THE PERFORMANCE STUDIES FOCUS GROUP
OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THEATRE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

in collaboration with THE RELIGION AND THEATRE FOCUS GROUP

12TH ANNUAL PRE-CONFERENCE:

spirituality as critique

23-24 JULY 2014, FAIRMONT SCOTTSDALE PRINCESS HOTEL, SCOTTSDALE, AZ
CURATED BY CLAIRE MARIA CHAMBERS AND BETH HOFFMANN

FOR MORE INFORMATION
WWW.ATHE.ORG/GROUPS/PSFG

Image: Video still from Tornado, Milpa Alta 2000-2010 - Francis Alÿs (2000-2010)
The Department of Performance Studies at Northwestern University lives at the sprawling intersection of personal narrative, literature, culture, technology, and performance theory. We value the study and practice of performance: examining and enacting literary texts, analyzing and theorizing on cultural rituals, public identities, and political positions. Our students and faculty are vibrant scholars who question cultural assumptions and influence national performance scholarship and production.

**DEPARTMENT FACULTY**
Joshua Chambers-Letson  
Paul Edwards  
Marcela A. Fuentes  
E. Patrick Johnson

D. Soyini Madison, chair  
Ramón Rivera-Servera  
Carol Simpson Stern  
Mary Zimmerman

**PROGRAMS OF STUDY**
MA/PhD in Performance Studies  
BA/BS in Performance Studies
"Spirit" and "critique": these two words have such convoluted genealogies, and are part of such wide-ranging scenes of intellectual inquiry, that they form a particularly complicated starting point for an interdisciplinary academic conversation. It would take far more space than is available here to try to give even the briefest account of their operations within the context of theatre and performance studies. Perhaps it is enough, for now, to say that our goal at this pre-conference is to juxtapose “spirituality” and “critique” in such a way as to renew and reimagine broader critical attention to the complexity of their enmeshment in one another.

For example, Kant's three Critiques reflected upon the Enlightenment's optimistic celebration of “reason” as the human capacity for independent thought in direct challenge to the authority of church and state. But what ensures that the exercise of reason maintains morality and the common good? Responding to this “crisis” of Enlightenment thought, Kant's Critique of Pure Reason upholds the sovereignty of reason, by critiquing reason with reason itself. According to Kant we live in a world that is thinkable but not knowable, since reason and experience provide ordered structures for our understanding, but the “noumenal” world remains beyond our approach. Despite the apparent sovereignty of reason, then, Kant leaves room for the possibility of critique that maintains a relationship with spirit, since the unknown is not rejected as “unreal” but understood as the context for knowledge itself. Furthermore, Kant's philosophy never rests; it is practice that constantly considers the relationship between experience, knowledge, and truth. Accordingly, Foucault's reassessment of critical theory kept Kant in mind when he offered “critique as practice in which we pose the question of the limits of our most sure ways of knowing” (Judith Butler, “What is Critique?”).

And indeed, taking up Butler's gloss on Foucault, this pre-conference was also imagined as itself a scene of critique: specifically, in attending to the particular ways in which these terms have been pressed into the service of a range of obdurate binarized formations, with significant slippage between the valued/devalued term depending upon the context of the encounter between them (e.g. secular/religious social spaces and ways of knowing; objective/subjective academic inquiry; etc.).

To serve these ends, we will explore the particular encounter between spirituality and critique enacted through the research conducted by Prof. Amira de la Garza. De la Garza's innovative work can be read as a reappropriation of Western traditions of spirituality, challenging a conventional division between spiritual practice and academic research. As a performance ethnographer and postcolonial methodologist, de la Garza opens up critique to situate its authority not only in an abstracted version of structural “context,” but also within the more nebulous, affective spaces of community, collective memory, and shared experience. We're very excited to having Prof. de la Garza with us to walk us through her work in lecture form, as well as in offering an introductory, practical workshop on her research methods.

Thank you so much for joining us. We look forward to a vibrant, ongoing dialogue at ATHE, starting here at the pre-conference and continuing throughout weekend.
Pre-Conference Schedule

Wednesday, July 23

11.30 am - 12 pm: Registration

12.00 - 12.15 pm: Welcome and opening remarks from Beth Hoffmann and Claire Maria Chambers

12.15 - 1.45 pm: Keynote talk by Prof. de la Garza

1.45 - 2.00 pm: Break

2.00 - 4.00 pm: Workshop with Prof. de la Garza

4.00 - 5.00 pm: Reception

Please stay and join us for refreshments immediately following the workshop

Thursday, July 24

10.00 - 11.15 am: Working group sessions. Tea and coffee will be served

11.15 am - 12.00 pm: Working group debriefings and concluding remarks
About PSFG

Since its inception over a decade ago, the Performance Studies Focus Group (PSFG) has helped to expand the scope of the ATHE conference as a whole. By drawing upon interdisciplinary methods, scholars, and ideas, PSFG has consistently worked to challenge and critique the boundaries of performance itself and performance-based inquiry. To that end, PSFG has consistently sponsored a wide variety of multidisciplinary panels, fostering scholarship and discussion about the keywords, models of cultural efficacy, and research methodologies defining the fields of “theatre” and “performance.” Since 2003, the PSFG has also hosted an annual pre-conference event, exploring in depth a variety of PS topics—ranging from the foundational question “what is performance studies?” to “play” and the gamification of everyday life.

PSFG Officers and Members-at-Large
2013–2014
Focus Group Representative        Megan Shea
Conference Planner                Joseph Cermatori
Treasurer                         Lindsay Adamson Livingston
Secretary and Focus Group Representative Elect Melissa Wansin Wong
Webmaster                         Raimondo Genna
Conference Planner Elect          Beth Hoffman
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2014 Pre-Conference Organizer
Beth Hoffmann
Program Design: Raimondo Genna

If you would like to learn more about PSFG, please attend our annual membership meetings.
Meeting #1: Saturday 12-1.30 pm, Sonoran Room. Meeting #2: Sunday 8-9.30 am, Casita 5232
About R&T

The Religion & Theatre Focus Group (R&T) is comprised of scholars and artists whose work broadens and deepens an exciting and rigorous discourse surrounding the performative practices of spiritual belief. We advocate for the serious study of points of intersection between religion/spirituality and theatre/performance. We challenge preconceptions about the place of belief in theatre/performance studies, and champion uncensored critical discussion of religion in the public sphere.

R&T Officers

2013–2014

Focus Group Representative  Jill Stevenson
Conference Planner          Claire Maria Chambers
Focus Group Representative Elect  Megan Sanborn Jones
Conference Planner Elect    Ed Lingan
Secretary                  Allan Davis
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Archivist for the Journal of Religion and Theatre  Heather Beasley

If you would like to learn more about R&T, please attend our annual membership meeting:
Saturday 12-1.30 pm, Casita 5232

Washington University in St. Louis

Master of Arts Program in Theater and Performance Studies

This two-year master’s program integrates multidisciplinary approaches to performance into an intense study of theater grounded in cultural history, critical theory, and applied practice. In the Performing Arts Department at Washington University in St. Louis, students can:

• Prepare for competitive PhD programs in theater and performance studies by working with leading faculty in performing arts, as well as art, anthropology, classics, dance, film and media studies, English, non-Anglophone languages and literatures, music, and women, gender and sexuality studies.
• Integrate theory and practice both in coursework and by working on productions with our creative team of directors, designers and choreographers.
• Attend symposia focused on debates in contemporary scholarship.
• Access holdings in the university’s archives and special collections, including drafts of Samuel Beckett’s Play (1963), early writings by Tennessee Williams, and unedited documentary footage from Eyes on the Prize (1987; 1990).

Washington University is located in St. Louis, an accessible Midwestern city that boasts cultural amenities such as a world-class symphony, several world-class art museums, historical archives, a vibrant independent theater and music scene, and many other attractions. For more information please visit pad.artsci.wustl.edu/graduate.

Please recommend our program to your most promising students!
Application deadline is January 15th
ABOUT FEATURED GUEST
SARAH AMIRA DE LA GARZA

Prof. Sarah Amira de la Garza (Amira) is a Southwest Borderlands Scholar and Graduate Faculty Member of Theatre & Performance in the Americas at Arizona State University. She is an Associate Professor in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at ASU, where she heads the Innovative Inquiry Initiative and teaches courses in performance studies, ethnography & qualitative research methods, and intercultural communication. She has a Ph.D. in Speech Communication from The University of Texas at Austin and a D.Min. from The University of Creation Spirituality, where she also served briefly as Academic Dean and Co-Director of the Doctor of Ministry program. At Arizona State University, she is Affiliate Faculty with the School of Transborder Studies, Women & Gender Studies, and Disciplinary Faculty with Barrett: The Honors College. She also serves as technical advisor to The Marsh: Breeding Ground for New Performance (San Francisco/Berkeley), and was PI of a Social Science seed grant for the Shakespeare Cognitive Research Consortium at ASU. Read her full bio at http://amiradelagarza.com/

THE INSTITUTE FOR COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND SOCIETY (ICLS)
Columbia University

The Institute for Comparative Literature and Society (ICLS) at Columbia University brings together the humanities and the social sciences, with law, architecture and the arts, and places questions of translation and comparativism at the center of its mission. The work of the Institute is fully historical in its range. Of particular interest to the Institute is the post-Cold War rethinking of area studies paradigms in relationship to new developments in the discipline of comparative literature itself.

ICLS organizes a range of events open to the public, and houses the undergraduate and graduate programs in Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University, as well as the undergraduate program in Medicine, Literature, and Society, and the graduate certificate in Psychoanalytic Studies.

In our curriculum, as well as in our conferences, lecture series and workshops, we bring a literature-focused study of language and culture to the area studies as they rethink their mandate; and, conversely, we try to give substance and recognition to those directions in comparative literature that can benefit from the breadth of knowledge produced by a reshaped area studies. In this effort, we work collaboratively with the social sciences. The name of our endeavor — Institute for Comparative Literature and Society — acknowledges that goal.

ICLS’s engagements with the arts extend beyond literature to include performance, film, music and plastic forms, as well as art history and aesthetic theory. Past events with artists, filmmakers and musicians include performances, screenings and conversations with: Toni Morrison and Richard Danielpour (about the opera ‘Margaret Garner’); Assia Djebar (about her opera ‘The Daughters of Ishmael’); Joe Diebes; Mieke Bal; William Kentridge; and Daniel Barenboim.

For more information, please visit: icls.columbia.edu

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