The increasingly obsolete binary between the notions of ‘new writing’ and ‘new work’ in the United Kingdom, as shown in Chapter 3, has led both playwrights and theatre-makers to seek new models of writing for the stage. While companies such as Shunt and Punchdrunk have joined the ranks of Forced Entertainment, Reckless Sleepers and Forkbeard Fantasy in diversifying further the ways in which the tradition of live and performance art can (re-)enter the theatrical domain, writers such as Chris Goode,1 Shon Dale-Jones2 and Tim Crouch3 have drawn on similar strategies to reinvent the nineteenth- and twentieth-century notion of a playtext. All three writers consider themselves to be theatre-makers who practise highly collaborative ways of working, although they have all been able to gain accolades in both performance and new writing circles. David Lane notes that:

Crouch’s work in particular creates numerous crossovers between these categories, both ‘performance’ and ‘new writing’ in its aesthetic but also ‘traditional’ and ‘text-based’ in its pursuit of a story structured around the resolution of a character’s inner conflicts.

(2010: 87)

Revisiting my theatre-going experiences from 2009, described in the Introduction, I find that, in addition to a rebalancing of the text and performance hierarchy, there is another key characteristic that they all share to varying degrees – an altered relationship with the audience. It remains therefore for me to finish this volume by focusing on the variety of early twenty-first-century dramaturgy that inscribes the spectator into the work. This kind of spectator is not solely involved on a ‘cognitive’ level (McConachie 2008), in the ‘visceral, sensorial and critical modes of watching’ (Fensham 2009: 15), nor are they primarily an ‘unsettled spectator’ (Grehan 2009: 2). Even though some of the works discussed here have been perceived as being ethically problematic because they involve the audience in the kind of ‘active spectatorship’ described by Helena Grehan as a ‘process of consideration
about the important issues of response and responsibility’ (2009: 5), the investigation of this chapter is more concerned with the space created for the audience’s co-authorship and authority, rather than solely the makers’ own. While acknowledging the tension that has emerged between ethical and aesthetic art criticism, and taking into consideration the reinvigorated legacy of Brecht as outlined in the previous chapter, the discussion that follows engages more keenly with theatre works that are seen as ‘new’ within their twenty-first-century context. Although they necessitate the audience’s active involvement, the chosen examples might not be solely and primarily characterized by their ‘interactivity’ or the notions of ‘cognitive and sensory immersion’ (Klich and Scheer 2011) that they provide. Instead, these works could be understood as belonging to the category of ‘experiential theatre’, or, at least in one case, the Dutch/Flemish version of this known as ‘ervaringstheater’. However, what is specifically important about them is that they do not simply require the audience’s agency, but they in some way depend on the audience’s authorial input for their full meaning to be realized. For this reason, I have opted to consider the work of Punchdrunk, for example, in the context of adaptation rather than this chapter; in my view, the company engages the audience in a kind of interactive mechanism that I would qualify as ‘dramaturgy of anxiety’ reminiscent of gaming, rather than as a process of co-authorship.

I will discuss here the work of Tim Crouch, the Belgian company Ontroerend Goed and the Croatian company Shadow Casters, with reference to Nicolas Bourriaud’s idea of ‘relational art’ and eventually also in the context of Jean-Luc Nancy’s idea of community as a process of ‘being together’, which this work might be seen to facilitate. A key methodological feature of this chapter is the intention to show the way in which the element of co-authorship has, in the case of all of the discussed artists, emerged as a result of an evolving dramaturgical approach which places relationality at its core. For this reason specific works by Tim Crouch, Ontroerend Goed and Shadow Casters will be considered in relation to the specific genealogies of making to which they belong. Instead of Purcărete’s Faust, discussed in the Introduction, Shadow Casters’ trilogies Process_City and On Togetherness have been chosen for analysis as more explicitly relevant examples in the context of this chapter. Although some of these artists have never met or seen each other’s creations – being based in distinct cultural contexts – it is particularly interesting that their works share some crucial methodological similarities.

**Tim Crouch’s ‘dramaturgy of liberating constrictions’**

On its Royal Court premiere, Lyn Gardner described The Author as a ‘bold, brave, playful piece, a devastating riff on ways of seeing and turning a blind eye to our own moral choices’. Dominic Cavendish too, saw it in positive