THEATRE & PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

REVISED EDITION

dramaturgy and performance

cathy turner
synne behrndt

Dramaturgy and Performance

Theatre and Performance Practices

General Editors: Graham Ley and Jane Milling

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Revised Edition

Cathy Turner
and
Synne Behrndt

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To M, with thanks

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PART III

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General Editors' Preface

This series sets out to explore key performance practices encountered in modern and contemporary theatre. Talking to students and scholars in seminar rooms and studios, and to practitioners in rehearsal, it became clear that there were widely used modes of practice that had received very little critical and analytical attention. In response, we offer these critical, research-based studies that draw on international fieldwork to produce fresh insight into a range of performance processes. Authors, who are specialists in their fields, have set each mode of practice in its social, political and aesthetic context. The series charts both a history of the development of modes of performance process and an assessment of their significance in contemporary culture.

Each volume is accessibly written and gives a clear and pithy analysis of the historical and cultural development of a mode of practice. As well as offering readers a sense of the breadth of the field, the authors have also given key examples and performance illustrations. In different ways each book in the series asks readers to look again at processes and practices of theatre-making that seem obvious and self-evident, and to examine why and how they have developed as they have, and what their ideological content is. Ultimately the series aims to ask questions about what are the choices and responsibilities facing performance-makers today?

Graham Ley and Jane Milling

Introduction

When we wrote the introduction to the first edition of this book in 2007, our tone suggested some hesitancy at the complexity of the task, and the difficulty of arriving at sufficiently inclusive definitions. Nevertheless, we hoped to open up a discussion around dramaturgy and the book certainly made a contribution in that respect. At that point, there was little literature on the concept of dramaturgy or the practice of the dramaturg, and none in English that embraced the diversity and complexity of a dramaturg's practices, in the UK or elsewhere. This meant that our book had to broaden the field discussed, for example, in Luckhurst's excellent study of the literary dramaturg (2006a), while at the same time providing some sense of definition and orientation. This expansion might have been frustrating to those seeking certainty, while at the same time failing to include everything worthy of note, but it was a way to acknowledge diversity and suggest some of the many different directions dramaturgical thinking and practice might take.

The situation in 2016 is rather different, and the discussion of dramaturgy far more wide-ranging. Just as the practice of dramaturgy may be even more various, and the concept still more widely applied, the English-language discourse has burgeoned and there now exists an impressive list of publications that concern the practice and concept of dramaturgy. As a result, the expanded field is now better understood, while it is possible to find detailed analysis of many specific aspects of dramaturgy. The question of identity and definition has receded, if it has not been definitively answered, and the place of the dramaturg in the theatre-making process is widely acknowledged, even if not ubiquitous.

We have ourselves contributed to these developments, editing an issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review* on 'new dramaturgies' (2010)

and publishing individually on devising and dramaturgy (Behrndt 2011) and on dramaturgy and architecture (Turner 2015). Other journal issues devoted to dramaturgy include *Performance Research* 14.3 (Gritzner, Primavesi and Roms 2009); *Maska*, XVI, 131-2 (Kunst and Založnik 2010); *Canadian Theatre Review*, 155.1 (Hansen, Callison and Barton 2013); *Theatre Topics*, 24.3 (Hopkins 2014). Of these, it is notable that both the *Maska* and the *Canadian Theatre Review* collections are focused on movement and dance, while the *Performance Research* issue looks at a broad range of practice across contemporary European theatre, dance, performance, media art and pedagogy. D. J. Hopkins notes in the introduction to the *Theatre Topics* edition that unlike the journal's 2001 issue on dramaturgy, 'all of the many submissions emphasized expansions or refinements of perspective and innovations on practice rather than questions of professional identity' (Hopkins 2014: x).

Edited books have focused on 'Relational' dramaturgies (Pewny, Callens and Coppens 2014); 'Queer Dramaturgies' (Campbell and Farrier 2015); 'Dance Dramaturgy' (Hansen and Callison 2015); and 'New' dramaturgies (Eckersall, Beddie and Monaghan 2011; Trencsényi and Cochrane 2014), or on an expansive range of approaches (Romanska 2015). It has been particularly interesting to see the emergence of literature on dance and the dramaturg, mirroring an important aspect of contemporary dramaturgical practice (Kunst 2009; Profeta 2015), as well as books that offer an introduction or overview (Proehl 2008; Chemers 2010; Irelan, Fletcher and Dubiner 2010; Trencsényi 2015).

This expansion of the field seems to be continuing on a global scale, since there have been multiple workshops, symposia, and conferences worldwide. We identified over thirty such events, advertised in English and focused on dramaturgy in the period 2007–16, predominantly in Europe (including the UK) and North America, but also in Israel, Morocco, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Singapore. No doubt there are many we have missed as this research was not exhaustive. What differentiates these events from those taking place previously is a shift away from definition and introduction and towards sharing a range of perspectives and practices.

If, therefore, it was important in 2007 to 'break some ground', that ground has now been broken. It is to be hoped, however, that this book still serves as a useful way of opening that field to the newcomer, provides a snapshot of UK practice at the beginning of this period, and provides some useful observations for those more familiar with the concept of dramaturgy.

We were previously writing at a time of exciting expansion and uncertain direction for the UK dramaturg. That expansion has not yet halted. More dramaturgs are now working in the UK theatre and not merely in literary management positions, but in devising, dance, live art and curation.

In our previous introduction we commented on German dramaturg Thomas Frank's visit to the UK in 2006. 2014 saw Frank, then founding director of Brut Wien (he has since been appointed artistic director at Schauspiel Leipzig), contributing to a Symposium on 'new dramaturgies' convened by Tim Harrison and Helen Medland from the Basement, Brighton, which aimed to provoke discussion of structural models for dramaturgical practice, among producers, curators, dramaturgs and academics from the UK, Belgium and Austria. Here the dramaturgical input of producers came under interrogation, though with some reservations about the power imbalance in the producer-artist relationship. Differences between UK funding structures and those of mainland Europe were discussed, including the difficulty of finding young producers with dramaturgical sensibility. These discussions were important enquiries into the relationships between infrastructure, funding and practice, and the dynamics of the role, rather than attempts to define an unfamiliar term or profession.

Though the concept of dramaturgy and the practice of the dramaturg are still more widely accepted and established across mainland Europe than in the UK, the difference is not as stark as it used to be. A recent article in the industry paper, *The Stage*, suggests that 'dramaturgy is finding its place in the British theatre' and emphasizes the dramaturg's 'analytic function', while stressing that the role can vary across contexts (Anderson 2015). Trencsényi identifies the significance of Akram Khan's use of a dramaturg, Carmen Mehnert, for his production, *ma*, in 2004, as the first acknowledged input of a dramaturg into a major work by a UK choreographer and this role has continued to develop (Trencsényi 2015: 215). The major challenge continues to be a lack of funding and rehearsal time that tends to militate against the role of the dramaturg. Structures of production still tend to be more conducive to the work of the dramaturg in play development, which continues to be a significant feature of dramaturgical practice. Nevertheless, the variety of roles, if not the multiplicity of opportunities available for the dramaturg, is one of the interesting aspects of theatre in the UK.

The distinction we make between the role of the 'dramaturg' and the related term 'dramaturgy' continues to be an important one. Indeed, we have often felt that it is the more significant in a context where

dramaturgy is often developed without a dramaturg present. Indeed, the term 'dramaturgy' can be very widely applied and though our focus is on theatre practice we have, as mentioned above, since extended our discussion of dramaturgy in relation to dance, cross art-form work, new media and architecture.

The origins and nuances of the terms 'dramaturgy' and 'the dramaturg' are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, but it remains helpful to give an initial summary here. Though the words are linked, 'dramaturgy' can be separated from the 'dramaturg': while the term 'dramaturgy' applies to the general composition of a work, the 'dramaturg' is a specific, professional role.

The 'dramaturgy' of a play or performance could also be described as its 'composition', 'structure' or 'fabric'. Where the term 'dramaturgy' is used to describe an activity – 'doing dramaturgy', or even, in Lynn Thomson's North American variation, 'dramaturging' (Thomson 2006: 4) – this activity concerns an engagement with the work's composition. 'Doing dramaturgy' usually implies a discussion of compositional strategies and effects; for instance, those students undertaking non-vocational courses in 'dramaturgy' are likely to be engaged in some form of performance analysis. The word 'Dramaturging', 'shaping the dramaturgy' or 'dramaturgical work' may all imply an engagement with the actual practical process of structuring the work, combined with the reflective analysis that accompanies such a process. Peter Reder suggests that 'dramaturgy temporalizes events, a process that leads to a structure that orders sense and thus enables encoding/decoding of meaning', yet importantly, he stresses that the artwork's meaning does not precede this putting into process: 'Dramaturgy is visualizing and embodying by performing the structure itself; it emancipates itself from an idea on paper by placing the idea into time and space, giving it a body' (Reder 2010). Tim Etchells, who similarly considers dramaturgy as a 'positioning of information' that is 'not just temporal but also physical', draws attention to the internal dynamics, the 'ontological tension' between elements, and the affective tangles and loops that complicate performance (2009: 72–3). Dramaturgical work is, as Reder suggests, 'an art-form, not a science', far from being formulaic (2010).

It is clear that there can be composition, performance analysis and even performance-making, without the necessary involvement of the dramaturg. We can therefore discuss the term 'dramaturgy' in isolation from the professional role of the dramaturg. If we do not make this distinction, we seem to be saying that works without dramaturgs have inadequate or even non-existent dramaturgies: this would clearly be a

ludicrous claim. Indeed, it is impossible for a play to be entirely *without* a dramaturgy, any more than it can be without structure or compositional strategy.

On the other hand, the professional dramaturg specialises in an understanding of dramaturgy and is able to bring analytical and compositional skills to assist in all aspects of the theatre-making process. The role has its traditions, histories and established practices, as well as its ongoing debates and developments. Given the dramaturg's expertise, an interest in the term 'dramaturgy' runs parallel with an interest in the profession and it is logical to address both terms within the same volume, while avoiding the confusion that arises if we assume that dramaturgy relies, or should rely, on the presence of the dramaturg.

Dramaturgy

If we are to discuss the role of the dramaturg in Part II, we will need to bring to it what is meant by the word 'dramaturgy', which is the dramaturg's field of expertise.

Essentially, we are using the word to describe the composition of a work, whether read as a script or viewed in performance. While it is a term for the composition itself, it is also a word applied to the *discussion* of that composition. In other words, when we are engaged in (doing) dramaturgy, we are looking at the composition or dramaturgy of a work.

Perhaps it is important, however, to clarify the need for a dynamic and fluid conception of what 'composition' means in the context of performance: rather than attempting to pin down the meaning of a work, once and for all, dramaturgy tends to imply an observation of the play in production, the entire context of the performance event, the structuring of the artwork in all its elements (words, images, sound and so on). It also requires awareness that theatre is live and therefore always in process, open to disruption through both rehearsal and performance. If the dramaturg attempts to sketch a 'map', perhaps this will always be in pragmatic and tentative relation to the territory of the performance event. Thus there is a dynamic, contextual and, indeed, political dimension to dramaturgical practice.

This tension between the fixity of concept and the fluidity of performance is illuminated by referring to the ways in which the word 'dramaturgy' has been used in other contexts. For example, Erving Goffman (1959) has used it to discuss social behaviours, the roles

we play in communicating with others and in presenting ourselves to the 'audience' that surrounds us. Goffman suggests that our encounters may be considered as scripts, including not only our words, but also our gestures and actions. Like all scripts, our social interactions include an element of structure, rehearsal and repetition, enabling recognition and referencing a social order. Yet we also own them and experience them as unique moments of encounter. Goffman's theories have been applied to diverse social contexts, from his own application of them to asylums and prisons, to more recent discussions. Charles Edgley's edited volume, *The Dramaturgy of Social Life: A Dramaturgical Handbook* (2013), brings together perspectives from across the social sciences, including the dramaturgy of dissent, museums, barbershop singing, transsexuality, sadomasochism, social media and many other instances in which relationship and individuality are performed. Nor is this collection an isolated instance: others have commented on political dramaturgy (Raban 2009; Alexander 2012); the dramaturgy of policing (O'Neill 2015); urban planning (Rannila and Loiveranta 2015); consumer research (Schultz 2012); or health (Edwin 2016; Freeman et al. 2016; Tembeck 2016).

'Dramaturgy' need not only apply to dialogue and interpersonal relationship, but can also apply to relationships with the world of objects and the more-than-human world (Abram 1997). Architects have related it to the ways in which buildings suggest the possibility of a range of uses, and are 'completed by events' (Fretton 1999: 15). As architect Bernard Tschumi puts it, architecture is 'seen as the combination of spaces, events and movements … our experience becomes the experience of events organized and strategized through architecture' (Tschumi 2000: 176). So, for Tschumi, conceptual, 'ideal' space exists in dynamic relation to lived space. While Tschumi does not use the term 'dramaturgy' (though he does use other performance-related terms), he is clearly describing architecture as a dramaturgical practice, one in which there is a deliberate deployment of structure in order to provoke or enable live events. Nick Kaye comments, 'Tschumi provides for an architecture … always *in performance*' (Kaye 2000: 52, italics in original). One might suggest that if Tschumi looks at the performance of architecture, the theatre dramaturg looks at the architectures of performance.

Though we can use the terms 'performance analysis' and 'dramaturgy' more or less interchangeably, perhaps the former, with the roots of 'analysis' in the Greek word 'to unloose', implies a sense of unravelling the different strands of a work, while the latter, closely linked to the

idea of 'composition', the bringing together of parts, implies an attempt to view them in relation to each other.

Elinor Fuchs' useful article, 'EFs visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play' (Fuchs 2004), encourages us to view the performance work as a whole, as an organic world with its own rules, systems and coherence. It provides an evocative model for a dramaturgical approach. The dramaturg's 'toolkit' for discussing dramaturgy often produces suggestions for ways of summarizing and encapsulating overall structures. Dramaturg Kitte Wagner suggests that she asks general questions of a developing production, such as, 'What is the attraction? What are the dynamics? What are the elements? … How many "postcards" are there? I call them postcards … I mean, just strong, visual images' (Wagner 2005: 14). There are numerous other examples of ways in which, as Anne Cattaneo puts it, the dramaturg is 'someone who keeps the whole in mind' (Cattaneo 1997: 6).

As theatre and performance have changed through history, dramaturgies have also changed. For much of the history of theatre and drama, theatre has been defined by the play and dramaturgy has often been defined according to play structures. As Peter Szondi demonstrates in his *Theory of the Modern Drama* (Szondi 1987), shifts in thinking about theatre have occurred when shifts in playwriting have occurred. And, indeed, play texts are often our most complete records of performances. However, we must remain aware of the limitations of the discussions of literary texts, since we cannot rely on words alone to describe or to predict the dramaturgy of a theatre event. Patrice Pavis, for example (Pavis 2003: 21–3), warns that in analysing performance, we cannot assume that the script exists in causal relationship to the event: the performance must be considered as an independent occurrence, which cannot be explained as a realization of authorial (or directorial) intention. The dramaturgy of the play text is therefore something rather different from the dramaturgy of the play in performance, which is always situated in space and time. Nor are playwrights the only theatre-makers who influence dramaturgy, since all theatre and performance-makers whose work provokes or suggests new compositional strategies are involved in changing dramaturgies.

Why do dramaturgies change? A short answer might be to say that the ways in which we see and read the world change, challenging or augmenting the perceptions that we have previously held. If each performance work can be viewed as its own 'planet', it is true that, as Fuchs suggests, we might want to be careful about considering it as a portrait of the actual planet that we inhabit; however, it does give us a vision of

another possible world, another way of revisioning experience. When we return to our own 'planet', we may become more aware of aspects we had not previously noticed, or simply aware of the differences between the world we inhabit and that of the performance. We therefore suggest that the development of new dramaturgies is invariably political, in that they provoke us to look at reality through new eyes.

The Dramaturg

The role of the dramaturg, as opposed to the concept of dramaturgy, has its roots in the practice of mainland European theatre and, specifically, that of Germany. By the time the term arrived in Britain, it already had a long history behind it, including its transformation in Germany from a largely critical, literary role, as occupied by G. E. Lessing, to the more practical engagement of the 'production dramaturg' instigated by Brecht and others. Dramaturgs across Europe continue to debate their function and possible functions within the theatre, while being employed across a range of performance forms and theatre development activities.

Therefore, although the concept of the 'dramaturg' is not unfamiliar to those making theatre in mainland Europe, this is not to imply that the role of the mainland European dramaturg has some monolithic unity. On the contrary, the very fact that the role is well-established gives scope for a wide variety of dramaturgs to work in diverse ways in different theatre and performance contexts.

The conventional role for the German dramaturg is within the management structure of a state-funded theatre. Here, the *Chefdramaturg* works with the artistic director to plan the repertoire, a job that includes research into new plays (that is, identifying suitable works for production, rather than writer development) and selecting established works. The dramaturgical department (the number of dramaturgs varies, depending on the size and funding of the theatre) may also have responsibility for aspects of casting, for writing programme material and liaising with marketing departments. A 'production dramaturg' may be allocated to specific productions, working with the director in rehearsal, probably offering advice on textual changes, researching contextual information, offering comment on the evolving work and so on. This practical involvement is a more recent development, evolving through the work of Piscator and Brecht, to become well-established during the 1970s.

However, this description does not exhaust the dramaturg's practice within the German theatre, nor practice across other European countries. Dramaturgs are working as curators and creative collaborators within experimental theatre and dance, while the development of new writing, not always the German dramaturg's principal concern, is the subject of debate and diverse projects and programmes in both mainland European theatre and higher education.

The dramaturg's role in developing new writing is best established in North America, though it is also, perhaps, most widely debated in the US, for that very reason. In North America, as in the UK, dramaturgs began to appear when regional subsidized theatres began to be established in the 1960s. The dramaturg was initially seen as part of a European model of state theatres, with no well-established tradition of the American dramaturg. However, the first literary manager in America, modelled on British lines, appeared well before this and Zelenak argues that, earlier in the twentieth century, playwrights like those of the Provincetown Players in effect acted as dramaturgs – a tradition that was then replaced by the Yale model of the dramaturg as 'in-house critic' (Zelenak 2003: 105). Yale-trained Ben Cameron, of the Theatre Communications Group, admits that the early rhetoric was 'problematic', encouraging a rather self-important view of the dramaturg as 'critic' or 'conscience of the theatre', a tone he now regrets (Friedman 2002: 4).

Because of this importation of the dramaturg's role from the European theatre, the 'German' model of the dramaturg is better established in the American theatre than in the UK, and the US dramaturg sometimes works across the whole repertoire, rather than focusing solely on new writing. However, the American dramaturg continues, in many contexts, to be closely associated with new writing, partly because of the previous legacy of literary management and partly because significant early employment of dramaturgs took place at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, with an emphasis on developing new North American work.

Dramaturgy has also become a recognized and widely taught subject within higher education in the US, since the Yale School of Dramaturgy was established in 1977. In the UK, Masters level programmes are still offered at a few universities, although few use the term in the title: Glasgow and Central School of Speech and Drama seem now to offer the only courses that do so, and they combine it with 'Playwriting' and 'Theatre Criticism' respectively. This represents a slight decrease since 2007 and reflects a shift towards more generic

MA courses that can attract students with diverse interests. Those that mention dramaturgy in their overall description tend (like the former) to combine it with a focus on text, for instance as a specialist pathway on 'Writing for Performance', 'Playwriting', 'Text and Performance' or 'Creative Writing and Scriptwriting' (Goldsmiths; Royal Holloway; RADA; East Anglia). Wider-ranging courses such as Kent's MA in 'European Theatre' and Roehampton's MA in 'London's Theatre and Performance' refer to the practice of dramaturgy as a lens or specialism. The word appears to be used more widely in undergraduate modules than in previous years, although with varying options available from year to year, this is hard to ascertain with confidence. It appears that in a competitive climate, the word 'Dramaturgy' does not attract post-graduate students (at least, not in large numbers), but that the practice and concept are now more likely to be introduced into broader courses by lecturers with an understanding and interest in the subject.

While the role of the dramaturg within the UK appeared around the same time as the American dramaturg, with the establishment of state-subsidized theatres, it is only in the last twenty that the UK dramaturg has begun to appear in significant numbers and as the subject of sustained debate. Though Kenneth Tynan's role at the National Theatre offered an example during the 1960s and there have been gradually increasing numbers of significant dramaturgs or, more usually 'literary managers' in theatres since then, it is only since the end of the 1990s that we have seen the rapid professionalization of the role, with the number of literary managers doubling in the first five years of the new millennium (Luckhurst 2006a: 200). Discussion of its breadth and diversity is still more recent, and really gained momentum only in the last decade. When we wrote our introduction in 2007, we commented on the initial surge of energy and interest, and asked what was particular about the 1990s and early 2000s. These observations may now be considered in relation to the subsequent eight years of development.

UK Dramaturgy 1990–2016

At the beginning of the 1990s, new writing in the UK seemed to be at a low ebb. The production of new work dropped to 7 per cent in the latter half of the 1980s, with audiences preferring productions of classics, adaptations and musicals, partly due to the funding cuts instigated by the Thatcher government. However, from 1992 onwards, new writing seemed once again to be on the rise, in both quality and popularity.

David Edgar gives a number of reasons for this: the opening of two works by American writers, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and David Mamet's *Oleanna* in 1992; the continuing successes of writers such as David Hare and Caryl Churchill in the UK; the growing self-help movement among writers, including the establishment of writers' organizations; the trend set by Stephen Daldry (at the Royal Court) in directing new writing; television's 'virtual abandonment of the single play' and writers' discovery of 'a subject' in the crisis of masculinity (Edgar 1999: 26–8).

Though Edgar does discuss government funding of the arts in the late 1990s (with mixed feelings), he does not accord state funding much direct credit in either instigating or sustaining this resurgence. The relationship of both funding and development to the actual quality of new work is, of course, a questionable and chequered one. Jeff Teare, then director of Made in Wales, writes lugubriously in 1999 that the profession of the dramaturg might well begin to appear 'if the American model of plays being developed without actual production takes further hold in the UK due to decreasing funding and increasing embourgeoisification of our "New Labour" theatre … ' (Teare 1999: 5). Teare had good reason to be bitter with Arts Council Wales, whose 'New Writing Initiative' effectively forced the closure of Made in Wales in 2000. However, while the mode and extent of government-funded development of new writing can be criticized, new writing development did increasingly appear as a funding priority for Arts Council England as the 1990s progressed, with a corresponding growth in funding opportunities, particularly with the introduction of the National Lottery in the mid-1990s. This impetus continued into the new millennium, though the emphasis shifted from 'new writing' to 'new work'. In 2000, Arts Council England commissioned the 'Boyden Report', which prescribed an investment in new work as a way to revive the English theatre. The Arts Council responded with another document, 'The Next Stage', which confirmed that: 'The production of new work will not only support the development of a generation of new voices but also benefit the industry as a whole, creating more jobs and reaching wider audiences' (Arts Council England 2000: 8), promising, among other things, new writing, new work, workshops and new literary departments.

However, in March 2007, it was announced that the Arts Council would receive a 35 per cent cut in the coming year, partly because of the Olympics but also because sales of lottery tickets were in decline (see Gardner 2007a). Despite this, the 1990s boom in new British playwriting and the professionalization of literary management that grew

alongside it, or perhaps, followed it, clearly played a significant role in the rise of interest in the dramaturg.

Indeed, Luckhurst writes that, 'There can be no doubt that the growth of officially appointed literary managers and dramaturgs since the 1960s results principally from market demand for new plays' (Luckhurst 2006a: 202). Here, Luckhurst yokes the two terms, 'literary manager' and 'dramaturg'. However, we suggest that the interest in the role of the *dramaturg* – a role potentially distinct from 'literary manager' – was influenced by a number of other factors besides the emphasis on new writing.

These factors, while possibly less dominant, both enriched and confused discussions of the term taking place in the early years of the millennium. During this period, we saw increasing numbers of Britain's live artists and experimental devising companies working with dramaturgs, while still others worked with someone in an analogous position, sometimes as an integral part of a creative team, sometimes as an 'outside eye' and sometimes combining the role of producer and creative collaborator.

This might partly have reflected the fact that companies had become increasingly pan-European, gaining a significant proportion of their funding and recognition from European theatres and festivals. This engagement with European practice brought them into contact with dramaturgs-as-curators, such as Thomas Frank, Bettina Masuch, Matthias Lilienthal and others. At the same time, we noticed, in 2007, a growing interest in the role of the creative producer within the UK, which had some clear overlaps with that of certain mainland European dramaturgs (this is discussed in more detail in the introduction to Part II). In some instances, the person working as 'creative producer' might otherwise be defined as the dramaturg.

These developments had little to do with an interest in new plays and instead highlighted the dramaturg's role as producer, as creative collaborator and/or as someone who brings textual, compositional skills, but does not 'author', or necessarily even write any part of the performance work.

As we reflect on these developments in 2016, one might have expected the dramaturg's role to have been diminished by a harsh funding climate. However, while it is still the case that budgets do not always accommodate the appointment of a dramaturg, we seem to see more dramaturgs appearing in production credits (this might, of course, represent an increase in the use of the term, rather than a change in rehearsal practices). The role of dramaturg as producer may also be one

of naming, rather than a shift in policy, although, for example, in the description of 'dramaturg and creative producer' Petra Jane Tauscher at Manchester's HOME, the dual role of co-curator and artistic collaborator/adviser is quite specific.

It has been urged that writer development cannot be treated as a substitute for new productions, and that if approached too systematically, can tend towards homogenisation (for example Eldridge in Trueman 2012): both these dangers are potentially exacerbated by cuts in funding for new writing, where theatres become less able to take risks on full productions and unprecedented formal approaches. However, dramaturgs and artistic directors have tried to respond to these fears through innovative programming and support that empowers writers: for instance, the Royal Court's 'Open Court' season in 2015, when writers were figuratively 'handed the keys' of the building to curate a festival of new work, workshops and events, while in 2009 the Bush theatre launched 'Bush Green' as an online community for writers to share their work and discussion.

One might argue that there is a sense in which dramaturgical skills, if not the dramaturg, have come to prominence in contemporary arts practice, in an emphasis on the development of new creative strategies and networks. To give one example, New Local Government Network (NLGN), drawing on Arts Council England figures, suggests that local authority cuts represent the biggest challenge for arts funding in 'a time of austerity'; NLGN therefore proposes that organizations should form new partnerships, in work which contributes to broader social priorities (health, wellbeing, tourism, the environment) (Harvey 2016: 16). The integration of arts practices into other social initiatives is, it is suggested, one approach to diversifying funding sources and making new partnerships that are mutually supportive. Naturally, this tendency for arts practice to converge with broader concerns entails a difficult negotiation and imaginative conceptual work if one is to avoid instrumentalizing art as a tool of government policy. The dramaturgical skills of the producer are foregrounded in such developments, even where there might be no funding for the dramaturg as such. One example of a creative response to such imperatives is offered by Exeter's Kaleider, which is premised on the idea of a studio which brings together 'academics, climate scientists, technologists, creatives (including, but not limited to, artists) and young people to face some of the world's greatest challenges' (Kaleider 2016). Kaleider's approach is anything but prescriptive, but instead engages live performance with urgent concerns around space and resources, in collaboration with others.

Despite such positive examples, the emphasis that the Arts Council places on the development of new institutional structures is uneasily reminiscent of Fredric Jameson's recent observations of the rise of the curator as the 'allegorial personification' of the institution in arts practice (2015). This observation might suggest that there could be an unpalatable side to a role that is sometimes closely connected with articulating an institutional rationale. Despite clear advantages, as suggested by Jacqueline Bolton, who proposes that the institutional dramaturg provides a means to 'unify artistic and administrative functions' and to provide the (internally developed) justification for state subsidy (2009: 200), fears around the dramaturg's implication in structures of power, policy and finance were part of the anxieties rightly expressed at discussions of the dramaturg in 2005–7. These included, for instance, debates at 'What is Dramaturgy?', Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 2005; at 'Dramatrix 05', London Oval Theatre, 2005; and even at 'European Dramaturgies in the Twenty-First Century', Hessische Theaterakademie, Frankfurt, 2007. The location of the dramaturg in municipal arts buildings also implicates the role in the politics of space, where such buildings can prove to be merely the spaces of the cultural elite. Kully Thiarai, now Artistic Director at the National Theatre Wales, proposed in a keynote speech to 'Dramaturgies #4', Melbourne:

> As dramaturgs … we spend time exploring what is present in the text and what is missing. I'd like to suggest that it's time to apply some of this thinking into a broader analysis of cultural provision. Let us not just look at what is present. Let us also ask ourselves what is missing? Who isn't part of this conversation? (Thiarai 2011: 19)

Thiarai seems to be suggesting a role for the dramaturg as provocateur, rather than as the 'gatekeeper' occasionally suspected by playwrights and others.

In another context, it could be interesting to look at Jameson's anxieties around the role of the curator in relation to the politics of space and historicity in contemporary art, to identify some of the challenges for the dramaturg-as-curator in the context of such art curatorial dominance. This is as much a discussion of artistic form and the role of 'postproduction' activities in contemporary practice, as it is about institutional power – although the two are not unconnected. However, we should not assume that the dramaturg has the same kind of influence and status that we find among curators in the visual arts, nor that such dominance would go uncontested by theatre artists. In practice, the majority of dramaturgs