

From the Editors

Welcome to the fourth volume of *Text, Practice, Performance*, the graduate journal of the Américo Paredes Center for Cultural Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. We are proud to offer you a diverse collection of works centered on the theme of authenticity. This volume brings together perspectives from a broad range of academic disciplines including anthropology, rhetoric, film studies, women's studies, and literature. Our authors invoke authenticity in questioning traditions, awakening hoaxes, juxtaposing truth and realism, and rupturing the boundedness of culture.

The first two essays in this issue explore the vexed relationship between the quest for authenticity and the discipline of anthropology. Chappell reviews two pieces on the "anthropology of work," each written by a non-anthropologist author. Both accounts treat "work" in novel and insightful ways which break with the current protocols of anthropology. Stuesse's article explores the boundaries of the traditional role of the anthropologist and the anthropological discipline. In her ethnography of El Cenizo, a current site of struggle about what it means to be an "authentic" American, she takes an activist stance and, as both an "ethnographer" and employee of the city in question, Stuesse examines the affinity between national language and "authentic" American identity.

Articles by Westmoreland, Siebert, and Perkins also forefront the relationship between authenticity and national identity, sharing a focus on countries of the Arab-speaking world. Each author maps out the interplay of tradition and innovation in a realm of creative expression—film, dance, and dress, respectively. Themes of yearning and nostalgia run through these explorations and locate the quest for authenticity within the desire to protect and celebrate the past. Westmoreland describes Lebanese cinema in the wake of the country's war, a fifteen-year period of chaos that abruptly halted the Golden Age of cinema as it forced the vibrant community of artists and intellectuals into exile. Articles by Siebert and Perkins describe the pulsion toward authenticity as a reaction to Westernization; each questions the Egyptian public's readiness to accept a hybrid creative form as an expression of an authentic, unifying tradition.

Walsh and Webel share an interest in mid-19th century practices of hoaxing, assessing the role of authenticity in reception patterns

surrounding the work of two *auteurs*: Edgar Allen Poe and Phineas Taylor Barnum. Walsh's argument builds up a generic definition of Poe's hoaxes in which their contexts of circulation are central. Through hoax as context-dependent rhetorical formation, Poe assembled a privileged public who shared his dedication to the imagination's ability to craft worlds. Webel makes a similar move in approaching Barnum's American Museum as a "dream world," but downplays hoaxes in favor of their reassessment as elements of a new realism capable of imaging the global.

Moore's short fictional piece, "Three Stories," departs from the historic and ethnographic projects of this volume's other authors, but shares their concern with the transcendent quality of authenticity. Where the scholarly projects gathered here implicitly grapple with embodying a reliable description of a reality always outside the text, the brittle surfaces of Moore's stories strain against an absence—a third story that the author within the text cannot bear to tell. We find this a fitting close for an interdisciplinary journal themed on authenticity: a piece of fiction, posed as journalism, purposefully crafted to fail in embodying the transcendent real.

Carlita Greene
Elizabeth Hawthorne
Alisa Perkins
Scott Webel

Austin, Texas
December 2002