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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.

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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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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*.

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Jean Dubuffet & Art Brut: The Creation of an Avant-Garde Identity

By Antonia Dapena-Tretter

Abstract

Since Jean Dubuffet first invented the category Art Brut, or Outsider Art, has stood as a unique niche characterized by supposedly pure or authentic artworks born outside the clutches of cultural influence. Despite staking claim to the Art Brut label himself, Dubuffet maintained a profitable career within the fine art market he criticized, utilizing his unusual collection as a tool through which to fashion an image of individuality. As the avant-garde artist par excellence, Dubuffet's early career reveals a personal quest for an undetected 'other'—resolved through his 1945 'discovery' of Art Brut. In writing *Asphyxiating Culture* and other public texts that denounce societal impact on artistic production, Dubuffet carefully constructed the appearance of an outsider. While reaping the financial benefits of an avant-garde status, Dubuffet simultaneously shamed other artists within his Art Brut collection for pursuing artistic recognition or fame. This article provides a careful reading of Dubuffet's many texts and artist statements, underscoring the paradoxical nature of his celebrated career and ultimately questioning the very idea of artistic authenticity.

Struck by the freedom of expression found in the recently-discovered art of the mentally-ill, the French post-war artist Jean Dubuffet began a quest for what he called art of 'raw' origins—an indirect reference to Levi Strauss's famous volume *The Raw and the Cooked*. His search was resolved in 1945 when the artist claimed to have discovered a new category of art. Known more generally today by the English equivalent, Outsider Art, Art Brut stands as a unique art niche characterized by supposedly authentic art objects created outside of the cultural influence of an academic art tradition. Now housed in Lausanne, Switzerland, Dubuffet's *Collection de l'art brut* contains thousands of art objects once

considered by their late collector to be worthy of the unusual 'brut' designation. If for no other reason than the fact that he maintained a profitable career within the commercial art market he criticized, the collector's reputation differed dramatically from that of the Art Brut artists he championed. To compensate for the obvious differences between his career and that of an authentic Art Brut artist, Dubuffet's outsider identity had to be constantly forged through his controversial art production and prolific writings. In penning *Asphyxiating Culture* and other widely available texts that denounce any societal impact on artistic production, Dubuffet shaped his identity as an outsider and in turn reaped the benefits of the avant-garde status he had constructed for himself.

The following analysis seeks to question Dubuffet's authenticity through a detailed review of his relationship to Art Brut—from its mid-century invention to the art world's acceptance of Dubuffet as a member of the avant-garde. The first section aims specifically to contextualize Art Brut and the unique power dynamics that inherently exist between collector and artist. The second assesses Dubuffet's supposed position as an outsider and the long-accepted literature that advances this viewpoint without sufficient research. Through a specific examination of the artist's own words, the paradoxical nature of his career is revealed, and the artist is ultimately exposed as a member of the same 'culture club' he famously denounced.

Dubuffet and the Search for Authenticity in Art Brut

Dubuffet was born in 1901 to a middle-class family in Le Havre, France. At the age of eighteen, despite pressure from his father to study business, he entered the Académie Julian. He tired of academic training after only six months (Selz 9).

It was not until he turned forty-three that he managed to secure gallery representation. Dubuffet referred to the twenty-something years after leaving the Académie as his 'prehistory', and while he destroyed most of his early works, a handful of paintings do remain (Rhodes 779). Scrutinizing these pre-1940s tableaux, art historian Aruna D'Souza categorizes this period as 'Picasso-esque', composed mostly of artworks belonging to a 'classical-Cubist mode' (D'Souza 65). Perhaps it was because his work seemed derivative of what was already on the market that Dubuffet failed to actualize his career until he was middle-aged. To differentiate his art from the rest, he would need to look beyond the Parisian art bubble—a precedent set by a number of avant-garde artists. Drawing parallels between Dubuffet's search and similar quests for non-Western inspiration, outsider art expert Lucienne Peiry noted:

Artists felt a need to free themselves from their tradition and were searching for new values and landmarks, resulting in a kaleidoscopic quest for otherness: Delacroix left for the East in search of love with the splendor of the South Seas, Picasso was fascinated by strange tribal works, and Kandinsky marveled at the engravings of folk artists (13).

Perhaps originality seemed more accessible away from home, beyond the cultural forces of familiar surroundings. This would explain the marked predilection of avant-gardism for all variations of the 'primitive', in literature as well as in the visual arts. So-called primitive people were thought to possess a 'spontaneity' that Western civilization was believed to have lost (Bergel 116). Favoured non-Western cultures of the avant-garde were typically non-industrial and were therefore interpreted as being somehow closer to nature. Lumped together with their

natural surroundings, they were thought to exhibit uninhibited behaviour, charming in its simplicity.



Fig. 1: Jean Dubuffet, *Four Bedouins with an Overloaded Camel*, 1948. The Museum of Modern Art, New York City. ©2017 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

In search of a creative awakening like his artistic predecessors, Dubuffet made a series of trips to the French colony of Algeria between 1947 and 1949 (Minturn 248). He took with him pencils and paper to pass out to willing natives in hopes of observing their art-making habits. Works created by Dubuffet either in Algeria, or from memory shortly thereafter, include a number of gouaches and oil paintings, for example *Four Arabs with an Overloaded Camel* (**Figure 1**). Initially, the exotic destination provided an artistic impetus, but by the third trip, Algeria no longer seemed any more liberated than France. Apparently, the appeal proved attractive in concept only, and Dubuffet began to refer to the indigenous peoples of the Sahara as ‘clowns of the desert’. In 1949 he officially declared: ‘I have

for the moment renounced the descriptive arts of exoticisms' (Minturn 253).

By excluding 'exoticisms', the artist had eliminated the possibility of finding inspiration in geographic or ethnic difference. In doing so, Dubuffet purposefully restricted his search for the primitive to the people living in his own Western culture. This new otherness was harder to delineate. It required Dubuffet to coin the term Art Brut and then to define its parameters. This first iteration of the category was very much an umbrella term to describe all sorts of marginal art, including art from asylums, folk art, self-taught masters, drawings by children, tattoos, graffiti, and even cave paintings (Peiry 60). Realizing that the term was a bit vague, Dubuffet wrote in a 1945 letter: 'Naturally, Art Brut is very difficult to define without getting confused ... But there is no reason for saying that something does not exist because it is elusive and indefinable' (qtd. in Peiry 62). The word 'elusive' suggests that the artist meant not only to define Art Brut but to capture it. He would own this slippery category, pinning it more firmly into position with each definition, and by the time Dubuffet arranged his first exhibition of the newly-formed collection, he revealed a noticeably narrowed focus.

The show was held in Paris and contained approximately two thousand works—proof of Dubuffet's intense enthusiasm for Art Brut (Foster 13). In an essay to be published in conjunction with the Art Brut exhibition, Dubuffet offered up the following parameters:

We mean by this the works executed by people untouched by artistic culture, works in which imitation—contrary to what occurs among intellectuals – has little or no part, so that their makers derive everything (subjects, choice of

materials used, means of transportation, rhythms, ways of patterning, etc.) from their own resources and not from the conventions of classic art or the art that happens to be fashionable. Here we find art at its crudest; we see it being wholly reinvented at every stage of the operation by its maker's knack of invention and not, as always in cultural art, from his power of aping others or changing like a chameleon (qtd. in Thévoz 11).

In the above explanation, Dubuffet stressed two things: Art Brut must be created in isolation of societal pressures, including artistic precedent, and it must *not* be derivative. Clearly the chameleon's ability to change its colour is cast in a negative light, and an artist with such an ability would be marked as inauthentic or fraudulent.

With this improved definition, the makers of Art Brut were grouped not so much for what they were, as for what they were not: they were not yet tainted by civilization. While Dubuffet failed to pinpoint the exact difference between his choice of 'other' and the far-off primitiveness generally favoured by the avant-garde, he would later do so in an assortment of promotional materials for a small 1951 showing of his still-growing collection. He now stressed that, unlike other artists traveling abroad in search of the primitive, 'one can on the contrary find authentic and living *European art*' (qtd. in Minturn 262, original emphasis). If the makers of Art Brut were to be located within the European periphery, their otherness was characterized by a less tangible 'psychic elsewhere', an apt descriptor established by art critic Roger Cardinal (95). Intentionally or not, by constructing a category of primitive art without geographic restrictions, Dubuffet had created a type of primitiveness that did not

necessarily exclude his own art. Unlike Picasso's appropriation of African masks—a primitiveness definitively other to his own Western culture—it was difficult to prove that Dubuffet's art did not reflect a 'psychic elsewhere'. Therefore, promoting Art Brut could directly benefit Dubuffet. His audience would most likely associate him with the unprecedented inventiveness of the category in general. However, by exposing Art Brut to the world, he also ran the risk of inadvertently inspiring others to usurp his unique 'other'. Such was the case with gallery owner Alphonse Chave. At the start, Dubuffet considered Chave to be a friend and supporter, but he soon became defensive when the gallery owner showed an interest in an apparently similar endeavour. Dubuffet proclaimed in writing:

[Chave is] in every way a copycat and since I had the idea of putting together an Art Brut collection, he came up with the same idea, an Art Brut collection, but it would be better if he came up with his own ideas and would start collecting pipes or teapots and leave Art Brut alone, seeing as how I'm the one who invented this business and I'm the one who has zealously and methodically worked on it for ten years (qtd. in Peiry 119).

The accusatory tone of the passage indicates that Dubuffet was protective of his collection. When discussing the possibility of being separated from his precious art objects, the artist even described Art Brut as though it were a part of his physical body: 'seeing a few pieces removed is a sacrifice equivalent to losing an eye' (qtd. in Peiry 125). This statement from the artist does more than conflate the collection with the self. Equating Art Brut to his own eye, Dubuffet subconsciously suggested that collecting it had altered his vision – artistic or otherwise.

Studying the frequency with which collectors define themselves through their collections, Pierre Bourdieu, in his book *Rules of Art*, stated that the collector becomes the ‘creator of the creator’, legitimizing the art produced by the discovered artist (Bourdieu 168). In this way, Dubuffet’s role as collector was itself a creative endeavour, but one in which he managed to maintain a constant position of dominance. He was the sole Art Brut inventor and controlled the terms of an artist’s acceptance, their exposure to the public, and all financial negotiations.

Dubuffet’s business training, fostered during his time spent working on the family vineyard, surfaced most obviously in his dealings with outsider artists whose works he admired. In an August 1963 letter, he detailed a recent exchange with artist Clement Fraisse: ‘[Fraisse] first suggested that I offer him a car and garage to put it in, but I found his demands too grandiose and offered to send him fifty thousand francs [five hundred new French francs], with which he was finally satisfied’ (qtd. in Peiry 147). This excerpt, and especially the word ‘finally,’ reveals that Fraisse, left with no other recourse, succumbed to Dubuffet’s request. The work, an elaborately carved wood panel had taken him three years to complete. Other Art Brut artists were given much less, though; Gerard Olive exchanged an artwork for a roll of film, and Raphael Lonné a record player. Claiming to feel remorse for the insufficient monetary compensation he awarded Art Brut creators, Dubuffet wrote, ‘I experience a feeling of injustice in comparing the derisory, or even non-existent, prices that these people receive for their works with the absurd prices for which my own works—which I am aware are not more valuable ... —are sold for commercially’ (qtd. in Peiry 147-48). Here Dubuffet purports that the value of Art Brut should be as much as his own, but he continues to proffer the lowest price

possible. His feelings of injustice read as strangely detached from his actions. As long as Art Brut was excluded from the larger art market, Dubuffet could pay as little as a pack of chewing tobacco for an artwork, the asking price for one Adolf Wölfli. Today, with the benefit of time and exposure, a work by Wölfli will sell at auction for as much as \$100,000—still a pittance when compared to Dubuffet's record of twenty-five million U.S. Dollars, earned for his painting titled *Paris* (sold in April 2015). The shocking disparity can be partially explained by a baseball metaphor:

Folk art is like playing the game of art in a big league ball park, but playing by different rules. As long as the game is played by different rules, the major league players do not mind. They even admire the way which the untrained players can use the same park, even the same diamond, bat, and ball. But there is no competition since beyond these minimal similarities folk art is in a different league, and moreover, it is a very different ball game (Pearse and Webb 27).

While folk art is only one type of Outsider Art, this passage can easily be extended to all of Art Brut. Dubuffet wrote the rules, and his artists had no choice but to play by them.

An unofficial Art Brut credo of sorts (i.e., the rules) can be pieced together based on Dubuffet's various declarations in correspondence with Art Brut creators. This special brand of artist must not crave recognition of any kind; they must be satisfied with whatever small reward they might gain in exchange for their creation. They are to have no concern for whether or not their art will be exhibited or how it might be received by a particular audience. Dubuffet specified: 'one should make art for

oneself in the same way others go fishing or for walks and not to put in a show' (qtd. in Peiry 164). In other words, it should be a recreational activity as opposed to a profession. So, it follows that '[y]ou have to choose between making art and being regarded as an artist. The one excludes the other' (qtd. in Peiry 163). With this claim, Dubuffet excluded any outsider artist who might regard him or herself as an artist sans the outsider prefix. Some of Dubuffet's Art Brut artists adhered to these guidelines, having total disregard for the art object after its completion, but others maintained a more traditional relationship to their artworks, expressing feelings of pride and/or a desire for compensation.



Fig.2: Gaston Chaissac, *Untitled*, c.1948. Photo: Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne. © 2017 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.



Fig.3: Jean Dubuffet, *Cursed Gossip*, 1954. The Museum of Modern Art, New York City. © 2017 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Gaston Chaissac, an artist, writer, and shoe-repairman whom Dubuffet met during his time in Algeria, is a case in point. Quickly admitted to the Art Brut collection, he would later prove difficult when he began to strive for additional artistic acknowledgement. After becoming aware of similarities between his art and Dubuffet's current projects, Chaissac famously accused Dubuffet of plagiarism. A most convincing comparison (**Figures 2 & 3**) exists between one of Chaissac's untitled charcoal sculptures, still in Dubuffet's Lausanne collection, and Dubuffet's *Cursed Gossip*—carved six years later from the same crude charcoal material—or between Chaissac's 1961 *Totem Double Face* and Dubuffet's 1973 *Personnage pour Washington Parade* (**Figures 4 & 5**).



Fig. 4: Gaston Chaissac, *Totem Double Face*, 1961. Photo: Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI. © 2017 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.



Fig. 5: Jean Dubuffet, *Personnage pour Washington Parade*, 1973-2008, Edition 5 of 7. No. 46497.05, Photograph courtesy Pace Gallery. © 2017 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Totem Double Face demonstrates Chaissac's propensity to divide his figures into smaller puzzle-piece-like sections. While two-dimensional, the work stands as tall as a person and is generally considered to be a sculpture. *Personnage pour Washington Parade*—a similarly flat figure composed of linked, irregular shapes—could represent any number of Dubuffet's *l'hourloupe* sculptures from the early 1970s. The *l'hourloupe* style first manifested itself in Dubuffet's portfolio in 1962, shortly after Chaissac began experimenting with *his* signature technique. Art historian Sarah Wilson sees Chaissac's claims as 'not unjustified' (Tuchman 132). As though remembering the criticism that his early art too closely resembled Picasso's, Dubuffet renounced any formal influences beyond a psychological inspiration. He stated with no uncertainty: 'I have never been influenced by Art Brut. I have been influenced by their freedom, a freedom which has helped me a great deal' (qtd. in Peiry 100).

In spite of Dubuffet's assertions, Chaissac's accusations had the potential to be incredibly dangerous to his career. Gary Alan Fine, in his article 'Crafting Authenticity: The Validation of Identity in Self-Taught Art', maintains that '[i]f authenticity sells art, claims of inauthenticity can be damaging' (166). The question of authenticity is especially important when traditional measures, such as draftsmanship, are dismantled. This became particularly true in the twentieth century with the development of abstraction. Paintings or sculptures were suddenly judged by a different rubric, and their appreciation was considerably more dependent on artistic intent than merit. It is for this reason that possible claims of disingenuous inspiration could have been detrimental to Dubuffet's reputation. Interestingly, the artist *did* recognize the risk of inadvertently copying another artist's

style, and his words, taken from *In Honour of Savage Values*, could actually support Chaissac's case:

The author is not conscious that he imitates another work of art, which strongly impressed him and which he assimilated. He believes, entirely in good faith, that he pulled it out of his own reserves (qtd. in Minturn 261).

Had Dubuffet found inspiration for *Cursed Gossip* and *Personnage pour Washington Parade* subconsciously through his frequent exposure to Chaissac's art? It is entirely possible, but most art critics remain wary of the search for direct points of influence, as they are by nature impossible to prove. As a consequence, the various formal similarities between the works of Dubuffet and his many outsider artists are generally dismissed or ignored (Bowler 23). After the plagiarism accusation, Dubuffet removed Chaissac from the Art Brut collection. It was at this time that he began an annex grouping, the New Invention Collection, for Chaissac's works and other pieces created by outsider artists who displayed a desire for fame and other insider ambitions (Peiry 213). While their art technically remained in Dubuffet's collection, the New Invention sub-collection was a certain demotion, as these artists were no longer recognized for their unadulterated originality, and the relocation was a stern reminder that the collector's support was not to be taken for granted.

Dubuffet as Inauthentic Outsider

Shamelessly promoting his own work, Dubuffet would not have qualified for either the New Invention or Art Brut categories. Because he did not hold himself to the same standards as the artists he collected, it was not uncommon for him to make bold declarations such as, 'Away with all those stale canvases hanging

in dreary museums like the wives of Bluebeard's cabinet! They *were* paintings; they no longer *are*' (qtd. in Rhodes 779). Here the artist worked to build his reputation as an artistic innovator. He called attention to his new, crude painting style as something altogether unique, and went so far as to claim that his technique made all previous art obsolete. Commenting on the public's reception of these artworks, one contemporary critic observed: '[Viewers] were revolted by his use of mud, his "scrapings of the dust bin"...[and]... the 1946 show was sold out within days' (qtd. in Selz 22). The popularity of this exhibit proved the marketability of shock value, and it was through it that American art critic Clement Greenberg first noticed Dubuffet. With Greenberg's promotion, the artist's reputation as an outsider was cemented internationally and remained intact for decades.

Even recent scholarship continues to support Dubuffet's claim to the outsider image. For example, Peiry wrote in her 2006 published dissertation:

The inventor of Art Brut is an atypical artist, a traitor to his profession, an intellectual keen on a lack of cultivation, a professor of the inconsequential, a double agent, an ingenious smuggler operating along the borders of culture (8).

By calling the artist a double agent, she suggested that the *real* mask donned by Dubuffet was that of the insider. She has not questioned the authenticity of his outsider status, attempting instead to rationalize the inconsistencies. Michel Thevoz, curator of the Art Brut collection from 1976 to 2001, took a similar stance: 'Dubuffet must be defined in strategic terms as an *enemy from within*, using the cultural instruments and institutions at his disposal to wage war on culture' (50). Was he an authentic outsider, somehow able to parade undetected on the inside? Both

Peiry and Thevoz were willing to overlook blatant hypocrisy and professional contradictions to give Dubuffet the benefit of the doubt; however, this blanketed acceptance of Dubuffet's artistic authenticity is becoming less common in the field.

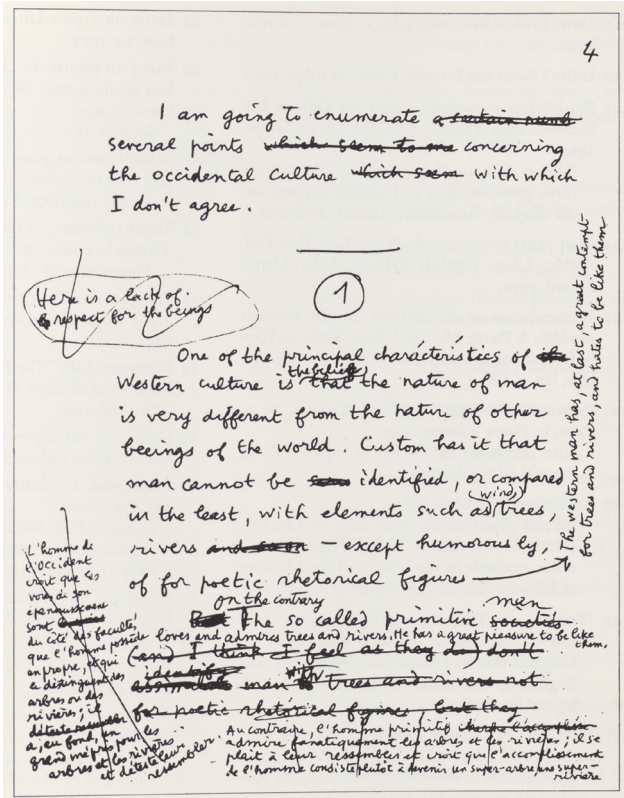


Fig. 6: Jean Dubuffet, Notes from a speech the artist gave at the Arts Club of Chicago, Dec. 1951. Museum of Modern Art Library, New York City. © 2017 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

The performance scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, who focuses on issues of performance and identity, indicates that authenticity stems from 'an absence of cognitive

understanding—sincere, innocent, original, genuine, and unaffected, distinct from strategic and pragmatic self-presentation’ (155). Put simply, authenticity is what a person presents through his or her unmediated action. The more self-censorship, the more controlled the presentation, the less authentic the act. Looking for signs of self-censorship in Dubuffet’s career, one is quick to uncover multiple instances of inauthenticity. One example comes from a rare opportunity to view the artist’s handwritten notes for his 1951 lecture at the Arts Club of Chicago. Dubuffet covered a piece of paper with his unmediated thoughts, scratching and scribbling on all sides of the sheet (**Figure 6**). There he sketched out his oft-quoted binary between Western man and the so-called ‘primitive’:

The Western man has at least a great contempt for trees and rivers, and hates to be like them. On the contrary, the so-called primitive man loves and admires trees and rivers. He has a great pleasure to be like them. And I think I feel as they do (qtd. in Selz 173).

The last sentence, ‘And I think I feel as they do’, has been crossed-out by the artist. Did Dubuffet think it would come across as somehow too radical? While we will never know the reason, we can see that the artist was aware that he had an audience and clearly reconsidered the image he might project by making such a statement. All his omissions and edits expose a heightened sense of self-awareness. So, what is ultimately shown through this redacted text is a level of self-consciousness counter to the authentic experience as defined by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett.

His artist statements would likewise have been censored, and reading with this fresh critical eye enables us to uncover numerous contradictions. In *Asphyxiating Culture*, as the title

suggests, Dubuffet described a desire to suffocate culture with a capital 'C'. Its monstrous forces contained within its power the influence of commercialization and intellectualism, both of which Dubuffet scorned. Apart from noticeable Marxist undertones, *Asphyxiating Culture* is otherwise vague, with the last line reeking of a purposeful generality: 'The important thing is to be *against*' (Dubuffet 93). This is a clever manoeuvre on the part of the artist, for he has managed to attack culture but does so in such a general way that he avoids making political arguments or listing any specifics. *Asphyxiating Culture* is a rant designed so that no one is actually offended, a calculated attempt to increase the market value of his art through the furthering of his outsider identity while remaining entirely neutral. Still relatively noncommittal, one passage meant to champion the common man by knocking intellectualism unintentionally exposes Dubuffet's guarded insider status:

Thus an intellectual can receive immense success for having presented a certain object to the enchanted cultural body—a urinal, a bottle rack—that all plumbers and cellar-men have been admiring for fifty years. But it never occurs to anyone that the plumber and cellar-man played the role of discoverers (Dubuffet 45).

Speaking out for the plumber and cellar-man might have seemed transgressive in certain cultural circles, but Dubuffet makes clear reference to two of Marcel Duchamp's readymade artworks—*Bottle Rack* and *Fountain*—thereby situating himself in connection with the ever-evolving art scene and its corresponding intellectualism. Was he actually angry for the overlooked plumber? It seems more likely that he was jealous of Duchamp, another Frenchman, who was getting recognition for

his shocking art. The true cellar-man would have been unaware of Duchamp's Dada urinal—shielded from the cultural splash by his lack of contact with the art world. Dubuffet's cognizance of this important art historical development, on the other hand, puts him squarely in the position of an insider.

Recognizing these textual fissures disassembles the artist's carefully constructed image and allows for a better understanding of how Dubuffet should be situated in relation to the true outsider artist. A particularly baffling textual disconnect is unearthed after cross-referencing various artist statements against Dubuffet's visual, rather than textual, portfolio. In 1953, the artist finished *Butterfly-Wing Figure* (**Figure 7**), his first collage made by pasting butterfly wings to a backing board. Additional colour was then added to the background with watercolour. Obviously pleased with the outcome, Dubuffet completed a handful of other butterfly-wing works between 1953 and 1955, including *Sylvain* and *The Garden of Bibi Trompette*. In his memoir, he described the particular joy of catching butterflies as stemming from '[t]he liveliness of the chase itself, the exhilarating effect of the hot sunshine of this country, new to me at that time, and the charm of the mountain solitudes where I chased butterflies' (qtd. in Selz 109).¹

The senseless killing of colourful, winged insects is only one small part of the story, and art historian Sarah K. Rich dissects the many layers behind their execution in her article, 'Jean Dubuffet: The Butterfly Man'. As Dubuffet reported, he

¹ In 1968 when Dubuffet published *Asphyxiating Culture*, he included one strikingly contradictory metaphor in which the butterfly catcher was specifically grouped within the category of culture with a capital 'C'. He wrote: 'The culture club, in its eagerness to heavy-handedly name and endorse, fills a function comparable to that of the butterfly catcher. Culture cannot stand butterflies that fly' (Dubuffet 46). While this statement is surely a metaphor for society's ability to crush beauty and freedom, by casting himself as the butterfly catcher, had Dubuffet revealed himself as a true member of the 'Culture Club'?



Fig.7: Jean Dubuffet, *Butterfly-Wing Figure*, 1953. Photo: Cathy Carver. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 1991. © 2017 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

was in Switzerland when he first caught butterflies, but what he neglected to include in his account of the chase was that he was *not* alone. Although Dubuffet had planned to draw, he was inspired by his artist companion Pierre Bettencourt who was busy constructing butterfly-wing collages. In a letter following their art-making sessions, Bettencourt proposed a joint exhibition where they could display the fruits of their labours side by side. Declining to participate, Dubuffet wrote back: 'I have been your imitator through this whole affair, and that makes me anxious...' (qtd. in Rich 54). However, within the next few months, Dubuffet's butterfly artworks were included in the 'Démons et merveilles' exhibition with no mention of Bettencourt. Infuriated, Bettencourt organized his own exhibit with promotional materials, publicly stating that Dubuffet had plagiarized his idea. Disregarding Bettencourt's evidence to the contrary, Dubuffet again denied any influence: 'I do not have the slightest awareness of any borrowing from my work ...' (qtd. in Rich 55).

Putting a spin on a story that would otherwise read as being very much like Chaissac's accusations, the letters between Bettencourt and Dubuffet also revealed a mutual respect for the insect's mimicry of other animals—likely a defensive mechanism—and its remarkable ability to transform itself during metamorphosis. Quite the opposite of his outward repulsion for the chameleon, Dubuffet privately appreciated these qualities in butterflies, and his compositional choices highlight that fact. When composing his collages, he often hid the more colourful side of the insect's wings to expose the creature's eyelike spots or ocelli (Rich 70). In *Butterfly-Wing Figure*, the imitative ocelli are precisely arranged to form a series of buttons running down the chest of the man. Mimicry is given a place of honour, front and

centre.

After reviewing cases like Bettencourt's or Chaissac's, the attempt to create a category just for Dubuffet—that of an outsider on the insider—seems absurd. Comparing his career to that of a true Art Brut artist exposes a fabrication of originality, riddled with imitation, and structured solidly around his collection and any associations that might be made between the two. If Art Brut artists spoke out, recognizing their integral role in Dubuffet's grand performance, like Chaissac, they would be pushed offstage before Dubuffet's avant-garde persona could be questioned. Behind the smoke and mirrors of his cultural lambasting—whether through his writing, collecting, or art-making—there was always an insider in full costume. Dubuffet managed to secure a coveted spot within the art historical canon, reserved for a select few, but, given his inability to start a career before his discovery of Art Brut, it seems safe to say that it could not have been done without the assistance of his Art Brut artists, the cellar-man, and the plumber.

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Historical Authenticity: Performing Victorian Blackness in *Red Velvet* by Lolita Chakrabarti and *An Octoroon* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

By Hannah Greenstreet

Abstract

In this paper, I draw on approaches from neo-Victorian studies, theatre history as well as race and performance studies to argue that authenticity is a historically contingent concept and ideologically motivated category of value. In nineteenth-century theatre, the idea of authenticity was used to exclude and stereotype black people. My analysis of the neo-Victorian dramas *Red Velvet* by Lolita Chakrabarti and *An Octoroon* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins and their first productions in London and New York focuses on the trope of authenticity to trace how these two plays historicise and make visible the cultural production of racialised discourses in the theatre. In both productions, theatricality is employed to question authenticity claims in relation to race. *Red Velvet* rehabilitates authenticity for its project of recapturing a lost black theatre history. *An Octoroon*, by contrast, seems to reject the trope of authenticity for a more performative understanding of race, thereby resignifying racist theatrical devices. By historicising authenticity *Red Velvet* and *An Octoroon* are therefore able to expose historical and current racism within the theatre industry and serve as anti-racist interventions.

Authenticity is a highly politically charged and historically mobile concept, especially in relation to race. This paper explores how *Red Velvet* (2012, dir. Indhu Rubasingham) and *An Octoroon* (2014, dir. Sarah Benson) historicise authenticity. The productions reveal how the trope of authenticity was used in nineteenth-century theatre to exclude and stereotype black people and how this legacy endures within the theatre in Britain and America. *Red Velvet* rehabilitates the concept of authenticity, identifying it with the character of Ira Aldridge, who, the play suggests, was prevented by racism from achieving his true po-

tential as an actor. One of playwright Lolita Chakrabarti's stated aims for *Red Velvet* is to recapture lost black history and to use the theatre to establish a theatrical lineage for BME actors on the UK stage (*Red Velvet*, Preface). In contrast, the playful irreverence of Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' adaptation of Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* seems to undercut fixed notions of race by asserting the performativity of race; authenticity then seems at best an irrelevant, at worst a potentially oppressive category. Both strategies are antiracist interventions.

The main sense of authenticity I want to explore is of accuracy of representation. This is not merely aesthetic but also political, particularly when the objects of aesthetic representation are un- or underrepresented politically. As E. Patrick Johnson argues, 'Because the concept of blackness has no essence, "black authenticity" is overdetermined—contingent on the historical, social, and political terms of its production ... Authenticity, then, is yet another trope manipulated for cultural capital' (3). Harvey Young's concept of 'phenomenal blackness' is also relevant here. Young defines this as 'the ways in which an *idea* of the black body has been and continues to be projected across actual physical bodies' (4, original emphasis), often violently. The popularity of the nineteenth-century theatre, in Britain and America, made it a highly influential medium in the cultural production of this fictional, stereotyped 'black body', as Michael Pickering and Hazel Waters have explored. Both *Red Velvet* and *An Octoroon* show how the racist production of 'authentic blackness', the warrior Moor in the former and the blackface minstrel in the latter, is remote from actual black people, leaves very little room for other, dissenting representations and can even justify racist violence.

Red Velvet and *An Octoroon's* revisionary engagement with theatre history places them in a burgeoning genre of

neo-Victorian texts, which Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn define as '*self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*' (4, original emphasis). Whilst Benjamin Poore, in his survey of plays representing the Victorians since 1968 in Britain, is right to point out Heilmann and Llewellyn's neglect of drama in favour of literature and film and the potential of excluding texts based on aesthetic judgement, his self-described 'quantitative' approach goes too far in the opposite direction and underestimates the importance of theatrical form in creating meaning (7). It is *Red Velvet* and *An Octoroon*'s metatheatrical engagement with history that makes them so effective. Indeed, because it is an embodied medium, theatre can go further than other kinds of neo-Victorian texts in re-animating and reflecting upon the past. Joseph Roach's concept of 'kinaesthetic imagination', a form of cultural memory found in 'gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories' is relevant here (26). In both *Red Velvet* and *An Octoroon*, the bodies of the actors are crucial in enacting and revising racialised theatre history, particularly in the recreation of historic acting styles, white face, racial drag and minstrelsy. Roach's approach also broadens the discussion beyond the theatre to other performances of race, as although he points out that kinaesthetic imagination 'exists to a high degree of concentration in performers', he argues that 'it also operates in the performance of everyday life' (26). This allows for the consideration of the relationship between productions of race within the theatre and how they are performed in the world outside.

Red Velvet by Lolita Chakrabarti is a semi-fictionalised account of the life of Ira Aldridge, the first black actor to perform

at a legitimate theatre (one of two licensed by the Lord Chamberlain to perform spoken drama) in Britain in the nineteenth century. *Red Velvet* premiered at the Tricycle Theatre in London in October 2012 and was directed by the theatre's new Artistic Director, Indhu Rubasingham. It was revived at the Tricycle in January 2014, before transferring to St Ann's Warehouse in New York. I saw the production in its revival at the Garrick Theatre in London in January 2016.

The main action of *Red Velvet* is set up as a flashback: Aldridge's encounter with a journalist at the start of the play in 1867 provokes him to remember the events of 1833, when he was engaged to play the lead in *Othello* at Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. In Chakrabarti's version of history, due to a virulently negative, racist reaction in the press, the manager of the Theatre Royal, Pierre Laporte, decides to let the house go dark after only two nights rather than allowing Aldridge to continue in the role.

An Octoroon by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins is a highly metatheatrical adaptation of Dion Boucicault's 1859 play, *The Octoroon*, a Victorian sensation drama set on a southern plantation that centres on the plight of Zoe, who is one eighth black (an 'octoroon'). *An Octoroon* premiered at the Soho Rep in New York in April 2014 and was directed by Sarah Benson. Benson's production was revived at Theatre for a New Audience in New York in February 2015, where I saw it. As with Boucicault's original play, *An Octoroon* has also been produced across the Atlantic, in Ned Bennett's recent production at the Orange Tree Theatre in London, which opened in May 2017.¹ Branden Jacobs-Jenkins adaptation is surprisingly faithful to Boucicault's play. However, it is ironised by a frame narrative, in which a black actor playing the character 'BJJ' and a white actor playing the character 'Play-

¹ As I saw the Orange Tree Production late in the editing process of this article, I will focus on Benson's production and only make brief references to Bennett's.

wright' squabble and explain the mechanics of melodrama, and by the use of racial drag: actors black up, red up and white up onstage.

Representation and Realism in *Red Velvet*

The first sense of 'authenticity' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition is 'accurate reflection of real life, verisimilitude' (1). *Red Velvet* explores how questions of aesthetics have been used as a veil for racism. One of the most outrageous moments of staged racism in Rubasingham's production is the speech the character Charles Kean (who is characterised as Aldridge's fiercest opponent) gives to the theatre manager, Pierre Laporte:

Pierre ... acting is an art. Transformation is an art. My father, a small ... physically ... challenged ageing man, to see him become a warrior Moor ... is an art, isn't it? ... People come to the theatre to get away from reality. And ... what I mean to say is ... it's a sad fact ... and I'm sorry to say it ... but it's true I'm afraid that ... his ... well ... he will prevent them from escaping reality ... (43, original ellipses)

Kean attempts to disguise his racism as a concern for theatrical mode, helped by the rhetorical device of aposiopesis: 'I'm afraid that...his...well...he'. Kean cannot even bring himself to verbally acknowledge Aldridge's blackness, as if by pretending not to see race he is not being racist. The gaps in Kean's speech illustrate the historically determined construction of authenticity.

Kean professes that the purpose of theatre is escapism; the true skill of acting is in the transformation. This logic, which strikes a twenty-first century audience member accustomed to a naturalistic concern for reflecting reality as perverse, informed many of the racist reviews of Aldridge's 1833 performance, a

selection of which are read aloud by the cast in *Red Velvet*. One of the most shocking is an excerpt from a review *The Spectator*: ‘An African is no more qualified to personate Othello—than a huge fat man would be competent to represent Falstaff’ (72). Beyond the excerpt quoted in *Red Velvet*, the review continues, ‘the property-man can furnish as good a suit of “the shadowed livery of the burnished sun” for stage purposes, as Dame Nature herself,—perhaps, in his own opinion, a better’ (‘The African Actor’ 328). The keyword in the review is ‘verisimilitude’, a synonym for authenticity, signifying the appropriateness to and believability of an actor in a part.² The reviewer for *The Spectator* asserts that the body of the actor does not produce ‘verisimilitude’ in the role; indeed, in the case of the raced, ‘African’ body, it militates against ‘verisimilitude’. However, whilst seeming to deny the body in favour of the incorporeal ‘temperament’, the reviewer tacitly replaces the obscenely corporeal ‘African’ body with ‘a flat nose and thick lips’ with an unmarked white body, which can be blacked up—this is the value judgement communicated in the word, ‘better’ (328).

A twenty-first century audience, used to seeing black actors in the role of Othello, may struggle to comprehend how a white actor blacked up could ever have been considered ‘better’. Yet this is to underestimate the shock of Aldridge’s appearance in the role of Othello to a Victorian audience, which *Red Velvet* attempts to contextualise. Theatre historian Hazel Waters emphasises that Edmund Kean, Aldridge’s predecessor in the role at the Theatre Royal, had represented Othello as ‘tawny’ rather than black (70). Othello, a noble, tragic hero, did not fit with conventional theatrical representations of black people as servants and buffoons, such as Mungo in *The Padlock*, a role Aldridge himself

² For a brilliant exploration of Victorian perceptions of authenticity and acting, see Voskuil.

often played (Duncan 246). In nineteenth-century Britain, theatrical and scientific discourses of race, along with colonialism, fed into each other to promote a discursive hierarchy of European races over non-European ones, as Jane Goodall shows. Even before anthropological and ethnographical accounts used physical features as a circular 'proof' of racial inferiority in the second half of the nineteenth-century, Goodall notes that a number of non-Europeans were displayed in ethnological freak shows, such as Saartje Bartmaan (165). Goodall argues, in reference to such shows, 'Performance skills in themselves were crucially situated on the savage/ civilised borderline, so that a too-skilled presentation of savagery might paradoxically fail in its objectives, while too natural a display would frustrate the expectations of an audience who wanted to see a certain kind of mental image realised in performance' (89). By this logic, Aldridge's performance was criticised as it was at once under-identified and over-identified with the part: because he is black, he cannot act 'the warrior Moor'; because he is black, audience members cannot suspend their disbelief. As Othello, Aldridge's raced body exceeded accepted nineteenth-century forms of black representation. In *Red Velvet*, Aldridge comments ruefully to Laporte, 'So when Kean plays the Moor, we're amazed at how skilfully he descends into this base African tragedy but with me it seems I'm revealin' my true nature' (85).

The phrase 'true nature' is important, as it suggests another definition of authenticity: 'A mode of existence arising from self-awareness, critical reflection on one's goals and values, and responsibility for one's actions; the condition of being true to oneself' (OED, 3d). The OED's first citation of the use of the term 'authenticity' in this sense is from 1948, suggesting that the idea is anachronistic for the nineteenth-century character

Aldridge to express. Sophie Duncan has written incisively about Chakrabarti's use of the ahistorical in order to 'associate ... nineteenth-century blackness not merely with the 'exotic' but also emphatically with the modern, progressive and intersectional' (Duncan, 231). To this list can be added 'authentic'. Rubasingham's production deliberately employs anachronism (or historical in-authenticity) as part of its critique of racialised, historical notions of 'verisimilitude'. Nonetheless, the script, direction and, crucially, the acting style that Adrian Lester employs in the production imbue the role of Ira Aldridge with authenticity to a twenty-first century audience, setting up a rival definition of authenticity as being true to oneself.

In Chakrabarti's telling of Aldridge's story, it was Ira Aldridge's innovative acting style, almost as much as his race, which disturbed and angered the nineteenth century theatrical status quo (although supposedly aesthetic concern can act as a smokescreen for racism). When Ira Aldridge arrives at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, he asks the company to perform Desdemona's arrival in Cyprus. Rubasingham and the cast of the play-within-a-play create a pastiche of early nineteenth century acting, which proved one of the funniest moments of *Red Velvet* in production. Their acting, as the stage directions state, is 'full of gesture, pose and scale' (34); the character Ellen Tree as Desdemona does not look at Aldridge as Othello even as he greets her. George Taylor states that 'the stock style [of the early nineteenth-century theatre, as opposed to longer runs] emphasised individual expression rather than social interplay, and the outward expression of feeling, through gesture and vocal technique' (22). In contrast, the character Ira Aldridge objects, in the character Ellen Tree's words, to the "teapot' school of acting' and answers Tree in the affirmative when she asks, 'So I may

play what I feel?' (37). Aldridge's suggestions imply that he is in favour of a more naturalistic playing style.

However, casting Aldridge as a champion of naturalism in 1833 is anachronistic. Although Errol Hill argues that Aldridge did help modernise acting, he dates this to Aldridge's sympathetic performance of Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* in 1857 (19). Furthermore, as Taylor's account suggests, early nineteenth-century acting set great store by representing feeling, albeit in a stylised way. Perhaps then, the emphasis of Tree's question is on the 'I', acting as an expression of the self and, therefore, a kind of authenticity. Here, the senses of authenticity as being true to oneself and as accuracy of representation blur. In another layer of Rubasingham's production, when the Covent Garden cast are not 'acting', the twenty-first-century actors embody them in a naturalistic performance style. Naturalism seems therefore to be designated the authentic playing style, set against the comic artificiality of early-nineteenth century acting conventions (from a twenty-first century audience's perspective, at least). Identifying Aldridge with a more naturalistic style, then, increases the sense of Aldridge's authenticity.³

Yet it is not only Lester as Aldridge as Othello's acting style that is made a signifier of authenticity, but also his race. To a twenty-first century audience of *Red Velvet*, Lester is a legitimate Othello because of his stature as an actor, his association with the role, and because he is black. As Sophie Duncan notes, Adrian Lester was heavily associated with the role of Othello (241), especially for those audience members of the revivals, including myself, who had seen him take the title role in Nicholas Hytner's 2013 production at the National Theatre. In the same

³ It is important to note that Adrian Lester nuanced his performance of Ira Aldridge's performance of Othello. He still employed larger gestures and passions than would be customary in a contemporary performance of the role.

way that Rubasingham's production sets Lester as Aldridge as Othello's more naturalistic acting against the artificiality of early nineteenth-century gestural acting, it sets the audience's sense of Aldridge's legitimacy as a black Othello against Aldridge's Victorian detractors' sense of his lack of 'verisimilitude'.

There is a danger that such a positioning of the twenty-first-century audience members' progressive understanding of race against the risible alienness of the Victorians could allow them to dismiss racism as Victorian and thereby be insulated from confronting the continuing legacy of racism within the theatre industry. Nonetheless, the final image of Rubasingham's production acts as a *gestus*, showing the violent marking of race on the body in performances in and beyond the theatre. Lester as Aldridge has been preparing to go onstage as *King Lear*, gradually putting on his costume and applying makeup. At the last moment, Lester turns to face the audience. He is in white face. He quotes from *King Lear*, 'they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie' (92). The lights go down. In the violent marking of race upon his body, Adrian Lester is re-enacting how Aldridge played 'white' Shakespearean parts. In Chakrabarti's tragic version of Aldridge's story, whitening up could seem the ultimate betrayal of authenticity; Aldridge was prevented from living his authentic self, a black actor, due to racism. However, such a focus on Aldridge as an individual and a victim risks oversimplifying how he negotiated blackness within the limitations of nineteenth-century racial discourses, as well as obscuring wider, structural racism. Ultimately, *Red Velvet's* anti-racist critique is limited by the production's continued reliance on authenticity as a category of value.

Blackface Minstrelsy and Racial Drag in *An Octoroon*

Ira Aldridge's acting career intersects with the stage history of blackface minstrelsy. The minstrel show was a form of popular entertainment originating in the United States, but also popular in Britain, in which generally white, male performers blacked up with burnt cork and performed comic dances, skits and songs. It developed from individual performers, such as T.D. Rice in the 1830s, to full-blown variety shows in the 1840s and '50s. In staging demeaning stereotypes of African Americans for laughs, blackface minstrelsy played a large role in what Hazel Waters calls 'the consolidation of the black grotesque' (114). Stage representations of black people in the nineteenth century also drew on minstrelsy, including the multiple dramatic adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and their characterisations of Topsy as insensate heathen and Uncle Tom as the happy slave, which were hugely popular in Britain and America in 1852-'53 (Pickering 23). A number of theatre historians note that blackface minstrelsy was received as an authentic representation of blackness because of its grotesquerie (see Waters 95-109; Goodall 123). Indeed, Eric Lott suggests that 'the belief in the authenticity of blackface' was so great that white theatregoers mistook white minstrel performers in blackface for black people (20).

In an interview, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins said that his play *Neighbors* (2010) is an investigation of 'a 300-year history of black people in the theater' (quoted in Healey). *Neighbors* juxtaposes a naturalistic drama about two families with interludes drawing on blackface minstrelsy; in its premiere at the Park Theater in New York in February 2010, which was directed by Nigel Smith, the Crow family were played by black actors in black face. In the final scene, the Crow family (each member of which is named after a stock character in minstrel shows) are prepar-

ing to go ‘onstage’ to perform their minstrel show. The son, Jim Crow, who is a reluctant performer in the family show business, worries, ‘What if they don’t like me?’ His mother, Mammy, replies, ‘They luvs evathang we does’, before she and Jim’s siblings, Sambo and Topsy, launch into a list of racialised stereotypes that span from minstrelsy to twenty-first century American culture:

Topsy	They luvs when we dance.
Sambo	When we shucks.
Mammy	When we jives.
	...
Topsy	When we ax like we on crack lak dis.
Sambo	<i>(doing a stomp routine)</i> When we stomps our feet lak dis.
Topsy	When we drop it lak it’s hot lak dis.
	...
Mammy	They luvs when we be lak dat.

(Scene 18)

By paralleling minstrelsy with twenty-first century forms of cultural production, including Snoop Dogg and Hollywood films, Jacobs-Jenkins suggests the continuing danger that racialised representations can obscure complex realities. The recasting of grotesque, racist stereotypes as ‘authentic’ blackness is achieved through the complicity of the audience and the performers. The performers represent to the audience what they want to see (‘They luvs when we be lak dat’), which results in a self-reinforcing loop of racist cultural appropriation and caricature.

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins strives in his plays for a relationship with the audience that breaks that loop, encouraging scepticism of representations presumed to be authentic. In the final moments of *Neighbors*, the house lights come up on the Crows and the audience and the stage directions instruct, 'We watch them. They watch us. We watch each other' (Scene 18). This dynamic of confrontational, mutual watchfulness is carried through into *An Octoroon*, which makes use of metatheatres and racial drag in part in order to contest the value of concepts of authenticity—racial and theatrical.⁴

It is worth noting that Boucicault's treatment of race in his production of *The Octoroon* in New York in 1859 was more nuanced than might be expected. Boucicault's white wife, Agnes Robertson, played Zoe—a casting choice that undermined the bodily legibility of race and suggesting that the 'taint' of being an octoroon was a social construct rather than something innate. Nonetheless, Boucicault himself wore redface to play Wahnottee.⁵ Additionally, the play's depiction of the plantation slaves, which he claimed were based on his travels in the South and would have been played by white actors blacking up, owes something to blackface minstrelsy conventions. Jacobs-Jenkins re-appropriates and resignifies Boucicault's minstrelsy into racial drag to suggest the performative nature of race: actors black up, white up and red up on stage to play characters of a different ethnicity from their own. The twenty-first-century American theatre audience's squeamishness about blackface is crucial in the effectiveness of this device.

⁴ Whilst Benson's production was staged end-on, Ned Bennett's was staged in the round at *The Orange Tree*. This made me hyper-conscious of my fellow audience members, who were, on the preview night I saw it, mostly white and older, and their reactions. For an excellent critique of Bennett's production's relationship with the audience and race, see Wagaine.

⁵ For a discussion of redface in America, see Deloria.

The extent of the racial drag is conveyed by the list of *Dramatis Personae* at the front of the playtext, which is astoundingly specific in the ‘ethnicities listed in order of preference’, at once reifying race and suggesting it is performative. BJJ, ‘played by an actual playwright, African-American actor, or black actor’, whites up to play George and M’Closky. As in Boucicault’s original, the ‘white actor, or actor who can pass as white’ playing the Playwright, reds up to play Wahnotee. The ‘Indigenous American actor/ actress, a South Asian actor/ actress, or one who can pass as Native American’ who plays the Assistant blacks up to play the slaves Pete and Paul. The slippage created by the word ‘pass’ points to the paradox of staging race; whilst audience members may read race onto the actors’ bodies onstage, the visual signifiers may not correspond with how the actors themselves identify. Johnson argues that, in ‘the inexpressible yet undeniable racial experience of black people’, ‘blackness supersedes or explodes performance in that the modes of representation endemic to performance—the visual and spectacular—are no longer viable registers of racial identification’ (8). In *An Octoroon*, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins and Sarah Benson spectacularise race (in the sense of making it a spectacle) to make the cultural production of race visible.

The racial drag ironises the racist content of Boucicault’s *The Octoroon*. For example, when George (in whiteface) asks Pete (in blackface) whether the slaves were all born on this estate, the slave replies:

Dem darkies? Born here? What? On Terrebonne!
Don’t believe it, Mas’r George — dem black tings
never was born at all; dey growed up one mornin’
frum da roots of a sassafras tree in the / swamp (52).

This is almost word for word what he says in Boucicault’s play;

the minstrelised dialect and folk wisdom are hallmarks of minstrel representation. Yet, in the Theatre for a New Audience Production, Austin Smith presented Pete's minstrelised characterisation as just an act, put on around white people to appeal to their beliefs about black people's 'folksy ways' (52).

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins further interrogates the problems of representation by having the house slaves Dido and Minnie (played by black actors) speak in twenty-first-century, urban slang. The comedy lies in the anachronism and the wilful inappropriateness, such as Minnie's reassurance to Dido, 'You can't be bringing your work home with you' (137). A note in the playscript before Act 1 reads 'I'm just going to say this right now so we can get it over with: I don't know what a real slave sounded like. And neither do you' (43). Branden Jacobs-Jenkins forestalls criticism of the authenticity of his work as a representation of the conditions of slavery. Indeed, by setting the contemporary slang of Minnie and Dido alongside Boucicault's minstrelised slave dialect, revealing both to be historically contingent forms of representation and refusing to privilege one over the other, he questions the truth claims of representations supposed authentic and, in so doing, also delegitimises notions of 'authentic blackness'. However, it is worth noting that Jacobs-Jenkins' representations of black female characters have been criticised as playing into racist stereotypes (see Wagaine). There is a danger that, in celebrating the theatrical as inauthentic, Jacobs-Jenkins mitigates the potential of theatrical representation to create sympathy for black characters. As the satirical characters do not permit much room for sympathy, Zoe's problematic character arc, as written by Boucicault (representative line—'I'd rather be black than ungrateful', 77), ends up bearing emotional weight. This is the opposite problem from *Red Velvet*, which makes Al-

dridge a sympathetic character by setting his authenticity against the nineteenth-century theatre.

Nonetheless, through a complex critique of racialised representation and the distribution of affect, Jacobs-Jenkins and Benson show what is at stake in challenging racist representations that claim to be authentic. At the centre of *An Octoroon*, where, as BJJ informs us, the ‘Sensation Scene’ would be in a Victorian melodrama (114), a lynching photograph is projected onto the back wall of the theatre for a number of minutes. In Sarah Benson’s production, the photograph was of the lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith in Marion, Indiana in 1930, which was the inspiration for the song ‘Strange Fruit’ by Billy Holiday. In front of Shipp and Smith’s hanging bodies, a crowd of white people face the camera, smiling; one man points sternly at the bodies. In my memory of the Theatre for a New Audience performance, the image remained for an uncomfortably long time; I wanted to look away but felt I had to look.⁶ Benson’s choice of image – one of the most famous visual representations of lynching—means that many in the audience would have seen it before. The photograph’s significations and significance exceed the play, which simultaneously punctuates the comedy of *An Octoroon* with the realities of racist violence and shows that this has been under the surface of *An Octoroon* all along. Young argues ‘the lynching event was one of the most spectacular performance events of the past two centuries’ (188). Staged black bodies have been objectified and subjected to violence for the entertainment of white people, on a continuum from the discursive violence of the staged slave auction in Boucicault’s *The Octoroon*, the comic

⁶ Bennett’s treatment of this scene did not encourage similar reflection, at least in the first preview. An old school projector was brought out, but, as it was staged in the round, the photograph (of a single, hanging black body and a white man looking on) could only be shown to half the audience at a time, resulting in awkward stage business that provoked laughs.

violence in minstrel shows (within the theatre), and the physical violence of lynching (beyond the theatre). By staging the photograph as the ultimate spectacle in the melodrama of race, Benson and Jacobs-Jenkins suggest that the cultural production of race is implicated in violence, making it a duty of artists to challenge racist representation.

As *Red Velvet* and *An Octoroon* show, the theatre is uniquely placed to make visible the slippage between artistic representations and embodied experiences of race. Although authenticity is not in itself negative, I have demonstrated how authenticity as a category of aesthetic value has been co-opted to exclude non-white people from the theatre, to grotesquely misrepresent black people, as in minstrelsy, as well as to justify racist violence. Although Chakrabarti and Jacobs-Jenkins' approaches to authenticity are very different, both are concerned with the political responsibility of representation in the theatre. While theatrical devices are not in themselves racist, they carry their histories with them, including their use in racialised representation. This does not discount them as valuable tools. However, their racialised legacies must be acknowledged by theatre makers, so they can be reappropriated to counter those histories and restore lost stories. In *Red Velvet*, Ira Aldridge remarks that there is 'something about velvet—a deep promise of what's to come, the sweat of others embedded in the pile. A crushed map of who was here folded in' (12). This is an apt metaphor for *Red Velvet*'s and *An Octoroon*'s aesthetic and ethical engagement with theatre history.

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A Woman's Brood: Confronting Disparate Memories of 1916 in Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*

By Jordana Starkman

Abstract

In 1926, Sean O'Casey's play *The Plough and the Stars* was staged at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Set during Ireland's 1916 Rising, O'Casey's play interpreted history from the perspective of residents living in a penurious Dublin tenement building and focused in particular on the female experience of the Rising. Antithetical to the lives of revolutionary women in his audience, the production presented a controversial cast of women who challenged nationalist narratives of female support for the Rising. The play, which complicated the official, nationalistic narrative by emphasizing the history of non-partisan communities, was perceived by republican women as a neglectful affront to their lived experiences and failed to confirm their collective memory of the Rising as a nationalist triumph. Female activists led by Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington rioted in the theatre, protesting against what to them was an inauthentic portrayal of Irish women. Focusing on post-riot newspaper correspondences between O'Casey and Sheehy-Skeffington, this article examines the emergence of *The Plough and the Stars* as a vehicle of memory. Concentrating on 1916 as a *lieux de memoire*, the article argues that O'Casey's play subverted the nationalist, feminist rhetoric of the Easter Rising and provoked conflict between different lived experiences and historical interpretations of 1916. As the play sparked vigorous disputes over the representation of female participation in the 1916 Rising, *The Plough and the Stars* provides unique insight into the theatre's ability to influence the national psyche. By reckoning with notions of authenticity, the article also illuminates the Abbey Theatre as a locus of Irish identity formation.

On 8 February 1926 a full audience awaited the debut of playwright Sean O'Casey's new work *The Plough and the Stars* in Ireland's Abbey Theatre Playhouse. The third in a series of three

plays collectively known as 'The Dublin Trilogy', O'Casey's drama focused on the character of Nora Clitheroe, a young newlywed whose tenement home initially promises the potential for domestic happiness. Set against the events of Ireland's 1916 Rising, however, Nora's life is rapidly reduced to turmoil as her husband chooses to fight with the Irish Citizen Army against British troops. By examining historical events from the perspective of the residents of a penurious Dublin tenement building (and primarily focusing on the female experience), O'Casey illuminated a marginalized history, calling into question the established distinction between honourable heroism and unnecessary destruction. However, rather than unite his audience around a new analysis of the past, the play provoked anger, antagonism, and rioting from the audience. Taking offence from what was understood to be an inauthentic and inaccurate recreation of their lived experience of fighting in or losing family members to the 1916 Rising, riots were incited primarily by Irish republican women. These were led by Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, a nationalist fighter and member of Cumann na mBan, an Irish republican women's paramilitary organization.

O'Casey's gendered characterizations caused unease amongst audience members who, having lived through and participated in the Rising, took offense with the play's interpretation of their own recent history: as the men in the story become willing martyrs for Irish freedom, the play portrayed women as bystanders to violence who succumb to the destruction and loss of life taking place around them. Upon seeing the play, republican women expressed anger at its perceived inauthenticity and its failure to reproduce the women's experience of bravery and sacrifice throughout 1916.

By 11 February, the fourth night of the play's run, a lar-

gescale disruption from protestors in the audience occurred as twenty members of Cumann na mBan, led by Sheehy-Skeffington, rioted against the play (Lowery 30). The second act witnessed 'pandemonium which continued until the curtain fell', as protestors 'shouted, booed, and sang'. This continued until Act III, when 'a dozen women made their way from the pit on either side of the theater and attempted to scramble on to the stage ... and there ensued on stage a regular fight between the players and the invaders' ('Abbey Theatre Scene' 7). The play was stopped as protestors were removed from the stage and the Irish poet and playwright W.B. Yeats came forward to address the audience. 'Is this going to be a re-occurring celebration of Irish genius?', he asked spectators who replied with shouts of, 'Up the republic!' (qtd. in 'Abbey Theatre Scene' 7; see also Lowery 31). As protestors were escorted out of the theatre by police, Sheehy-Skeffington remarked, 'It is no wonder that you do not remember the men of Easter Week because none of you fought on either side' (qtd. in Lowery 31).

As Sheehy-Skeffington assigned ownership of the authentic memory of 1916 to active republican fighters, O'Casey's perceived misrepresentation was attributed to his lack of direct involvement, which was supposed to impede his ability to adequately recall and commemorate the Rising. Sheehy-Skeffington later clarified her belief in the Rising as 'the first time in history that men fighting for freedom had voluntarily included women' (qtd. in Ward), emphasizing that 1916 had been a pivotal instance of gender inclusion in the struggle for emancipation. As such, *The Plough and the Stars* and subsequent female-led riots illuminate the 1916 Rising as a locus of contention wherein individual recollections and the experiences of Dublin's marginalized and impoverished classes conflicted with historical nar-

ratives of courageous rebellion. Different ideas about what constituted authentic reality challenged the 1916 Rising's status as a seminal event foundational to Irish female republican identity. Further complicating notions of authenticity—as a prerogative that relies on public display and presentation for affirmation—the riots emphasized a specific play's capacity to undermine communal identity. Through an exploration of the Abbey Theatre as a national venue and *The Plough and the Stars* as a vehicle of memory that subverted the accepted national rhetoric of 1916, the remainder of this article analyses the confrontational consequences of conflicting lived experiences and diverging understandings of what constitutes historical authenticity.

***The Plough and the Stars* and Conflicting Memories of the 1916 Rising**

Although it was the first nationally endowed theatre in the English-speaking world, having received a state subsidy of 850 pounds in the newly emerged Irish Free State, the Abbey Theatre was not simply an organ of nationalist ideology. A quick glance at Irish history further clarifies the theatre's position. For example, despite the 1923 ceasefire agreement, groups who opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, such as Cumann na mBan, continued to meet at the theatre. At the same time, however, the nascent Free State government aimed to solidify its position in part through the development of new institutions like the Abbey Theatre (A. Clarke 210).

According to the philosopher Ernest Gellner, 'nationalism is not the awakening of nations', rather, '[nationalism] invents nations where they do not exist' (Gellner 169). As such, the successful invention of a nation is predicated on the government's ability to be identified with and assert its belonging to the

nation (A. Clarke 211). In my view, the theatre can be a potent tool for emergent governments, insofar as it offers a viable conduit for the transmission of the newly invented national identity to audiences. This perspective provides the point of departure from which this article presents its argument.

The Abbey Theatre's subsidy was granted by the Pro-Treaty government and integrated the national stage within the infrastructure of the Free State Administration. As the theatre's work was seen to be representative of the new nation the provocations put forth in O'Casey's play inspired nationalist anger. The protests targeted, in part, his use of female characters to illuminate the failure of the Rising and subsequent emancipation of Ireland to improve the living conditions of Dublin's working class. By portraying weak and dying female characters, O'Casey further disparaged the role of Free State women and called into question their ability to symbolically represent the nation. Thus, as the collective memory of revolutionary Irish women in 1926 foregrounded the courage of female protestors in 1916, O'Casey's derision of the Easter Rising posed a dual problem of identification: Female protestors felt that they could identify neither with the play's portrayal of 1916 nor with the new Republic's 1926 Pro-Treaty government. While, to many, 1916 constituted a shrine for authentic Irish nationalism, O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* called this into question by instead showing 1916 as 'old and unhappy far off days for the nation', its working classes, and, most specifically, working class women (Lowery 9).

The memory of a past event held by individuals and communities is created not only by the event itself; it is also constructed by successive generations as a shared form of cultural knowledge (Confino 1386). In addition, memory is variable and

situated within fluctuating social frameworks, molded by capricious political situations, and located within varying collective communities (Olick et al. 37). The irregular boundaries with which collective memory is marked preclude a universal recollection of the past and allow various groups to construct unique identities in relation to a commonly experienced event (Halbwachs 144). As such, in 1926, when confronted with O'Casey's recollection of the past as a vehicle of memory viewed on a national stage, audiences disagreed that his interpretation of historical events, especially those concerning women, was impartial and authentic. Instead, protestors felt that 1916, as a foundational site of Irish memory, was being disparaged on stage in a play that was seen as an affront to Irish female identity. Labelled by Pierre Nora as 'lieux de memoire', sites of memory are bound in the sense that memory is intentionally created and diffused; plays and other commemorative efforts are not naturally occurring phenomena, but imposed to maintain and substantiate specific sites of memory (Nora 12). By reinterpreting the 1916 Rising, O'Casey thus challenged the narrative of heroic martyrdom, offering a newly constructed lens through which to view the Irish past and reimagine national memory.

O'Casey's play complicated the celebratory ethos surrounding the memory of 1916 by emphasizing the histories of those who did not understand the Rising as necessary for the salvation of Ireland. Because it functioned as a vehicle of transmission for the memory of 1916, *The Plough and the Stars* created anxiety over the new historical interpretations it put forth. According to the French historian Ernest Renan, the stability of a nation, defined as 'a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future', depends on the possession

of rich legacies of memory' (82-83). In the case of *The Plough and the Stars*, the emergence of dissenting memories tested national solidarity as feelings of past sacrifices were called to question. In sum, Irish republicans saw the play as a challenge to Irish nationalism because it showed 'the meanness ... the squalor ... and the little vanities and jealousies of the Irish Citizen Army' and failed to include 'a single gleam of heroism' ('Right of Audiences' 5). However, for O'Casey himself, the play presented an authentic 'body of truth' ('The Plough and the Stars: A Reply to Critics' 6), which served the vital function of re-inserting neglected histories into the dominant nationalist narrative.

Reactions to the Controversy in *The Irish Times* and *The Irish Statesman*

On 9 February, following the play's opening night, a critic for *The Irish Times* described *The Plough and the Stars* as 'the high-water mark of public interest'. The same critic stated:

O'Casey paints the people among whom he has lived until quite recently. While history is being made all around them in scenes of death and destruction, these people live their lives as they have lived them all along—drab and shiftless ('*The Plough and the Stars*: Mr. O'Casey's New Play' 5).

However, because the critic's praise that the play was 'more than realism; it is naturalism—a faithful reproduction of what happened, with the truth of the picture apparent to the dull-est imagination', was anything but uncontroversial, O'Casey felt compelled to publish vigorous defenses of his script in *The Irish Times*. Responding to anger regarding 'the representation of fear in the eyes of the fighters', for example, O'Casey contended, 'if they knew no fear, then the fight of Easter Week was an easy

thing, and those who participated deserve to be forgotten in a day, rather than to be remembered forever (*The Plough and the Stars: A Reply to Critics* 6).⁷ His recollection of the past, however, was still seen to belittle the bravery and morality of fighters, such that the nationalist fighter Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington felt provoked to publicise a nationalist call to action, which stated: 'The Ireland that remembers with tear dimmed eyes all that Easter Week stands for, will not, and cannot be silent in the face of such a challenge' (*Right of Audiences* 5).

In the weeks following the play's run, O'Casey, Sheehy-Skeffington, and Irish civilians concerned about the production sent letters to the editors of prominent newspapers, including *The Irish Times* and the *Irish Statesman*. Their opinions reveal varying social attitudes towards the play and its effect on the memory of the Easter Rising. A letter to *The Irish Times* noted about the riots that, '[f]rom start to finish the whole thing was a woman's row, made and carried on by women' (*Abbey Theatre Scene* 7), many of whom, like Sheehy-Skeffington were 'prominently identified with Republican demonstrations in the city' (Lowery 37). Rather than seeing reflections of themselves, their actions and memories, republican women saw in the play an offensive and faulty depiction of women in 1916. While the protestors had fought alongside male soldiers and witnessed the deaths of their husbands and sons during Easter Week, O'Casey's women censured the Rising and lamented the death and destruction taking place around them. O'Casey's response to criticism in *The Irish Times* addressed the anger towards the character of Nora Clitheroe, who, dissenters believed, failed to accurately represent Irish women. O'Casey asserted that: 'Nora not only voices the feeling of Ireland's women, but the women of the human race. The safety of her brood is the true morality

of every woman' ("The Plough and the Stars: A Reply to Critics" 6). Sheehy-Skeffington, however, disapproved of this sentiment, suggesting that 'when Mr. O'Casey proceeds to lecture us on "the true morality of every woman", he is somewhat out of his depth'. Sheehy-Skeffington contended that 'Nora Clitheroe is no more "typical of Irish womanhood" than her futile, sniveling husband is of Irish manhood' (qtd. in Lowery 80).

As public representations of Irish women became contested territory, multiple communities operating within a singular historical milieu fought for control over what constituted an authentic understanding of the past. However, in affirming that '[t]he women of Easter week, as we know them, are typified in the mother of Padraic Pearse, that valiant woman who gave both her sons for freedom', Sheehy-Skeffington's response, which here compared Irish women to the sacrificial Virgin Mary, failed to adequately address O'Casey's perceived misrepresentations (qtd. in Lowery 80). Rather than complicate or nuance the play's characterization of womanhood, the ascription of females to the biblical trope merely substituted one generalization with another. In response, O'Casey further transformed the stage into a site of contested memory and subversive reality. He asserted that he 'was not trying, and never would try, to write about heroes', because he could only write about the life and the people that he knew ('Rights of the Audiences' 5). His female characters, as women with critical faculty, scrutinize violence and complicate the idea that women tend to willingly send their men to die. Nora Clitheroe implores her husband to abstain from violence, pleading, 'I won't let you go! ... I am your dearest comrade!' (O'Casey, 'The Plough and the Stars' 48). Though O'Casey's women do not embody revolutionary devotion, their bravery is revealed through their willingness to protect each other; as men

die for their country, women are summoned to build a new life from the ruins (Krause 99).

Published reactions to the play were not limited to O'Casey and Sheehy-Skeffington. While Sheehy-Skeffington claimed to speak for all Irish womanhood, other Irish women also contributed their opinions to the *Irish Statesman*. Brigid O'Higgins, a Dublin resident, contributed a letter to the editor entitled 'The Plough and the Stars: As a Woman Saw It', in which she remarked that O'Casey 'gives a critical, cynical, and impassioned picture of ... the Dublin slums.' O'Higgins went on to say that O'Casey, 'does not shrink from portraying tenement life as he knew it himself' and shared her impression that, 'the man is honestly striving for truth and is seldom far from it'. While O'Higgins shared the view that 'O'Casey has shaken our smugness; he has ruthlessly dispelled that convenient smokescreen which would shut out from our comfortable drawing rooms the awful reality of a side of Dublin life that men and women ... are up against', she also lamented that 'for O'Casey ... 1916 only meant war' and that the playwright had missed 'the soul of the insurrection—a simple people's sublime act of faith in themselves and their right to nationhood'. Closing her letter by affirming, 'those of us who are not fashioned in heroic mold are deeply indebted to the author of *The Plough and the Stars*, for he is the defender of the rights on the poor, weak, and unheroic' (qtd. Lowery 82), O'Higgins praised O'Casey for bringing neglected memories to prominence, thus situating herself starkly at odds with Sheehy-Skeffington.

Other letters also grappled with Sheehy-Skeffington's ideologically charged dissent. A woman named Kathleen O'Sullivan, in her letter to the editor, wrote in favour of 'the street girl and consumptive child', who 'may not have knit themselves into

the heart of the tragedy ... but ... were more real, more germane to the life O'Casey depicts for us than the tragedy that overshadows them' (qtd. in Lowery 86). Conversely, O'Sullivan also indicated fear that in the character of Rosie Redmond, 'O'Casey is in danger of giving us a stage slum dweller, not too far removed in conception from the stage Irishman' (qtd. in Lowery 87), offering criticism resonant of Sheehy-Skeffington's. Though Sheehy-Skeffington and republican female protestors maintained that their demonstration was on behalf of Irish womanhood whose collective, national identities had been insulted, letters like O'Higgins's and O'Sullivan's make clear other Irish women held more nuanced views which encapsulated a necessary criticism of O'Casey's failure to sympathize with republican ideology, but also understood the value of his revisionist approach to 1916.

Conclusion

A critic's judgement that *The Plough and the Stars* was 'a woman's play, a drama in which men must die and women must weep' clarifies the crux of the female-led riots incited by O'Casey's Play ('*The Plough and the Stars*: Mr. Sean O'Casey's New Play' 6). While O'Casey's fictional women succumbed in the face of the deaths of their revolutionary husbands, republican women had actually participated in the Rising and thus demonstrated their ability to respond to loss with greater fortitude (K. Clarke 192). The play, which aimed to recalibrate nationalist accounts of 1916 by inserting the history of non-partisan communities into official narrative, was perceived by republican women as a neglectful affront to their authentic experiences and collective memory of the Rising as a nationalist triumph. Collective memory, according to French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs, 're-

tains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping memory alive' (Halbwachs 143). Sheehy-Skeffington's scrutiny of the production as a 'leprous corpse,' incapable of bearing 'the body of truth' (qtd. in Lowery 77), illuminates the fervency with which republican women refused to accept O'Casey's depiction as a valid conception of the memory of Easter Week. The play became a target for the republican women's anger; like Sheehy-Skeffington's metaphorical leprous corpse, protestors understood O'Casey's work not only as a deceased body unable to communicate their recollections of the past, but as a locus of contagion threatening the vitality of their collective memory and identity.

In light of this, it may be asked how one may seek to reconcile competing memories that are mired in conflicting ideologies and incompatible understandings of what constitutes the authentic past. Perhaps the answer lies not in the play itself but in its greater resonances for the meaning of authenticity and what constitutes authentic Irish experience. Questions of authenticity arise when communities find themselves in struggle for recognition, seeking national or cultural affirmation and validation of their experiences and histories (Handler 3). In Ireland, the multitude of experiences formed in the aftermath of 1916's revolutionary week gave rise to competing claims for recognition and historical legitimacy. In 1926, the controversy surrounding Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* not only provided a platform for competing realities and lived experience; it also but posed critical questions whose long-term implications continue to resonate: Who inherits authentic truth, and who has the right to interpret history?

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‘To Speak The Truth, The Whole Truth and Nothing But The Truth’: About Political Performances of Listening

By Anika Marschall

Abstract

In this article, I discuss performative sound interventions by British-Jordanian media artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan. I employ performance studies discourses to think through the politics of authenticity that his works address. I argue that Hamdan’s performative interventions aim to bring forth a new form of political agency that grounds on us rethinking the dramaturgy of listening. Different from an aesthetic of authenticity as seen in verbatim theatre, he does not aim to give a voice to the voiceless in order to challenge the norms of cultural belonging and identity politics. Instead, his artistic works about legal authentication processes produce a new sensibility for the act of listening and the political positioning of the listening subject. Interrogating how the politics of listening coalesces with an aesthetic of authenticity, I argue, can impel us to reconsider our understanding of the *vox populi* and naturalised practices of exclusion.

Introduction: Politics of Authenticity

In this article, I make a case for how contemporary performance art challenges our politics of authenticity and can expose state-related practices of identity authentication. I discuss the performative interventions by British-Jordanian sound artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan. By looking at how his artistic works about legal authentication processes produce a new sensibility for the act of listening, I suggest that they impel us to reconsider our understanding of the *vox populi* (the voice of the people) and naturalised practices of exclusion.

Shifting perspective from the prevalent notion of our society as a speaking and self-representational one, Hamdan

seeks to establish an understanding for the political impact of listening. His artistic research interrogates juridical hearing practices, legal identity profiling and voice authentication and he places new emphasis on audibilities¹ rather than on culturally dominant visual metrics. The works comprise exhibited audio documentations, legal petitions, technological installations, and lecture performances. The works are open-ended and use self-reflexive strategies to subtly undermine the authority ascribed to expert witnesses, forensic linguists and narrator's voices, while at the same time unmasking the political stakes of listening. How can we account for practices that authenticate accents and that categorically fix identities? Can performance art offer modes of resistance to these legal disapprovals of inauthentic and 'wrong' voices? Or, in what ways does an 'aesthetic of authenticity' (Wake 84) merely reproduce imbalanced structures of communications that reify otherness? How does a prevalent cultural valorising of authenticity exclude particular groups from effective voice in the first place?

The fatal and complex consequences of contemporary migration movements oblige us to account for policed forms of authentication. To challenge established state-related demands for performing authenticity and to give a plausible account of oneself by means of voice today (Couldry 10)² is especially im-

¹ What I term audibilities here refers to the multiple soundings and voices that can be heard by means of human ears but also by means of technological devices. In his works, Hamdan analyses human voices but he goes even further in his interrogation when he analyses sounds which are not audible to mere human ears. Therefore, I use audibilities to highlight the complex disparities of sensual and digital or technological ways of listening to multiple forms and depths of sounds and voices. Hamdan uses the term audible in a political way to describe how those sounds and voices which are categorised as intelligible get transcribed and historically recorded – as opposed to those voices that are regarded as impossible to transcribe (2016, 1).

² In *Why Voice Matters*, Nick Couldry gives a sociological account of how narrative resources are unequally distributed in Western societies and that there is a limit to whose voices can be heard and what voices are readily recognised

portant but equally controversial when it comes to asylum appeals (see Jeffers; Nyers; Jestrovic).³ Theatre scholar Caroline Wake argues that specific forms of documentary verbatim theatre can shift our practices of listening and thereby assist, damage or disable the formation of publics rather than discussing theatre's efficacy of giving a voice to the voiceless (Heddon 128).⁴ Playfully referencing Gayatri Spivak (1994), she insists that in this way theatre brings forth new modes of listening and cultural belonging, stating that '[r]ather than thinking about whether the subaltern can speak, listening encourages us to think about whether the mainstream subject can listen' (Wake 95). Informed by her approach, I seek to examine how Hamdan's body of work on the *Politics of Listening* intervenes in cultural and political Western productions of truth(s). Even if postmodern criticism and culture easily targets and troubles the epistemologies of truth, authenticity and reality (Martin 1), it seems that our contemporaneous culture is still or again preoccupied with them as defining terms for performance—be it performance in the arts, forensics, politics or law (Lavender). In the following, I will ex-

in our institutional politics. He is aware that listening is not a tool to easily reconcile that conflictual distribution, but that it is necessary to acknowledge the entanglement of our stories with the stories of others (131).

³ This article foregrounds practices of listening rather than speaking out. Nevertheless, the ramifications of the contemporaneous rise of right-wing politics, and fascist and sexist rhetoric are in fact urgent and so dangerous that one cannot simply lean back in silence. I do therefore acknowledge the necessity to speak out against injustice, inequality and racism as well as the necessity to elicit solidarity such occasions as in the Women's Marches on 22 January 2017. Not despite but exactly because of that, in the following I challenge culturally disciplined forms of communication(s) and I aim for new forms of political agency, ethical responsiveness, and cultural belonging.

⁴ Theatre practitioner David Hare acknowledges theatre's capacity to bring about public dialogue and in particular to be giving 'a voice to the voiceless' (Heddon 128). In this context, theatre is seen as political useful because it can provide a platform, a setting and a stage for oppressed and marginalised communities to make their point of views heard by a wider public audience. But what seems important is to challenge the metaphor 'voiceless' and the problematic of speaking for rather than with others in verbatim and documentary theatre.

amine how Hamdan's performative interventions make evident how authenticity is practised as a means of political bureaucracy (Jeffers 17), and how prevalent its valorisation is for a socio- and biopolitical construction of identity (Agamben).

Challenging Bureaucratic Truths

Based at the Goldsmiths College in London, Hamdan interrogates the role of voice in law through artistic research. He is part of Forensic Architecture which is an institute that 'undertakes advanced research on behalf of international prosecutors, human rights organisations, as well as political and environmental justice groups' (Forensic Architecture). Alongside the founding member Eyal Weizman, the team includes architects, film makers, media and urban designers, theatre and performance makers, journalists, cultural theorists and historians, who work on new modes to present researched evidence in high profile human rights investigations. While in Forensic Architecture visual metrics and protocols are pertinent in the evaluation of crime scenes, the mapping of borders, and environmental changes, Hamdan investigates technologies of the ear that deal with judicial court hearings and evaluative listening. He attributes a new form of political agency to audacity and the listening subject—as opposed to the one speaking out.

Even though forensic listening is not the primary research interest and practice of Hamdan, his body of work does reflect on the ways it theoretically and empirically intervenes in how society deals with voices and soundings. Since forensic listening has been used juridically in the 1980s, the legal and linguistic interpretation of sound or noise is at issue – any kind of sonic resonance or voice inflection can become evidentiary. Acts of listening for the courtroom have made way for specially

trained ears and phonetic analysts operating as expert witnesses (Hamdan 2011: 83). Hamdan's artistic works focus on the role of the voice in law and how the changing nature of testimony can be understood in the face of new regimes of body control, algorithmic technologies, medical sciences and methodologies of eavesdropping. To him, listening is ultimately political.

Hamdan refers to the year 1984 as a political marker that deeply intervened in the understanding and practices of listening. When the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) came into force in the UK, it brought forth a new 'sonic avantgarde' that is related to the audio recording of police interrogation interviews (Hamdan 2014a). Since then, all police interviews are compulsorily audio-recorded rather than documented solely through note-taking. As Hamdan puts it, this legislation has brought about the 'death of incidental and ambient background sounds' (2014a), and created instances of expert listening where linguists spend three working days listening to a single recorded vowel and what meanings are captured in it. This emphasis on the object-quality of sound rather than its ephemera and the presumed legibility of a voice (as means of age, health, and ethnicity) risks essentialising sound. Sound studies discourses that have aim to contest the long fetishised notion of the voice-as-object (Thomaidis and Macpherson 4–5) do not align with this politicising and policing of voice and sound. In the following, I will look at two of Hamdan's performance interventions and how they negotiate listening and the politics of authenticity: *The Freedom of Speech Itself* (2012) and *Contra Diction: Speech Against Itself* (2014–ongoing).

***The Freedom of Speech Itself* (2012)**

The performance installation *The Freedom of Speech Itself* was ex-

hibited at The Showroom in London in 2012. With this piece, Hamdan critiques the voice profiling applied by immigration offices all around Europe. Part of this performance installation are sculptural voice prints that are made of acoustically absorbent foam and thus they intervene in the audio-space. These sculptures materialise different pronunciations of the word 'you' cartographically and make them tangible in the form of 3D voice prints. They form a sort of tectonic structure that reminds of geographic maps, but they illustrate how the frequency and amplitude of two different voices saying the word 'you'. This use of cartographic techniques works to exemplify how accents can be linguistically mapped and forensically identified – much like fingerprints. But the core of the installation is a 30-minute audio documentary, a bare sound piece which includes expert interviews that reveal the actual complexities of vocal biographies. The content expounds different power-relations intertwined with the (ab)uses of language in our societies. Audiences can listen attentively and sit down on plastic chairs surrounding a large square wooden table on which four speakers are placed that play the documentary.

Adapting the form of a radio programme, the sound piece confronts listeners with different stories from people involved with or affected by the practice of voice analysis. A sonic background is produced by sound altering effects, voice layovers and other mechanical sounds that distort and interlude. After Hamdan's own voice gives an introduction to the piece, an ironic lift music eases the passage to the first contribution: UK's leading forensic speech analyst Peter French explaining his use of the accent atlas and comments on his listening practice. French imitates different English accents ('running late, layte, lite') while in the sonic background we can hear the looped and repeated

recordings of single syllables and spoken phonemes, delivering a sense for the microscopic level of scientific deep listening. A North-American sociologist then describes how speech analysis was developed in the 1990s in Swedish immigration offices. A dry corporate and old-fashioned jingle interludes before a lawyer and activist linguist questions the legal status of accents and explains how forensic listening has evolved as a new means of securing the UK borders.

As an undocumented asylum seeker you can either give your body in evidence for a testimony, or you can have your biographic claims validated by giving your voice in evidence. Usually, such voice evidence interviews do not last longer than 15 minutes. They are recorded on tape and sent to private companies that produce a verdict on the origin of the asylum seeker without any personal contact. From this physical distance, the validation of origin neglects any body language. Even more problematic is that the interviewer more than often does not speak the same language as the interviewee, or they lack certain linguistic and cultural knowledge to the extent that it creates blind or rather mute spots for the interviewer who is unaware of the interviewee's tendency to change their 'original' way of speaking and adapt for the benefit of smooth communication (*The Freedom of Speech Itself* 12:40–13:28min).⁵

The audio documentary shares different examples of such stories: a case worker speaks about an Afghan man whose asylum claim was denied because of how he pronounced the letter 't' convincing analysts that he was Pakistani. Another story revolves around the pronunciation of the word 'tomato' which was used at check points during the Lebanese civil war to detect

⁵ A group of linguists and other scholars have published guidelines for the use of accent profiling in relation to questions of national origin in refugee cases. See also: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4cbebc852.html>.

whether an enemy (in this case, a Palestinian) wanted to pass. A third story is told by a Sierra Leonean who has been mistakenly identified as Nigerian and is about to be deported 'back to his country'. In the first person, he is wondering where he will go once he arrives at the airport in Lagos. These stories paired with the contributions of field experts and voice analysts vex once again questions about the equation of territorial origin and the language(s) one speaks. They question the ideology that underlies these listening analyses and that fatally derives from the actual diversity across national borders. These stories led Hamdan to include a legal petition in his performance installation, diffusing the means of the artistic realm itself. The petition was not in any way exhibited as artefact but as a 'real' document open for audience members to sign. Drafted by Hamdan himself and a lawyer, it aimed to stop forensic accent tests and to amend the right of silence by expanding the caution that 'anything you do say may be given in evidence' with 'any way you say something may also be given in evidence'.

Thus, these audibilities expose the moral debris of forensically constructed bureaucratic truths and reinforce the complexity of vocal biographies. They reveal how a native tongue is virtually impossible and give way to manifold possibilities of cultural belonging. When Hamdan asks the seemingly simple question 'Where are you from?' to one of his interviewees, it opens up what Emily Apter considers to be 'cosmopolitical worlds of constant migration' (106):

So, where are you from?
I'm from Hackney.
But you're Danish, aren't you?
No, I'm Palestinian.

So where are you from in Palestine?

I'm not from Palestine.

So where are you from?

We're Palestinians from a refugee camp in Lebanon.

So you were born in Lebanon?

No, I was born in Dubai.

Why do you have an American accent?

What do you mean?

You speak English with an American twang.

It's because, you know, because of Eddie Murphy, Stallone.

So you're from Hollywood?

No, no, I'm from Hackney.

(The Freedom of Speech Itself 22:30–23:18min)

This conversation highlights how the idea of an authentic native tongue is purely fictional and does not account for traces of constant uprooting that are left in one's language. Thus, an accent is not only a cultural stigma that is yet to be overcome but it is even more so a new bureaucratic liability: accents are governmentalised and can pose a primary threshold to access the very social realm itself.

The Freedom of Speech Itself challenges the presumed authenticity revealed through the object-quality of accents. I argue that by referencing audio techniques of radio programmes, podcasts, and television documentaries the performative installation operates as a documentary aesthetic rather than an 'aesthetic of authenticity' (Wake 84). As documentary aesthetic, it seeks an (at times elusive) educational effect and questions the status of the voice as a legible document. The performance in-

stallation does not affect through a story-telling that is bound to a valorised authenticity prominent in theatre and performance discourses about authenticity (Luckhurst). The work challenges political efforts of de-legitimising and othering 'inauthentic' voices and accents. Further it makes intelligible how authenticity is scientifically marked and legally constructed through voice profiling. What becomes evident is that authenticity cannot be heard in any voice or accent testimony—despite technological and political attempts to render the voice legible.⁶ Thus, authenticity is not an effect of the voice itself but of prior extra-legal knowledge or rather beliefs about the assimilation between voice and the territorial confinements of a nation-state. Therefore, I argue that authenticity is ultimately political and part of a wider performance framework in which artistic, scientific, and jurisdictional practices of cultural belonging hybridise.

***Contra Diction: Speech against Itself* (2014–ongoing)**

In his performance lecture *Contra Diction: Speech against Itself* Hamdan expands his critique on policed authentication. Hamdan presented the performance lecture at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin on 15 April 2016, as keynote for the two-day annual symposium *what now?* by Art in General in collaboration with the Vera List Center for Art and Politics in New York on 24–25 April 2015, and at the annual one-day conference *Improving Reality* organised by Lighthouse as part of the Brighton Digital Festival on 4 September 2014—among others. In all three conference presentations, Hamdan addresses internationalised audiences capable of fluently speaking and understanding

⁶ Konstantinos Thomaidis and Ben Macpherson propose to understand voice as not simply expressive utterance, but rather as interconnection of multiple entities. They argue that it is only productive to speak of voices as a plurality, 'there is [...] no definite article: the voice does not exist' (4).

English and who are intricately interested and feel comfortable in participating in a public dialogue among artistic practitioners, researchers and critics alike. During the lecture, he usually stands on a bare stage of a teaching institution and makes use of a teleprompted script or a music stand alongside a video projection. Additionally, he carries a portable unit for sound modulation, turning him into ‘a hip musician and a nerdy scientist at the same time’ (You 113). He usually starts his performance by describing the digital progress of communication software and how it is able to constantly analyse our voices through different devices. There is no longer a transparent transmutation and threshold that marks how our speaking becomes liable testimony and how it is being turned into a bureaucratic truth about our identity and cultural belonging: ‘we can no longer depend on a place and time to which the law acts on our voices, there is no longer simply the police interrogation room and the witness stand, our speech is now legally accountable in all sites and across international jurisdictions’ (Hamdan 2014a).

In turn, Hamdan seeks possibilities within the communication(s) politics of our ‘All-Hearing and All-Speaking society’ for avoiding telling the whole truth at all times and preserving our right to silence. Concerned with strategies of how to object to a certain imposed politics of listening, he focuses on the principle of *Taqiyya*, which is a Druze Islamic jurisprudence. This practice is ‘simultaneously speaking freely and remaining silent’, a subversive strategy that is neither lying nor ‘not not lying’ (Hamdan 2014a).

Taqiyya is introduced by Hamdan as ‘Islamic jurisprudence, a legal dispensation whereby a believing individual can deny his [sic] faith or commit otherwise illegal acts while at the risk of persecution or in a condition of statelessness’ (2014a).

In this politico-religious context, it mirrors Giorgio Agamben's discussion about the state of exception—being both inside and outside of the law at the same time (27). However, the notion of Taqiyya is not occupied with a normalisation of otherwise exceptional biopolitics. Rather, it balances and reconciles what it means to make use of lying, while maintaining a trustworthiness when 'absolving people from the offence of blasphemy in the case of renunciation of faith under duress' (Apter 113). Taqiyya fosters the adaptation of speech to the kind of listener one is talking to; it is a vocal practice of pronunciation and a mode of identification amongst an exclusive community. In the logic of this privately expressed faith, if a phonetic pronunciation of certain words is incorrect, then the truth is not being spoken, and a believer is guarded through Taqiyya, through the potential contradiction between what they said and how they have said it. According to Emily Apter, for Hamdan Taqiyya 'carries the sense of keeping one's own counsel, preserving faith inwardly despite the outward appearance of compliance with the enemy, or speaking truth to power in the medium of vocal dissimulation' (113). This form of 'not not lying' dissimulates authenticity and can be understood as a possible subversion of the postmodern notion that the State, the law and identity rely on fictions and imaginaries as much as 'forensic' facts. In my view, this jurisprudence therefore resembles the very paradoxes of acting, of theatricality and performance itself—a manipulation or designing of an outward appearance that appears as it would publicly represent something which is private or internal (as the mind of a character) without the burden of proof.

Practised by the Druze minority in northern Syria, Taqiyya functions as a withdrawal from the nowadays fundamental obligation to 'perform oneself in public, to speak on behalf of

oneself or to confess an authentic heart' (Hamdan 2014a). The linguist Mi You argues that it performs a gap in our cultural communication codes going beyond the binary division between what one says and one does not say and invoking a 'camouflage' by words (121). It complicates the relation between speech and reality, exceeding a linguistic signification context of truth and lies, and serving as 'a vehicle for direct perception and attainment of insight' (114). It emphasises the interiority of language, a Deleuzian distrust of significations and the redundancy of our processes of denotation, although Hamdan reverberates very traditional linguist dichotomies of poststructuralist thinking, pitting the said against the saying while he does not reflect what is at stake in terms of secularity and religious beliefs (Kreuger 70).

As I argue in the following, what further challenges the ethics of his performance is the way in which he presents his findings about the Druze community to his audiences. Quite paradoxically he states that his research intention was to 'get to the truth of what happened there [when the Idlib Druze agreed to a forced conversion under the rule of the Sunni Islamist terrorist al-Nusra in March 2015] [...] to understand the concept of truth in our age of the freedom of expression' (2014a). He tells a story about how he visited the Druze community to learn new insights about Taqiyya, but the community did not grant him access to their religious documents. Meanwhile, his presentation visuals show a silent video that depicts blue skies and a tree from which cassette tape is hanging. He explains how this 'obsolete media' (the tape) is (re-)used by the community to ward off birds from feeding off of the trees' fruits. Compelling, yet not sufficiently convincing in terms of an 'aesthetic of authenticity', a seemingly true account or testimony, he further tells his audience

how he suddenly discovered a dictaphone tape which he bluntly categorises as a tool for recording foremost private notations or personal conversations. Hamdan therefore anticipated to find a tape recording with 'a confessional and biographical personal content' and he did 'harvest[...] the voice on the tape' which in turn revealed the recording of a Druze scholar's interpretation of Taqiyya.

This fictional story about the artist proudly admitting his harvesting of a voice and sharing it publicly with an audience without (in the logic of the fiction) permission by the recorded voice to eavesdrop seems ethically troubling and contradictory to what Hamdan's lecture is set out to do: the seeking for safeguards of acoustic spaces. The performance lectures were presented to mostly academic English-speaking audiences, and those more familiar with his work must have noticed how this story-telling conflicted with his publication *A Politics of Listening in 4 Acts*. Therein is a transcribed and referenced interview with a Druze scholar with the exact phrasing that Hamdan plays to the audience in his lecture (36–45). Inasmuch as this story and interview were designed for two different audiences and media, they coalesce with my own research bias when it comes to the evidentiary mode of media and documents. I am prone to taking the printed publication as accurate or 'worthy' of a truthful crediting as opposed to the live story-telling. I shall now show how this live story-telling can have impact upon our ethics of listening, and how it relates to the politics Hamdan seeks to engender.

While performance's salient feature is the negotiation of private and public space, Hamdan's story anticipated as a model for listening does fail to account for the complexities and contexts that make secret listening practices differ from an 'ethical eavesdropping' (Dreher 9). Krista Ratcliffe suggests to under-

stand eavesdropping as a composite and purposeful cross-cultural listening practice which allows the eavesdropper in the context of critical race and whiteness studies to learn from others by deliberately choosing an outsider position ‘on the border of knowing and not knowing’ (90). Even though Caroline Wake likewise focuses on listening in verbatim theatre, her discussions about how an audience should be granted as listeners and contribute to the negotiation of safer speaking spaces are valuable to larger cultural frameworks. She considers how listening easily risks being co-opted (Lloyd 482; Salverson 188) and that consequently, a politically charged mode of listening might counter ‘solidifying existing social arrangements’ (Wake 90) and perpetuate an aesthetic that sentimentalises vulnerabilities and those with marginal power. I argue that this is the inherent biased problematic in Hamdan’s work.

In the conclusion of his performance lecture, Hamdan celebrates Taqiyya as not being ‘a minorities’ claim to an identity and State of one’s own, but rather a claim to Statelessness [...]. A simultaneously subservient and subversive form of political agency’ (2014a). However, reaffirming and subversive that claim to statelessness seems, it is made from a position of power neglecting the highly perilous and highly contested claim to asylum that is judged by a policed aesthetic of authenticity.

Different works by theatre scholars about refugee performance on and off stage show how authenticity relies on a performing of power relations (Jeffers 31), on the ethics of public performances (Bishop 112), and the ambiguity of any theatricalised frame (Jestrovic). Despite any postmodern critique of the epistemologies of authenticity and truth, those scholarly analyses and their case studies proceed from the idea of authenticity as a means of valorising aesthetic *and* political performance. Where-

as documentary refugee theatre works within an aesthetics of authenticity which paradoxically seeks to affirm documentary evidence *and* its artificiality or forms of alienation, the political requirements imposed on refugees to perform authentically for public authorities reveal a less contested, dangerous and unethical practice of cross-cultural public listening to their testimonies, stories of trauma or violation. The way in which Hamdan affirms and proposes Taqiyya as resistance strategy to the penalty of perjury does merely perpetuate the figure of the refugee and their rendering as bogus. *Contra Diction: Speech Against Itself* therefore raises difficult ethical issues and I would question its political stakes. The work actually takes us away from the idea of how a listening subject can hold substantial political agency and question our passive-active communication dichotomies. Thus, I would say that Hamdan's understanding of Taqiyya merely solidifies the othering of voices by which I mean the expectation that the exile will meet our notion of what a 'real' illegal immigrant looks or rather talks like to have their refugee status legitimised in our eyes in the first place.

Conclusion: From Vox Populi to Aures Populi?

The speech act 'to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth' in the proceedings of a court hearing reiterates the very conditional and complicit relation between theatricality, the law and the voice—many different clusters of voices are necessary for the law to be executed (Parker 4). But it also reveals tensions between the frailty of language and the reliability of words that may cause severe harm or in some cases may even open up possibilities for strategic acts of resistance, acts of equivocation. Testimonies and truth-producing seem to be structurally similar, seem to be inherent performative in the specific language ecol-

ogies of both documentary theatre and the courts of law. Carol Martin describes documentary theatre as agentive in the way it 'strategically deploy[s] the appearance of truth, while inventing its own particular truth' (11). Similar to the courts of law, theatre forensically constructs a path of evidence that serves as a form of authorised pretext for the testimony of actors, inasmuch as for the testimony of witnesses and lawyers in court. Whereas this aesthetic of authenticity in documentary theatre is seen to serve as a non-legislative opportunity to exercise the freedom of speech (14), Hamdan renegotiates this exercise in the legal realm; he suggests in turn to extricate oneself from speaking authentically and to obtain the right to silence.

His reappraisal of the right to stay silent seems to be a somewhat controversial idea—especially in the face of a current political apparatus that makes use of what Emma Cox has analysed as bureaucratic language '[which is] meant to silence response'. This bureaucratisation of language and the policing of voice forcefully help to protect national borders from an overflow of 'illegal' bodies and their symbolically *and* materially or racially othered voices.⁷ Through its aesthetic perspective about alternative understandings of belonging or identity and the shifting borders in Europe, the discussed body of Hamdan's work brings forth a new form of political agency. This agency is based upon a powerful re-positioning of the listening subject who can manifest (or subversively exceed) political and bureaucratic truths which are based upon an unjust legitimacy of naturalised practices of exclusion. Whereas documentary verbatim theatre can be seen to bring a voice to the voiceless, trigger issues of responsibility through affect, and confound notions of

⁷ See e.g. *The Politics of Listening* by Leah Bassel for how norms of audibility are being enforced by state actors through law, political discourse and policy (17); and see *Theatre & Voice* by Konstantinos Thomaidis for the notion of listening intersectionally (46f).

authenticity and illegitimacy, Hamdan's performance interventions do not so much affect through an aesthetic of authenticity as they seek to formally intervene in the politics of authenticity. Thus, his art intervenes in the discourse about how subjects are legally constituted and suggests that it is through the act of listening rather than speaking out. Beyond aesthetically probing the immateriality of state-related surveillance and identity authentication, his documentary aesthetic makes us reconsider our very own communication biases, and the responsibilities of our own positioning as listening subjects in an environment of constant migration.

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Authenticity and the 'Documentive' in *Nanay: A Testimonial Play*

By Alex Lazaridis Ferguson

Abstract

In this article, Lazaridis Ferguson explores the notion of documentary authenticity in the advocacy play *Nanay: A Testimonial Play* through his theory of the *documentive*. The documentive is a productive tension that is produced through the combination of present material factors (actors, set, architecture, etc.) and the absence of material documents such as transcripts. It is a recalibration of the traditional *actual-fictive* binary as *actual-documentive*, and is further produced by the pressure of *emergency time*—the knowledge that what is performed on stage represents a crisis that is currently occurring elsewhere. The authenticity of the document predominantly relies on what philosopher Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht calls *presence effects*—the spatial and affective relationships of tangible and materially present performative elements such as actors and scenography; but is also in dialogue with *meaning effects*—how the presence effects are interpreted. Ferguson uses these frameworks to look at the aesthetic choices made by the creators of *Nanay*, especially how certain theatrical genres were chosen to convey documentive affect, and how these choices succeeded or failed depending on the degree to which an attendant equated a given genre with 'truth.'

Between 2008 and 2013 I directed *Nanay: A Testimonial Play*,¹ a sited documentary play developed in collaboration with Dr Caleb Johnston (Artistic Director of Urban Crawl Theatre), The Philippine Women Centre of BC, and Dr Geraldine Pratt of the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia.² *Nanay: A Testimonial Play* was performed at the Chapel

¹ The word 'nanay' is Tagalog for mother. However, in English it also has the resonance of 'nanny', the common term used in Canada for domestic worker.

² I use 'sited' rather than site-specific because the production was not deeply engaged with the site's socio-political history. *Nanay* was rehearsed and performed on-site and was a 'collaboration' with the architectural features of the space. It should therefore be seen as a sited or site-conditioned performance.

Arts Center in Vancouver during the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival (2009), at the Hebbel am Ufer in Berlin as part of the Your Nanny Hates You! Festival (2009), and at the PETA Theater Center in Manila (2013). *Nanay* is about Canada's Live-in Caregiver Program, a migrant labour program that brings Filipino domestic workers to Canada to provide live-in care for children and elderly parents of Canadian families. It's a temporary work visa program, one that also offers those who successfully meet its challenging conditions 'Landed Immigrant' status, which can lead to full citizenship. It is an advocacy play that attempts to raise public awareness of the program's injustices, and to give voice to workers exploited by the program and to employers who feel existing conditions force them to employ and exploit the workers.

I began the project in a zealous mood regarding what I considered the documentary potency of verbatim text, a text transcribed from interviews with stakeholder-subjects, rather than text invented by a writer. Eventually I came to regard truth claims associated with verbatim text with skepticism as well as the preferred performance styles that tend to go with it, such as psychological realism. What we call document or verbatim testimony goes through many transformations between an initial interview and a final performance in front of an audience. While the final spoken text has a valid connection to the original interview, it seemed to me that we were trading on the *idea* of document rather than the actual documents. I began to ask myself where authenticity lay, if anywhere, in a documentary play that uses written testimony as the basis of its truth claims but doesn't present documents for inspection. While my skepticism regarding the concept of authentic document grew, my faith in documentary theatre persisted. I could see in performance and

during post-show discussions that there was a rhetorical power in the idea of verbatim in testimonial performance. However, I had shifted from insisting on the veracity of the spoken text to focusing on more traditional theatre concerns. These had to do with the affective power of the performer, the scenography, and the attendant co-creating the performance.³ The usual tension in theatre between *actual* and *fictive* by which the materially present (an actor, for example) and that which is imagined (a character such as Hamlet) combine to create an unstable yet powerful affect remains in play in a documentary performance. It is the *idea* of the document that adjusts the attendant's relationship to the performance dialectic.

In this essay, I discuss the affective power of the *document-as-idea-in-performance* by examining two different scenes from *Nanay*. The examples trouble notions of authenticity and documentary veracity in ways that are specific to the staging of each scene. In my analysis, I recalibrate the *actual-fictive* dialectic as *actual-documentive*, where the *documentive* represents the *idea* of the document. The document is *documentive* because it references something that is not materially present—a transcription on paper or in digital form. Therefore, it inhabits what is usually the *fictive* side of the binary, that which is imagined. The attendant must construct the document based on the evidence before her: an actor speaking words within a scenographic composition. The power of the performance lies in the affective proximity to the attendant of actor and scenography, combined with the notion that the words being spoken are 'true' and the actor is representing a subject who is a 'real' person. While the documentary source has referential power to the extent that it is imagined by

³ Following theatre and performance theorists such as Stephen Di Benedetto, I often use this term in place of 'spectator'. Where the term spectator privileges seeing, 'attendant' tries to address the whole-body, multi-sensory attention an individual brings to a performance (Di Benedetto 126-27).

the attendant, it is ultimately only as convincing as its embodiment through performance.



Fig. 1: Actor Lisa Neptuno uses a small chicken-wire cage to represent the family of her employer. Photo by Caleb Johnston.

With these considerations in mind, and in order to fully articulate the affective power of a documentary play, I turn to philosopher Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's elucidation of the actual-fictive binary, which he expresses as *presence effects* and *meaning effects*. Presence effects arise from the affective power of our proximity to tangible things (including performers) and their spatial relationships to one another. In the context of theatre this would mean the tangible proximity of performers and sets to the attendants. Together these can produce aesthetic insights that cannot immediately be conveyed as meaning in the sense of being explainable or categorizable. On the other hand, 'meaning effects' arise when we try to interpret, explain, or categorize presence effects (Gumbrecht 1-3,17). The attendant always oscillates

between presence and meaning effects as she tries to resolve the tension between the one and the other. As I will argue when discussing the scenes, it is this tension that can give the performance the feel of authenticity and documentary power, if handled well by the artists.

The balance is tricky. In a testimonial play the aesthetic dimension of performance struggles with the ethical dimension. As Gumbrecht argues, the latter can overwhelm the former, undermining the power that lies in aesthetic affect (103). The aesthetic dimension lies with the affective intensity of the presence effects, while the ethical dimension lies in the attendant's assessment of truth claims and personal decisions as to whether to take political action. Without what might be called the persuasiveness of the presence effects, the social justice issue that a play like *Nanay* advocates may be better served by other means, such as conventional journalism or other types of political activism.⁴ That is, political points can be stated explicitly in, for example, a news media article or on an advocacy website (for example The Philippine Women Centre of BC website). Such journalism or advocacy platforms can be extremely potent ways of getting a message across. A documentary play in which a written story is embodied by actors and scenography offers a different kind of insight, one in which the body of the attendant is in immediate spatial proximity to the body of the actor and scenographic composition. It presents a kind of immediacy that does not occur in journalism or NGO advocacy. However, this embodiment of document can prove problematic for the attendant if the theatrical genre employed is at odds with her expectation of how truth

⁴ Gumbrecht makes this point when he writes, 'whenever conveying or exemplifying an ethical message is supposed to be the main function of a work of art, we need to ask—and indeed the question cannot be eliminated—whether it would not be more efficient to articulate the same ethical message in rather straightforward and explicit concepts and forms' (103).

should be represented on stage. For example, parody might seem an inappropriate container for a documentary play about worker exploitation. In *Nanay*, some attendants were offended by the use of parody in one scene, and felt it was demeaning to the subjects portrayed (see the Yaletown scene below), while others had no trouble seeing this scene as a truthful representation of the given situation. Through the scenes discussed below, I will explain how these have worked successfully for some attendants but not for others, based on the theatrical genre employed in each case.

There is one further concept I introduce to explain the way that *fictive* becomes *documentive* in a testimonial play. What I call *emergency time* is to do with the fact that a documentary play like *Nanay* references an ongoing socio-political crisis that is concurrent with the performance. What is represented on stage is currently occurring elsewhere in the world—the exploitation of the domestic worker character onstage has an immediate correlate to many domestic workers who are currently being exploited somewhere in the country. In such a play, emergency time expresses itself as an intensification of material affects. The embodied document—the documentive (i.e. the actor, objects, or setting)—creates intensities of affect in the moment of performance.⁵ These are generative in that they create sensory perceptions that give rise to *felt* truths, truths felt by the attendant (they can also give rise to felt *untruths*, as when genre doesn't match expectation). Emergency time is evoked through both presence effects—moments when affective intensities are felt viscerally or emotionally—and meaning effects, moments that encourage distanced critical thinking. Through oscillation

⁵ Gumbrecht argues that these intensities are also produced by 'a disposition of composed openness [that] anticipates the energizing presence of an object to come'; one has the feeling of being lost in the affective moment (104).

between the two the attendant is pressured to consider taking action to correct the social injustice. If the advocacy verbatim play is effective, the attendant may feel that any delay in taking action will prolong human suffering.

In the following sections, the affective oscillation described above is examined in two scenes from *Nanay: A Testimonial Play*. I examine how particular theatre genres are used to represent real-life subjects and situations, and how these genres might complicate the attendant's notions of authentic representation. The two scenes explored below include: (1) the Nadine scene, performed in the style of psychological realism; (2) the Yaletown scene, performed as parody.

The Documents

Authenticity in *Nanay* is tied to the idea of a verifiable document, out of sight but, in theory, available for scrutiny. As I wrote above, during the years of developing the play I became increasingly mistrustful of the authoritative value we, the collaborators, had placed on our testimonial transcripts. For the most part, these documents were transcribed from the verbal testimony of Filipino domestic workers and Canadians who employ them. In *Nanay*, ten different installations/scenes are performed in ten different rooms. Eight of the ten rooms feature actors portraying either a domestic worker from the Philippines or a Canadian who has employed them. Each personal testimony has gone through the following transformations: (1) a subject recollects certain events, (2) the spoken recollection is audio recorded, (3) the recording is transcribed, (4) if the original testimony has not been given in English it is translated and further transcribed, (5) the transcript is edited by the writers (Caleb Johnston and Geraldine Pratt), (6) a dramaturg (Martin Kinch) works with

the writers to give the monologues or dialogues something of a dramatic arc and appropriate length, (7) workshops are undertaken with actors and designers; various genres are attempted in order to find a resonating style that is considered performable and communicable, (8) rehearsals are conducted along the same lines, (9) the show is performed for paying audiences.

A contentious issue that arose among the creative team during rehearsals was whether psychological-realism was the only acceptable performance genre in a testimonial play.⁶ During the run of the show, scenes featuring actors playing Filipino domestic workers in a psychological realist style were for the most part deemed credible, truthful representations by attendants who offered feedback at nightly post-show discussions. This was so even though the scenes were performed in somewhat abstract and surrealist scenographic environments. For example, in one installation an actor playing a nanny uses ceramic bunnies in a cage as stand-ins for her employer's family (**Figure 1**). The scene takes place in a part of the Chapel Arts Center (a former chapel, formerly equipped with an embalming room) that was once used as a car port for hearses delivering coffins and had formerly been equipped for raising coffins to a room above. Despite the surrealist scenography, the scene was received as unproblematic by attendants due to the psychological realist performance of the actor. All of *Nanay's* scenes performed in this style were deemed credible and unproblematic by attendants and professional col-

⁶ The term 'psychological realism' has several roots including: (1) 19th century stage realism - the presentation of scrupulously observed material realities; (2) the work of the Russian director Konstantin Stanislavsky, pioneer of psychological realist acting, in which the performers try to present *accurate* renditions of everyday human behaviour; (3) 'the incorporation of filmic reality effects, psychologically attuned directing, fluid scenography, and variations on method acting'; trying to genuinely feel the emotional state one is portraying on stage (Zarilli et al 602-3). The idea is that the actor and scenography are to be believed as credible renditions of human behaviour and situation. The attendant is usually expected to buy into the stage illusion of reality, at least for a while.

leagues. The parodic 'Yaletown' scene, by contrast, was deemed by some to be an inappropriate distortion of the subjects represented.

Real Realism in the 'Nadine' Scene

The first major point of disagreement among the creators concerned how to truthfully represent Nadine, one of the Canadian employer characters. Played by Karen Rae, Nadine is an artist and university professor struggling to find appropriate in-home care for her aged mother who suffers from Parkinson's disease.⁷ The artists composed the setting of the scene with the intent of having it accepted by the attendant as realistic. That is, it resembled closely enough a real kitchen in its various details (wallpaper, windows, etc.) to be considered a credible facsimile of someone's life out in the *real* world. The kitchen was Nadine's mother's, where Nadine prepares her mother's pills, rolls cigarettes, and blows smoke out the window. Nadine is in a purple thigh-length sweater, knee-length wool skirt, knee-high leather boots, wooden bead necklace, and with her hair tied back in a ponytail. These costume details are also meant to be accepted as a genuine and credible representation of a *real* person.

The acting style is psychological realism. That is, the performer works through the text in such a way that she seems to be having the kinds of thoughts and emotions that a real person might have, speaking in an unexaggerated manner, and not overly amplifying her voice or speaking in a way that might be interpreted as 'stagey'. Additionally, there is the use of a convention of direct address. Even in psychological realist theatre, sometimes the actors speak directly to the audience.

Although set, costume, and performance details are intended to convey authenticity, they were arrived at through ex-

⁷Nadine is a pseudonym.

perimentation in rehearsal. Through improvisation, Rae's Nadine became a burdened, edgy woman, aware of the ethical dilemma of exploiting foreign workers but unable to find an affordable alternative. Rolling cigarettes was something we arrived at as a way to help Rae give Nadine a little more edge and the scene a little more drive. The actual Nadine did not smoke, nor did she dress as described above, nor did the scene take place in her mother's kitchen. These choices were made as a way for Rae to give energy and dramatic truth to the character. Dr Pratt, who had conducted most of the research for *Nanay* and was co-writer of the script, strongly objected to these choices. She felt we were compromising the factual integrity of the subject and that we needed to be 'alert to misrepresentation—of what they said, and to some extent the conditions in which they said it' (Pratt Email). Accuracy of representation had indeed been violated in several ways. For one, the original interview took place during a walk in the forest. Clothing style, tone of voice, and the physical gestures of the actor did not arise from study of the subject, whom Karen Rae had never met. Pratt also felt that rolling cigarettes was beneath the dignity of a university professor. It seems that in order to avoid misrepresentation, some level of photographic likeness would have had to be employed to ethically represent Nadine.

The challenge of recreating the walk in the forest notwithstanding, if testimonial truth is more than just textual data that could be edited for clarity and dramatic sequence, then the conditions of the spoken testimony had already been seriously altered in the writing of the play. Changing the order of a speech changes its meaning, as does creating a dramatic arc where there isn't one. Meaning as content is not independent of syntax or ordering of sentences. The materiality of the spoken words, and the tone in which they are delivered *is* the meaning. The *factual-*

ity of gesture, intonation, and rhythm of speech and text are all powerful presence effects. In the Nadine scene, such effects were connected to the performance style of psychological realism, which has a complex relationship to photorealism. As Ernst Van Alphen remarks, 'documentary realism has become the mode of representation that novelists and artists must adopt if they are to persuade their audience of their moral integrity' (cited in Salverson 20). This, I think, is what Dr Pratt was fighting for in the representation of Nadine. For her, the costume details were important signifiers of documentary truth. For me, anything other than using the actual Nadine and her actual clothes was already a significant departure from testimonial veracity. I agree with Stephen Bottoms when he points out that 'realism and reality are not the same thing', and that 'unmediated access to 'the real' is not something the theatre can ever honestly provide' (57). In theatre, and in anything called documentary, verbatim, or testimonial theatre that I have seen, the aesthetic inevitably diverges from the documentary. Indeed, it must do if theatre is to have any value as an art form, including an art form of advocacy. Gumbrecht argues that the aesthetic cannot sustain its special intensity if it is made subservient to the ethical: 'the projection of ethical norms on the potential objects of aesthetic experience, will inevitably lead to the erosion of the potential intensity of the latter' (102). Aesthetic intensity is how theatre serves the ethical.

This is not to say that Dr Pratt was wrong. The scene could have been constructed in a photorealist manner. Doing so would have created an aesthetic different from the one we had arrived at through experimentation in rehearsal. It would have resulted in different felt truths. Different, because the embodied subject and scenography would have produced other material affects. Perhaps the resulting scene would have been less am-

biguous than the one we produced. That is, perhaps there would have been a more unified, less complicated response to the scene by the attendants who witnessed it. Talk-back audiences sometimes had complicated opinions of Nadine, sympathizing with the compromises she felt she had to make, and sometimes had uncomplicated opinions in which she was seen as an exploitive villain. My own tendency as an artist is to relish examining and representing ambiguity. This is because I feel real life situations are usually not reducible to one point of view and one interpretation. This disposes me to avoiding the photorealist approach for the reason Van Alphen and Bottoms imply above: aesthetic realism is too easily equated with *truth*.

This is apparently true of the social sciences as well. In one of their essays on the same production, Dr Pratt and Dr Caleb Johnston discuss the social scientist's discomfort with the type of theatrical representation that was at play in *Nanay*. The discomfort arises from the production's departure, in certain scenes, from realism. In fact, from a type of performance that might insist on photorealism: 'staging that departs from its original context compromises its honesty,' write Pratt and Johnston (Pratt and Johnston 126). Describing 'the conflict[s] over interpretation' as 'irresolvable but fascinating tensions between academic and theatre work,' they go on to say that 'social science is typically written in a realist mode in which comedy and parody are unacceptable, or at least suspect, genres' (126). I am not a social scientist, but I am both an academic and an artist. I see the strict delineation between *realist* social science and the representational strategies of theatre as an academic convention, one that seems to arise from a notion of realism as foundational to serious study. In my opinion, accepting the methodologies and writing styles of social science as realist, and therefore truthful,

lacks critical self-examination of the social scientists' (in this case two geographers) personal biases, and perhaps the biases of the entire field. Neither psychological realism nor any other style or genre can claim the moral high ground. Each is a convention (theatrical or academic) that can produce particular aesthetic affects. Circumstances, unforeseen directions taken in rehearsal, and the aesthetic disposition of some of the collaborators led to the particular Nadine scene that was staged. It could have gone many other ways. In *Nanay*, ambiguity of representation due to the choice of performance genre was a contested issue, not only in the Nadine scene, but also in the Yaletown scene. And not only for the collaborators, but for the attendants as well.

Authentic Parody in the 'Yaletown' Scene

The installation/scene that caused the most controversy for the audience in *Nanay* was one in which we pushed into parody.⁸ What we call the 'Yaletown' scene took place (in the Vancouver production) on the second floor of the Chapel Arts Center, an art gallery/performance space. The architecture is such that there is a kind of a proscenium arch between one gallery and the next. Unlike most of the other installations in which the audience mingles with the performers, in the Yaletown scene we put a projection scrim across the arch, reinforcing the separation between spectator and performer.⁹ However, the distance is slight:

⁸ I am using parody as in the following definition: 'the comic imitation of another's socially typical speech, behavior, thinking, or deepest principles' (Zarilli et al. 601). Additionally, I cross over into satire, defined as one artwork used to mock another artwork. Here the source I am mocking are the lifestyle coffee advertisements that were common through the 1980s and 90s in Canada and that still appear in new iterations from time to time.

⁹ To accommodate demand, attendants were separated into two audience groups. Each group took a different route through the ten installations/scenes. One group would start with the Yaletown scene described above. The other group would start with an actor representing a domestic worker in a kitchen in another part of the building.

the attendants sit in chairs in three rows, two to four meters from the performers. A still image projected onto the scrim depicts a couple in matching white, terry-towel bathrobes, holding coffee mugs, looking straight at the camera—and therefore at the audience (**Figure 2**).



Fig.2: Actors Alexa Devine and Patrick Keating as Stephanie and Richard. Photo by Caleb Johnston.

The image is accompanied by text introducing the couple as ‘Richard and Stephanie’ who have two children and reside in the chic downtown neighborhood of Yaletown. The image is underscored with a version of the early 1970s bossa nova classic *Waters of March* (*Agua de Marco*) by Antonio Carlos Jobim (Jobim). The image alludes to and has the feel of the kind of TV commercials for coffee products that suggest drinking the right brew brings about sexual and domestic contentment. The couple look happy and refreshed, though ridiculous in their matching robes. The image dissolves to reveal the very same two actors,

live, standing behind the scrim, wearing the same costumes and adopting the same positions in the exact same bedroom. As the music fades Richard and Stephanie speak to the audience. (The following stage directions were not scripted; they reflect discoveries made in rehearsal):

RICHARD: When Stephen was six months old, we chose a Filipino nanny because we heard that they were very caring for the very young ones. So we basically *only* interviewed Filipino nannies.

STEPHANIE: We found out about Marlena from a friend of ours. How we worked it out was like this: we had 2 bedrooms upstairs and one room that we used as an office. So we sacrificed that. (*She produces a booklet*). In the information booklet it told what a live-in caregiver is entitled to have. And it was a room with sleeping arrangements, and a lock on the door. Although no one's ever locked the door.

The couple smiles at the absurdity of having to lock the door, as the previous musical track fades up. They sip from their coffee mugs in unison, taking a long draught, sighing together, smiling contentedly. They are touched by a warm glow, as if from the rays of dawn light filtering through balcony windows.

RICHARD: And then we *also* gave her separate bathroom facilities. And she didn't need a separate phone, but we gave her one. We gave her a TV, a desk, an answering machine.

A dirty 'polluted' light arises from stage right. They turn to view it. They look troubled.

It's different than working in Singapore or Hong Kong. Marlena told us stories of where the nannies were sleeping. It wasn't a pretty scene.

STEPHANIE: They're treated like second-class citizens in other countries!

RICHARD: At first she wanted to call us 'Madam' and 'Sir'! But we said, 'Wooahhh, wait a minute.' I think she was kind of taken aback by that! And we said to her:

RICHARD AND STEPHANIE: 'That's not the Canadian way!'

*Lights fade on the couple. A slide of Richard and Stephanie in the exact pose they will be seen in next is projected onto the scrim. Bossa track underneath. (Pratt and Johnston, *Nanay*, 13-14).*

This scene raises a number of issues regarding its status as documentary play. Documentary theatre has often positioned itself as a moral corrective to the entrenched privilege represented by corporate media (Martin 12). It attempts to reframe the way corporations shape public opinion (Paget 59). It either re-interprets evidence provided in the mainstream or draws attention to what was omitted. *Nanay*, in keeping with Carol

Martin's and Derek Paget's descriptions, attempts to reframe the way a department of the Canadian government has shaped the discourse on migrant labour, and to bring to light what it has omitted.¹⁰ However, its documents provide an archive that is unstable and contestable. This contrasts with director Erwin Piscator's claims, at the advent of German documentary theatre in the 1920s, of providing 'conclusive proof', based on 'scientific analysis of the material' (92). There are powerful stories to be told, but conclusive proof may be beyond reach. Rather than that the data presented regarding the numbers of women involved in the Live-in-caregiver program are false, or that the wage scale and living conditions are unverifiable, the way documented evidence is used in a testimonial play is a combination of imagined data and material affect. In other words, it amounts to a struggle over public discourse. 'Governments 'spin' the facts in order to tell stories,' writes Martin, 'theatre spins them right back in order to tell different stories' (14). A documentary play asks the attendant to be judge and jury and to examine evidence both as presence effect and as imagined document (the original transcription, recording, oral testimony, or memory). The attendant tries to determine whether the playwrights' intent and methodology is trustworthy (to the extent that it is transparent or implied). In documentary theatre, the 'archive' (the document) and the 'repertoire' (performance) are blurred (10). As Martin puts it, 'the hidden seams of documentary theatre raise questions about the continuum between documentation and simulation' (11).

¹⁰ I am suggesting here that the Canadian government is behaving like a business corporation in the sense of using news media outlets, as well as its own websites, to influence public discourse. It is, in effect, taking part in an advertising and public dissemination campaign intended to promote what it considers a need for exploitation of foreign workers—the need being that there is a demand for 'affordable' live-in-care that is not being supplied by the national work force; therefore a supply of 'affordable' foreign labour must be imported to meet this demand.

These are the seams that the attendant tries to unravel at the *documentive* end of the binary. While wrestling with the imagined document and the artists' methodology, she also becomes a co-creator of the representation by engaging with the material factors before her. To be sure, in the Yaletown scene both digital projection and living actor are materially present; each has a distinct presence effect. But the still image, composed as it is with accompanying text and having a lineage to both archival and advertising photography, has the quality of a document in a way that the live actors don't. Between this imagined document and the living actors there is a tremendous push-and-pull on the attendant. The projected textual information is meant to be understood as factual. The words spoken are verbatim testimony. And yet the genre is parody.

The use of parody violates one's sense of truth if psychological realism is the marker of moral integrity. Some non-Filipino attendants were offended by the parodic representation employed in the Yaletown scene. They let their displeasure be known in talkbacks and on survey forms. They complained that the couple was unfairly ridiculed. For them parody had no connection to truthful or ethical representation. On the other hand, many non-Filipinos, and all the Filipinos I heard from (general audience members, but also activists; many of whom were part of the creation process), saw it as an accurate reflection of the situation. Depending on the attendant's comfort with a given theatrical style, conventions associated with parody diminished the authenticity of the embodied document or conversely gave it greater authority.

Emergency Time

As the Yaletown scene progresses, two other subjects are intro-

duced. The comedic feel that has governed the live actor segments is interspersed with slide projections not only of Richard and Stephanie, but also of one of their children and of their domestic worker. The child, ostensibly the couple's son, first appears in a still image jumping on the couple's bed. The intent is to present pseudo-documentary evidence that will remind the audience of the couple's legitimate child care needs and that they are trying to find the best solution they can. The images of the child counter the satire: yes, the couple is unaware of their privilege but are they ultimately dismissible? The next image projected complicates things further: a domestic worker, Marlene, appears in the bedroom.¹¹ She is seen shooing the child off the bed and then standing alone staring out at the audience. A room presented as the couple's boudoir/playground, now becomes a workplace. For the couple, it represents family togetherness: the song *Waters of March* ends with the lyrics, 'It's the promise of Spring/ It's the joy in your heart' (Jobim). For the nanny, it represents loss.

The recurring image of Marlene reminds the attendants that what is unfolding before them in immediate time-space also represents another time-space, in which Marlene or another nanny is suffering the conditions of the Live-in Caregiver program. In fictional theatre that other time-space may have been selected for its allegorical or metaphorical value: that which is represented on stage is not currently occurring elsewhere (Hamlet is not currently contemplating suicide in Elsinore). When documentary theatre represents an issue that is current, and is a 'true' story, it claims an injustice is occurring somewhere else *right now*. Performance time is pressured by *emergency*-time. While watching the performance and oscillating between actual and documentive, assessing evidence as valid or invalid, ascrib-

¹¹ In the photo shoot for this scene Jocelyn, a domestic worker, stood in for Marlene.

ing or not ascribing authenticity to the embodied-document, the spectator must also begin to consider whether to act and how soon.

During the ten installations of *Nanay* the attendants learn that a third of the women who come to Canada as domestic workers through the Live-in Caregiver program have left their own children in the Philippines (Pratt *Circulating* 4). Many of the women, although well educated, get caught in a long-term cycle of low paying jobs (Pratt *Families* xix, 15). Marriages break up. Some of the women suffer abuse, including sexual abuse, at the hands of their employers. Filipino youth in the Canadian province of British Columbia, often the children of domestic workers, have a very high secondary school drop-out rate (Pratt *Families* 24). Emergency-time means these consequences are occurring elsewhere as the performance unfolds.

Conclusion

Documentary theatre, in whatever form, is never genre-free. Each performance trades on accepted performance conventions, either re-enforcing or destabilizing them. Psychological realism, surrealism, parody, and satire are all legitimate strategies of representing subjects and situations. The truth value of each depends on the attendant's familiarity with a given genre and whether she equates or does not equate the genre with truth or authenticity. Text may be verbatim but it is nevertheless subject to alterations of human embodiment in performance and whatever style of embodiment that goes with the performance of the text, including psychological realism as a genre. This logic can be extended to academic writing, in which each field has its own conventions, genres and sub-genres. During the creation of *Nanay* conflicts arose between social scientists and theatre art-

ists and scholars, as to how to represent the subjects and situations truthfully. The status of the transcription as authentic vs. the status of the embodied performance was debated. During a performance in which a verbatim transcript is only referenced, is at best an imagined document—is in other words *documentive*—the embodied performance, the *actual*, becomes the foregrounded 'meaning-maker' through material affect. Authenticity in a testimonial play depends on the extent to which the presence effects of a performance (i.e., the affects of human and nonhuman performative elements and their spatial relationships to one another, as well as their proximity and tangibility for the attendant) combine with meaning effects (i.e., how the attendant interprets the presence effects under pressure of emergency time to create, not the veracity of a document, but the affective tension of the documentive).

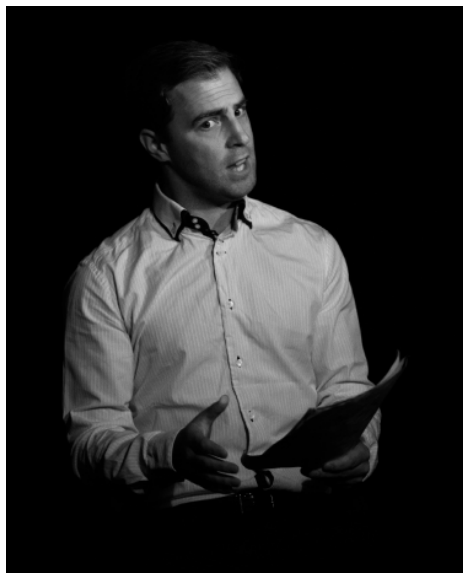
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EYES: A Monologue

By Christopher O'Shaughnessy



EYES performed by David Bibby, The Blackshaw Theatre Company's New Writing Night at the Hen and Chickens Theatre, London, 19 September 2016. Photo by Richard Stratton.

The driver seated, faces the audience. He's first in a line of chairs.

Concentrating on the road—I'm looking—
I'm looking at the road and beyond it—
It's very green, it's very very green—
Not that I am meant to be looking, no—
But it is green and I like that vibrant—
I like that vibrant *fuck-you* moment, yeah—
When the landscape smiles and I smile right back—
A kind of green spiritual orgasm.

Pause.

Driving can be a lonely business—here
To Edinburgh and back, motorway dong

Not the half of it. How I earn my bit.
A journey through hell: what do you expect
For £21 a pop? It ain't
The driving did my eyes in. No. No. No, no!
That passage through hell—toilet stops en route.
Ecstatic at Scotch Corner, on my way ...
Ecstatic at Scotch Corner ... (*Laughs.*) On my way ...
You ever had an accident, you ask?
Concentrating on that road, the journey
There ... And then, when it's dark, when it got dark,
When it got very *very* dark, the eyes
Mad towards me, spinning out of control,
The eyes, meteor-like out of the night
And rushing like an ill-remembered dream
Past the shadows of my soul. (*Slight pause.*) Can't drive now.
Pause.
It's like a board game: the journeys, epic.
And the resolution, the blood and gore finale
With local anaesthetic. (*Then, emphatic.*) Cornea ...
The way we picture what happens: blindness.
I—sight. Me in the operating chair.
Waiting for the graft, necessary graft.
Odd how the sounds magnify, smells increase.
Judder and throb of the wheels, sparks, spinning.
Sparks. And the moon floating like a dead child.
Alone in the driver's seat, that diesel smell.
Pause.
An owl swept down like a hovering pain.
Each town like a broken diamond necklace ...
And the silence, the stillness, driving through.
Ever driven at night through a sleeping town?

Pause.

Night sea journey, only it's tarmac.
Sixty miles an hour upright past Newcastle.
Only way to earn a living, Jean says.
Jean says without my income we'd all starve...
No roof over our heads, homeless.
Homeless. Forever in the driver's seat.
Listening alone to the shipping forecast.
Back and forth, this way and that.
And Daisy, how could we have *afforded*—?
Just how on earth could we have afforded—?
Shit. Have I ever had an accident
You ask. Have I ever had a—*what* ?

Pause.

I'm—I'm in Edinburgh at 10.00am.
Should arrive at eight. It's—it's a day case.
Ker-o-to-plasty. Scissors and fork job.

Pause.

Ever driven at night through a sleeping town?
Passengers asleep. Behind me. Baggage. (*He looks round.*)
When the headlights glide across the green verge,
Illuminating the edge: luminous
In the darkness. I count wildflower *names*:
Cow parsley, dandelion, buttercup,
Creeping buttercup, slow among the oil
And the exhaust. Winter heliotrope,
Red campion, meadow cranesbill, knapweed,
Nettle, toadflax, bluebell, cuckoo pint,
The rosemary drift of purple willow herb
Screening a vista of distant pain.

Pause. He looks round.

The passengers now asleep behind me.
The one under the newspaper, the one
Holding his boyfriend's hand, the old woman
Drinking absinthe, and the nice young couple
With their legs entwined, the others
Snoring in rhythm with the wheels, the small—
The small child dreaming in the long back seat,
And the priest reading—who knows what?— not me ...

Pause.

Concentrating on the road—I'm looking—
Yes—I'm looking forever at the road
And beyond it. 'It's National Express:
The board game.' For Fantasy Flight Games if—
If they'll have it. If they'll take it ... If they—
I tell Jean the money I can make.
The money I can make if it sells. Take—
Take a journey into the dark kingdom.
Rescue the slimy princess from the monster.
Everybody's doing it. Buying the fuckers.
Slaying the farting dragon by the volcano.
Leading the army of wraiths in battle.
Smoke. Fire. Bangs. Screams. Whistles. Pan-de-mon-i-um.
Could be me. (*He lurches to one side.*) Into the forest Tegoth.
Under black mountain. Dwarves. Goblins. Werewolves.
You ever had an accident? you ask.
Then the inevitable toilet stop.

Pause. He gets up authoritatively.

'Tea and toilet!' They all need to go. Now.
'Go now: save the onboard facility.'
He watches them move from their seats.
'Thirty minutes. *Thirty.* Time for a fag

And a leg-stretch. Sandwich at the kiosk.
Yes, it is sad the café is closed ...
Yes, you *might* need a brolly in that rain.
No, I *can't* look after your bloody iPhone.
No, I *don't* have any spare change. And no—
It *can't* be more than thirty minutes. What?
We've got a fucking journey to finish.
That's what. *Report me*. Lost five minutes, right?'
And off they go. Except for the dream child.
And me, waiting for the cornea fix.
Waiting. That—that really goddam waiting.
Unsent letters. Other end of the phone.
Pause.
Questions, the family asking questions.
Unspoken things, incommunicado.
Waiting for the transplant, waiting for that.
Pause.
Left it behind now, left it all behind.
Gaining speed, I'm gaining speed, swift...
A real success, the fork and scissors job.
Like a bird picking at a worm.
But could I drive back? But could I drive back?
Laid off. Gaining speed, as I *remember* ...
Swift. Like a pterodactyl with bright wings.
The blur, the shadows, the swift nothingness.
And those Job-Centre queries, the stupid –
Job-Centre queries. But ... if ... what ... how ... ?
'Come again, come again tomorrow morning
We might have something.' My wife almost cried.
Your *eyes*—? No known cause, inherited.
Pause.

Inherited? Not in my family.
And Jean wondering, wondering ... No *words* ... !
The entry to the forgotten cave, wet
Footsteps by torchlight; sweating; echoes;
Reflections in a phosphorescent pool,
The welcome silence of a darkened space.
And the bus turning, lumbering, rapid
In moonlight.
He gets up, stands to one side and looks back at the chairs.
Sometimes I'd like to walk away. (*Slight pause.*) From—from—
He indicates the coach.
I'd like to disengage while still en route.
I'd like to see the coach just disappear,
The person who's left behind still driving...
Still driving. And rush, rush, rush, rush, rush, rush
To another station! Another world.
But the road I am on is a different road.
Like to walk away ... And I will ... all right ...
Slight pause.
Sometimes I dream I am still in that seat:
Safe, warm, *me*—driving along through the night—

About *EYES*

A long-distance coach driver remembers and articulates his difficult, traumatised life-changing journey towards a cornea transplant. His authentic and real self emerges during the passionate recall. Transcendent and ideal worlds clash with the former, embedded acceptance of the mundane and the cyclical.

Written in iambic pentameter to convey tension, clogged feeling and speed of memory and experience, the monologue had its first (and well-received) performance by actor/comedian David Bibby at the Hen and Chickens Theatre, Islington, on September 19, 2016. It was directed by Alexander Pankhurst under the aegis of the Blackshaw Theatre Company's New Writing Night.

Book Reviews

Authenticity in Contemporary Theatre and Performance: Make it Real by Daniel Schulze

London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2017, 296 pp.
(hardback)

By Sara Reimers

Twenty-first century British society is marked by a sense of loss. The fragmentation and uncertainty of postmodernism—which shattered the illusion of a unified and abiding self and destabilised notions of truth and the real—as well as the impact of mass production and the ideology of late capitalism, has left a void that a new kind of essentialism appears to be filling. That is what Daniel Schulze argues in his first solo-authored monograph *Authenticity in Contemporary Theatre and Performance*. He suggests that 'the perceived superficiality and fakeness of contemporary culture leads to an increased wish for genuine experience, or some sort of reality that is perceived as not fake', or put another way, 'authentic' (8).

Theories of authenticity propounded by Jean Baudrillard (1981), Lionel Trilling (1972), and Julia Straub (2012) inform Schulze's work and he engages with an impressive range of scholarship from across a number of disciplines. Schulze draws particularly on Wolfgang Funk's theorisation of authenticity in *The Literature of Reconstruction* (2015). At times this close engagement with Funk slightly obscures the author's voice. However, as Schulze goes on to explore the concept of metamodernism and moves into specific performance case studies, his argument becomes clearer and increasingly compelling.

Schulze argues that in the context of the perception of

loss, ‘audiences are keen on bringing back the idea of truth’ (36). He goes on to argue that authenticity is ‘consciously created, specifically in the performing arts, as an aesthetic tool; it is both a strategy of creation and reception’ (37). This study identifies three genres of performance in which authenticity might be seen to be a defining feature: intimate theatre, immersive theatre, and documentary theatre. Offering case study analyses of specific productions that might be considered particularly representative of their genre, Schulze utilises the theoretical framework established in the first part of his book to explore authenticity in contemporary performance.

Focusing on the durational work of Forced Entertainment and also on the phenomenon of one-to-one performances as examples of intimate theatre—that is, theatre that ‘put[s] the viewer in the centre of attention, focusing on individual, unique experience and personal narratives as opposed to a commodified, uniform product’ (67)—Schulze argues that its ‘appeal to individual perception, narration and interpretation, which often closely links the life of the spectator to the spectacle on stage is one fairly prominent strategy of metareference that is able to effect authenticity’ (67). Drawing on Rancière’s notion of the emancipated spectator, Schulze explores the complex relationship between audience experience and authenticity in performance.

Considering immersive theatre—which ‘draw[s] each individual audience member into a world of wonder and discovery, where every visitor will go on a tailor-made, individual journey of exploration’ (127)—Schulze examines the work of Punchdrunk and specifically their productions *The Masque of the Red Death* (2007) and *The Drowned Man* (2013). Exploring the way in which immersive theatre’s ‘bodily experience, set and

politics provides the space where immersive experiences can be found and made', Schulze argues that it should be 'regarded as one expression of the culture of authenticity' and that 'this authenticity is both sought out and marked by the individual' (187).

Schulze then also explores the popular genre of documentary theatre, taking Robin Soan's *Talking to Terrorists* (2005), David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (2004), Edmund Burke's *Black Watch* (2007), Lucy Prebble's *Enron* (2009), and Dennis Kelly's *Taking Care of Baby* (2007) as examples of the genre. Arguing that documentary theatre is one of the most obvious examples of authenticity in contemporary performance (189), Schulze explores how authenticity operates in tribunal plays, verbatim theatre and documentary drama. He suggests that notions of authenticity function differently in each of these subcategories, but that the fact that 'the play is about something real' and often involves 'people speaking in authentic voices' (220) imbues documentary performance with a particular claim to the authentic.

One of the most exciting aspects of this study is its innovative engagement with practice. Schulze does not simply apply his theory of authenticity to his case studies, but uses the case studies to inform and develop his theory. As a result theory and practice are always in fruitful dialogue in this study. Furthermore, Schulze's study also represents an important contribution to scholarship on intimate, immersive, and documentary theatre. Those studying such genres of performance will gain much from Schulze's case studies, while scholars of authenticity and the real will benefit from his insights into the operation of authenticity in performance.

Schulze suggests that his study should be seen as

'a point of departure for further discussion' (7), rather than a comprehensive or definitive account of the operation of authenticity in contemporary performance. *Authenticity in Contemporary Theatre and Performance* provides a timely intervention in a burgeoning field of scholarship. His work has a political urgency as it highlights the way in which religion and nationalism appear to respond to the contemporary craving for essentialism. What is the potential cost of our quest for authenticity, he consequently asks. In locating contemporary theatre practice within this volatile political and social context, Schulze's book points towards a practice that might be able to indulge the contemporary appetite for the authentic, while simultaneously acknowledging its impossibility.

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***Theatre of Real People: Diverse Encounters at Berlin's Hebbel am Ufer and Beyond* by Ulrike Garde and Meg Mumford**

London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016, 247 pp.

(paperback)

By Pepetual Mforbe Chiangong

'Theatre of Real People' is a participatory theatre practice that engages with patterns of aesthetics and techniques, which Ulrike Garde and Meg Mumford, the authors of *Theatre of Real People: Diverse Encounters at Berlin's Hebbel am Ufer and Beyond* (2016), have analysed. They do so by considering such patterns as multifaceted components for the creation, under-

standing, and reception of 'the real', 'the authentic' and 'the unfamiliar' in experimental theatre productions across time and the globe. On the path to critically explore the real in an unmediated, doubling, and inter-textual context of 'Theatre of Real People', authenticity and 'Authenticity-Effects' emerge as avenues for critiquing the cast and performances of several theatre productions hosted by Hebbel am Ufer (HAU) theatre house in the Berlin Kreuzberg neighbourhood, under the directorship of Mathias Lilienthal from 2003–2012. This exploration raises interesting questions about veracity and fiction and the oscillating space between the two. The productions explored are incorporated within three bigger performance formats namely Rimini Protokoll's 100% Berlin: A Statistical Chain Action (Eine statistische Kettenreaktion), Lilienthal's X-Apartments: Theatre in a Private Space (X-Wohnungen: Theater in privaten Räumen) and Mobile Academy's Black Markets No. 7 with an analytical focus on dramaturgy, performance aesthetics, and most of all the audience reception of the listed foci. Having these particular productions in mind, the authors employ the notion of 'Theatre of Real People' to succinctly discuss what they delineate as dealing with 'those people in a theatre context who present aspects of their own selves—their perspectives, personal histories, narratives, knowledges, skills, environments, social worlds, and/or socio-economic categories—rather than those of fictional or devised characters' (5). This understanding already resonates with the authors' findings from some of the listed productions, namely that no demarcation existed between professional and non-professional performances since the goal, relevance, and impact of practicing such a 'Theatre of Real People' needed to be felt both in the domain of performance, making its reception and the critical discourse that it brings forth.

Divided into eight chapters, together with an informative introduction and a succinct conclusion, *Theatre of Real People* aims at exploring the use of 'Authenticity-Effects' with focus on the presentation, performance texts and audience reception of the above-listed productions at HAU. The first three chapters of the book chronicle the history of Theatre of Real People by examining theoretical approaches connected to theatre, authenticity, and 'Authenticity-Effects'. Although the authors already introduce their readers to their case studies in chapter two, they are further divided into five more. It is worth mentioning that the authors employ elements from reception studies to be able to analyse how the performances as a whole engender the logic of truth in them. However, a question that a dramaturg, who is not necessarily emanating from a Western/German theatre background, might at the initial stages of engaging with Theatre of Real People ask, is whether other global forms of Theatre of Real People such as Theatre-for-Development, Theatre-for-Integrated-Rural-Development, Popular Theatre, People's Theatre, Legislative Theatre, and so on share certain similarities with Theatre of Real People in terms of its technique and narrative. Interestingly, Garde and Mumford catalogue autobiographical theatre, ethnographic performance, participatory performance, testimonial theatre, verbatim theatre to name just a few, in a bid to enunciate that no matter how one names Theatre of Real People and specify where and when they occur, modes of representation should engender, and yet subvert veracity and the genuine in ways that intimacy is generated between the performers and the audience in a social, cultural, and political engagement. This statement perhaps justifies why the authors engage with the complexity of the concept of real, authenticity and 'Authenticity-Effects' by showcasing the differences between idealising and

sceptical approaches towards notions, which one can comprehend as analytical tools for the theatre performances of HAU.

Focusing on the performances of 100% Berlin and 100% Melbourne in Chapter 5, the authors illustrate how authenticity and the audience's expectation of the truth is challenged and destabilised in the performers' representation and verbal communications. An example is the authors' discussion of the chain recruitment of the second but last individual (98%) whose role will help to complete the cast of 100% Berlin. What the authors note about this scene is that a statistical constraint destabilises the originality of the performer and in effect creates 'Authenticity-Effects'. This constraint, according to the authors, emerges from the requirement to cast someone from a specific country of origin, neighbourhood, age and marital status, a process which prompts the authors to make important remarks about individuality. Garde and Mumford further note that hasty presentations of the chain recruitment of the cast on stage also contributes to the creation of such effects. For example, the audience was encouraged by the first performer (1%) in 100% Berlin to look at the biographical information of performers in the production booklet. While the audience was engaged with this process, they needed to watch the digital projections of the time and date at which the pictures of the performers in the booklet were taken. Moreover, the same audience that was then engrossed with the booklet and digital projections had to watch how the performance itself was unfolding on stage. Such a theatrical entanglement provides a platform for the authors to engage even further with the notion of 'Authenticity-Effects'.

This book offers illuminating insights into the encounter of cultural and professional diversity—individuals from different ethnic and professional backgrounds—at Berlin's Hebbel am

Ufer-hosted performances. The authors foreground contemporary theatre discourses and bring it together with the enactment of cultural diversity while focusing on the notions of the real, the authentic and the unfamiliar. In Chapters 4, they further accord a critical space to the concept of the 'unfamiliar' which for them engages: 'with not only people who are perceived by the participants in the theatre as different, foreign or insufficiently known due to their occupational, class, and ethnic background, but also 'theatre strangers', those who do not usually perform their everyday activities within the theatre or as theatre. The unfamiliar with regards to HAU production deals with concepts like 'different', 'foreign', 'strange' (90).

According to Garde and Mumford, 'Theatre of Real People' is about migration and it is about the neighbour, together with whom its participants and audience members experience the every day. Yet as he or she is not sufficiently known, it is all about cultural encounters and cultural identity. The encounter with individuals from different cultural backgrounds in such a Theatre of Real People practice necessitates the authors to explore the relevance of Lilienthal's *Stadtteiltheater* (city district theatre) in order to probably critique the ideology behind *Stadttheater* (city theatre). Practised alongside the concern of culturally diverse local communities in mind, *Stadtteiltheater* becomes a representation of the 'unfamiliar' within a liberating theatre space. What one may draw from the authors' discussion here is that the impact of *Stadtteiltheater* is mainly performed outside of the theatre space. And it is different to that of the performances inside a state-funded theatre, which Garde and Mumford have described as conservative, incapable of reform, professional and rich (58). To them, this paradox allows HAU to experiment with aesthetic forms, especially when it comes to

self-representational models of 'Theatre of Real People', which is not only transferable, but also adaptable (see Chapter 7 and 8).

Destabilising 'Authenticity-Effects' allows the audience to engage with reality in different dimensions, especially when the performance space is moved from a theatre hall into individual apartments, located in the neighbourhood. The authors' reflections on the performance of X-Apartments in Chapter 6, speaks of postdramatic experience as 'everyday life and artistic projects become blurred due to the absence of a clear frame of reference that audiences can use to interpret their experiences' (127). Negotiating ones way through non-familiar neighbourhoods is certainly a strategy to acquaint the cast and audiences of X-Apartments with the unfamiliar, or simply put with people from different ethnicities. Caught in the web of sceptical authenticity, the narrative of X- Apartments for instance provokes the participants to question whether theatre is reality or fiction. Yet the participatory model of 'Theatre of Real People' is what lends credence to the productions of HAU, especially as the authors explore the opportunities and potentials of such experimental forms of theatre. Non-formal adult education is certainly one of such potentials of 'Theatre of Real People'. In this regard, the publication *Theatre of Real People* is a contribution to material previously published on the relevance of experimental/improvisational theatre related to any society—such as the edited accounts in *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice* (2009) by Monika Prendergast and Juliana Saxton and *The Applied Theatre Reader* (2009) by Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston. Just as these studies are concerned with people, differences, and borders, Garde and Mumford focus on how the audience is not only informed about cultural diversity in Berlin, but also about complex issues around immigra-

tion. But their poststructuralist approach to the performances discussed and audience reception of the plays is what makes this book self-standing. The representational format of the productions examined by Garde and Mumford articulate 'Authenticity-Effects' that are ambivalent and reminiscent of postdramatic notions of theatre practice.

What is of particular interest in *Theatre of Real People: Diverse Encounters at Berlin's Hebbel am Ufer and Beyond* is its subject of inquiry, i. e. how the people in 'Theatre of Real People' deal with everyday engagements and how the authors critically explore them. Looking beyond the capital of Germany, the real people examined in the book are described as 'the unfamiliar', a concept that speaks to cultural, social, political, ethnic, and professional diversity, which the authors term 'contemporary people'. The manner in which the authors connect the performers in the production listed above with the unfamiliar and authenticity allows them to investigate how aesthetic patterns of the productions analysed in the book create a negotiable platform for social encounter. Authenticity with regards to 'Theatre of Real People' highlights the diversity of the cast and the required unprofessional, semi-profession and professional acting skills, which according to the authors are relevant to the dissimilar life narratives that are represented on stage. Such narratives, as the authors note, are communicated in verbatim text, pre-recorded interviews, films and videos. These forms are integrated in some of the productions in such a way that they bring content, aesthetics, self-representation, and patterns of presentation together with authentic life experiences, igniting sceptical notions of 'Authenticity-Effects'. The publication of this book is timely as its critical approach does not only create a platform to reflect on contemporary relevance of postdramatic forms, but

also as it explores collective and individual narratives that create resonance with current debates on diversity. Having said that, I think that the book contributes interesting concepts—such as authenticity and 'Authenticity-Effects' in regards to new experimental theatre practices, and that it is a useful handbook to theatre practitioners, students and lecturers of theatre.

Works Cited

- Pendergast, Monica, and Juliana Saxton, eds. *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice*. Bristol: Intellect, 2009.
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***Reader in Comedy: An Anthology of Theory & Criticism* by Magda Romanska and Alan Ackerman, eds.**

London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016, 375 pp.

(paperback)

By Adrian Centeno

Reader in Comedy: An Anthology of Theory & Criticism, edited by Magda Romanska and Alan Ackerman, sets out to situate comedic performance, theory, and criticism at the forefront of intellectual discourse, in contrast to its historic place on the periphery by examining the pragmatic utility of comedy from antiquity to modern day. The reader fills a necessary gap in the field of dramatic arts scholarship by placing historicist and formalist interpretations of comic theory into a dialectic exchange. Romanska and Ackerman assert that 'comedy and theories of comedy are historically contingent,' and a sense of self-awareness inherent in the form allows for the irreverent manipulation of comic structures in such a way that 'form becomes content (and vice versa)' (4). With the establishment of this historicised form, the reader utilises various texts to reveal how comic theory may create, re-

veal or disrupt notions of truth that shape the human experience.

The narrative begins amid the hedonistic revelry of Greek civic festivals. The Athenian philosopher Plato was unnerved by arts ability to ‘inflare people’s passions’ (19), and specifically lamented comedy for its association with sensory indulgences. Sex or inebriation may be pleasurable, but earthly pursuits diminished the capacity for thought and thus distracted Greek citizens from the pursuit of Plato’s idealist conception of truth. In the Socratic dialogue *Philebus*, Plato placed the root of comedy in malice, suggesting that laughter at others is a character flaw derived from a lack of self-knowledge. In responding to Plato’s philosophical division of truth and comedy, Romanska and Ackerman arrive at two important questions: ‘But what if comedy doesn’t simply *reflect* a degraded reality? What if it *shapes* or even *creates* reality?’ (20). The idealism of Plato was supplanted by the pragmatism of Aristotle, a student of his, who advanced comic theory by ‘emphasizing logical causality’ (22) and suggested comedy, if well-constructed, could be a tool for normalising Greek virtues like moderation.

If comedies were used as magnifying glasses and held up to socially undesirable behavior could they be used for a more constructive purpose? The pragmatic potential of comic theory was observed by Roman theorists Horace and Quintilian, who noted that comedy could be used as a rhetorical device to correct non-normative behavior or to ‘win goodwill’ (23) that could convince others in debate. The problematic nature of who defines non-normative behavior, and to what degree the corrective effort extends—Is it playful and informative? Is it abusive and harassing?—creates unique problems specific to each period and culture. Later entries by the likes of Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, Molière, Immanuel Kant, George Meredith, Sigmund Freud,

and Jacques Derrida highlight the importance of the present moment on works on art and, conversely, the influence of works of art on an interpretation of the present moment. In this regard, Romanska and Ackerman dutifully advance us through the social and political complexities of each period and frame the accompanying texts thoughtfully.

The fluidity of the reader is a major virtue. The general introduction clearly outlines the reader's methodology and establishes key questions for the journey ahead. Chapters are divided logically, arranged chronologically and include virtually all the major dramatists, critics, and theorists one would expect to find, as well as several that one wouldn't. Many of the seventy-plus texts featured in *Reader in Comedy* are translations and, though the anthology doesn't include originals for those able to translate for themselves, that work appears seamless as well. A work of scholarship spanning this breadth of time, featuring the text of so many contributors, and from so many languages runs the risk of being bogged down by the weight of its information. In reaching backward and forward in time at so many points without creating confusion, the reader is a testament to the work of Romanska and Ackerman. *Reader in Comedy* feels appropriately challenging and would make an ideal text for university-level coursework.

It should be noted that much of comic theory since the mid-twentieth century has focused on the socio-political development of identity politics. Romanska and Ackerman acknowledge this trend in contemporary scholarship, but the reader perhaps misses an opportunity by containing very little comic theory rooted in contemporary identity politics. The stock representation of 'the trickster' is connected to African and Native American gods in the general introduction, but only in pass-

ing and isn't revisited in subsequent chapters. Texts by Glenda R. Carpio, Ruth Wisse, and Romanska herself help satisfy this gap in part, but the omission of something like Luis Valdez's *actos* in conversations about the reclamation of stereotypes or the pragmatic use of comic theory by politically oppressed groups is felt. Scholarship in the field will probably always lean heavily on European influences, but a greater diversity of voices in contemporary theory would be welcome in future editions.

The final chapter of *Reader in Comedy* begins with a review of the major atrocities of the twentieth century: the use of weapons of mass destruction, multiple occurrences of genocide, and wars on a global scale. The collective weight of these tragedies is too much for one person to imagine and that they occurred in such a short period is horrifying. The fatalistic nature of tragedy presumes inevitability. The intent of this opening isn't to crush the reader just before the finish line, but to remind them that comedy 'reflects tensions between order and disorder' (238) and, most importantly, comedy endures. As the unique challenges of the twenty-first century materialise *Reader in Comedy* arrives precisely when it is needed most, and it provides an excellent starting point for those looking for relief, resistance or both.

