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Chapter Title	The Echo Chamber: Theater in a "Post-Truth" World	
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Abstract	Kinghorn responds to retrospective analyses of In-Yer-Face theatre that emphasize the role of storytelling in the absence of the "grand narratives" which, by the mid-nineties, had been overthrown by the postmodern skepticism that defined the era. He considers key contemporary debates surrounding postmodernity, in order to examine the specific status of "truth" and "authenticity" within the surge of verbatim theater practice that followed the new writing renaissance in the United Kingdom. The analysis examines the ways verbatim dramaturgies locate and expand definitions of those contested terms, in an attempt to reposition them within the cautious framing of current "post-truth" theories.	
Keywords (separated by " - ")	Verbatim - Documentary - Authenticity - Post-truth - Postmodern	

Q2

AUTHOR QUERIES

Q2 Please confirm if "theatre" in the phrase "In-Yer-Face theatre" should be retained as is. Please check if the same can be changed to "theater" except in the title of the book authored by Sierz.

CHAPTER 15

AUT

The Echo Chamber: Theater in a "Post-Truth" World

Shane Kinghorn

The "post-truth" era poses a threat to the relevance, if not survival, of a form of theater to which the concepts of "truth" and "authenticity" stubbornly adhere. The vexed status of "authenticity" within verbatim theater practice is frequently questioned in critical discourses responding to the decade of intense activity that followed its revival in the United Kingdom. Academic criticism frequently rebukes verbatim artists' compositional strategies—especially the contrivance of narrative coherence—for somehow belying the documentary impulse, as if factual integrity must be compromised by overtly "creative" intervention.[1] In this chapter, the term "verbatim theatre" indicates that the material will emphasize the assemblage of "testimony," by which I mean the stories told through the words of individuals—the "private narratives" that, according to Carol Martin, infer "great authority to moments of utterance"[2]—gathered by practitioners through interview processes prior to production.

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W. C. Boles (ed.), *After In-Yer-Face Theatre*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-39427-1_15

In-Yer-Face: A Retrospective Assessment

Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, the leading playwrights among the "disaffected group of dramatists' clustered under a series of monikers, including 'the Britpack' and 'the New Brutalists,'"[3] both resisted their categorization as "In-Yer-Face" writers. Kane's statement that movements "define retrospectively and always on grounds of imitation […] the writers themselves are not interested"[4] reverberates in Ravenhill's later reflection on the mid-nineties moment when his hit play *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) "marked him as a potential 'pack leader.'"[5] Similarly reluctant, at the time, to "label," or even acknowledge, this "phenomenon," Ravenhill found "the diversity of [the writers'] voices … more striking than the similarities"; although "a series of unique, strong voices all emerged at the same time," they should not be "linked as a movement or school."[6] In his conclusion to *In-Yer-Face Theatre*, Aleks Sierz's retrospective assessment of the nineties new wave (to which his own, paradigmatic epithet has famously, and persistently, adhered) articulates a sense of purpose and optimism that prompts interrogation of its reputation for "uncompromising sensationalism"[7]:

> It was also a powerful reminder that culture is a place of half-truths, contradictions and ambiguity. Those searching for absolute truths and simple answers didn't find them in theatre […] [T]here was also a sense of hope that by facing such extremes we might all grow more able to bear the real world of which they were a lurid reflection.[8]

Extolling Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) as an "impeccable social document"—one that "captured the public mood"—Michael Billington recalls also his hunger for "remedies for the characters' urban angst."[9] That the plays of the nineties "lacked … any vision of Utopia" was, he concedes, the fundamental idea: "In the drifting, desolate Nineties … there were no ready-made Utopias and no grand narrative schemes. The best we could hope to do was construct our own private dreams and tell each other stories."[10] Billington's emphasis on storytelling anticipates the intrinsic "promise" of documentary practice[11] that is problematized, argues John F. Deeney, in Ravenhill's work.

Rather than propagate absolute faith in the veracity of lived experience, Ravenhill's plays "question the reliability of narrative (and its manifestations in memory and history)."[12] *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* (2007)—"a

complex contemplation on the relationship between a real world epic narrative of recent history, and how individual life stories operate within"—is, argues Deeney, framed "as a retort to the preponderance of contemporary verbatim or documentary theatres,"[13] allowing for poetry, metaphor even, to supplant the journalistic pragmatism of the genre.

Steve Waters' thesis, ten years on from the debut of *Blasted* (1995), separates Sarah Kane from "the *enfants terribles* of the mid-1990s."[14] Drawing parallels between artistic and actual "terror," Waters argues that although "Kane did not live to see the events of 9/11 and the ensuing open-ended 'war on terror,'" her plays "resisted ideology … in response to political conflicts enacted in the name of fixed identities and categories."[15] While "the post-ideological dramatists of the 1990's … shook themselves loose from the constraint of 'grand narratives,'" Kane's formal innovation in *Blasted* anticipated "the politics that would occupy the ensuing vacuum—post-humanist, experiential, non-consensual."[16] Into this "vacuum," then, came the preoccupations that would inform the revival of verbatim practice in the United Kingdom, an epoch ostensibly triggered by the events of 9/11.[17]

Lib Taylor, examining the parallels and distinctions between "In-Yer-Face" drama and the "fact-based" theater that followed on its heels, argues that the former "sought its politics through shock and disgust," while the latter "addressed events and issues that belonged squarely in the realm of political discourse, but treated these things by engaging the audience … *emotionally* in the detail of real stories."[18] Taylor's central thesis—that the "strategies of immediacy and directness" found in the nineties new wave are cultivated, in verbatim theater, into strategies of "emotional enlistment"[19]—will be revisited later in this chapter, when Taylor's emphasis on subjective attachment to political mindsets is reexamined in light of current cultural forces.

What Has Happened to Truth?

Verbatim theater experienced its resurgence in the United Kingdom at a time bereft of trust in political discourse, when theater was challenging the ways audiences took meaning from stories. Spectators sought not "simple answers" (and surely not Utopias), but a greater sense of certainty, of factual accuracy, or even *truth*, than could be found outside the auditorium. Live encounter with testimony offered temporary communities privileged access to a reflection of the real world that seemed impulsive, unmediated,

and *authentic*.[20] Viewed from a present-day perspective, the expectation that theater predicated on its truth claims could offer a welcome corrective to the realities it purports to reflect looks nostalgic at best.

Now that it has become hugely challenging to fish through the ceaseless stream of social media for unprocessed, unbiased information, can audiences still expect to find, in live encounters with verbatim testimony, portals to "an urgent 'truth'"?[21] The Brexit debacle in the United Kingdom and the lurid theatrics of Donald Trump have weathered our trust in government and the business of politics to the verge of erosion. In an age when elected representatives and influential commentators brazenly rebrand blatant lies as "alternative facts," the demand for genuine facts should be more urgent than ever. But the defining casualty of this extraordinary "post-truth" era has been the steady decline of faith in their authority. What has happened to truth?

While the significant characteristic of postmodernism is recognized by both supporters and critics as "a Socratic impulse to question truths,"[22] in an ever more socially and behaviorally fragmented world "the lines of force and meaning are more dispersed, more conflictual, more partial than [the] term … conveys."[23] Douglas Kellner draws attention, however, to a transformation in the current age "comparable in scope to the shifts produced by the industrial revolution."[24] Predicting "a postindustrial, infotainment and biotech mode of global capitalism, organized around new information, communications, and genetic technologies,"[25] Kellner posits that our social and cultural situation is hard to comprehend "in a hypercapitalist culture of spectacles, simulacra and disinformation."[26] Thus, we are pivoted between the postmodern and the modern, "in an interim period between epochs,"[27] an ambiguous situation foundational to Daniel Schulze's conception of the search for authenticity as a riposte to fragmentation and uncertainty.[28] In postmodern life, posits Schulze, the notion of authenticity has been replaced by that of multiple and constructed identities.

Within pluralist models of twenty-first-century verbatim theater (see, e.g., Robin Soans's *Talking to Terrorists* [2005]),[29] the assembled presence of individual testimonies entwines a number of competing, subjective "truths," disguising any thread that might be identified as a "master" narrative. While the exposure of unreported voices intends to challenge the authority of the "official" narratives that have conspired, through various operations of power, to exclude them, the potential for authorial or

political bias in the construction of "narratives of opposition"[30] has called into question their potential for offering more "truthful" accounts.

Schulze's characterization of authenticity can be applied to the realms of theater and performance in the sense that it can be *constructed* and commoditized in contemporary culture: it is "created, performed and developed, and once it is established it becomes a social (unquestioned) reality."[31] Carol Martin argues that the "provocative" element of documentary theater "is the way in which it strategically deploys the *appearance* of truth while *inventing* its own particular truth through elaborate aesthetic devices."[32] In Schulze's discussion of reality, the "real" materializes as the original, unmediated object.[33] Benjamin's distinction is useful in that it sets up a qualitative difference in "object" and "facsimile." Applied to verbatim strategies, these terms can be understood as the source material and its adaptation into theatrical presentation.

Citing *My Name Is Rachel Corrie*[34] as her primary example, Martin investigates the various types of "evidence" presented by documentary theater (the presence of documents, film clips, and so on) that act as surrogates for absent subjects. Here, those "surrogates" may be seen as the "original, unmediated objects" that trigger, in the audience, a temporal awareness of mortality through the idea that absent subjects might be "ghosted" by performers. If audiences then "create their own version of an (imagined) authentic past," it follows that reality must be "experienced as *staged, a mere representation* that has no depth."[35] Viewed from the perspective of our current, "post-truth" era, Schulze's troubling notion that reality has no more depth and substance than a projection screen demands scrutiny. Such an inquiry leads the discussion of postmodernity and authenticity into confrontation with the cultural forces influencing the present-day sense of dysphoria. It brings us to the defining questions of our age: how did the truth become an endangered species in the West? How did subjectivity come to trump factuality?

The "Echo Chamber": Theater in a "Post-Truth" World

Are we living in a post-truth world? The answer to that question requires looking at definitions of the term, its origins, and applications, and then asking how it applies to theater. In a post-truth era, documentary and verbatim's contested relationship to truth becomes even more problematic.

Does the widespread erosion of trust in sources of information, seen in the proliferation of phrases such as "fake news" and "alternative facts,"[36] extend to the realms of theater and performance? If so, verbatim theater is obsolete, because it is driven by a quest to expose the truth; without even a vague collective sense of *belief in*, let alone what we *mean by* "truth," the quest becomes futile. But if post-truth is more about contemporary information overload, an avalanche that is burying truth alive, then the task of verbatim practice—to clear away the debris of cascading falsehoods—becomes more urgent, more necessary than ever.

Is a stable definition of post-truth possible? *Oxford Dictionaries* selected "post-truth" as its word of the year in 2016, defining it as shorthand for "circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."[37] This is an intriguing definition that does not quite substantiate the hazy concept of a "post-truth era" but does offer a tentative rationale for the word that appears to cast subjective—personal—feelings as being "untruthful." The definition could serve perfectly well if the word was "post-fact." It is hard to comprehend the death of truth; intrinsic to the discourses and belief systems foundational to an operative society, it is "a cornerstone of our democracy."[38] Postmodern discourse invites scrutiny of the concept but has never entirely rejected "truth."

The technologies we rely on and their uncanny powers of silent observation draw us into a quest for the truth condemned to perpetual deferral. Technology can—and does—construct versions of ourselves made entirely of algorithms designed to detect what we like to look at and lead us to similar content. Thus, as I access the Internet, filters target my virtual self, leading me to information I believe I have found and selected autonomously. Through that monitored interaction with technology, my real and virtual selves become somehow fused, the consequence being that I am guided from any opinions that may substantially challenge my own.

This development implies a loss of autonomy that Kellner, in his conception of a new technoculture as a postmodern phenomenon, did not foresee; his prediction of "a more decentralized, individualist and variegated culture"[39] enables the subject to "generate postmodern selves—multiple, fragmented, constructed and provisional, subject to experiment and change," the result being "awareness of the variety of roles we play and dimensions to our subjectivity."[40] Kellner, writing in 2007, had not anticipated the commodification of online activity that has undoubtedly

played a substantial role in the movement toward post-truth and has profound political implications. As Matthew d'Ancona states:

> We have entered a new phase of political and intellectual combat, in which democratic [values] and institutions are being shaken to their foundations by a wave of ugly populism. Rationality is threatened by emotion, diversity by nativism, liberty by a drift towards autocracy. […] At the heart of this global trend is a crash in the value of truth, comparable to the collapse of a currency or a stock.[41]

In light of this apparent deficit it becomes necessary to expose the ways truth is obscured, and ignored, and fabricated; and consider whether, and how, we can get anywhere near to glimpsing, or grasping it.

As we increasingly receive our news through our mobile phones, it follows that social media profoundly influences the way we see the world. Michiko Kakutani observes a landscape in which "people live in increasingly narrow content silos and correspondingly smaller walled gardens of thought."[42] D'Ancona states that between them the "big five" providers—Google, Microsoft, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon—"outstrip … all the databanks, filing systems and libraries that have existed in human history"; information about all of our online transactions "has become the most valuable commodity in the world."[43] Further,

> This technology has also been the … engine of Post-Truth. […] [While] it was optimistically assumed … [it] would … smooth the path to sustainable cooperation and pluralism … the new technology has done at least as much to foster online huddling and general retreat into echo chambers.[44]

The terms "fact" and "truth" are not interchangeable: truth is more subjective. This does not mean either that people do not believe in or that they would necessarily dismiss facts; the point is that they are not *emotionally* invested in them. Facts may have lost their currency because areas of life that are not really about facts, but *values*, are no longer considered to be the monopoly of politicians, intellectuals, and self-appointed authorities. Indeed, one of the casualties of the post-truth era has been the discrediting of so-called experts, a situation that confinement to the echo chamber can only perpetuate and amplify. Facts, informed debate, even science "is under attack, and so is expertise of every sort."[45] In this climate, the term "post-truth" is misleading: the issue becomes a matter of

who is qualified, or entrusted, to speak the truth. The danger comes when people decide to trust a narrative that cannot be—or, worse, does not ostensibly *need* to be—supported or verified by facts. Reinelt, stating that audiences seek reassurance in "the assertion of the materiality of events, of the indisputable character of the facts,"[46] implies that verbatim theater establishes trust through blending subjective truths with factually sound archival evidence; d'Ancona sees, in recent political narratives, that facts have lost their sovereignty.

Both Kakutani[47] and d'Ancona[48] find the possibility that postmodernist texts, by questioning the very notion of objective reality, augured the "post-truth" phenomenon. While postmodernists did not entirely dislodge the consensus that truth was a sacrosanct value, we have arrived at the moment when "that consensus has collapsed."[49] The US president's unlikely ascent may be indicative of its demise: "His rise to the most powerful office in the world, unhindered by care for the truth, accelerated by the awesome force of social media, was the ultimate post-modern moment."[50] This discussion alludes not only to Donald Trump but also to another defining moment of the post-truth era: the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union in 2016. In her analysis of the Brexit campaign, the journalist Katherine Viner[51] highlights the most persuasive, emotive claims made by the key strategists (Gove, Farage, and Ukip donor Arron Banks) that were subsequently revealed to have had no factual basis.

In light of these troubling developments, can verbatim theater offer a meaningful intervention? Anderson and Wilkinson see the explicit advantage of *empathetic* engagement with testifiers. They argue for "[a] community's need … to be informed, engaged and transformed"[52] in ways that invite them to respond to performances both intellectually and emotionally, a process further emphasized by Lib Taylor's notion of "emotional enlistment."[53] Their analyses posit that verbatim practice offers a corrective forum for marginalized expressions of dissent: the authentic storytelling of those individuals whose stories have been somehow consigned to the margins, forgotten by history, or silenced by regimes of power. In a skeptical (postmodern?) age, the audiences are, according to Anderson and Wilkinson, attuned to the duplicitous nature of political spin, so that they are "asked to examine what playwrights and performers consider as *inauthentic*."[54] But an uneasy affiliation can be detected, here, between falsehoods in political ideologies (the "inauthentic" narratives) and the stories gathered from the testimony of real people that are somehow deemed worthier of trust (the "authentic" narratives).

If we are indeed living in a "sceptical" age—or even in a post-truth age—there is no compelling reason to believe that we should be more inclined to accept each other's words than those of our elected representatives. Such an assumption homogenizes testimony, not just to a flatly oppositional narrative, but as somehow untethered to *any* form of external political influence, because it implies that the recounting of subjective experience is entirely free, in its articulation, from the biased expression of political affiliations. D'Ancona and Kakutani argue, however, that we are now being led to online content that closes off anything that may cast doubt upon, or oppose, content to which we have already expressed an affiliation. This is a form of "enlistment" that denies the agency advocated (below) by Lib Taylor.

In response to technological developments, our definition of "community" has changed: communities exist online, can be built through campaigning action, shared enthusiasms, obsessions, or political allegiances. The work of pioneering United Kingdom verbatim practitioner Alecky Blythe exhibits her fascination with journeys from division to cohesion in particular communities (see, e.g., *London Road* [2011],[55] *Little Revolution* [2014]).[56] While it is fastidiously observed and recorded, it is precisely that affinity to localized issues that gives the work its pervasively parochial accent, but also its optimism. The current "global community" now that it has shifted to an online collective owned and monitored by the "big five" expresses a conception of connectivity—the "echo chamber"—that taints the positive idea of unity. The question, now, must be whether the stories heard in verbatim theater—if they do encourage empathetic connection—also encourage an emotional affinity to subjective truth. D'Ancona sees this possibility, in the context of online "clusters," as one of the contributory factors in the movement toward "enlistment" to narratives with *no factual* credibility. This development, seen in the context of recent political upheaval, is a threat to democracy. Is there any political agency in subjective reception?

Taylor does not explain precisely how the shift, in the spectator, from "a position of passive sympathy" to "active participation"[57] is actuated, but would seem to confirm Tomlin's apprehension of pluralistic strategies in verbatim practice that ostensibly replace the single protagonist, consigning audiences to biased "narratives of opposition."[58] D'Ancona has argued that, far from triggering oppositional activism, (online) emotional enlistment has a perilous tendency to silence opposition, and thus to play straight into the hands of the opponent. Taylor's optimistic expectation is

that audiences will be directed to channel their "emotional enlistment" toward meaningful activism, demanding reform, if not revolution. Allowing for this possibility, the emphasis upon "authenticity" as securely residing in *factual* material loses some of its authority, but in a post-truth era, the erosion of any factual basis to the perception of authenticity is a troubling prospect. Can viable alternative strategies in verbatim practice be evidenced?

Into the Breach: In Search of "Authenticity"

The truth claims made in, and of, verbatim theater have, according to Amanda Stuart Fisher, been overemphasized because they place "limitations on theater's capacity to respond *authentically* to real stories of trauma."[59] Stuart Fisher proposes "a more existentially nuanced articulation of truth grasped as 'authenticity,'"[60] informed by Martin Heidegger's account of being-toward-death, which looks beyond pedestrian fidelity to *factual accuracy* to consider "fidelity to the very conditions of our own existence."[61] The context of a post-truth era must acknowledge Stuart Fisher's call for a shift of emphasis, in the assessment of verbatim practice, from its supposed obligation to generate "technical" and "factual" truth.

If the faithful replication of verbatim accounts can only touch the surface of traumatic experience, how else might such profoundly subjective depths be explored or "authentically examined"?[62] An "authentic" methodology should break through the constraints imposed by factual legitimacy and reach for different dramaturgical strategies capable of locating and inhabiting this liminal space. What does this "space" look and sound like? Arguably, we have already encountered it, in the tangential environments imagined by the mid-nineties playwrights cited. Stuart Fisher looks closely at the impact of trauma upon the subject: it can be perceived "as a 'breach' in the processes of cognition with which we ordinarily experience and make sense of the world."[63] There are clear links to be found here, in subject and form, with the experiential theater of Kane and Ravenhill: if trauma cannot be assimilated into experience, it may therefore "stand radically beyond language and communicability."[64] The authors of "in-yer-face theatre," in their articulation of "the experience of absence and dislocation,"[65] captured the veracity of lived experience as defined by Stuart Fisher; verbatim theater, in its phlegmatic reliance on the spoken word, might actually foreclose communication of that which it seeks to disseminate.

It should be acknowledged that Stuart Fisher is not concerned with forms of verbatim theater that *necessitate* the presentation of facts. The foremost example, in the United Kingdom, of "tribunal theatre," *The Colour of Justice*[66] did not set out to investigate "what it *means* to speak of the truth"[67]; rather, it intended—successfully, as it transpired—to *evidence* institutional racism within the Metropolitan Police. The hyperreal tribunal theater form offers no juncture at which a radical departure from mimetic modes of delivery might occur. There is a more convincing link to be found with Stuart Fisher's call for a poetic dimension to the presentation of lived experience in Lloyd Newson's dance-theater piece, DV8's *John* (2014), the third in a sequence of verbatim pieces, following *To Be Straight With You* (2008) and *Can We Talk About This?* (2012).

Director Lloyd Newson's intention in making *John* was to allow the company's improvisational process—that is, the expression of their individual encounters with verbatim texts—to inform the somatic score. Thus, *John* offers a definition of authenticity that can be understood as "authentic" to *their* process, *their* experience, as much as to the traumatic experience of the testifiers. Arguably, the autobiographical content in DV8's *John*, and the work's extension, beyond spoken language, into physical expression of its extremities, force us more directly into contact with explicit experiences of trauma; into close proximity to mortality. Stuart Fisher is calling for verbatim strategies that somehow embrace and convey this dimension, and in doing so reveal a degree of "truthfulness" that factual accuracy (and mimetic performance styles) fails to disclose.

In DV8's *John*, the titular protagonist's narrative function oscillates between telling *and* reliving his own story, which is structured as a relentless chronology of trauma. The piece achieves a disorienting temporal trick through the juxtaposition of the "storied" John's past tense, verbatim text, and its immediate, "here-and-now" enactment; the character is both interlocutor and participant, inhabiting a space located somewhere between detached reportage and embodied, integrated reconstruction of the past. Trauma, posits Stuart Fisher, "returns unbidden to disrupt the present while also radically re-aligning the subject's vision of the future."[68] DV8's piece conveys this view: John is shown to have no control over the sequence of occurrences that make up his story, has limited control over their recollection and no control over their consequences.

While it has not proven possible to circumvent entirely the preoccupations with "truth" and "authenticity" that informs the critical landscape, I have drawn attention to one example of work that has pushed the form

from familiar treatments of verbatim material toward the formulation of dramaturgies that expand the definitions of these terms. Finding innovative ways and means to engage with urgent, real-world issues and debates, Newson is a contemporary practitioner that still "authenticates" material through the veracity of verbatim testimonies, discovering that he need not adhere to verbatim performance conventions in devising interpretative strategies. The imitations of "authenticity" apparent in DV8's work can be seen in the utilization and exposure, within the formal properties of the work, of their processes of making.

Newson's work is not at all times crafted in service to the text: the primacy of the verbatim material is subverted by an elliptical, often cryptic somatic score, by images and impressions gathered from somewhere outside and later imported. While those imported elements, being unrelated to the spoken words, cannot always be read (in performance) with any certainty of their precise meaning, what DV8 is doing with the text is opening up a space for interpretation, making the audience work to connect action and image to their speech acts (or leaving them free to accept this lack of correlation). Rarely seen in the treatment of verbatim material, this is arguably one of the foremost tenets of the "in-yer-face" aesthetic. Such innovative treatment both suggests a way forward for the practice and brings us full circle to Ravenhill's rebuttal of verbatim theater's dogmatic adherence to factual accuracy, to the need for "a poetic and therefore … more political sensibility than 'journalism' allows."[69]

Conclusion

If indeed we are in a "post-truth" era, living in the era of "alternative facts" and "fake news," it is significant—perhaps inevitable—that the art being talked about now is dystopian fiction: it is worth noting that Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* rose to the top of the bestseller charts days after Americans were encouraged to embrace "alternative facts." Fictional dystopias can invite queasy recognition of our current circumstances; not through facsimile, or Baudrillardian simulacra, but rather, through elements of allegory: the celebrated television adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, for example, exhibits recognizable parallels with the real world that seem to confirm our worst presentiments. I had anticipated a second resurgence of verbatim theater in response to the current political and cultural climate, but we are turning to work that reflects a kind of foreboding, perhaps because we are resigned to a world

in which the moderate, putatively liberal territory known as the "middle ground" has been squeezed out by the bellicose populism of recent political upheaval. The relationship of the genre to journalism has been undermined by the diminishing status, in the real world, of print journalism and the shift to online content. Fueled by rapid technological advances, and with astonishing rapidity, the persuasive influence of the "media," as we knew it—the reportage and opinion of paid professionals—has been all but eclipsed by the ceaseless chatter of social media. This is not to pretend that print journalism is not possessed of a promiscuous relationship with truth, or that its readership is not divided along lines of politics, class, and income. Alongside the addictive distractions of Clickbait, there are positive aspects to this phenomenon: the secretive nexus of politicians and media moguls has been exposed and weakened; the voices of individuals in the public domain appear to have gained status and power. Yet the ownership and manipulation of social media by five supremely influential, global corporations raise serious doubts about where the power truly lies. The capacity of search engines to feed bogus news stories to our handheld devices has brought about unchecked assimilation of the fake and the real that Baudrillard could scarcely have conceived of.

The examples of verbatim theater cited consider the dissemination of marginal voices as a positive alternative, corrective or form of redress to the "master narratives" propagated by media corporations bound by their own political associations. Now, however, the proliferation of public opinion, expressive of more extreme, more reactionary, more polarized affiliation to online "clusters," *is* the master narrative. The claim that verbatim theater could offer a viable *alternative* is no longer so easy to make: a form of theater predicated on the veracity of individual testimony seems destined, in the current climate, to get lost in the maelstrom. "In-yer-face theatre" is historically placed as a forerunner to the form, but its dystopian stories, offered in resistance to "the unrelenting ideological monopoly of late capitalism,"[70] might now be reconsidered as premonitions of the "post-truth" era. While my fascination with verbatim practice, and belief in its capacity for meaningful political intervention and aesthetic innovation, has not diminished, I conclude with the awareness that the status of "authenticity" and "truth" as sacrosanct values has diminished even further than postmodern skepticism would dare to have anticipated.

Notes

1. See Stephen Bottoms, "Putting the Document into Documentary–An Unwelcome Corrective?" *The Drama Review* 50, no. 3 (2006): 56–68; Jenny Hughes, "Theatre, Performance and the 'War on Terror': Ethical and Political Questions arising from British Theatrical Responses to War and Terrorism," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 17:2 (2007): 149–164; Donna Soto-Morettini, "Trouble in the House: David Hare's *Stuff Happens*," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 15, no. 3 (2005): 309–319.
2. Carol Martin, "Bodies of Evidence," in *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage*, ed. C. Martin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 23.
3. Graham Saunders, *Love Me or Kill Me: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 5.
4. Ibid., 7.
5. John F. Deeney, "Mark Ravenhill," in *Fifty Modern and Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. John F. Deeney and Maggie Gale (London: Routledge, 2015), 190.
6. Mark Ravenhill, "A Tear in the Fabric," *New Theatre Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (2004): 310.
7. Peter Billingham, *At the Sharp End* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 134.
8. Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-face Theatre: British Drama Today* (London: Faber, 2001), 24.
9. Michael Billington, *State of the Nation* (London: Faber, 2008), 361.
10. Ibid.
11. See Janelle Reinelt, "The Promise of Documentary," in *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present*, ed. Chris Megson and Allison Forsythe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2009), 1–25.
12. Deeney, 193.
13. Ibid., 194.
14. Steve Waters, "Sarah Kane: From Terror to Trauma," in *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama 1880–2005*, ed. M. Luckhurst (London: Wiley-Blackwell 2010), 377.
15. Ibid., 373.
16. Ibid., 381.
17. See Chris Megson, "This is all theatre: Iraq Centre Stage," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 15, no. 3 (2005): 369–371; Carol Martin, "Bodies of Evidence," in *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage*, ed. Carol Martin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 17–26; Liz Tomlin, "Representing the real: verbatim practice in a sceptical age," in *Acts and Apparitions* (Manchester, 2013), 114–142.

18. Lib Taylor, "The Experience of Immediacy: Emotion and Enlistment in Fact-based Theatre," *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 31, no. 2 (2011): 226, my emphasis.
19. Ibid., 224.
20. See Paola Botham, "From Deconstruction to Reconstruction: A Habermasian Framework for Contemporary Political Theatre," *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 18, no. 3 (2018): 307–317.
21. Taylor, 224.
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Author Queries

Chapter No.: 15 0004763686

Queries	Details Required	Author's Response
AU1	In the chapter title, "Theatre" has been changed to "Theater" as the chapter follows US spelling. Please confirm if that is okay.	
AU3	In the sentence "Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, …" please provide opening single quote for the closing quote after "dramatists'.	