

## Editorial

In the early twenty-first century, we face manifold crises that are increasingly shaping modern life: climate change, economic recession, terrorism, and the ongoing European refugee crisis. Others, meanwhile, perceive a sense of crisis in our political systems or in the ways in which we relate to one another in today's society. All of these concerns have found voice in the theatre in recent years, spanning a multitude of theatrical forms from performance lectures on global warming to analyses of the banking crisis. Looking further back, theatre has long engaged with the crises of its time, animating the stage with humankind's troubles and anxieties. Some of the theatrical forms to engage with ideas of crisis in the past, such as tragedy, retain their potency today. As the recent resurgence of Greek tragedy in British theatre has demonstrated, these ancient plays are still able to speak to our present day politics and conflicts. And as we mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, his plays continue to be used by theatre-makers globally to resonate with current challenges.

Theatre's relationship with crisis is also a theme that is generating increased debate among theatre and performance scholars. In September 2016, the TaPRA Directing and Dramaturgy Working Group explored the ways in which tragedy reflects various twenty-first-century crises, while a conference at the University of Birmingham discussed how theatre and performance that deals with the relationships between environment and economy at a time of accelerating ecological crisis. We hope that this edition of *Platform* can extend current discussions about the intersection between various theatrical forms and the multiple social, economic and ecological crises we face in the early twenty-first century, as well as exploring how theatre has engaged with crisis in the past.

We open this edition with Julia Peetz's article "Obama's Tears: Politics, Performance and the Crisis of Belief". Peetz reflects on the performative nature of Barak Obama's speech to the United States Congress on 5 January 2016. Focusing on Obama's emotional response to the issue of gun control in the United States, crisis is framed in both a personal and political context. Drawing on the work of Jeffery Alexander, Peetz questions the veracity of Obama's tears as an authentication "emotional avowal in the issue of gun control", and illuminates the crisis of authenticity and "the real" in contemporary political and societal debate.

Next, Chien-Cheng Chen adds to the scholarly debate around the plays of Edward Bond by paying sustained attention to some of the playwright's later and less discussed work. Cheng's article examines *The Chair Plays*, a dystopian trilogy consisting of *Chair* (2000), *Have I None* (2000) and *The Under Room* (2005), and uses these as the basis for a discussion of Bond's "dramaturgy of crisis". Cheng also attempts to illuminate some of Bond's dense theoretical writings, drawing a link between Bond's thinking and Adorno's modernist aesthetics. In the context of the ongoing refugee crisis and the rise of right-wing nationalist rhetoric, national borders are currently the focus of intense political debate.

In "Crossing Contested Borders", Panayiota Demeetriou interrogates both how contested borders are performatively enacted and how performance itself might interact with these symbols of conflict, exile and migration. Her article focuses specifically on the border between the northern and southern regions of Cyprus, using the case study of Cypriot performance artist Christina Georgiou's piece *Quid pro quo* (2011) as a lens through which to view the contestation of borders and identities, as well as the role(s) of women in war.

Lastly, in an example of how politics can impact on the-

atre practice, Zindaba Chisiza and Amy Bonsall discuss the impact of the fluctuant nature of theatre funding in Malawi in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. “The Donor Dependency Syndrome” analyses the politics of Malawian theatre funding structures from the 1960s to the present day. The study starts with a consideration of the diminution of state funding for the theatre under of the leadership of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who aimed to regulate artists viewed as a subversive threat to his presidency. Continuing their study into the 2000s, Chisiza and Bonsall assess the auxesis of international donations made to Malawian theatre makers, foregrounding the imperative and critical importance of state funding from the government in order to promote contemporary Malawian theatre.

We would like to thank peer and academic reviewers for their time and thoughtful feedback. Their support has provided invaluable assistance to the research of all who have submitted to this issue. We would also like to thank Palgrave Macmillan, Routledge and Methuen Drama for book review copies. We would also like to thank the authors of the articles and book reviews of “Theatre and Crisis”. Finally, we would like to take a moment to announce that we will be stepping down as editors of *Platform* after the publication of this issue. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the department of Drama, Theatre and Dance at Royal Holloway, University of London for all their continued support of the journal during our time as editors. We hand over the editorship of *Platform* to the excellent duo of Raz Weiner and Julia Peetz, and wish them the very best of luck in continuing the publication.

James Rowson and Catherine Love, Editors