

Drama

How the page becomes a stage

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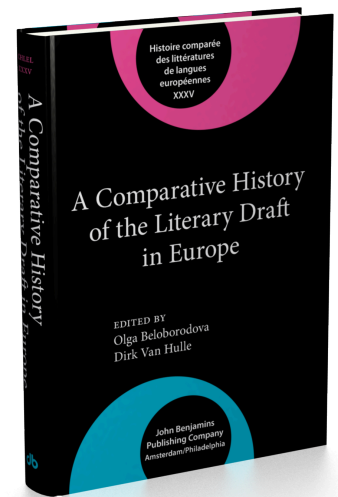
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1.4.2 Drama

How the page becomes a stage

Edith Cassiers

Theatre is often defined by its ephemerality, its fundamental presence in the here and now. Can we circumvent performance's immediacy and study theatre through the genetic documents of its creative process? How are drama drafts related to other literary drafts? Can we use the same methodological techniques to study drama and literary drafts? In this chapter, I will first suggest a new definition for drama drafts and discuss the theoretical domain of genetic criticism as an analytical tool. In the second part, I will explain the differences between dramatic and other literary drafts, and connect them to the challenges of genetic criticism as research methodology. In the third and final part, I will propose an alternative genetic research model on the basis of the directing book as drama draft.

Keywords: drama drafts, genetic criticism, director's theatre, directing book, *Regiebuch*, postdramatic theatre, performance documentation, theatre notation

Theatre disappears the moment it appears. Defined by its ephemerality, its fundamental presence is in the here and now (Phelan 1993: 146). Performance itself – as an action of relatively short duration performed by living bodies in a closed space – *becomes* “through disappearance” (146).

But theatre, dance and other performing arts do leave traces, including drama drafts. These drama drafts are often situated between literature and theatre, and thus form a bridge “between poetry and performance”. How are drama drafts related to other literary drafts? Can we use the same methodological techniques to study dramatic and literary drafts? What *roles* can drama drafts play in literary and theatre history? Can we circumvent performance's immediacy and study theatre through the genetic documents of its creative process? Can these drama drafts (re)present (the ontological quality) of performance – or is it, indeed, intrinsically lost?

In what follows, I will first suggest a new definition for drama drafts and discuss the theoretical domain of genetic criticism as an analytical tool. In the second part, I will explain the differences between dramatic and other literary drafts, and connect them to the challenges of genetic criticism as research methodology. In the third and final part, I will propose an alternative genetic research model on the basis of the directing book as drama draft.

Defining and studying drama drafts

Drama is understood to be one of the three main genres of literature, alongside epic and lyric. It is often defined as all forms of text intended to be performed on stage before an audience by one or more actors or *dramatis personae* (van Gorp et al. 2007: 130). This focus on performance is an essential element in the definition and analysis of drama, though not all types of drama are intended for staging (for example closet drama).

Drama is often characterised as a part of theatre, whereas theatre is seen as the performance of drama, including theatrical elements such as space, set, objects, sound, music, light, rhythm, mimicry, gestures, proxemics, costume, rhythm, and so on. However, that much-used dichotomy between drama as text and theatre as staging/*mise-en-scène* does not hold. Indeed, the word “drama” is derived from the Greek “dran”, which means “(to) do, act” (Van der Sijs 2010: n.p.). Thus, drama moves far beyond linguistic expression alone: “every act that is aimed at visualising something belongs to drama, including pantomime, a clown act, a role play and a play” (van Gorp et al. 2007: 130). An important difference between theatre and drama is the simultaneity of production and reception, which makes each theatrical performance a one-time, unrepeatable event, even if it is, for example, the same play. The word “theatre” is derived from the Greek “theatron” or “place of contemplation”, which comes from the Greek “theao-mai”, meaning “I contemplate, I look with admiration” (Van der Sijs 2010: n.p.). The word thus refers to both the act of *watching* (spectatorship) and the place where that act takes *place* (stage), while drama refers to the act of *doing*.

This somewhat forced dichotomy between drama and theatre haunted the relatively recent history of the study of genetic documents of the creative process, as “dramatic” notes and documents are separated from their “theatrical” counterparts. In her seminal article “Towards a Genetic Study of Performance – Take 2”, Josette Féral divides the genetic documents of a theatre performance into two categories: “textual drafts” and “scenic drafts” (2008). By “textual drafts” Féral means all documents related to “the text proper: the initial annotated text or manuscript with all the layers of corrections, modifications, cuts, adaptations, rewritings and so on that alter the original text” (224). With “scenic drafts” or sketches, she refers to all written, visual and oral documents related to (the design of) the staging and generated by “the conceptual workers and [...] different artisans of the show”, including the dramaturge, scenographer, lighting, costume and sound designer, text author, and director (226).

According to Josette Féral, the study of “textual drafts” – or, indeed, a narrow definition of drama drafts – closely resembles genetic criticism: the tracing of the different stages as well as the dynamics of the writing process leading to the final manuscript (224–225). The successful tradition of *critique génétique* or genetic criticism in the study of prose, poetry and other literary drafts that developed in the 1970s indeed provided much inspiration for the study of drama drafts (see among others Dort 1987; Grésillon 1996; Bernard 2005; Contat 2005). This led to the emergence of the sister discipline of theatre genetic criticism in the 1980s which promises the documentation, reconstruction and analysis of creative processes of the performing arts.¹

Theatre genetic criticism was defined by theatre scholar Patrice Pavis as the study of the creative processes of a dramatic text or theatre performance (2014: 105). The first mention of the dramatic text in that definition is significant, as the focus of this young discipline was namely on the genesis and earlier drafts of dramatic texts (see for example Thomasseau 2001: 97; Grésillon 1996). With the emancipation of theatre studies from literary studies in the 1960s, an increased interest in the genesis of the staging or *mise-en-scène* emerged, in addition to that of the text. Theatre genetic criticism thus became the systematic study of all documents produced during the process of creation (Féral 2008: 223). Due to the definition of drama as “doing” and thus not necessarily solely a textual exercise, I want to propose a broad definition of the drama draft. The drama draft is not limited to manuscripts and various versions of (drama) texts, but encompasses the wide variety of genetic documents within a creative process in the performing arts. These include (but are not limited to) set, light and costume designs and plans, rehearsal reports, drawings, dance notation, music scores, photographs, video and audio recordings, social media posts, actor’s copies, promptbooks and *Regiebücher* (directing books).

One of the objectives of theatre genetic criticism consists of contributing to historical theatre research – certainly in the period where audiovisual capture was not yet possible. Theatre genetic criticism provides insight into cultural history in general, and the performance practices of a certain period, theatre genre or artist in particular. Thomasseau states that (historical) theatre genetic research should be one of the priorities of theatre historiography (2005: 105). Theatre genetic criticism, furthermore, provides insight into the concept of theatre in general and a specific theatre performance in particular, laying bare the creative process(es), the roles and functions of collaborators (such as the writer, the director, an actor, a technician, and so on), and the relationship between text and scene (for example in the way in which a theatrical text is adapted or staged).

Differences between dramatic and literary drafts, and challenges for theatre genetic criticism

There are several differences between the drama draft and its more vigorously studied literary sibling, the prose draft.² Indeed, the differences among dramatic and prose manuscripts are

1. The list of publications on this subject is growing considerably. See for a selection of the most foundational publications in this area: special issues *Genesis 26 Théâtre* (2005) and *Theatre Research International 33.3 The Genetics of Performance* (2008), and edited volume *Genèses théâtrales* by Almuth Grésillon, Marie-Madeleine Mervant-Roux and Dominique Budor (2010). There is a working group “Processus De Création. La Génétique De La Représentation” of the IFTR that meets annually to discuss current research (<https://www.iftr.org/working-groups/processus-de-creation-la-genetique-de-la-representation>). Theatre genetic criticism is primarily a French-speaking theoretical domain, apart from the development of Anglo-Saxon “rehearsal studies” and the South American semiotic approach (see Almeida Salles 1992 and 2002, among others).
2. See the crucial introduction by Almuth Grésillon, Marie-Madeleine Mervant-Roux and Dominique Budor on the history, development and challenges of the research tradition of genetic research on theatrical creation (2010: 9–14).

often proposed as explanations for the more hesitant, and thus less visible, research of drama drafts. In what follows, I will discuss the idiosyncrasies of drama drafts as well as the resulting challenges for theatre genetic research.

Both *critique génétique* and theatre genetic criticism share the same starting point: a number of drafts that precede an (artistic) creation. The “pre-texte” or “avant-texte” in genetic criticism becomes the “pre-performance” in theatre genetic criticism (Féral 2008: 231). However, for a drama draft this distinction is less clear. When is a dramatic text finished? When published, similarly to a prose or poetry text? Or when being performed? In line with Pierre-Marc de Biasi’s notion of “bon-à-tirer” (1996), the moment when an author’s manuscript is released for publication, there is a clear separation between the creative process and the performance in theatre genetic criticism. The work is considered finished when it is premiered in a public presentation (Pavis 2014: 105). However, that performance is not a tangible, materially finished product – unlike a published text. As previously stated, theatre consists of the simultaneous taking place of both production and reception. The “ideal performance” does not exist, and each performance is different from the previous one. As Derrida’s paradox of the theatre states: the theatre is simultaneously doomed to repeat (through endless rehearsals – in French *répétitions* –, reruns, re-enactments, revivals, and so on) and cannot repeat (Hrvatín 1994: 43). The drama text exists by the agency of the actors who pronounce and embody it. Every rehearsal and performance, the text is spoken, acted and depicted differently. The tone is just that little bit different, a breath is taken differently, a word or punctuation mark is changed, the rhythm is different, a piece of dialogue is skipped. The body of the actor saying the text has changed since the last time that body said the text. The audience has changed as well: the other bodies that react to the text and influence its further expression, are different. A dramatic text is continuously in flux, is always being created, is always becoming.

Critique génétique starts from a denial of the preconception that the published form is the first and only version. A text is never “finished”. Each version of a text (published or unpublished) is merely a snapshot of a particular stage in the working process – a text can also be rewritten after publication. In contrast to the prose or poetry draft, this is the rule rather than the exception with the drama draft. During the various performances of a production, it undergoes constant changes. Rehearsals continue after the premiere, resulting in both minor and major adjustments. Moreover, several contemporary artists make variability and coincidence a subject of the (dramatic) work itself. The separation between the creative process and the performance is thus strictly artificial. Although these main categories are quite widespread in genetic research on literature, theatre and dance scholars have generally limited their focus to *endogenetic* analyses, with little or no attention paid to the *exo-* and *epigenetic* influences that equally determine the creation of a work.

In contrast to the (seemingly) individually produced poetry and prose, drama as well as the performance to which it (most often) leads, is the result of teamwork that includes the contributions of writers, directors, actors, designers, dramaturges, technicians, assistants, and others. Although collaboration and cooperation are some of the core principles of creative processes in the performing arts, there is a strong tendency to attribute the creation of a work to a single author (Rabkin 1985; Kraut 2007; Sidiropoulou 2011; Shepherd 2012). This reinforces the essen-

tially romantic idea that works of art are the product of a unique creative spirit, regardless of the collaborations, inspirations or circumstances that influence their final form. It also ignores the way in which new work formats, such as theatre collectives, deliberately defy singular authorship, turning the signature of a work into a political issue or statement (Syssoyeva and Proudfit 2013). In this respect, by providing a more accurate description of the various interactions that contribute to the creation of theatre (or dance), genetic studies can represent an important corrective to the historiography of the performing arts, which is often constructed around the names of directors (or choreographers), without taking into account the formative contributions of actors, dancers, dramaturges, playwrights, designers and others.

Parallel with its (usually) collaborative nature, the creation of drama drafts follows a non-linear and complex timeline. As a creative process in the performing arts exists of many phases of translation or adaptation – moving from idea, to text, to script, to embodiment, to performance, to re-enactment, and so on – many (but not all) drama drafts are characterised by an erratic conceptualisation, consisting of repetition, returns, curves, deletions, divisions and cracks (Grésillon et al. 2010; Brooks 2014). However, theatre genetic criticism, sprouted from a strong French structuralist tradition, presents the development of creative processes by means of a linear temporal model and thus creates coherence in the collection of drafts. An organic process of creation is twisted on a temporal axis, with a clearly delineated point in time as its beginning until the work is premiered (Grésillon and Thomasseau 2005; Thomasseau 2005). Different movements in time, such as moving forward, returning and multitemporality; the recycling of ideas, movements or text; the cross-links between different works; are all part of the everyday reality of theatrical creation, but are not integrated into theatre genetic models.

This brings us to a crucial but nevertheless often overlooked aspect of drama drafts: these are never solely textual. Theatre is often regarded as what Chiel Kattenbelt has called a “hyper-medium”, a medium that combines different media, leading to a *mise-en-scène* that (often) includes text, light, décor, costume, movement, music, projection, and so on. This leads to multi-medial drafts, including drawings and sketches, sound compilations and music notation, photographs and videos, collages, and so on. Although the evolution of theatre is intrinsically linked to the development of new media and technologies, these are conspicuously absent from current theatre genetic research. The use of film and photography is mentioned briefly (see also Féral 2008), but techniques such as digital editing, live streaming, and social media on and off the stage are neither recognised as part of the creative process, nor deployed as genetic research tools.³

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3. Dance studies, on the other hand, is moving more at the forefront of the implementation of new technological tools for capturing and analysing choreographic creations (see, among others, deLahunta 2007; Whatley 2015; Causey et al. 2015). Advances in this area have remained largely descriptive in nature: the primary focus is on the technological set-up that makes the documentation of these processes possible, rather than on the critical analysis of what the newly acquired documents can tell us about the artist's creative methods, the aesthetics of the piece or the contextual working conditions. Genetic criticism has been very actively impregnating new media and technologies in their

Theatre genetic criticism, emerging from the highly text-centred theoretical field of genetic criticism, (still) considers text as the main semiotic sign of theatre – as beginning and end (see for example Thomasseau 2005; Grésillon and Thomasseau 2005). The drama text remains the epicentre of theatre genetic analysis (Dort 1987; Grésillon 1996; Bernard 2005; Contat 2005). As mentioned before, several theatre geneticists have a very narrow definition of the theatre text (see for example Féral 2008) and rigorously preserve the unnatural separation between text and *mise-en-scène* (see for example Dort 1987).

As the presence of material traces continues to be a prerequisite for genetic research, non-written and immaterial sources are not taken into account. Several researchers (see Pavis 2014: 106, among others) have addressed this problem: certain “drafts” or “brouillons” of the theatrical creative process are non-linguistic (such as visual, auditory) or even immaterial (such as improvisations, rehearsals, and so on) and are therefore not examined. Although the importance of non-textual documents is acknowledged, scene-genetic documents are often considered “too difficult” to analyse, interpret and classify in a sequence of chronologically marked processes – they escape the “savoir-faire génétique” (Grésillon et al. 2010: 28; see also Féral 2008: 227). My broad definition of drama drafts includes non-linguistic traces (sketches and drawings, photos and videos, masks and costumes, lighting and the physical theatre space, and so on) as well as the *ephemera* of theatre (gestures, movements, presences, and so on) (see also Grésillon et al. 2010: 6). Performance theorist Diana Taylor has argued that the performing arts are distinguished from other artistic disciplines by their building on a “repertoire of embodied practices” (2007: 26). This repertoire should be recognised as “an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge,” even if this knowledge cannot be stored and preserved in the archive, traditionally seen as the repository for material remains, such as written documents, videos, photographs, and so on (2007: 26). So far, theatre theory has not been able to identify a way in which this repertoire of physical skills, cultural conventions or artistic know-how helps to shape creative processes in the performing arts. Oral testimonies, body-to-body transmission, embodied knowledge, the body as archive and intersubjective collaboration need to be given a place in theatre genetic criticism in order to clarify the relationship between both tangible and intangible forms of creation, and the interaction between this embodied knowledge and external media. Here the theoretical domain of rehearsal studies forms a crucial addition to genetic criticism. Rehearsal studies is defined as the systematic study and documentation of rehearsals.⁴

research for several years under the banner of Digital Humanities. Theatre genetic criticism still has to catch up in this respect (Crombez and Cassiers 2017).

4. Australian scholar Gay McAuley was the first to elaborate on rehearsal research within theatre studies (1998, 1999, 2012). Her focus is on ethnography as a methodology, an approach that was adopted by other researchers (Maxwell 2001). Since then, several researchers have focused on the study of rehearsals: from historical theatre performances (Hodgdon 1988; Stern 2000) to contemporary theatre (Govan et al. 2007; Harvie and Lavender 2010; Matzke 2015). Some researchers focus on rehearsal research in directorial theatre, such as Susan Letzler Cole (1992) and Helen Manfull (1999). See also *About Performance* #6 (2006).

Similarly, the current theatre genetic criticism falls short in its analysis of contemporary theatre by often ignoring the current hybridity within the performing arts. Theatre is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary and is moving on the boundary between theatre, dance, circus, visual art, architecture, music and Performance Art. In addition to director's theatre, collective practices and improvisation-driven rehearsals, there are also the hybrid creative processes of documentary theatre and installation art. These diverse creative methods are not reflected in theatre genetic research.

One of the reasons for eschewing hybridity in materiality and temporality amongst genetic traces, is the pursuing of an impossible, illusory completeness within genetic criticism. The entire theatrical genesis is imbued with this semiotic illusion: if we can map out all elements, we can arrive at a final interpretation of the performance and its creative process (for example Proust 2008). Several researchers have already pointed out the impossibility of completeness or totality (Grésillon and Thomasseau 2005: 32; Féral 2008; Grésillon et al 2010). After all, the genetic process does not end with the rehearsal; the artist's imagination is not limited to office hours.

Completeness within genetic criticism is also impossible to achieve if one only looks at the inside of the rehearsal room. Indeed, in theatre genetic criticism there is often no attention for the context and underlying dynamics of drama drafts. The creative process is a complex amalgam of different, intermedial processes and dynamics: textual but also physical dramaturgy, notation and documentation; actor theory and training; costume, light and scenography design. In addition, the production method and context (urban/rural theatre, residency circuit, rehearsal duration, and so on) also have an impact, as do sociology and political definitions of what "labour" and "creation" are or should be in (in this case) the current Western globalised, neoliberal society. Nevertheless, genetic research often remains devoid of the cultural, social, political and economic context of creation. Theatre genetic criticism remains trapped in formal analysis and ignores the extra-aesthetic embedding that determines the form of the work to a significant degree. Recent performance studies and art theory increasingly address both the close and critical connections between art production and neoliberal society (Gielen 2009; Kunst 2015). Yet the ways in which creative processes in the performing arts are shaped by these conditions have hardly been the subject of discussion. Nevertheless, these differences – such as the length of a rehearsal period, the production budget, the number of artistic collaborators, and so on – undeniably have an impact on creation and thus the drama drafts.

Diversity as well as idiosyncrasy within drama drafts and the creative process are often seen as a problem to be avoided. "Every production requires its own method", wrote the Belgian dramaturge Marianne Van Kerkhoven (1994: 5–6; my translation). Each work requires its own way of working and creating. This statement goes beyond the boundaries of the performing arts and applies to every form of art. "There are probably no general principles for artistic creation", writes Dirk Van Hulle (2007: 24–25; my translation). Eclecticism is therefore inherent to theatre genetic documents. And yet this idiosyncrasy is still seen as one of the greatest difficulties of theatre genetic criticism (Thomasseau 2005; Grésillon and Thomasseau 2005; Féral 2008: 227). Genetic scholars still try to streamline these singular and process-based creative practices into

static, categorical models and structures that can only be used for a limited number of theatre forms (for example Thomasseau 2005; Grésillon and Thomasseau 2005). Nevertheless, no model has yet been developed that can represent theatrical creation as a truly dynamic and intrinsically idiosyncratic process.

Last, but surely not least, drama drafts have a certain artistic quality themselves. The line between genetic documents and art has always been thin – a theatre performance or literary text is merely an “instantiation” of the actual work (Van Hulle 2007: 30–31). However, drama drafts (such as sketches, drawings, poems, videos, music scores, and so on) as artistic expression of different theatre collaborators, often flirt with the status of autonomous works of art. While some genetic scholars are aware of this quality in genetic documents, this hasn’t been made into a part of (theatre) genetic criticism.

In conclusion, theatre genetic criticism is a promising theoretical field for the analysis of drama drafts, but as a theoretical domain still clings too hard to the *critique génétique* and shows too little respect for the medium specificity of theatre. Everything that makes theatre *theatre* is often not included in the analysis (collectivity, physicality, multitemporality, and so on). What is needed is a revision of theatre genetic criticism that is based more on the ontological characteristics of theatre in general, and of contemporary theatre in particular. In the words of Patrice Pavis: “la génétique est une discipline d’avenir, à condition de ne pas se contenter de regarder en arrière, mais d’embarrasser toute la théorie contemporaine” [Genetic criticism is a discipline for the future, provided we don’t just look backwards, but embrace the whole of contemporary theory] (Pavis 2014: 108; my translation).

The directing book as thinking model

While theatrical creative processes, as well as the drama drafts produced in the meantime, receive more and more scholarly attention, directing books or *Regiebücher* have until now slipped through the meshes of the theoretical net. Nevertheless, theatre scholars like Josette Féral, Patrice Pavis and Jean-Marie Thomasseau have pleaded for (theatre genetic) research of these notes, since they prove to be a crucial window on creative processes, the performances and the figure as well as working methods of the theatre director. In what follows, I propose an alternative model for drama drafts on the basis of the directing book. Before that, I will explain the definition of a directing book, followed by a brief historical overview.

A directing book has a different name in every language. The directing book, *Regiebuch* or “livre/livret/cahier de mise-en-scène” is the favourite instrument of the director – the “author” of the performance, a figure that emerged at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century. The theatre director can be defined as the figure who centralises control of the *mechanics* (the practical and technical organisation) and *aesthetics* of a production (Jannarone 2010: 133–158; see also Chinoy 1976).⁵ They are responsible for bringing together the various

theatrical elements (either in harmony or deliberately in disharmony), making the director both an artist and a manager.⁶ The directing book generally contains the dramatic text accompanied by the notes written by the director(s) in the margins of the script. Director's notes thus stand between the drama-text and the staging, consisting of the director's instructions to transform the drama text into a performance text, to transpose it from the page to the stage.⁷

In the history of modern theatre, the directing book became a symbol for the empowerment of the theatre director. From the emergence of the director and their book onwards, the authority of the playwright (and thus of the dramatic text) as the sole origin of the performance will gradually become problematised. By filling the margins of the theatre text with ideas for the *mise-en-scène* (scenography, acting style, costume, floor plans, and so on), the theatre director not only created a new vision of a specific dramatic text, but also of the possibilities of the theatrical medium and the division of labour in the theatrical creative process. In what Erika Fischer-Lichte called the "performative turn" in theatre history (late nineteenth- to early twentieth century), the *mise-en-scène* became more important, partly driven by the rise of the director and their book.

Originally, director's notes remained closely linked to the text-based logic of dramatic theatre. The directing book served, and serves, as *paratexte* – an addendum for the dramatic text consisting of stage directions or *didascalia* how to stage the text. Thus the drama text seemingly remains the most important and all-determining theatrical sign, prescribing also the medium for these directing books: paper and pen. Patrice Pavis calls the directing book "a written materialization, the complete score of the work on stage" (1982: 116). It contains the ideally envisioned theatre performance, in contrast to the actual performance, with text as most important pillar. Directing books like Max Reinhardt's *Regiebücher* or Bertolt Brecht's *Modellbücher* promise completeness, a finished product that is invariable, permanent and stable.

Throughout the history of the modern stage, however, the text has become less prominent or even disappears in favour of the visual and auditory imagination of the director – hence Hans-Thies Lehmann's term "postdramatic" theatre (1999). The written drama text no longer functions as a source-text always preceding and determining the performance; within postdramatic theatre the director rather starts from ideas, images, movements or sounds – hence the term "post-drama". Partly because of the decrease of the importance of the dramatic text, and in that sense the implied medial carrier of notes and text and language, and partly because of

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5. Furthermore, direction does not have to be taken up by the singular person of a director but can also be shared by several people in a shared responsibility (as is the case, for example, with a collective) – hence the term "directing book" rather than "director's book".
 6. According to the German theatre scholar Annemarie Matzke, the director's tasks from production to final performance can be "conception", "organisation of the workspace", "reflection and observation" and "correction" (2015: 16). Simon Shepherd also confirms that there is no general and officially approved directing method – there are many different directing methods, all of which have different consequences and lead to different results (2012: 36–37; 23–68).
 7. Though it often resembles a prompt-book (a "livre/livret/cahier de régie"), it differs in function, form and author.

the increase of multi- and intermediality within postdramatic theatre, the mediality and materiality of the directing book have fundamentally changed. Besides sketches, notes and conceptual reflections in the margins, a diversity of formats is introduced, often borrowed from other artistic fields (films, video, music, the visual arts). In contrast to traditional director's notes, these contemporary notes are often traces of the complex, on-going and transitory dynamics of invention during the genesis of a performance in which text does not serve as the most important and all-determining theatrical sign, and the logos-centred structure of the performance is often undermined. Instead of instruction manuals for the ideal product, they form remains of the hybrid creation process in which different routes and possibilities are explored. They are often less (or differently) structured, unfinished and without boundaries. They flee the traditional form of pen and paper, the codex with obvious beginning and end.

As these directing "books" express different materialities, temporalities, functions and forms, they form an ideal "thinking platform" to redevelop a new model for drama drafts. As the temporality and materiality of directing books differ, I formulate different *roles* for the directing book – a word which has its etymological origins in the drama draft itself and refers to the ways a directing book can function in a creative process.⁸ Not every directing book includes all roles, and some of the roles overlap or are adopted by other genetic documents.⁹

- a. *Conception* seems to be the most obvious and possibly most important role of the directing book. The directing book is often the first platform for an original, creative thought – a new idea, design, outline, direction or plan for a performance. This conception, like directing as such, is intrinsically linked to the staging or *mise-en-scène*, and thus to the design of scenography, costume, light and blocking. Famous examples include the comprehensively planned directing books by Max Reinhardt, Konstantin Stanislavski, Bertolt Brecht and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.
- b. *Analysis* of the source material (a theatre text, theme, painting, music, and so on) is also an important role of the directing book. The British theatre director Katie Mitchell emphasises the importance of analysing the dramatic text before the start of the rehearsals in the directing book, including distilling the larger themes of the play and analysing in-depth the main action, the context of the play, each scene and character (2010: 26–53).¹⁰
- c. *Modification*: the directing book is used to edit and adapt the source material for the staging. This can be text adaptation of, among others, drama texts, novels, letters, poetry, essays and film scripts. For his adaptation of William Shakespeare's *King Dramas (Ten Oorlog)*, Belgian theatre director Luk Perceval butchered Willy Courteaux's translation with scissors and tape. The scraps he didn't need disappeared in the dustbin, the passages he wanted to keep were glued together (Sels 2005: 230). Indeed, postdramatic directors have an ambiguous relationship with text, which is not infrequently characterised by a dismantling or even

8. The word "role" stems from the early 17th century French "*roule*", referring originally to the roll of paper on which the actor's part was written (Van der Sijs 2010: n.p.).

9. An earlier version of this model for the roles of the *Regiebuch* has been published in Cassiers 2020.

10. Many of these research practices belong to the *exogenetic* process.

demolition of the classical theatre text (Lehmann 2006: 25). Other material can also serve as source material, including images, music, films, photographs, a choreography, and so on. The Italian theatre director Romeo Castellucci's notebooks, for example, contain various references to the Bible, mythology, visual art, film, literature and music (De Laet and Cassiers 2015). Modification often involves an exciting interplay between construction and destruction.

- d. *Organisation and communication*: Both the director figure and the directing book were born out of organisation, especially the medieval *maître de jeu* with their *abregiet* to organise and direct complex mass scenes and parades. Likewise, contemporary directors continue to be managers, leading figures who organise practical matters (Shepherd 2012). Belgian theatre director Guy Cassiers has the instructions or decisions in his directing notes translated into an electronic report that can be shared with the other employees.
- e. *Observation*: A directing book is often a log of the production and rehearsal process – especially “if there is no script before rehearsals begin” (Mitchell 2009: 111). Some directors write down everything that happens during rehearsals or discussions, but this is most often done by assistants – as was the case for Roger Blin, assistant to Antonin Artaud and extension of his eye. Likewise, Vsevolod Meyerhold had a team of assistants who noted the events during rehearsals.
- f. *Reflection* is a crucial element of directing books, as they can become a type of diary. In *Le Théâtre Au Jour Le Jour* (2013), Julie Valero discusses how the “journaux personnels et carnets de création” of theatre directors hold “la pensée en mouvement des artistes” (n.p.). In addition to personal reflections, there are also professional reflections on the poetics, dramaturgy or structure of a performance. The German theatre director Heiner Goebbels regularly writes essays in which he sets out the main parameters of his poetics, such as how he interprets “absence”, an important theme on his stage (2015). The reflectional function is not necessarily textual as some directors draw or doodle to reflect.
- g. *Selection*: A crucial function of directing books from the second half of the twentieth century onward is selection. Starting in the 1960s, the use of the (all-determining and linear-narratological) theatre text became less common and (as a result) improvisations became more important. Directing books are often platforms for making a selection from the large collection of material and thus represents the “decision process” of a theatrical creation – they allow us to “follow the choices, observations, modifications and hesitations leading up to the final decisions made for a production” (Féral 2008: 226). In this regard, the director is often compared to an “editor”. Although the entire artistic team creates the material – “devised” material, in the case of Forced Entertainment, for example – the director retains “a form of editorial control” (Shepherd 2012: 56). Director Tim Etchells describes himself as follows: “I am like an organizer, a filter; but not a neutral filter, because it’s ultimately what I like that gets prioritised” (Giannachi and Luckhurst 1999: 27). Selection can be performed in a positive or in a negative way, not infrequently crystallised in the form of (adding to or cutting from) lists, collages and annotations.

- h. *Compilation*: After the material has been selected, it is placed in a structure: a scene sequence or order that can serve as the skeleton of the performance. According to Matzke, this selection and structuring process is an important transition point in the two phases of rehearsal: the research-oriented and the performance-oriented phase (2015). Often theatre and Performance Art of the second half of the twentieth century have genetic documents in the form of chronological lists of scenes – not dissimilar to the *canovacci* of the *Commedia dell'arte*. Compilation can include strategies such as montage, collage and assemblage. Theatre director Elizabeth LeCompte (The Wooster Group) works with video recordings during rehearsals and stresses that she uses principles of film editing to organise her material. Even when not working with a video camera, directors revert to the cinematic process of editing to compose their production. Directors such as Robert Wilson and Peter Brook draw up storyboards.
- i. *Correction* and (self-)reflexivity form an important part of the rehearsal process and the directing book (Matzke 2015). To correct certain aspects of the theatre performance, mistakes are indicated, noted and analysed. Perceval records each rehearsal with a video camera, which he edits at home. At the next rehearsal, he confronts his actors with the recording of their actions, hence they can see their mistakes for themselves. Correction becomes especially important in the final part of the rehearsal process, shortly before the premiere, but is also used after the premiere, in preparation for the next performances.
- j. *(Intermedial) transposition*: “Just as performance need not resemble the exposition of dramatic literature, the performance document need not resemble the play script,” write Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks (2001: 57–58). Directing books can have the medium of writing (notes, notebooks, lists), drawing (sketches, designs, doodles), photographs, film/video, digital (for example software, social media, and so on), music (scores), and many more. In the transformation from directing book to theatre performance, both *what* is represented in the directing book – the “meaning” or “message” – and *how* it is represented – the “medium” – are being transposed. Indeed, in translating source material (a novel, a drama-text, an idea, an image, and so on) to the stage, some (medial and/or semiotic) qualities of the source material and/or directing book are transposed to the performance as well.
- k. *Construction (of authorship)* is likewise an underestimated function of directing books. As they strengthen the idea of a singular author or *Regisseur*, directing books also constructs an interpretation and conception of the director’s figure – a “genetic fiction”. Director’s books can be used to perform control, establish a cult(like) culture and generate capital (Cassiers 2020).
- l. *(Artistic) expression* is a role of the director as artist (rather than as manager). The directing book can serve as a platform for artistic expression and become an artwork on its own. The directing books of Adolphe Appia, Antonin Artaud, Lothar Schreyer and Edward Gordon Craig have already been exhibited and published extensively for (among other things) aesthetic reasons, so that these documents consisting of drawings and calligraphy flirt with the status of “artist book” (Bury 1995: 1). Several directors have also released theatre films –

(pseudo-)documentaries based on the process of creation of a performance, such as Ariane Mnouchkine's *Au soleil, même la nuit* (2012), a film about the creation of *Tartuffe* (1995) (see also Féral 2008: 227). Occasionally the directing book becomes part of the theatrical performance in the context of which it was created. Sometimes the directing book (or genetic documents and notation in general) is also thematised as such, as for example in Tim Etchells' *A Broadcast – Looping Pieces* (2014), Jan Martens' *Ode to the Attempt* (2014) and Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion's *Both Sitting Duet* (2002). Judith Malina, director of The Living Theatre, based her performance of *Antigone* on the complete translation of Brecht's *Modellbuch* of *Antigone* – for which she created a number of directing books (Rosenthal 2000). The result are *meta-performances* in which the process of creation is thematised. The directing book sometimes replaces the theatre performance – certainly in the case of performance documentation. Performance Art by definition only takes place once – in contrast to theatre, which can be repeated endlessly. In that respect, both photography and performance need each other, in a mutual authorisation, claims Amelia Jones in the much-cited “Presence in Absentia” (1997) (cf. Kosstrin 2012). Furthermore, certain performances “were staged solely to be photographed or filmed and had no meaningful prior existence as autonomous events presented to audiences. The space of the document (whether visual or audiovisual) thus becomes the only space in which the performance occurs” (Auslander 2006: 2). Some of the directors' ideas were better realised in the directing book, as for instance in the work of Craig, Artaud, Appia and Schreyer. Their theatrical experiments found an easier platform on paper than on the stage – thus creating a kind of “closet directing book”, in imitation of its dramatic equivalent.

Conclusion

To study the drama draft is in a way to question the nature of theatre itself. A new approach to drama drafts can benefit the study of both literary drafts and theatre, and, by doing so, create a more critical perspective on literary history. For example, the problematic tendency to attribute a drama draft to a single author is inherently linked to the complex notion of authorship and copyright in the performing arts (in which the dramatic manuscript plays a crucial role), but has led to a misguided perspective on theatre and dramatic history. A thorough study of (the wide variety of) drama drafts can oppose the tendency within historiography to attribute a (literary) work's creation to one single author – especially as collaboration forms a core principle of creative processes in the performing arts. To be able to do this, we need to include different medialities, materialities and temporalities among drama drafts in the genetic research of theatrical creative processes – and, thus, move away from a textocentric research perspective. Dramatic drafts form a gateway to artistic practices from the past. They can literally bring history to the here and now, promising historians to reconstruct “performances in the mind's eye” (Hart 2014: 2) – which is what happened with many Elizabethan and medieval performances (see Marker 1974; Marker and Marker 1976).

At the same time, these drama drafts teach us about the risks of incorporating genetic research into historiography. Besides the eclectic diversity among drafts, and the related analysis difficulties and illusory pursuit of completeness, there is also the manipulation of drafts – how these genetic documents are manipulated and censored in order to create an idealised image of a creative process, performance or author, or even to replace them altogether. Dance scholar Myriam Van Imschoot warns artists for sharing their genetic documents as they become “mystified” and “monuments” that strengthen the distance between artist and audience (2005: 15).

On the other hand, there is also great *performative potential* in drama drafts. Both Philip Auslander and Barbara Hodgdon claim that documents of the performing arts (be they Performance Art photographs or a Shakespeare promptbook) are not merely indexical traces that provide access to a theatrical past, but still “play roles” in performance culture (Hodgdon 2012: 374). The most important relationship is not between document and performance, but between the document and the audience – between the drama draft and us. Their authenticity, power and presence are not *ontological*, but *phenomenological*: we can perceive “the document itself as a performance that directly reflects an artist’s aesthetic project or sensibility and for which we are the present audience” (Auslander 2006: 9). Hodgdon sees promptbooks and also other documents as “sites of *re-performance* for which I am a present audience” (2012: 374).¹¹ Several authors claim that the originally binary opposites of performance and documentation (archive) move towards each other when process documents are shared – archive becomes part of performance (and vice versa) (Cook 2001; Whatley 2015). Drama drafts are performative, in the sense of their potential to construct a new reality, referring to the context in which they were created: an *aesthetic* reality (based on the poetic principles that inspired them), but also a *social* reality (based on the political, economic and social frameworks in which they were created). They are capable of dissolving the strictly separated notions of creative process and performance.

Drama drafts can be used literally and figuratively without limit – by audience members, researchers and artists – and their performativity is unleashed when they are shared. Genetic research turns into art practice, the historian becomes a performer. The expected immediacy and presence of theatre is endlessly stretched. Drama drafts carry the promise of infinity, as a performance of time that unfolds before us. If genetic documents can become art, where does theatre performance begin – and does it ever end?

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11. The drafting of such documents can also be called performative or theatrical. Pavis describes any form of theatrical notation as “already an act of theatre – and sometimes, a theatrical act” (Pavis 1982: 129).

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