

Transformations

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This special edition of *Platform*, entitled *Transformations*, focuses on contemporary explorations of experimental methodologies and interdisciplinary challenges in arts research. It points to some key areas of change and evolution in twenty-first century performance practice and scholarship. As many of the contributions suggest, approaches to the arts in general and theatre in particular are in continuous need of re-evaluation against the backdrop of local and global concerns. Human behaviour changes with the cultural, political and sociological influences of the world in which we live. In this spirit, *Transformations* demonstrates the contributions practitioners and researchers can make to the understanding of diverse performance practices. At the same time, we are wary of totalizing claims about the characteristics of our globalized era. As such we hope that, without being prescriptive, this edition of *Platform* charts some of the potential for transformation our times offer the individual practitioner or theorist.

Identity politics are central to *Transformations*. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theories provide a through-line that unites some of the more disparate themes in this issue. Notions of deterritorialization and reterritorialization are significant in thinking about the ways in which identity and difference are displaced and reconciled within rapidly changing spaces. Embedded in these terms is the theoretically adjacent notion of nomadism – with its connotations of movement and settlement – reflected in papers which span, geographically, from Taiwan to France, and, thematically, from the witnessing of catastrophe to the interactions of moving bodies with scenographic objects. Deleuze and Guattari's work on minor literature also comes into play, giving weight to the identities produced by sub-cultures, and to the political significances inherent in marginalised cultural phenomena.

In this regard, Chih-Chieh Liu's investigation of the subversion of Korean music videos through online subtitling in Taiwan provides an excellent example of minor literature. By locating these (sub)cultural artefacts within their specific socio-cultural contexts, Liu shows how meanings can mutate across cultures to create laughter, and in doing so she calls linguistic and anthropological assumptions into question. Eugénie Pastor's contribution echoes this sense of movement across national and cultural zones. Pastor discusses the work of *Escale*, a travelling theatre company in France. Her difficulty in creating an analytical language for the interstitial space in which the company operates drives an inquiry into French and English conceptions of physical theatre, as well as into her positioning as a researcher between these academic traditions.

The human body becomes the transforming and transformed entity in our two practice as research papers: Stephen Robins's 'Real Beauty Doesn't Have to Try like That: How I Got to Transform Cost into Value' and Paul Hurley's 'When the Body Becomes Too Much: Writing on *Becoming-locust* and the Spectacle of Theory.' Robins documents a year-long project in which he attended the gym daily in order to attain a body that accords with a mainstream ideal of male beauty. An analysis of the production that arose from this project, *Coinage*, explores the relationship between politics, economics, and the body, linking Robins's subjectivity with local and global communities and events. Hurley explores the politics of becoming through the final performance of his becoming animal series: *Becoming-locust*. Harnessing concepts of the carnivalesque and abjection, as well as tropes from queer and gender theory, Hurley shows how his performance problematises identity and transforms the human subject. The article offers a comment on the ways in which performance art can simultaneously deconstruct and express queer or Othered subjectivities in a twenty-first century context.

Beatriz Cantinho's photo essay, '*Eye-Height: A Project in Pictures*,' also offers an insight into the ways in which the human body, and movement in particular, can be transformed. Cantinho and her production team created an instrumental stage – a scenographic / instrumental object which operates as a resonance box for choreographed performance. Cantinho's photographs provide a sense of the aesthetic and function of her research project, in which dancers' movements become sound, while their bodies interact simultaneously with the instrumental stage object, the off-stage musicians, and the sensory perspective of the

audience. Bringing objects to life is also a key concern of Little Bulb Theatre Company, who find great dramatic inspiration in the minutiae of everyday experiences. In interview, they discuss their creative process and ways in which tiny details can be transformed into meaning and emotion.

Clara Escoda's article represents, in some ways, a traditional textual analysis of Martin Crimp's adaptation of Chekov's *The Seagull*. Yet it touches, like so many of our other contributions, on changing understandings of subjectivity and the relationship between micro- and macropolitics. Escoda offers a close reading of Chekhov's character Nina and her speeches, with special attention to their importance as testimony within a shifting world order. Nina's speeches, Escoda argues, do not just attest to her personal romantic tragedy, but also encourage the audience to engage with the ethical demand that the Other makes upon us – thus making the personal political. A different approach to issues of suffering, language, and relationships can be found in the work of Christopher O'Shaughnessy, whose one act verse drama, *The Strokes*, explores the relationship of a mother and son following the mother's strokes, which leave both struggling to articulate and re-establish their lives.

If the contributions in this edition speak to specific instances of transformation and change within diverse twenty-first century contexts, it is fitting that there are transformations underway within *Platform* itself. As a partnership between *Platform* and the University of Surrey, this issue disseminates some of the findings presented during the *trans.form@work* symposium at the University of Surrey in March 2010. The two-day symposium was the culmination of the collaborative research training scheme, *Sharing Dance Research: Theory and Practice*, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and co-organised by the University of Surrey, University of Chichester and Royal Holloway, University of London. A series of successful training seminars focusing on sharing, writing, disseminating and presenting research in dance and theatre were offered by Professor Rachel Fensham (Surrey), Professor Sarah Rubidge (Chichester), Professor Valerie Briginshaw (Chichester) and Dr Libby Worth (Royal Holloway) from 2007 to 2009. *Platform* is delighted to have been able to both draw on this forward-reaching work, and forge new collaborative links between Royal Holloway, Surrey and Chichester.

This collaboration has broadened the scope of the journal. Thus, we are delighted to welcome Lise Uytterhoeven as a guest

editor from Surrey whose work on the *trans.form@work* symposium has strengthened the interdisciplinary nature of this edition of *Platform*. In addition, Dan O’Gorman from the Royal Holloway Department of English has joined the editorial board for this issue. We hope to continue to foster links between the journal and other institutions and departments. Moreover, in our ongoing commitment to broadening our remit of contributions, this edition includes a photo essay, a piece of new dramatic writing, an interview with a dynamic fringe theatre company and two practice-as-research articles. Through these contributions we are furthering efforts to bridge the gap between theory and practice that can polarise our discipline. Lastly, with this, the eighth edition of *Platform*, we are pleased to offer print copies for the first time.

Platform is, as ever, grateful to the Royal Holloway Department of Drama and Theatre for their generous support, both financial and practical. We would also like to express our thanks to the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and to the University of Surrey and the University of Chichester for their involvement with this issue. We would like to acknowledge the generosity of Palgrave Macmillan, Intellect, and Sussex Academic Press in sending us books for review. We are grateful to our peer reviewers for their time and expertise. Lastly, we extend heartfelt thanks to all our contributors for sharing their research and practice.

Mara Lockowandt and Emer O’Toole (Head Editors)

Lise Uytterhoeven (Guest Editor)

On behalf of all the Platform Editorial Board

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