

**The voice of anxiety : affect through tone in filmic
narration and voice-over**

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PERFORMA



Performance and Performativity: Actualities and Futures

Call for Papers (Deadline: 15th April, 2016)

Conference to be held on Wednesday 15th June, 2016

Leeds Humanities Research Institute, University of Leeds

Confirmed Keynote: Professor Vikki Bell, Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths

In 2011, Athena Athanasiou and Judith Butler held a series of exchanges via email that led to the book project *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (London: Polity, 2013). As the authors contest... *Acts of resistance will take established orders of subjection as their resource, but they are not condemned to hopelessly reproducing or enhancing these orders. "Self-presence" is an attachment to an injurious interpellation, which becomes the condition of possibility for non-normative resignifications of what matters as presence.*

Over 2015/16, the *Performa* research group (LHRI, University of Leeds) has explored the relation of performance, performativity and the performative *in* the political through a concerted programme of reading, taking on the writings of Frantz Fanon, Judith Butler, Peggy Phelan and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick among others committed to renewed possibilities for the Left. This programme will culminate on **15th June 2016** with a **one-day conference, *Performance and Performativity: Actualities and Futures***. Performativity is a transdisciplinary concern that informs research in disparate fields; we aim to bring scholars into conversation who might not otherwise have a chance to meet. We are thrilled to welcome as the keynote speaker Professor Vikki Bell, author of *Culture and Performance: The Challenge of Ethics, Politics and Feminist Theory* (2007). Bell's work on theories and critiques of performativity has particularly engaged with the implications of the performative for ethics and politics.

PERFORMA

Abstract for paper *Performances and Performativity: Actualities and Futures conference*

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THE VOICE OF ANXIETY:

AFFECT THROUGH TONE IN FILMIC NARRATION AND VOICE-OVER

Unhomely Street, a recent essay film by filmmaker Susannah Gent explores the Derridian concept of hauntology, both in terms of its original context taken from *Spectres of Marx* where Derrida suggested that 'time is out of joint' and that we are haunted by spectres of those dead and those not yet born, as well as Mark Fisher's interpretation of the term which mourns the lost futures of the twentieth century, suggesting we are live in a time of mental illness, unable to envisage a future that is different to current times.

The film is comprised of a multi-layered narrative, a central storyline follows a woman, performed by Gent, lost in a fugue following a head injury as she navigates an alienating city. Other contributors discuss capitalism and what they see as being wrong with the world today, snippets of recollections that enter the narrative as remembered conversations. Another narrative strand revisits human atrocities of the last century. The stories are told from third person narration; the voice of authority, first person accounts of mental illness, including the vocalisation of affect, cold recounting by factual voiceover of historical accounts, and personal statements.

Through this film Gent considers the various registers of vocal presentation and the point of departure from language to tone where the quality of delivery communicates over and above the linguistic content, where emotion in the voice expresses the anxiety and illness which the speech describes, as well as issues of authenticity, affect, and mimicry in acting, performance and presentation.

Gent draws on Michael Chion's idea of the screaming point as an element of timeless punctuation, and explores R. D. Laing's statement that 'we can indicate by language why language cannot say what it cannot say'.

KEYWORDS: violence, history/memory, mourning, modes of seeing, sounds and the senses

This proposed paper would last twenty minutes and would be supported with video clips from *Unhomely Street* (see below for a selection of images from the film as an indication of content and style).

Technical requirements: projection facilities for hard-drive or on-line video.



Bibliography

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FISHER, Mark, *Ghosts of my Life – Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, Winchester: Zero Books, 2014

R. D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise*, London: Penguin, 1967

Biography

Susannah Gent is a filmmaker, artist, and lecturer in film production at Sheffield Hallam university. Her films that have gained awards at international film festivals over the past twenty years explore experimental narrative approaches to representing subjectivity. She is studying for an interdisciplinary, practice led PhD researching the uncanny and hauntology through film, philosophy, and scientific survey.