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**'Authenticity'**

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*Platform: Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts* is published twice annually. Contributions are particularly welcome from postgraduate researchers, postdoctoral researchers, and early-career academics in theatre and performing arts. We welcome the submission of academic papers, performance responses, photo essays, book reviews, interviews, and new dramatic writing. *Platform* also welcomes practice-based research papers.

Papers should not exceed 4500 words (including notes and references). Practice-based papers should normally include images in JPEG format (300ppi). Reviews should be around 1000 words. Photo essays should not exceed 2000 words and 10 pictures. All contributions should be formatted according to the MLA style guidelines (see Gibaldi's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*) and should include a 200-word abstract of the article submitted as well as the article itself. Authors should also send a 50-word bio with their submission. Submissions should be sent electronically as email attachments to [platform-submissions@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:platform-submissions@rhul.ac.uk).

**Peer Review Policy**

All articles are subject to peer review. All articles are anonymously refereed by two or more independent peer reviewers, in addition to review by the editorial board.

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## Editorial

Authenticity is both a historical concern and a hotly debated topic. As a concern for the genuineness of historical artefacts and the validity of individual and collective memory, authenticity reaches into the past. In the first sense, the advent of mechanical and digital reproduction has turned authenticity from a relatively straightforward scientific question of accurate dating into a more open-ended philosophical investigation of the meaning and value of the authentic object. As it relates to memory, questions of authenticity serve to open up enquiries into the hierarchy of facts over feelings (or vice versa) and the extent of our ability to reconstruct the past.

Alongside and as an extension and intensification of these questions, authenticity has more recently become a favoured preoccupation in academic research and journalism. In the 2016 U.S. election, for instance, the comparative authenticity of presidential candidates like Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and Donald Trump was on everyone's lips. Touching on the realm of performance and theatricality, the concern here was with the authenticity of the self and its public performance, a topic seminally explored in Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972). Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that in response to newfound interest in, and the apparent currency of, the 'authentic, several recent monographs emerge from within theatre and performance studies that engage to a significant degree with the notion and current relevance of authenticity. Both Andy Lavender's *Performance in the Twenty-Century* (2016) and Daniel Schulze's *Authenticity in Contemporary Theatre and Performance* (2017, reviewed in this issue of *Platform* by Sara Reimers), for instance, identify hunger for authenticity as a now predominant structure of feeling, emanating from the desire to

replace postmodern scepticism with something more tangible, real, and post-postmodern.

The articles in this issue of Platform pursue and question this newfound penchant for authenticity in myriad different ways, from concerns with the authenticity of historical representations in the theatre (Greenstreet, Starkman) to the market value of an artistic identity constructed as authentic (Dapena-Tretter). The political valence of an aesthetic of authenticity is a particular concern; the articles here examine how such an aesthetic might be constructed through the combination of documentary and fictive elements in the theatre (Ferguson) and interrogated through performative sound installations (Marschall).

In the opening article, 'Jean Dubuffet & Art Brut', Antonia Dapena-Tretter examines the mid-twentieth century art world's propensity to see authenticity in what was perceived as 'primitive' rather than cultured, and in the amateur's supposed unselfconsciousness and lack of concern with professionalised art practice, as opposed to the learned perception of the trained artist. Through an examination of Jean Dubuffet's Art Brut collection and Art-Brut-inspired art practice, Dapena-Tretter exposes how claims to uncultivated authenticity could become extremely lucrative for a consummate professional and highly cultured artistic insider like Dubuffet.

Hannah Greenstreet's article, 'Historical Authenticity', examines how two neo-Victorian plays, *Red Velvet* by Lolita Chakrabarti and *An Octoroon* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, grapple with the history of black representation in the theatre. Analyzing how the two plays interrogate and question the authenticity of stereotyped representations of black people, Greenstreet argues that the plays pursue this goal through different strategies. While both provide critiques of racist representations

in Victorian theatre, *Red Velvet* upholds authenticity as a category of value to locate a forgotten black theatre history whereas *An Octoroon* challenges the validity of racial and theatrical authenticity altogether, putting forth in its stead a more performative understanding of race.

‘A Woman’s Brood’ by Jordana Starkman continues the exploration of historical authenticity, using an analysis of competing memories of the Ireland’s 1916 Easter Rising to examine and question the privilege of constructing ‘authentic’ historical memories. Starkman analyzes how the 1926 staging of Sean O’Casey’s play *The Plough and the Stars* in Dublin threw into sharp relief the different ways in which Ireland’s Easter Rising had entered into the Irish collective memory. Because it championed a distinctly unheroic female working-class perspective that was largely excluded from the national narrative and because the play failed to affirm their triumphant memory of the Rising, *The Plough and the Stars* was controversially received by Irish revolutionary women. Examining how O’Casey’s play became a focal point for a contest between competing memories of a nationally significant event, Starkman calls into question the very idea of authentic history.

Anika Marshall interprets the sound installations and lecture performances of the media artist and researcher Lawrence Abu Hamdan in her article ‘To Speak The Truth, The Whole Truth and Nothing but The Truth’. Engaging with technologies of surveillance, control of immigration, and court hearings, Hamdan draws attention to voice-based legal profiling authentication procedures. While theorising the means by which Hamdan intervenes in the practice, epistemology, and politics of listening and the listener, Marshall questions the ethics of his works, especially the ethics involved in the act of re-playing mar-

ginalised voices to the audience. She finds that the subversion of Hamdan's works may not lie in their critique of power relations but rather in the disturbance of a politics of authenticity.

Alex Lazaridis Ferguson relies on his experience as the director of a documentary theatre production when questioning the representation of testimony in 'Authenticity and the 'Documentive' in *Nanay: A Testimonial Play*'. Using this play—which is based on interviews with Filipino domestic workers in Canada and their employers—as his case study, Lazaridis Ferguson analyses the process of making artistic choices, as well as the dilemmas and debates to which such choices give rise. From his position as a scholar-practitioner, Lazaridis Ferguson confronts and reinterprets the different and often clashing demands of discourses of ethics, affect, and aesthetics on authentic representation and the representation of the authentic. Lazaridis Ferguson dedicates special attention to the physical proximity of actor and object to the audience, and he advocates for the legitimacy of non-realistic stylisation when engaging with the 'authentic' transmission of real people's voices and stories in the theatre.

Following the academic articles, this issue of *Platform* includes a monologue by Christopher O'Shaughnessy. The monologue was first performed by actor/comedian Dave Bibby at the Hen and Chickens Theatre in London on 19 September 2016. It speaks to the theme of authenticity through its exploration of the thoughts and memories of a long-distance coach driver, who articulates his difficult, traumatised life-changing journey towards a cornea transplant.

The editors would like to thank the Department of Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London, for the continued support—both financial and academic—of this journal. Thank you also to our peer reviewers for generously giv-

ing their time, attention and expertise to Platform. We would also like to thank Bloomsbury Methuen Drama for book review copies. Finally, a very special thank you to the authors, whose diverse and challenging engagement with the theme of 'authenticity' has made this an exciting and multi-faceted issue to work on.

Julia Peetz and Raz Weiner, Editors

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## Notes on Contributors

**Adrian Centeno** received his MA in Theater Arts from the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is currently Literary Manager at Playwrights' Arena in Los Angeles.

**Antonia Dapena-Tretter** writes about modern and contemporary art. Her articles have been published in *African Arts*, *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, *The Lincoln Humanities Journal*, *Droste Effect*, and *Seismopolite: Journal of Art and Politics*. She holds a Masters in Art History from the University of Toronto.

**Hannah Greenstreet** started AHRC-funded PhD on contemporary feminist theatre and realism at the University of Oxford in September 2017. She was winner of the TaPRA Essay Prize in 2016 and her essay on storytelling in Enda Walsh and Marina Carr's plays was published in *Studies in Theatre and Performance* in 2017. She is also a playwright, and reviews for *Exeunt Magazine*.

**Alex Lazaridis Ferguson** recently completed a PhD in Theatre at the University of British Columbia. He is on faculty at the Bachelor of Performing Arts program at Capilano University and is co-artistic director of Fight With a Stick Performance.

**Anika Marschall** is a PhD candidate at the University of Glasgow and a member of GRAMNet. Her research focuses on performative interventions and human rights. She has presented at international conferences and published about artistic responses to migration movements, dramaturgies of statelessness, and the aesthetics of Antonin Artaud and Jacques Rancière.

**Peptual Mforbe Chiangong** is Assistant Professor of African literature and culture in the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Humboldt University in Berlin. She has taught at several universities in Germany, including at the Graduiertenkolleg 'Alter(n) als Kulturelle Konzeption und Praxis' in the Department of Art History at the Heinrich-Heine University in Düsseldorf. She holds a PhD in Drama and Theatre Studies from the University of Bayreuth. Her research focuses on intervention theatre, African theatre, postcolonial literatures, critical theory and the representation of 'old age' in African literature.

**Christopher O'Shaughnessy** is a PhD practice-as-research candidate in Theatre and Performance at Goldsmiths, University of London. Verse drama is a facet of his research into spirituality in Theatre.

**Sara Reimers** recently gained her PhD in Shakespeare, gender and casting from the Drama Department at Royal Holloway, University of London, where she is now a Senior Teaching Fellow. She is also a director and dramaturg working on the London fringe and regularly collaborates with Lazarus Theatre Company.

**Jordana Starkman** is pursuing an MPhil in Public History and Cultural Heritage at Trinity College Dublin. Her research on the contemporary commemoration of Dublin's twentieth century Jewish community questions the place of social history, memory, and post-memory within conceptions of current Irish-Jewish identity. She is interested in the effects of community based commemoration and museum development on the formation of modern group identities and notions of diasporic peoplehood.