

[sic!]

SUMMER INSTITUTE COLOGNE

2017 - BELIEF/BELIEVE - CALL FOR PARTICIPATION



- Topic: Belief/Believe
- 29 August – 9 September 2017
- Location: Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung, University of Cologne
- Deadline for applications: 1 March 2017
- Open to graduate students (master's and PhD)
- Fee: 200.00 Euro, reduced fee for Cologne students: 70.00 Euro
- The fee covers lunches, excursions as well as snacks, and coffee at [sic!].
  
- You will find the application form, a preliminary timetable and more information on <http://sic.uni-koeln.de>
- Please feel free to contact the coordinator Sascha Förster:  
[sascha.foerster@uni-koeln.de](mailto:sascha.foerster@uni-koeln.de)



**Northwestern**  
**THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

## [sic!] 2017

We invite graduate and postgraduate students from Area Studies, Art History, Classics, Communication, Cultural Studies, Dance, English, Film, German, Japanese Literature, History, Literary Studies, Media, Music, Performance, Sound, Theatre, and related fields to apply for this international interdisciplinary program. (All sessions will be conducted in English.) Participants and faculty of [sic!] 2017 will explore perspectives on the topic *belief/believe* through three themed seminars:

- Sound Media
- Theatre
- Visual Narration

Each seminar will be led by a pair of scholars from Northwestern University (Evanston, USA) and the University of Cologne (Germany). In addition to the seminars, [sic!] offers interdisciplinary academic workshops that allow for a dialogue with participants from across the seminars. Each participant enrolls in one seminar and one workshop, thus composing an individual study program. Seminars and workshops are enhanced by excursions, lectures by alumni, poster presentations by students, and social gatherings. The University of Cologne assists participants in identifying accommodation and with other basic logistics.

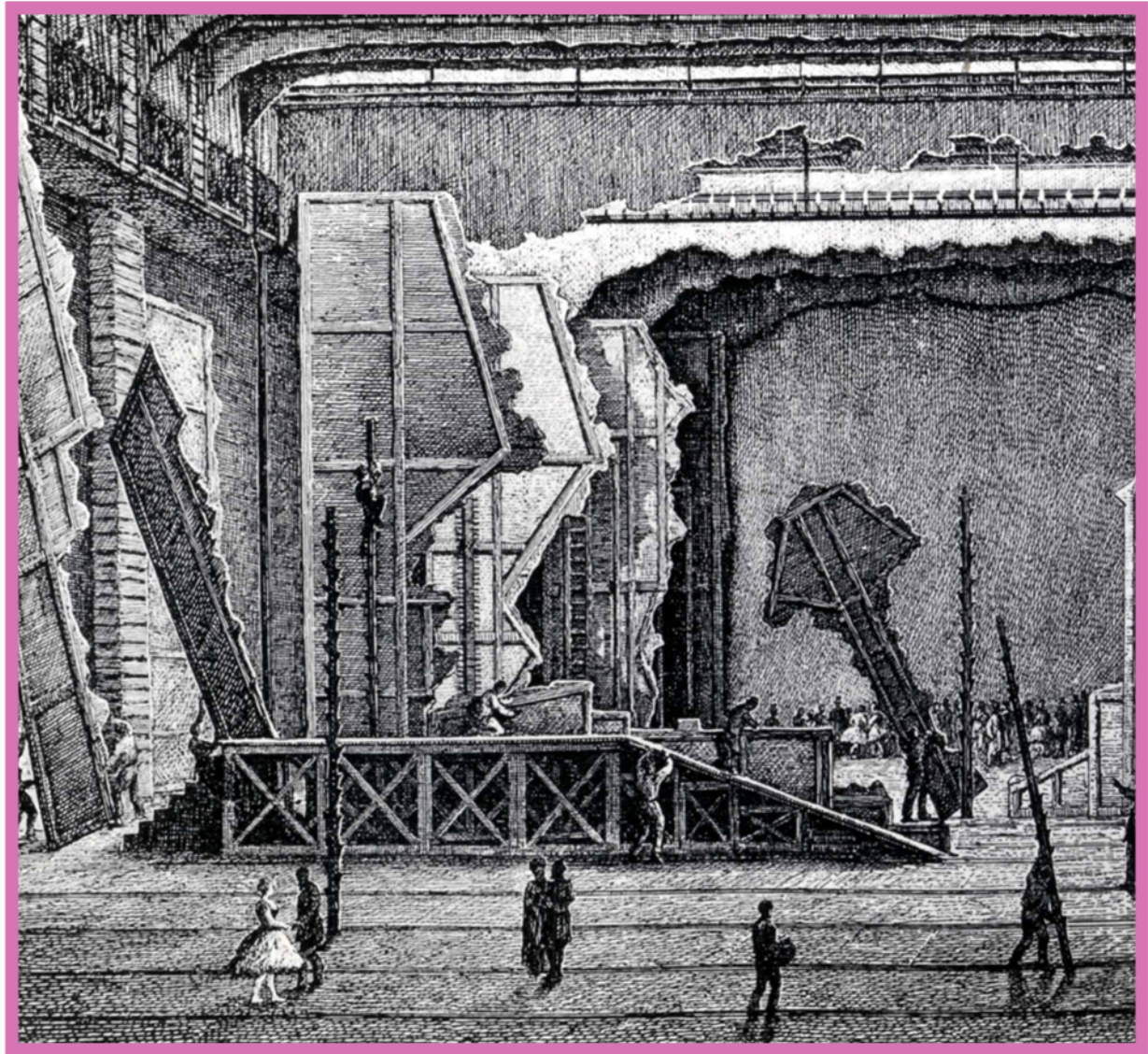
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The words *belief/believe* not only designate a state of certainty but also conjure the epistemological apparatus of knowledge and its mechanisms. Implications range from religious faith to the conviction to “hold something as true.” This points to three different aspects:

- a) a firm conviction to believe;
- b) the status of knowledge (not as absolute certainty but an active investment of the believer); and
- c) the underlying *contrat de vérité* (Greimas), the epistemological foundation and its rules to “produce” truth.

The Latin word *credere* – influential to all Western concepts of *belief/believe* – emphasizes this broad horizon through its etymological roots, *cor dare* (to put your heart on someone/something) which includes the affective element as well as the active agency that is inscribed into the concept. Thus, a continuum of experiences, conditions, or convictions – belief, credibility, assurability, magic, reality, abstraction, artificiality – may be considered as relative to each other or as mutually held. We make investments in something, but this is also triggered by conventions and technologies.

Even in the Age of Science (“wissenschaftliches Zeitalter,” Brecht), or maybe particularly because of it, the concept of *belief/believe* is especially salient. In pluralistic societies that allow for polyphony of convictions and procedures that instill contrasting beliefs, the active and affective moment of putting one’s heart on something and taking it for reality is both omnipresent and constantly challenged. There are no longer any obligatory and unifying systems of knowledge; instead, there are various institutions and systems competing against each other and fighting for influencing/becoming reality in a political, economic, or social sense. The arts gain a special position: the realm of aesthetics which in many cultures are designated as autonomous and/or put against ‘reality’ creates a point of view that allows various grammars of *belief/believe* and their respective individual and social investments. Sometimes, also, the arts create a perspective of the world that is more to our heart than a reality we cannot or do not want to believe.



## HEARING IS BELIEVING: THE UNREAL REALITY OF SOUND MEDIA

– Marcus Erbe (Cologne), Neil Verma (Northwestern)

How do sound media shape our beliefs? How do they prompt us to make-believe? The two questions diverge, one leading to the establishment of a credible sense of “the real” and the other to a firm sense of “the unreal.” But at the same time they converge around issues of authenticity, evidence, hyper-reality, construction, and manipulation. Together they also let us consider the making and apprehending of sound as a contingent process central to defining that which is allowed to be evident, and that which is “merely hearsay” or even “phony.”

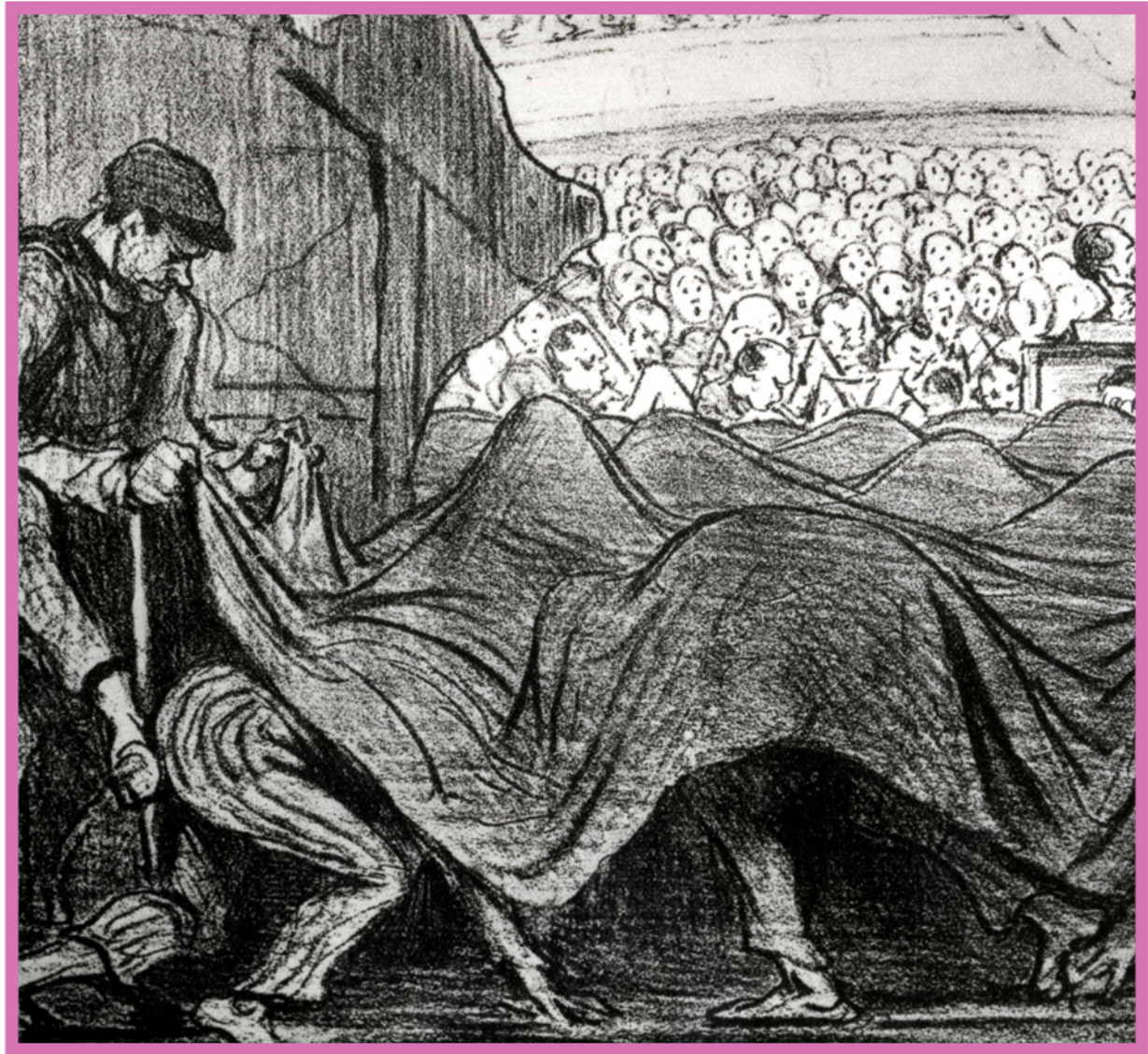
This seminar will consider how artists and theorists have worked on (and played with) the problem of sound and its status as “bearing” the real/unreal, the believable and the unbelievable. Some key questions include:

- What is the concept of the real emerging from specific sound recordings in radio art, film, video games, audio books, electroacoustic music, found sound, and soundscapes?
- What discourses – philosophical, religious, historical, political, artistic – become entangled in the problem of the relationship between the sonic real and the sonic unreal?



- What forms of art are afforded by spaces of play between the believable and the unbelievable in sound recording?
- How is audio-visuality central to the idea of making audiences believe in things?
- How do audience members themselves create alternative realities by re-shaping predetermined media artifacts?
- Do certain types of vocal performance make the underlying emotive contents appear more 'credible' than others?

Focusing on key texts, artworks, and performances, this seminar will take into account some of the deepest epistemological problems in sound studies, and on sound's role in both undermining and vouchsafing concepts of certainty.



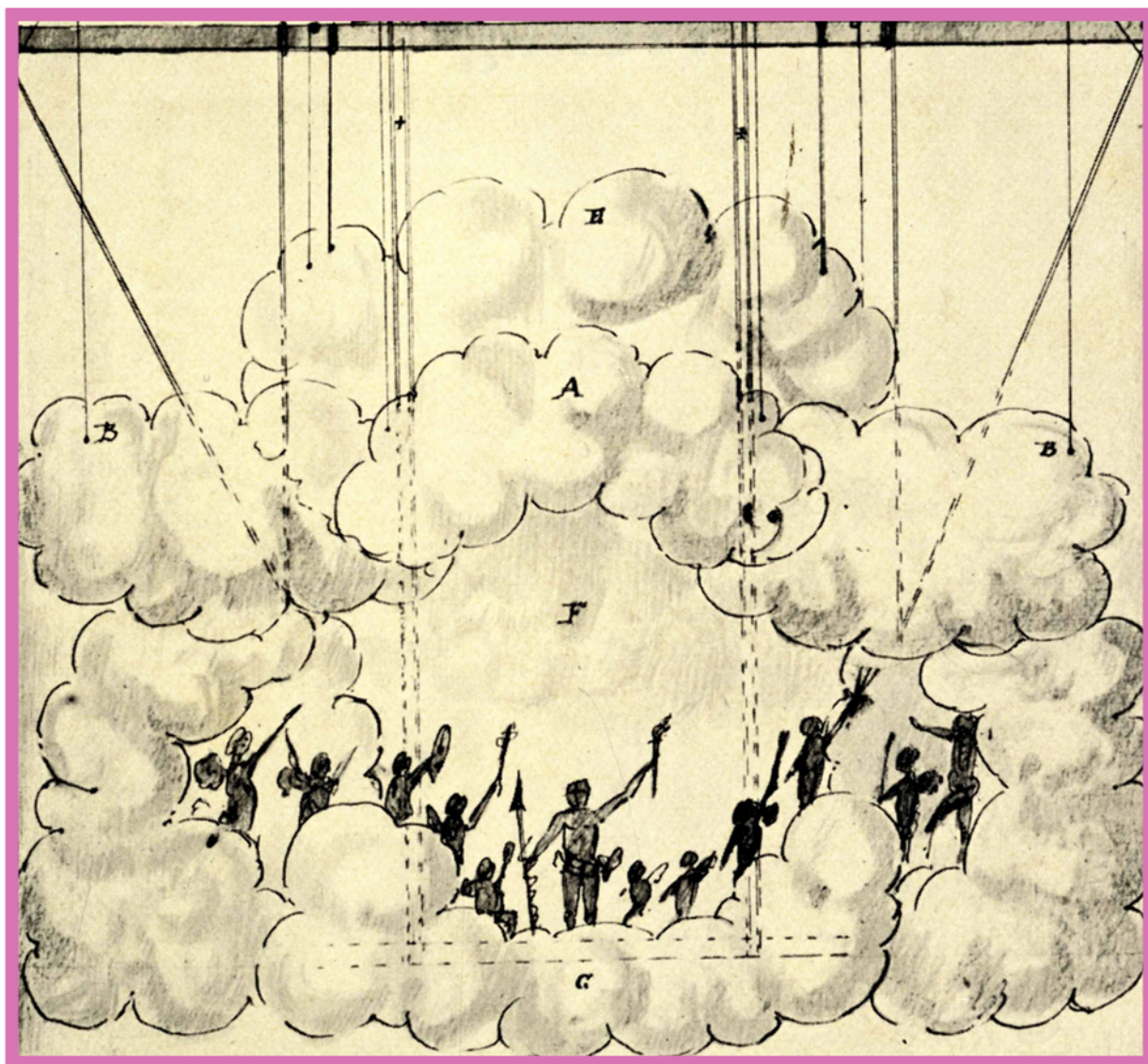
## THEATRE

– Tracy C. Davis (Northwestern), Peter W. Marx (Cologne)

One of the objections against theatre is that it can “make one believe” in something that is not real. On the other hand, one of theatre’s contributions to the human experience is that it can posit as conceivable what is otherwise not yet imagined or hoped for. Both the objection and the contribution pit performance against an idea of “reality” and require aesthetic devices and traditions to engender belief. This seminar takes a broad view of performance and performative situations and explores claims that

- depend on the idea of a fixed and unified truth
- undermine regimes of truth with alternate perceptions
- break illusion and bear witness against rational claims
- utilize aesthetic conventions to codify belief systems

Additionally, following an open and broad concept of *belief/believe*, acknowledging its various layers and implications, procedures of making believe in terms of creating a personal investment come into view. How can we describe theatrical practices and techniques in the light of *belief/believe* as a process of negotiating procedures to create a truth/conviction that – in return – is not restricted to the scene but has implications for the culture that provided the scene?



## SEEING IS BELIEVING: EVIDENTIALITY IN VISUAL NARRATION

– Patrick Noonan (Northwestern), Stephan Packard (Cologne/Freiburg)

The belief that visual media, like the photographic image, can serve as evidence of the “real world” is often based on assumptions about the objectivity of the camera or the indexical nature of the image. To see an image as evidence requires seeing it “as it is,” removed from any potentially subjective, or “false” narrative context. But what role does narrative itself in visual media – from cinema and TV to comics, animation, and more – play in inspiring belief? The objects and characters in stories may or may not actually be as they are shown and seen, which can invite doubt. (Is Donald a duck? Do the warriors of Azeroth carry swords larger than their bodies? And does Captain Kirk wear a hairpiece?) At the same time, seeing a scene may give it a media-specific credibility, plausibility, or disposition towards suspension of disbelief.

In this seminar, we will examine various effects and differences in the evidentiality created by the graphic quality of visual narration. We will discuss topics ranging from media rhetoric through fictional and documentary genres to questions of ideology and the representation of body images; and we will trace emotional and affective attachments and their relations to the belief we invest in what and how we see.



- Images: Carl Baumann Archive at Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung Cologne
- Photos: Christina Vollmert

