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Exploitation and Objectification in Documentary Theatre

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Oral Presentation O4.3

**EXPLOITATION AND OBJECTIFICATION IN
DOCUMENTARY THEATRE**

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Traditionally, works of theatre have been fictional in content and character. However, in the 20th century, a trend started that reflects a more journalistic, documentary movement in theatre. Playwrights and devising companies began crafting plays out of stories shared by real people, even going so far as to incorporate non-actors to share their lives with the audience. Though this created a greater verisimilitude, it also posed a new risk to legitimate works: that of exploiting or misrepresenting the people's stories presented in the production. Just as in documentaries on the screen, those in charge of crafting the production, whether it be a writer or a troupe devising the performance collaboratively, can sometimes exploit the subject matter and end up objectifying those they are trying to help. Misrepresentation of source material can be accidental, and it can be deliberate, but in either case, exploitation needs to be avoided in order to pay the subject(s) proper respect and to ensure a successful production. This paper looks at plays that have these realistic attributes and examines how they kept their testimonials in context and honorable to their donors.