, *Theaterstudie. Een voortgezette opleiding, infobrochure 2002-2003*, 14).

At Ghent University, too, the MA course module on dramaturgy became more practice-oriented as students were stimulated to enter into the co-creative space of a collective dramaturgy. Various formats have been developed to enhance this participative interaction between students and dramaturgs. When I succeeded Van Schoor as a Professor in Theater Studies in 2003, for example, I also took over his course on dramaturgy and introduced the so-called “dramaturgical sessions” (Stalpaert, “Studiefiche Dramaturgie” 2003-2004). Each year, students could choose two from a list of about five projects that were developed in close collaboration with various art venues in Ghent (such as Vooruit, NTGent, CAMPO, Nieuwpoorttheater) as well as the Drama Department at KASK - School of Arts. The diversity of the selected projects meant to give students a sense of the variety of dramaturgical processes in the contemporary performing arts scene. Different from the approach at the University of Antwerp, where the dramaturg was more often brought into the class-room,²⁰ students at Ghent University were spurred to enter the rehearsal studio. In 2004, for example, students participated in *Connexive#1: Vera Mantero*, a two-week project revolving around the work of Portuguese choreographer Vera Mantero and dance scholar André Lepecki, who acted as her dramaturg in those days. The students could go to performances and concerts, participate in master classes and seminars with Vera Mantero, André Lepecki, Benoît Lachambre, and others, or they could also attend workshops, informal showings, and various other events.²¹ Sometimes dramaturgical sessions consisted of a conversation with the artist and the dramaturg, who explained the dramaturgical underpinnings of their collaboration. More often, however, these sessions were stretched over several days during the rehearsal process for a particular performance, which offered students an inside look into the particular dramaturgical labor unfolding in practice. At the same time, the format of these sessions deliberately aimed to go beyond mere observation and to facilitate active participation. Various exciting

projects came out of this, such as the collaboration with dramaturgs Jeroen Verstele and Koen Tachelet at NTGent, who, in 2009, were working on an adaptation of Billy Wilder's 1936 film noir *Double Indemnity* for director Johan Simons. Students not only joined in sometimes heated discussions with the dramaturgs; they also ended up writing their own adaptation.

At the Arts Center Vooruit, some students joined the Superamas in their discussions on the history of perspective in painting and theater, in preparation of their performance *THEATRE* (2011). In addition, students were welcome to become “partners-in-crime” and to infect the venue's season program. Artistic director at the time, Barbara Raes, explained her aim was to gather people in order “to form a cluster of so-called ‘particle accelerators’ [to] enter into a dialogue about the program. These can be artists (like the Superamas) but also art (theoretical) courses or organizations that have close ties with Vooruit.” According to Raes, the ultimate objective was to create “a pool of cross-fertilizing ideas *and* the greatest possible social forum for Vooruit's activities” (Van Steenberghe).

Over the years, many dramaturgical sessions were organized with various dramaturgs, choreographers, and theater makers, including Marc Vanrunxt, Nature Theater of Oklahoma, Tine Van Aerschot, Rézy Schumacher (Toneelgroep Amsterdam), Johan Simons (NTGent), Pieter De Buysser, or Kris Verdonck. These encounters and collaborations opened doors for students. Getting to know dramaturgical praxis from the inside out even encouraged some to take up a second internship during their Master and to work as an assistant-dramaturg at professional theater or dance companies, or for the graduate production of a KASK student, under the supervision of highly skilled educators such as Jan Steen or Sam Bogaerts.

In recent years, the format of the dramaturgical sessions at Ghent University has been further consolidated by Katharina Pewny as well as her (post-)doctoral assistant Jeroen Coppens, who took over the dramaturgy course respectively in 2009 and 2015. Next to her scholarly practice, Pewny has worked as a free-lance dramaturg herself and she consequently stressed the importance of the entanglement of theory and practice. Pewny also broadened the scope of the course by including topics such as the often insecure labor conditions of contemporary performers, pointing at what she terms the “Theater of the Precarious”. From a dramaturgical point of view, she explored these conditions by looking at “the aesthetic strategies artists use to perform their unstable working

situations” on stage (S:PAM, “Research Tracks”). Jeroen Coppens, who has collaborated with video artist Ariane Loze as a dramaturg, further expanded the course and turned it into a seminar that deals with dramaturgy both in a theoretical and practical way, focusing on the newest dramaturgical developments in contemporary theater and dance. At the forefront is not only the (new) dramaturgical treatment of the theater text, but also contemporary dramaturgies of the body, media, sound, and visibility. These issues are tackled in group discussions, lectures, dramaturgical exercises, workshops, artist talks, and performance visits.

The International Appeal of Dramaturgy in Flanders

The growing dramaturgical expertise in Flanders did not pass unnoticed on an international level. The practice-based approaches to the study of dramaturgy developed at Flemish universities seemed to respond to a range of pressing issues that were also raised by scholars and dramaturgs working in other countries. When Hans-Thies Lehmann and Patrick Primavesi organized the international conference *European Dramaturgy in the 21st Century* at the University of Frankfurt-am-Main in 2007, for example, their aim was to probe the challenges posed to the dramaturg by the changing landscape of contemporary theater and performance, such as the need “to develop new performance and production forms, create concepts that appeal to new target groups, establish international networks connecting various artistic fields, etc.” (Lehmann and Primavesi, “European Dramaturgy” n.p.). When they go on to claim that “dramaturgical education rarely focuses on the necessary qualifications required to master such challenges” (ibid.) or write elsewhere that “it is essential that dramaturgy is taught in close connection to and interrelation with practice” (“Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds” 6), a tradition of practice-based dramaturgical teaching had already flourished in Flanders. The programs at the Universities of Ghent and Antwerp met the challenge of training an interdisciplinary and open-minded dramaturg for the twenty-first century, “ready to accept the job as a position on shifting grounds and to question the categories that used to define the art of theater” (ibid.).

In order to give a place to the specific Flemish expertise on dramaturgy at the 2007 conference, Lehmann and Primavesi invited the internationally esteemed dramaturg Marianne Van Kerkhoven for a keynote lecture, while I was asked to share my thoughts on “a dramaturgy of the body” in a panel discussion.²² The teaching model for dramaturgy developed at Ghent University was also picked up by the *Arbeitsgruppe Dramaturgie* (Working Group Dramaturgy), founded in

2008 by Katharina Pewny, Peter M. Boenisch (University of Kent, Canterbury) and Evelyn Deutsch-Schreiner (Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Graz). In April 2014, Sandra Umathum and Bernd Stegemann invited me to give a keynote lecture on “the Ghent model” for teaching dramaturgy at the gathering of the Arbeitsgruppe Dramaturgie in Berlin.²³

Following the expanding international network through which the expertise on dramaturgy at several European universities has been increasingly circulating during the past two decennia, new interuniversity collaborations emerged, such as the Master in International Dramaturgy, which was established in 2016-2017 at the University of Amsterdam and is coordinated by Professor in Theater Studies Kati Röttger. The program explicitly aims to facilitate cultural exchange on both an academic and practical level by means of an Erasmus Consortium that allows students to study at partner universities inside and outside Europe for three to six months, or to undertake a long-term internship at art venues or companies.²⁴ As the website mentions, the Master’s program is geared at “train[ing] future generations of dramaturges to work in theatrical settings across cultural, linguistic, social and national boundaries” (UvA, “International Dramaturgy”). Importantly, the focus on international mobility also aims to respond to the current working conditions of dramaturgs and the fact that “theater and performance practice of today is increasingly characterized by international and intercultural collaborations” (ibid.). As a consequence, dramaturgs are more than ever expected “to develop practical as well as theoretical skills to engage with these new cross-cultural performance production contexts” (ibid.).

The international scope of the Master’s program at the University of Amsterdam also became a topical question during the symposium *International Dramaturgies of Intercultural Translation* (October 2016), in which the different universities of the Erasmus Consortium participated in order to stipulate their role and function. The symposium focused on performance as a site of intercultural translation in a manner that “extends beyond the common understanding of translation as the transference of meaning from one language into another and the process of finding linguistic equivalences” (UvA, “Invitation”). It seeks to identify in performance the “corporeal, historical, and epistemological aspects of cross-cultural communication, and inquires into its conditions and limits,” with the aim of gaining deeper insight into the “poetic and dramaturgical conventions of staging” (ibid.). The symposium was an important impulse for Ghent University to offer, from 2016-17 onwards, an interdepartmental and even interfaculty course module in English to students who are doing the UvA-based

Master in International Dramaturgy.²⁵ As such, I devised the course module bringing together different perspectives on the idea of intercultural translation, while students are also offered the possibility of doing a long-term apprenticeship to immerse themselves into the practical reality of dramaturgy.

Building Bridges: The Dramaturg-as-Researcher and the Researcher-as-Dramaturg

The practice-based perspective on the study of dramaturgy acknowledges the dialectical relationship between theory and practice as well as the importance of what can be described as the “bridging function” of the dramaturg. In several of her writings, Van Kerkhoven observes that, despite the amalgam of functions the dramaturg can assume, there is one constant factor: a dramaturg always deals with “the conversion of feeling into knowledge, and vice versa” (“Looking without Pencil” 140). As such, the dramaturg is supposed to occupy a bridging position between theory and practice, between art and science, between emotion and reason (Van Kerkhoven, “Van de kleine en de grote dramaturgie” 69). This follows from Van Kerkhoven’s conviction that thinking and being are deeply related:

Thinking cannot be seen separate from the practical activities, it has its roots in the material reality. But the relationship between theory and practice is also a “double,” dialectical dynamics: on the one hand, (material) being determines consciousness; on the other hand, the ideas we have in our head determine how we see the world and, therefore, how we act upon that world. (“Van de kleine en de grote dramaturgie” 69)

This bridging position between theory and practice took on another dimension with the Bologna Process. The reformation of European higher education into a generalized Bachelor-Master structure radically reshuffled the academic landscape in various countries, and so too in Flanders. While these changes did not go uncontested, it was especially the requirement that also those institutions offering professional practical training in the arts should undergo a process of academization through an increased emphasis on research that provided new opportunities for the bridging of theory and practice, which Van Kerkhoven deemed essential to dramaturgy. The fact that it became possible to obtain a PhD in the arts not only indicated a growing acknowledgment of the academic value of practice-based research, but it also led to a new type of dramaturg: the dramaturg-as-researcher.²⁶ In Flanders, it was Guy Cools who was the first (dance) dramaturg to pursue a doctoral degree in the arts in 2014. With his PhD

research, he aimed to deepen both the somatic and creative dimensions of his dramaturgical practice.²⁷

Even if the emergence of the dramaturg-as-researcher in Flanders is a fairly recent phenomenon that could only establish itself when the institutional conditions were created for it, the close connection between dramaturgy and research is far from surprising, since many scholars had in fact already taken up the somehow reversed role of researchers-as-dramaturg. Luk Van den Dries, for example, based his book *Corpus Jan Fabre: Observations of a Creative Process* on the dramaturgical work he had done with Jan Fabre.²⁸ Kurt Vanhoutte has been a dramaturg for the performance group CREW and their experiments with digital technologies. Before becoming a performer herself, Myriam Van Imschoot combined her position as a PhD researcher at KU Leuven with dramaturgical support for choreographer Meg Stuart. Similarly, Kristof van Baarle's academic research focuses on Kris Verdonck's posthuman aesthetics, but he also functions as a dramaturg in several of Verdonck's artistic projects.

While such collaborations between artists and scholars seek to infuse creative practices with intellectual expertise, it seems that this rapprochement is also impacting the tenets of academic research on theater, dance, and performance. As much is suggested by dance scholar Laura Karreman, who even purports that a new generation of upcoming performance scholars can rightly be called "dramaturg-researchers":

Dramaturg-researchers can be identified by the responsibility they take on for the following seven activities: positioning, interpretation, mediation, translation, support, ambassadorship and research. (...) The above-mentioned traits of the dramaturg-researcher surface as a common concern of the current generation of emerging performance scholars, as can be seen in recent dissertations in dance and performance studies in Belgium and the Netherlands. (Karreman 15-16)²⁹

As the divide between theory and practice, or between reflection and creation, is increasingly dismantled in the performing arts, the standard image of the dramaturg as the intellectual side-kick of the artist is outdated. Van Kerkhoven aptly remarked that she does not recognize herself at all in the idea of the dramaturg as an "officer of theory" ("Van de kleine en de grote dramaturgie" 67). Moreover, if the rise of the researcher-as-dramaturg and the dramaturg-as-researcher already troubled any kind of conventional delineation of dramaturgical

profession, this dissolution of clear-cut boundaries was exacerbated by the emergence of what I will describe as a “collective dramaturgy,” in which dramaturgical tasks are no longer necessarily attributed to one single person.

Collective Dramaturgy and the Ethics of Response-ability

The bridging position of the dramaturg also turned its role in theater practice into a profoundly ambiguous one: while some (like Van Kerkhoven) have argued that the dramaturg furnishes an indispensable intermediary between intellectual reflection and artistic creativity, others have claimed that reserving a separate place for a dramaturg reinforces the ingrained binary opposition between theory and practice. In the late 1990s, the function of the dramaturg became indeed a heated topic of discussion in Flanders, as some critics started to wonder whether the function of the dramaturg should not be erased completely. In a brief but polemical 1998 essay, Bart Meuleman bluntly summoned the dramaturg to get lost, arguing that “the resignation of the dramaturg must pave the way for a permanent dramaturgy” (15).³⁰ In this permanent dramaturgy, as envisaged by Meuleman, the function of the dramaturg would become obsolete as all participants in the creative process are required to take up their own artistic *and* intellectual responsibilities.

Meuleman’s ardent call for a permanent dramaturgy obviously resonates with the increased presence of theater collectives in both Flanders and the Netherlands from the 1980s onwards. Attempting to formulate an alternative to the established (and at the time often sclerotized) institutional structures of theater companies led by a single artistic director, actors felt impelled to form their own groups in which they would be responsible for all aspects of the creative process. Following the model of the influential Dutch company Maatschappij Discordia, various collectives emerged also in Flanders, including Tg STAN and De Roovers or, more recently, FC Bergman. For them, dramaturgy is an inherent part of the development of a piece, which falls under the responsibility of the entire group instead of being the task of one individual providing assistance. In their practice, the dramaturgical labor is thus equally distributed amongst all members of the collective, as they all engage in reading plays, translating dialogues, analyzing the meaning of text, discussing how a specific sentence works, etc.

In describing his work with the performance troupe bluemouth inc., the Canadian dramaturg Bruce Barton similarly observes how the deliberate choice for collective working formats requires that group members “occupy a creative space of constant persuasion, coercion, argument and generosity, one in which

they must perpetually explore, negotiate and reinvent their collaborative framework” (14). In line with these developments, I have suggested elsewhere to replace the concept of the dramaturgical *function* by that of “dramaturgical *figuration*, constituting *points* of emergence or of creativity” (“The Distributed Agency” 100-101). Drawing on Deleuze’s concept of figuration, these points of emergence or of creativity refer to unexpected conjunctions or improbable continuums in a composite network of forces. Hence, this Deleuzian perspective on dramaturgy takes into consideration the complex distribution of dramaturgical labor in collective working structures. It more specifically points to “an open creative process in perpetual modulation, where the division of dramaturgical labour shape-shifts constantly, as the relationship between action and reflection is in constant motion” (100).

These modulating co-creative processes obviously entail an even less clearly defined function for the dramaturg. However, I disagree with Bart Meuleman that a flexible, ever-changing dramaturgical *figuration* cancels the *raison d’être* of a dramaturg. More than ever, the dramaturg has an important responsibility in a contemporary art scene that is continuously pressured by increasing commercialization. This responsibility has not so much to do with having intellectual authority over something or someone in support of a creative process, nor with having good judgment or fine taste in artistic choices. This responsibility should rather be understood as a “response-ability,” that is, as the ability to respond to the different constituents (including both ideas and people) that come with a networked (collective) mode of creation.

This notion of response-ability implements a new paradigm of relationality. Instead of working towards a preconceived “meaning” of a play in service of one director or one theater venue, the tasks of the dramaturg become part of a dynamic and de-hierarchized figuration that includes anyone and anything involved in the creative process. In her ethics of response-ability, Rebecca Schneider similarly “rethinks relationality as something that always already anticipates and perpetually reinaugurates possibilities for response” (108). The ability to respond operates indeed on an ethical level too, which reinforces rather than undermines the continuing need for the dramaturg. In a direct response (indeed) to Meuleman’s polemical statement, Marianne Van Kerkhoven considers the presence of the dramaturgical function crucial in securing the bond between what she calls the macro-dramaturgy of the social and the micro-dramaturgy of the creative process. The urgent question for her becomes then: “What are the connections between the position of the dramaturg in several productions and

his or her tasks in the current social context in general and the performing arts in particular” (Van de kleine en de grote dramaturgie 67). It is from these *connecting points* that creativity emerges and from which the dramaturg derives his/her response-ability. Or, as Van Kerkhoven claims:

More than ever, there is a need for critical reflection that interprets the work of artists today in its social and cultural context; more than ever, the world is in need of nuanced opinions, of raising awareness of the existing paradoxes and contradictions, of a different view of reality. Artist can help us to read the world, to decode its complexity. One of the resources available to them to achieve this is to use dramaturgy in all the different forms it can take (“Van de kleine en de grote dramaturgie” 69)

In the following and final section, I call on the response-ability of universities to take Van Kerkhoven’s aspirations about the macro-dramaturgy of the social seriously and to cultivate a critical attitude on behalf of the (future) dramaturg. I do so in light of the recent corporeal, digital, and posthuman turns in performance studies. As we shall see, this is a particular challenge that stems from the manner in which neoliberal principles have profoundly affected the profession of dramaturgy.

Bodies that Matter in Digital, Posthuman, and Neo-Liberal Times

Similar to the earlier linguistic turn, the notion of the corporeal turn points at a profound change in Western thinking, which began to manifest itself during the last decades of the twentieth century. A growing number of scholars began to question the validity of Descartes’ highly influential separation of the mind from the body in his philosophical inquiry into how knowledge is produced. Going against this Cartesian dualism, scholars working in various fields of the humanities began to recognize the importance of *embodied* thinking. In line with this proclaimed corporeal turn,³¹ both postdramatic theater and dance became increasingly concerned with the dramaturgy of the body.³² In recognition of the importance of corporeality for dramaturgy, I have described the dramaturg’s function as “a corporeal ‘try out’ of the spectator’s bodily capacity to read and make sense of an aesthetic of intensities” (“A Dramaturgy of the Body” 123). Similarly, Lehmann and Primavesi have claimed that the renewed attention for the body has redefined dramaturgy as “an open process, perhaps a shared and mutual productivity in the proliferation of movement” (“Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds” 4).

The heightened interest in the body in postdramatic theater as well as the emergence of dance dramaturgy has indeed profoundly reshaped the contours of the dramaturgical profession. Taking into account that choreography primarily deals – as Mallarmé famously claimed³³ – with bodies “writing” on stage, dance dramaturgs often refer to haptic and energetic processes in their search for words to communicate embodied affects. Myriam Van Imschoot, for example, describes her dramaturgical labor as “the management of different dramaturgical energies” (in *Kunst* 83). Christine Fenz calls it talking “in metaphorical ways, in colors, in landscape structures,” while Carmen Mehnert regards it as dialoguing “on an energy level” (in Stalpaert, “A Dramaturgy of the Body” 123).

The current digital and posthumanist era is often said to reveal how the energetic processes in the body and between different bodies do not merely take place in the privileged realm of corporeality, as they are also steered by material and technological sources. Likewise, dramaturgical labor often involves the handling (and being handled by) technical and digital instruments. In their joint text “And What about ‘Dance’?” Boris Charmatz and Isabelle Launay observe how “working on lighting and sound also entails a kind a physicality” (230). Consequently, they define dance no longer as “a particular kind of choreographic writing, vocabulary or way of mobilizing bodies on stage,” but as a “specific sensory treatment of the environment” (236). Pushing this even further, the manner in which actor Johan Leysen dialogues and performs with a hologram projection of himself in Kris Verdonck’s *M, a Reflection* (2012) renders an exclusively human-centered actor’s dramaturgy irrelevant. The technological set-up of the piece strongly confined Leysen’s movements, with the result that he was in fact choreographed by the virtual presence of the hologram. Dramaturg Kristof van Baarle testifies to the actual implications of this so-called “virtual dramaturgy”:

This thorough scoring of movement, adjusted to the technical capabilities of the digital and virtual technology, dictates the live actor, i.e. ‘the real’. Virtuality leaves only some space to move around and turns the actor into a ‘barred’ actor, to put it in Žižek’s words. The live actor has to adapt to the theatrical machine. (...) As it turned out, the virtual has its own language, which man has only just started to learn. (van Baarle et al. 57)

Is the dramaturgical function lost in the machine then? This seems to be a step too far. As Lehmann and Primavesi suggest, “instead of trying only to copy media technologies or maintaining a defensive ontology of ‘live’ presence,” there is a

need for “a new way of thinking media”, techné, technology as new possibilities to conceptualize spectating, viewing, witnessing, participating beyond the simple dichotomy of subject and object” (“Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds” 4).

This new way of thinking, of moving beyond preconceived and stereotypical notions of not only spectatorship but also of the body in digital times is in fact what the idea of collective dramaturgy as a shared response-ability inaugurates. From this perspective, the virtual dramaturgy of a piece like *M, a Reflection* is not about the machine choreographing the live actor. Instead, it is all about the points of emergence and creation in response to the complex relationship between man and technology, which includes not only the apparatus of the machine but also the larger machineries of ideology and economic systems. As van Baarle points out: “New technologies are changing our world, but also force us to face the axioms of our society, axioms that might need revision in light of society’s evolution” (62).

Rethinking the role of corporeality, subjectivity, and creativity in the present age of posthumanism and neoliberalism is currently one of the most pressing tasks for the profession of dramaturgy. It is only by looking closely to what happens not only on but also beyond the stage that the connection between the micro-dramaturgy of the performing arts and the macro-dramaturgy of the social is ensured. This assumption has, of course, important ramifications for educating future dramaturgs too. As I have shown in my discussion of dramaturgy in the curricula at the Flemish universities of Ghent and Antwerp, the aim has always been to provide students with the necessary skills to adapt swiftly to different production formats and distinct modes of dramaturgical labor, which corresponds to the flexible approach to dramaturgy advocated by Van Kerkhoven. It has become increasingly clear, however, that this flexibility, too, has its flip side.

Recent research on the precarious working conditions of contemporary performers indicates how not only the role of the artist but also the one of the dramaturg has drastically changed in our current neoliberal society, especially with regard to the ever-increasing demand for flexibility (see Pewny, “Relational Dramaturgies”). Just like artists, dramaturgs are more than ever required to move from one project to another and only a few have a fixed position at theater companies. This development is of course partially the result of the new aesthetic exigencies of the postdramatic era, but it also ensues from specific economic and social circumstances, which – as Marianne Van Kerkhoven points out – we should continue to be critical about:

There has been an overwhelming *élan* of the neoliberal political and economic forces that – supported by the superfast development of technology – have spread the modules of unrestrained production and consumption all over the globe. (...) It seems that one of our first tasks is to examine how the economic foundation determines our daily work. (“Van de kleine en de grote dramaturgie” 8)³⁴

While written in 1998, Van Kerkhoven’s statement on the need for dramaturgy to look beyond the confines of its own micro-structure in order to assess its creeping usurpation by the macro-structures of our neoliberal economy still resonates strongly with the present-day situation. In this sense, too, the need for a macro-dramaturgy of the social remains an urgent, topical issue, if we are to arrive at a viable future for (the study of) dramaturgy. Universities ought to take up their responsibility – or, rather, their response-ability – in order to respond to the increasingly high demands placed upon the professionals they proclaim to educate. As the theater stage has long been said to provide a mirror of society, we should not refrain from looking into that mirror and critically ask where we are heading to.

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¹ Marianne Van Kerkhoven began working as a dramaturg in the early 1980s and she collaborated with renowned artists such as Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Jan Lauwers, Jan Ritsema, Josse De Pauw, Guy Cassiers, Peter Van Kraaij, and many others. From 1985 onwards, she became the permanent dramaturg of the Kaaitheater in Brussels. Later during her career, Van Kerkhoven was involved in the work of a new generation of artists, including Rudi Meulemans, Kris Verdonck, Pieter De Buysser, Tine Van Aerschot, Marijs Boulogne, and Hooman Sharifi.

² Van Kerkhoven worked as a dramaturg for five productions by De Keersmaeker: *Bartok/Aantekeningen* (1986), *Verkommenes Ufer/Medeamaterial/Landschaft mit Argonauten* (1987), *Mikrokosmos* (1987), *Ottone, Ottone* (1988), and *Stella* (1990).

³ All quotes from French or Dutch are the author's translation.

⁴ See, for example, "The Story of the Technicians" in Van Kerkhoven and Nuyens 191-213.

⁵ As Luk Van den Dries discusses the historical development of theater studies in Flanders elsewhere in this special issue, I limit myself to a brief historical overview of how dramaturgy was introduced in the curriculum at the Universities of Antwerp and especially Ghent, since Ghent University is the educational context I am most familiar with.

⁶ In various of her writings and talks, Marianne Van Kerkhoven made this distinction between “kleine” and “grote dramaturgie,” which literally translated would be “little” and “big dramaturgy.” In the English version of the State of the Union speech she delivered in 1994, the terms are translated as “minor” and “major dramaturgy” (Van Kerkhoven, “The Theatre is in the City”). Yet I choose for “micro-” and “macro-dramaturgy,” since I believe this reflects better what Van Kerkhoven had in mind when making this distinction.

⁷ See “dramaturgy, n.” OED Online, Oxford University Press, March 2018, www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/57490. Accessed 6 February 2018.

⁸ Lessing’s *Hamburg Dramaturgy* and his work at the Hamburg National Theatre (1767-1769) meant the breakthrough of the modern conception of the dramaturg. As Bert Cardullo observes, when Lessing was appointed as a resident critic at Germany’s first permanent, subsidized repertory company, he took up various tasks we now commonly associate with the role of the dramaturg. No longer merely working as a playwright and a critic, Lessing’s dramaturgical function would from then on also include planning the season’s program at the Hamburg National Theatre, as he also read and selected plays that were to be staged (6-7).

⁹ For an in-depth discussion of the pioneering role of Proka in the Flemish performing arts scene, see Stalpaert, “De speler en de strop.”

¹⁰ After finishing his master’s thesis on *Herman Teirlinck en het toneel* in 1961, Jaak Van Schoor (1939-) began to work as an assistant at Ghent University in 1966 and as a lecturer at the drama school Studio Herman Teirlinck in 1968. He defended his PhD on *Herman Teirlinck en het toneel* in 1974 at the University of Amsterdam. Afterwards, he was affiliated with Ghent University as a post-doctoral researcher and became appointed as professor in 1990 at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, where he worked until his retirement in 2003 (Stalpaert, Bussels, and Van Oostveldt 8-15 and *UGent Memorials, Archive Ghent University* <http://www.ugentmemorialis.be/catalog/000005590>. Accessed 6 February 2018).

¹¹ As Van Schoor was convinced that, rather than the dramatic text, it is the performance as such that lies at the core of theater studies, he adopted the teaching model of Max Herrmann (1865-1942), who Erika Fischer-Lichte describes as “one of the founding fathers of German Theater Studies as an academic discipline” (19). Until the beginning of the twentieth century, “theater was considered as something based on dramatic texts” and was hence regarded as “a suitable subject of literary studies” (ibid.). In contrast, and as early as 1914, Herrmann emphatically claimed that “the most important aspect of theater art is performance” (qtd. in Fischer-Lichte 19). This performance-centered approach stood central at the University of Berlin’s Institute of Theater Studies, which Herrmann co-founded in 1923. For more on the tenuous relationship between theater and literary studies, see Bart Philipsen’s contribution to this issue.

¹² This licentiate degree third cycle is what we now would call an Advanced Master’s degree.

¹³ In his “Dramaturgie en Media” course, Van Schoor introduced his students to Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope as a compositional configuration of time and space in a work of art. In his essay “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” Bakhtin defines the chronotope as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (84). Regarding the dramatic construction of characters, Van Schoor referred in his course to, amongst others, Mieke Bal’s publication *Mensen van papier* (People of Paper), in which she further develops Gérard Genette’s notion of focalization, investigating “the different *points of view* from which the life or the action is looked at” (Genette qtd. in *The Mieke Bal Reader* 4).

¹⁴ Van Schoor’s focus on primarily modern theater and also film was complemented by other lecturers. When Jozef De Vos (1945-) began working at the English Studies Department in 1992, for instance, the Theater Studies Program engaged him as a Shakespeare expert. Being appointed as a classicist at Ghent University in 1987, Freddy Decreus (1949-) also served at the Theater Studies Program as an expert in Greek tragedies and ritual theater.

¹⁵ The academic year 1991-1992 was the first one in which Ghent University offered a licentiate degree in Theater Studies of the second cycle (what we would now call a Master’s degree). The Theater Studies program was a part of the Arts Department at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy. Next to Visual Arts, Architecture, Interior Design, and Ethnic Arts, students could now also choose to study theater, performance, and media art. Two years later, the theater program was further expanded to the first two candidates’ years (which is the equivalent of the current Bachelor’s level).

¹⁶ Initially, students could enroll at all four universities involved in the Interuniversity Specialized Study in Theater Studies. In a later stage, the University of Antwerp became the administrative center where students had to enroll, yet all universities continued to co-deliver the diploma. With the Bologna Declaration, the interuniversity degree was renamed an Advanced Master and would continue to exist until 2012-2013. It was eventually abrogated due to financial cutbacks. The paradoxical effect of the implementation of the Bologna Declaration has been that, contrary to the aim to streamline higher education, universities in Flanders would ultimately fall back on their individual programs in Theater Studies, with only two of them offering a specific course on dramaturgy: Ghent University and the University of Antwerp.

¹⁷ Luk Van den Dries studied Germanic Philology at the University of Brussels, where he also started his academic career in 1980 with a research fellowship. In 1991, he received his PhD with a dissertation on the theater of Heiner Müller and was appointed as an Assistant Professor at the University of Antwerp. Since 1995, he is Professor of Theater Studies at the University of Antwerp.

¹⁸ My own course description of “Dramaturgy” for the academic year 2010-2011, for example, explicitly mentions this postdramatic perspective: “This specialized course gives insight into the dramaturgical principles of a theatrical text and/or a film script and into the latest developments in the dramaturgy of word, sound and image in contemporary postdramatic performing arts (performance, dance and music theater) and new media arts” (Stalpaert, “Studiefiche Dramaturgie 2010-2011”).

¹⁹ Some of the most notable events that testify to the fairly rapid incorporation of the postdramatic theater aesthetics by Flemish theater studies include the following: already on 30 August 1997, even before Lehmann's originally German study *Postdramatisches Theater* was published, Geert Opsomer and Marianne Van Kerkhoven invited Lehmann to the conference *Van Brecht tot Bernadetje. Wat maakt theater en dramaturgie politiek in onze tijd?* (From Brecht to Bernadetje: What Makes Theater and Dramaturgy Political in Our Age?; see Opsomer and Van Kerkhoven). In September 2000, the research center Aisthesis (University of Antwerp) and the Center for Philosophy and Art (Erasmus University Rotterdam) drew attention to the publication of Lehmann's *Postdramatisches Theater* during the colloquium *New Theatre Concepts*. In November 2001, I invited Lehmann for a guest lecture for the MA students, on the occasion of *One Week Medea*, an interdisciplinary event on Medea (some of the keynote lectures were published afterwards in *Documenta* 20:2, 2002). In 2007, I established the research platform *Postdramatic Aesthetics: Word, Sound, Image*, which investigates dramaturgical concepts, such as visual dramaturgy (see Bouko on Stalpaert, "Théâtre et Reception" and Coppens); a dramaturgy of the body (see Stalpaert, "Dramaturgy of the Body"), the actor's dramaturgy (see Steen); the dramaturgy of sound (see Bouko on Stalpaert, "The Musicality"). Another occasion for MA students and researchers to discuss the topic of postdramatic theater with Hans-Thies Lehmann was the specialist course/doctoral school I organized in 2011 on "Auratic Presence: a Postdramatic Perspective on the Body and Corporeality."

²⁰ Until his retirement in 2018-2019, Luk Van den Dries has taught the course on Dramaturgy at the University of Antwerp, for which he regularly invites active dramaturgs to lecture on the projects they are working on. Next to theater, the module also considers dramaturgy in film and opera, taking intermediality as its overarching perspective. Questions that are raised in the course description include: "How are stories told today on stage? Are stories told differently on large and small stages? Is there influence coming from film? Is dramaturgy for opera different than for theater?" (Van den Dries, "Studiefiche Dramaturgie").

²¹ For more on *Connexive#1*, see: <http://sarma.be/pages/Connexive>. For a report on the project by writer in residence Jeroen Peeters, see <http://sarma.be/docs/712>. Accessed 6 February 2018.

²² A selection of papers presented at the conference, including Marianne Van Kerhoven's and my own contribution, were reworked and collected in a special issue of *Performance Research* "On Dramaturgy" (2009).

²³ "Teaching Dramaturgy. Some Notes on the UGent Concept," *Arbeitsgruppe Dramaturgie*, Ernst Busch Hochschule, Berlin, 4 April 2014 (Keynote lecture on the invitation of Prof. Dr. Sandra Umthum and Prof. Dr. Bernd Stegemann).

²⁴ The University of Amsterdam established partnerships with: the University of São Paulo (Brazil, Escola de comunicações e artes), The University of Cape Town (South Africa), Free University Berlin (Germany, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft), Ghent University (Belgium, Research Center S:PAM Studies in Performing Arts & Media and the Department of Art History, Musicology and Theater Studies), and the University of Stockholm (Sweden, Theater and Dance Studies).

²⁵ The departments and teachers involved at Ghent University for the academic year 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 were: Art History, Musicology and Theater Studies (Jeroen Coppens, Frederik Le Roy, Katharina Pewny, Christel Stalpaert, and guest professors Timmy De Laet and Charlotte Gruber); English Literature (Stef Craps, Joost Krijnen and Maheen Ahmed); English Linguistics (Geert Jacobs and Mieke Rosselle); German Literature (Benjamin Biebuyck); History (Berber Bevernage and Steven Vanden Broecke); East European languages and Cultures (Rozita Dimova); Oriental Languages and Cultures (Ann Heirman and Mathieu Torck); African languages and Cultures (Inge Brinkman); Gender and Diversity (Chia Longman); Philosophy (Tom Claes); and Political and Social Sciences (Koenraad Bogaert).

²⁶ For a more extensive discussion of artistic research and doctoral degrees in the arts, see Pascal Gielen and Nele Wynants' contribution to this issue.

²⁷ Guy Cools' academic supervisor was Christel Stalpaert, his artistic supervisor was Paola Bartoletti. He obtained his doctoral degree on 20 May 2014, with an international jury consisting of Hans-Thies Lehmann (Universität Frankfurt-am-Main), Freddy Decreus (UGent), Marijke Hoogenboom (Amsterdam School of the Arts), Mary Nunan (University of Limerick), and Lin Snelling (University of Alberta).

²⁸ On the occasion of the book launch of *Corpus Jan Fabre*, Luk Van den Dries organized a symposium at deSingel on 10 November 2004, inviting pairs of choreographers/theater makers and dramaturgs to talk about their way of collaborating with each other. The duos on the program were Meg Stuart and Myriam Van Imschoot, Jan Fabre and Luk Van den Dries, Eric Joris and Kurt Vanhoutte, Hooman Sharifi, and Bojana Kunst. The event stands as one of the many ongoing efforts to forge dialogues between academic researchers and artists, demonstrating how scholars aim to develop their research in close connection with actual creative practices.

²⁹ These PhD dissertations include but are not limited to: Konstantina Georgelou (2011), Frederik Le Roy (2012), Zeynep Gündüz (2012), Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink (2015), Jeroen Coppens (2016), Timmy De Laet (2016), Charlotte Gruber (2016), and João da Silva (2016).

³⁰ Bart Meuleman's polemic text "Bericht aan de dramaturg: opkrassen!" ("Message to the Dramaturg: Get Out!") initiated a heated debate on the "death" of the dramaturg. See, for example, the texts written by Melens; de Vuyst; Van Kerkhoven, "Van de kleine en de grote dramaturgie."

³¹ It was Maxine Sheets-Johnstone who first introduced the term "corporeal turn" in her 1990 book *The Roots of Thinking*.

³² Postdramatic theater cultivates a renewed attention for the body and corporeality: instead of disappearing behind a mask or tu(r)ning into a character, the body proudly performed its own presence. As Hans-Thies Lehmann puts it, whereas "the dramatic process occurred between the bodies, the postdramatic process occurs *with/on/to* the body" (*Postdramatic Theater* 163).

³³ Stéphane Mallarmé introduced the idea of a “corps-graphie” or the body writing on stage in his “Crayonné au théâtre,” written in 1897. Dance was for him a form of corporeal writing (“écriture corporelle”), an instance of thought in motion (229).

³⁴ The manner in which neoliberal principles have affected the profession of dramaturgy was also one of the issues that were addressed at the international conference *PLAY: Relational Aspects of Dramaturgies*, organized by Ghent University’s research center S:PAM and with Katharina Pewny as the driving force behind the event. In general, the conference explored the “mutual relations of dramaturgical work/the labor of dramaturgy in production processes AND dramaturgies as ‘arrangements’ of theatrical signs” (<https://www.ugent.be/lw/kunstwetenschappen/en/research-groups/spam/conferences/play/overview.htm>, Accessed 6 February 2018).