

Any Color of the Rainbow—As Long as It's Gray: Dramatic Learning Spaces in Postapartheid South Africa

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Abstract: This article addresses the issue of the relationship between contemporary South African politics and the type of socially committed theater that might be capable of mounting a critique of those politics. The author highlights the contradictions between the aspirations of the Freedom Charter and the realities of subscribing to the neoliberal world order. His contention is that any theater form that is seeking cultural intervention must find a way of representing contradiction if it is to remain true to the experiences of its audiences and its participants. Such a representation can be achieved through a combination of Bertolt Brecht's praxis in relation to contradiction and current practices in Theatre for Development, which themselves draw upon aspects of the antiapartheid resistance theater.

The intention of this article is to initiate a search for an appropriate aesthetic for a theater of cultural action in South Africa today. My contention is that an exploration of an aspect of European popular theater can combine fruitfully with some of South Africa's antiapartheid theatrical strategies to produce a strain of community theater capable of representing the contradictions that contain and constrain the development of its majority population. While context is always crucial in defining the particular contours of the struggle between a neoliberal world order and people's desire for self-determination, democracy, and justice, that struggle represents the major contradiction confronting First, Second and Third Worlds: the "developed" and the majority alike. A theater, regardless of what label it pins to its lapel, that cannot find the means to address this contradiction is a theater incapable of engaging its audiences in meaningful dialogues about their place in the contemporary world.

African Studies Review, Volume 51, Number 3 (December 2008), pp. 91–106

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The argument crystallizes around two related notions: first, that the dominant contradiction of South African politics is that between the aims enshrined in the Freedom Charter and the conditions of its IMF loans; and second, that a developmental theater that seeks to make an intervention into this situation must adopt an aesthetic capable of presenting contradiction. Only by confronting its audiences with the world as it is can such a theater make an effective contribution to social cohesion. This article will examine the context of the political contradiction before going on to suggest some of the elements from which an appropriate theater aesthetic might emerge. It is one of the more bitter ironies of recent history that at the moment when South Africa was engaged in a compelling struggle to liberate itself from a regime that sought to determine discriminatory categories of being human for its citizens, the politicians at the forefront of the struggle had already entered into negotiations with global institutions that would impose a different set of externally determined ways of limiting what it is to be human.

When you speak of “learning spaces” in the context of South Africa, it is impossible to divorce the phrase from the spatial geographies of apartheid with its multiple and frequently changing designations of space: black space, coloured space, white space; urban space, rural space; Bantustans and townships. The material realities of the spaces people inhabit intersect with the memories of other kinds of space—colonial space, precolonial space, and the mythical spaces of desire. Notwithstanding the claims of Peter Brook (a theater director and author of *The Empty Space*) (Brook 1972), no space is empty. All space is culturally determined, in many cases overdetermined. Unlike theater processes located in designated buildings, in “safe” spaces to which one escapes for the enactment of dramas, the theater of the streets, of the communities, sets about to redefine space according to popular history or popular desire. This process of redefinition is by no means guaranteed to be progressive, since the appeal of local, ethnic, class, and nationalist factors frequently produce reactionary results. Nevertheless, it is today an act of resistance to assert the very right to popular, collective space in the teeth of the forces that seek to profit from the privatization of our environment, our bodies, and even our imaginations in order to transform us from citizens into consumers. In the words of Wolfgang Sachs:

The mental space in which people dream and act is largely occupied today by Western imagery. The vast furrows of cultural monoculture left behind are, as in all monocultures, both barren and dangerous. They have eliminated the innumerable varieties of being human and have turned the world into a place deprived of adventure and surprise; the “Other” has vanished with development. Moreover, the spreading monoculture has eroded viable alternatives to the industrial, growth-oriented society and dangerously crippled humankind’s capacity to meet an increasingly different future with creative responses. (1992:4)

It seems that our concern for biodiversity is incapable of embracing our own species, as evidenced by the speed with which languages are disappearing from the face of the earth. As we conspire in the processes that reduce the available resources through which we define what it is to be human, so we point ourselves in the direction of a future in which the range of our epigenetic codes will be severely limited and our evolutionary possibilities constrained: *homo erectus*, *homo sapiens*, *homo sapiens neanderthalensis*, *homo sapiens microsoftus*. At which point it will be time to send in the clones.

Creating theater is a social practice that requires the forming of relationships, between characters if not between actors. Identities are forged out of the impact of one character upon another. In community or grassroots theater, to which “ordinary” people bring their own stories as the raw material for theatrical devising, the dialogue between the reality of what is and the imagined of what could be may produce moments in which individuals and communities transform themselves from the objects into the subjects of their own development. In an act of collective creation histories are remade and identities refashioned as the participants in the process, in the words of the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire, “come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (1972:56)—rather than having those identities named by neoliberal politicians or corporate advertisers. The scale of the work may be small, and the issues confronted may owe more to microcontexts than macrodiscourses, but the possibility of cohesive public action has at least been asserted. Writing of young people’s township theater Gay Morris concludes:

Times have changed and the paradigms have shifted. The enormous challenges of social, geographic, economic, ethnic and cultural diversity jostle for equitable acknowledgement in the formation of our young nation. Township theatre... deals centrally with identity formation, speaking to selfhood both as a social construction and as a nation. But it does so in ways that are specific to, and derived from, everyday life in the township. (2007:176–77).

European anxieties about the erosion of the public sphere do not transfer automatically to Africa, where space can still be defined in part by traditional norms of communal life. Nevertheless, the change from citizen to consumer is keenly felt, especially by young urban South Africans whose capacity to contribute to a shared existence can be seriously reduced through the exclusionary mechanisms of iPod and mobile phone, turning the public private. This diminution in the function of the citizen is not an inevitable process of historical evolution, still less an irresistible force of nature. Acts of privatization are committed as the consequence of decisions taken by people, usually far away from the point where the results of those decisions are felt. In a globalized, capitalist economy the only protection that ordinary citizens have against the rigged market of neoliberalism is

provided by the controls and regulations put on that market by national governments. Where those governments, out of either helplessness or self-interest or a combination of both, fail to provide that protection, whole populations are deprived of their human right to education, health, or a safe environment. Access to such universal rights is degraded into the economic sphere, where even clean water is commodified for monetary exchange. As Patrick Bond (2001) has demonstrated in the case of South Africa, the fiscal institutions that run the global economy on behalf of Western interests have no moral sense, no responsibility to their fellow humans. They exist to turn the maximum profit at whatever cost to the victims.

In previous years, the IMF had ignored international condemnations of apartheid and the financial sanctions campaign. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, in the wake of the Soweto uprising, the IMF lent \$2 billion to Pretoria just as international anti-apartheid activists began persuading commercial banks to boycott Pretoria. In 1983 the U.S. Congress forbade further IMF loans to the apartheid regime after anti-apartheid pressure increased.

Despite this history, leading economists of the African National Congress believed that the legitimacy associated with the IMF was required for a democratic South Africa to access international financial markets. In December 1993 the first act of the Transitional Executive Committee (a government-in-waiting combining the ANC and the ruling National Party) was to borrow \$850 million from the IMF, ostensibly for drought relief, although the drought had ended eighteen months earlier. The loan's secret conditions were leaked to *Business Day* in March 1994, presumably to establish confidence in financial markets that the election in April 1994 and the subsequent transfer of power would be characterized by continuity in economic policy. These conditions included not only items from the classic structural-adjustment menu (lower import tariffs, cuts in state spending, large cuts in public-sector wages, etc.), but also informal but intense pressure by the IMF managing director, Michel Camdessus, to reappoint both Finance Minister Derek Keys and the governor of the Reserve Bank, Chris Stals, the two main stalwarts of National Party neoliberalism (Bond 2001).

Rather than operating as a loan agency, the IMF is a club; if you join you play by the rules, and the ANC had signed up to this free-masonry that had propped up the apartheid regime even while it was still struggling to overthrow it. To be a proper, grown-up member of the world community of governments, the ANC felt obliged to subscribe to a set of principles that would put much of what was being fought for, as articulated in the Freedom Charter, out of reach, even in the moment of victory. From a disengaged perspective it is easy to condemn the decision; with the outside world eagerly awaiting chaos, bloodshed, and failure, it is understandable that the ANC power brokers decided that the sacrifice was necessary in order to achieve, at least temporarily, the external trading conditions that would provide it with sufficient funds to operate as a national government. This

is the catch; the more governments subscribe to the system, the less likely it is that any single one can afford to stay outside the only game in town. This situation has accelerated since the collapse of the Soviet Union and given rise to the global, imperial aspirations of the United States. Perhaps in the heat of the struggle against the apartheid government the ANC was seduced into the path of nationalism at the expense of creating a socialist movement with economic principles that could have enabled it to lead the nonaligned nations of the world.

It is frequently evident from the rhetoric of Thabo Mbeki that such a position has not lost its attractions, but it is increasingly difficult not to see such utterances as a cynical attempt to appease the frustrated hopes of the majority:

Fundamental to the labour, social democratic, socialist and national liberation movements from their very inception, is the adherence to the view that the people must be their own liberators. These movements have therefore always fought for democracy and, more than this, for the empowering of the people to represent their own interests through their political parties and through mass struggle.... Democracy is about the exercise of political power by the people themselves. As the organised representative of these masses, the progressive movement cannot, on the basis that the market will decide these issues,... abandon the struggle for the all-round and sustained betterment of the lives of the people and the attainment of social justice. Accordingly, we have to continue to treat the struggle against poverty, national and social exclusion and marginalisation as fundamental to the objectives of socialist movement. (Quoted in Bond 2001:116)

Asking his government to strive for these things while remaining inside the systems of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO would have been like urging his people to strive for Olympic medals while pouring concrete onto their starting blocks. Like many social democratic governments around the world, the ANC has adopted the fig leaf of the “third way” in the hope of disguising the blatant contradiction between its actual and its perceived position. This “third way” is, in reality, not an alternative but merely the currently fashionable, revisionist strategy designed to make the world a safer place for the global, neoliberal project by appeasing the potentially “antisocial” elements that might disrupt it. Naomi Klein has recently demonstrated how the way in which the ANC traded one form of oppression (apartheid) for another (neoliberalism) forms part of the global strategy of “shock” by which the planet is sacrificed to the Washington Consensus and its transnational corporations (2007:194–217).

Gillian Hart, reflecting upon her own fieldwork research in KwaZulu-Natal, has no doubt that contradiction characterizes—or perhaps, rather, paralyzes—the politics of the rainbow nation: “Without question,... a yawning chasm has opened up between the promise of liberation from the malignant apartheid state and the harsh reality of the neoliberal post-apart-

heid order—a chasm that heightens the stakes in grasping the slippages, openings and contradictions in neoliberal capitalism, and in defining alternatives” (2002:312). Like most people and organizations confronted by disabling contradiction, the government, in the typical spirit of line management, has sought to deflect the location of the split from itself onto another—in this instance, local government. If mud is going to stick, let us make sure we keep our own business suits clean. But a devolved contradiction does not become less contradictory when it is spread from the center to the periphery. In her thorough and revealing study of the local effects of globalization on the contrasting KwaZulu-Natal communities of Ladysmith-Ezakheni and Newcastle-Madadeni—a study that demonstrates the historical and political significance of space—Hart lays bare the ways in which the neoliberal paradigm has an impact at the micro-level. She quotes, for example, the Mayor of Ladysmith-Emnambithi:

This community is aware that I am the representative sent overseas to invite industrialists to locate here. The issue of bringing industrialists is a real headache. Industrialists are looking for a particular type of workforce. If we go overseas we go kneeling to beg. It is difficult to beg a person and put conditions. Yes, we have government by the people for the people. But the industrialists are not on our side. What happened was that the only industrialists prepared to come are Chinese. The Europeans are not interested.

Once abroad, we asked why are you paying such low wages? What they told us was that the products are cheap. When sold, they don't bring much profits. These industries are just feelers. If conditions are good, they say they will bring bigger industrialists. In this situation we are in difficulties. If we demand more, they will go—we will send them away. (Quoted in Hart 2002:270)

On the one hand, the need to generate exports for foreign currency demands that local officials open their communities to the depredations of global business; on the other, these same officials are in the front line of the demands for decent housing, clean water, access to free education, and all the rest of the elements that constitute the basic human rights to which the South African government has subscribed. Thus the contradiction reaches out from the power brokers of Pretoria to permeate the lives of every citizen on the farm or in the township: female and male, young and old.

The telling of their stories and the forging of the connections between the factors that shape those stories and those that drive macroeconomics are the challenges faced by dramatic learning spaces today. The neoliberal model, as in Noam Chomsky's book title, places “profit over people” (1999). The model of a theater dedicated to cultural action for change must not only explore the means by which neoliberal economics can be resisted; it must also open up alternatives and possibilities that can emanate from this act of resistance.

Theater is the most social of the art forms, taking, as it does, the human

being in relation to other human beings as its object of analysis and its process for investigation. The reaffirmation of what it is to be human is not confined to the performance space, for the collective act of forming an audience is a crucial element in the way that social communication occurs and meaning is transferred from the imaginative world of the players to the actual world of the spectators. The dramatic learning space is the total space of the experience, especially in those forms that have abolished what Bertolt Brecht, and Augusto Boal after him, called the bourgeois distinction between performer and spectator. Zakes Mda has written of the problem faced by South African theater artists of the postapartheid era: to find the imaginative resources needed to revitalize a theater that had become dependent on apartheid not only for its content but also for its poetics. The realities of apartheid called forth the experiences that were recounted by this theater and the agitational-propaganda stances shared by performers and audiences alike: "In the post-apartheid era South Africa is no longer just black and white. There are shades of grey. We are now faced with complexities and ambiguities that we need to interpret. We have become normal and ordinary. To create an exciting drama from the daily narrative of our lives we need to draw from the depths of imagination" (2002:282–83).

While agreeing that the totalizing experience of apartheid and the solidarity of the response to it have now given way to a more fragmented picture of competing demands and conflicting stories, I do not believe that theater artists today, be they professionals or ordinary people engaged in Theatre for Development (TfD), have to search far into the recesses of their imaginations to come up with the big story: that story concerns the contradiction between the rights and desires of the people and the requirements of an economic system to make ever greater profits for ever fewer people. The capacity of today's enemy to destroy lives exceeds, perhaps, that of the apartheid state, yet the confrontation with it is indeed complex and insidious, lacking that certain demarcation of good and evil, oppressor and oppressed that characterized the former regime and the theatrical responses to it. It is for this reason that the strategies of the antiapartheid theater may no longer be wholly appropriate. That theater was part of a struggle to mobilize the peoples of South Africa to take revolutionary action against a clearly demarcated, racialized oppressor. Some of its strategies are just as applicable today to the struggle for shelter, health, and education, while the agit-prop elements may now need to be superseded by a more participatory, interactive approach to theater-making. I do not mean that those aesthetics proven to be effective in the antiapartheid struggle should now be abandoned, but rather that they need to be supplemented by others that are derived from TfD and refocused to address the contradictions of postapartheid society.

This adjustment is itself fraught with its own contradictions and complexities. For just as Mda suggests that many of the racial attitudes of that era impregnated the psyche of the whole nation, so now the devices and

desires of globalization often represent the core aspirations of the same people who are its victims. Shared stereotypes of resistance cannot be assumed, and in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's famous phrase, "decolonising the mind" (1981) becomes a key prerequisite for a cultural intervention aimed at opposing structural adjustment with local, grassroots activism.

Bertolt Brecht understood the historical period in which he lived as the "scientific age" and called for a theater that was capable of representing the realities that age threw up in the lives of ordinary people: "The first thing therefore is to comprehend the new subject-matter; the second to shape the new relations. The reason: art follows reality. An example: the extraction and refinement of petroleum spirit represents a new complex of subjects, and when one studies these carefully one becomes struck by quite new forms of human relationship" (1964:29). In a similar way the audiences for and participants in theater at the start of the twenty-first century require an art that configures the reality of the neoliberal model of globalization.

The process that Ngũgĩ describes as "decolonization" requires that the theater adopt devices akin to Brecht's notion of *Verfremdung*. The *Verfremdungseffekt*, most accurately translated as the "effect of making the familiar strange," was the theatrical process that Brecht developed in order to instill in his audiences an attitude of critical curiosity about the workings of the world. For example, he was fond of turning clichés on their heads in order to reinvestigate familiar social processes. At the moment in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1944) when the servant girl Grusha is about to adopt the abandoned royal baby, the narrator tells the audience: "Terrible is the temptation to do good," thereby warning them of all the tribulations that lie in wait as a result of her reckless goodness. *Verfremdung* is a counterhegemonic device that encourages the audience to position itself mentally where it becomes exposed to the sociopolitical contradictions that hegemony disguises.

The colonizer of our minds, exploiting the technologies of satellite communication and the economic reach of transnational corporations, is able to penetrate the furthest corners of the imagination to plant the desire for a way of life directed toward consumption and predicated upon the transformation of the citizen into the customer. Such desires are today the norm, from shopping mall to soap opera, DVD to cinema. Once they have been normalized in our minds we have, in effect, bought into an economic system that makes us its willing victims. In order for our consciousness of this contradiction to be raised, our cultural space must be defamiliarized. Only a new perspective will enable us to analyze the historical causes of neoliberal globalization as actors and audiences, to see the human subject as at once the victim of that history and capable of acting upon it to produce transformation. The familiar space is transformed into the learning space, and our typical actions now amaze us. The constant mantra of the neoliberal model is that there is no alternative. The function of socially committed theater is the imaginative exploration of alternatives, grounded

in reality and predicated on the demand for social justice.

The Natal Workers' Theatre Movement of the 1980s offers a precedent that itself harks back to the *Lehrstücke* (teaching/learning play) of Brecht. These were short plays created for performance by amateurs in non-theater spaces, designed to address issues specific to the lives of the performers. There were no audiences in the conventional sense of the term, since everyone participated in the event. In Natal (as it then was) works such as *The Dunlop Play* and *The Long March*, performed not in theaters but in places where those who needed to see them habitually gathered, operated as cultural interventions designed to bring about both workers' solidarity and a change in conditions (see von Kotze 1988). Today an equivalent practice would need to link local conditions to the wider macropolitics of neoliberalism in relation to the ANC government.

The *Verfremdungseffekt* clears the dramatic learning space of the familiar psychological clutter of our daily experience so that the exploration of alternatives can commence. The metaphor through which Brecht depicts the consequences of such a process in his play *The Life of Galileo* (1939) is that of the astronomer's discovery that the earth revolves around the sun rather than the familiar opposite of daily experience, as rendered through the hegemony of the Catholic Church. Similarly an attitude of critical astonishment can be encouraged by using a theater process that highlights the contradictions between the advertisers' images of the good life and the ever-widening gap between rich and poor, gated community and township, with the accompanying escalation in violence and youth alienation; the contradiction, in other words, between the terms of the Freedom Charter and the policy delivered by the government elected to enact those terms.

I am proposing that the theater needed for dramatic learning spaces today will combine the counterhegemonic strategies of Brecht and the practical, participatory social analyses offered by Tfd. Tfd has been practiced with increasing frequency in the latter half of the twentieth century with the purpose of connecting popular theater to the development goals of grassroots communities and NGOs. While its earlier applications were characterized by a tendency to deliver messages about such topics as health, education, and agriculture, more recently it has been applied to more community-centered endeavors, such as advocacy for human rights. In this phase more attention has been paid to helping the participants transform themselves from objects into the subjects of their own development. Here "development" needs to be understood as the way in which communities and individuals address the barriers to their self-development by applying creativity and imagination to the search for alternatives.

In part, at least, such a proposal takes us back to the "major pedagogy" of Brecht. He used this term, and also "theater of the future," to describe the plays he wrote before he was forced into exile by the Nazi election victory of 1933. The term was coined to express the educative potential of the-

ater when operating in a context in which both participants and audiences have a direct stake in the matters presented. Their dilemmas, experiences, and contradictions are the stuff of the drama. For example, *The Measures Taken* (1930) explores contradictory impulses within a human being in the context of what is owed to the Communist Party and what is owed to the individual, expressed in the dialectical tension between reason and feeling. The situation of the play is that four agitators have been sent by the Party in Moscow to support the work of the fledgling Chinese Party. They recruit a “Young Comrade” in China to assist in their work. Spurred on by his sense of injustice, the Young Comrade persistently jeopardizes their work by acting impulsively rather than strategically. Finally his actions threaten to expose the identities of the undercover agitators, thereby risking a Chinese invasion of the USSR. These incidents are told in the form of a report back to the Party in Moscow, with each of the agitators in turn impersonating the actions and words of the Young Comrade. When the play was presented in Berlin in 1930 there was a widespread expectation that a coalition of communists and socialists would win the forthcoming election. Failure to account for this context has led Western critics to regard the play as propaganda for revolution, when in actuality it is posing a key contradiction that would have been faced by a Communist Germany.

While the specific contradictions have changed with the historical context, and postmodern distrust of anything resembling a solution within the discourse of a master narrative colors our attitude to Brecht’s analysis, the aesthetic within which the play is conceived offers much for contemporary TfD:

The First Agitator to the young comrade: If you are caught you will be shot; and since you’ll be recognized, our work will have been betrayed. Therefore we must be the ones to shoot you and cast you into the lime-pit, so that lime will burn away all traces of you. And yet we ask you: Do you know anyway out?

The Young Comrade: No.

The Three Agitators: And we ask you: Do you agree with us?

Pause.

The Young Comrade: Yes.

The Three Agitators: We also ask you: What shall we do with your body?

The Young Comrade: You must cast me into the lime-pit, he said.

The Three Agitators: We asked: Do you want to do it alone?

The Young Comrade: Help me.

The Three Agitators: Rest your head on our arm. Close your eyes.

So with immense tenderness and devotion, the Young Comrade is shot and disposed of. The dramaturgy of the moment is notable for the way in which contradiction operates on several levels. It is one of those moments, typical in Brecht, when an action guaranteed to evoke maximum empathy is presented in a manner that compels the spectator and the performer to

critically evaluate their emotions in the instant of experiencing them. The peculiarly theatrical quality of empathy resulting from the attempt of the actor to inhabit the emotional life of another is highlighted by the device of the reported incident, which compels performers and audiences to remain constantly aware that the theater process is a reworking of reality, and that words are spoken and actions committed on behalf of another. This process is not concerned simply with recounting what happened so that the truth may be told; it also is about repositioning that truth in an altered context so that ways of addressing the contradiction may be tried out in the devising mechanisms. In this way the truths of lived experience are brought together with the possibilities offered by the imagination: not to seek a fantastic escape into the happy ending, but rather to bring the human resources of creativity and play to the service of a society that must find syntheses for its contradictions in order to survive. The challenge made by the Young Comrade to the Party is not simply eliminated with his death. Instead the Party must continue to seek ways of harnessing the individual's desire for justice and equity to the demands of the greater good of society in ways that do not lead to the destruction of that desire, which is the motor of change.

This same blend of reality and imagination provided the creative springboard for the antiapartheid theater's most famous creation, *Woza Albert!* In their introduction to the text Mtwa, Ngema, and Simon draw our attention to the contradiction that forms the basic building block of the play's multiple ironies: "Most of the South African government's policies are the result, they say, of their Christian Nationalist principles. *Woza Albert!* is our fantasy of a Second Coming to South Africa by Morena, the Saviour" (Mtwa 1983). The play proceeds to mount a practical analysis of the contradiction between the principles of Christianity and the practices of apartheid. This strategy enables the actors not only to support the antiapartheid movement, but also to expose the weak points in a system that will be defeated as much by its internal contradictions as by the external resistance of its victims. The enemy is not only cruel and dangerous, he is also ridiculous and self-defeating; hence the nose of the clown as his emblem. We might ask what the equivalent is today of the colonial clown of the white man? Is it the neocolonial figure sitting in the government office: black on the outside, white on the inside? This idea of contradiction is not confined to the present of the play's performance but also informs the way in which this present is historicized in terms of the practice of power, as demonstrated in one of Mbongeni's monologues:

When Piet Retief came to Dingane, Dingane was sitting in his camp with all his men. And he thought, "Hey, these white men with their guns are wizards. They are dangerous!" But he welcomed them with a big smile. He said, he said, "Hello. Just leave your guns outside and come inside and eat meat and drink beer." Eeeiii! That is what will happen to Morena today! The Prime Minister will say, just leave your angels outside and the power of

your father outside and come inside and enjoy the fruits of apartheid. And then, what will happen to Morena is what happened to Piet Retief when he got inside. (Mtwā 1983)

In describing the defeat of the Savior at the hands of the regime, Mbongeni draws a historical parallel showing that the regime, in the person of its historic emblem Retief, can be defeated, that it owes its position to the contingencies resulting from the acts of men, not the laws of nature or God. Later in the play the point about taking action as a human being arises more urgently as the figure of Morena becomes increasingly compromised as a political savior, a result of the compliance that he inadvertently encourages. It is not difficult to envisage a representation of Thabo Mbeki and the ANC government entering the tents of the IMF, which adopts a similar disjunction. One of the enduring strengths of the play is this delicate balance of ironies as Morena at once acts as a catalyst for antiapartheid resistance and encourages the fatalism that maintains the regime:

How can you let these things happen? How can you just sit there like that, Morena? Okay, okay, I know you don't like miracles, but these are bladdy hard times, Morena. Morena, I must tell you, now that I've gone into your book, I really like you, Morena. But I'm getting bladdy disappointed. How long must we wait for you to do something? Morena, I must tell you, I'm among those who have stopped waiting. One day we'll have to help you. (Mtwā 1983)

This play of irony encompasses the ending of the action and reaches back to its beginning through the choice of the title. *Woza Albert!* simultaneously leaves the protagonists in a passive limbo, waiting to be redeemed by ghosts, and calls up the spirit of heroic resistance necessary to bring change. It is the same paradox highlighted by that arch-exploiter of the *Verfremdungseffekt*, Galileo, in Brecht's *The Life of Galileo* "Unhappy the land that is in need of heroes." The hero is not so much debunked as made strange so that we can perceive the double-edged quality of heroism, at once inspiring and escapist.

A similar set of aesthetic strategies could be applied to the notion of globalization: at once empowering and destructive. In this way the neoliberal takeover of the creative possibilities of globalization can be laid bare. Having explored an aesthetic capable of opening up contradictions in the prevailing hegemony, the next step is to marry these poetics to the politics of Tfd. Rightly conceived, Tfd can take its place as the successor, via Boal's Forum Theatre (Boal 1979)—where members of the audience replace the protagonist in order to redirect the action—of the *Lehrstück*. Just as Brecht saw the need for a socially engaged theater to work outside the safely licensed space of theater and beyond the limitations of the professional but ideologically neutered actor, abolishing the distinction between actor

and audience, so Tfd is a social analysis conducted through practice by the members of a community who have a vested interest in using culture for transformation. Both space and process are made accessible to every person as a cultural right, not as a privilege bestowed by a beneficent NGO responding to its notion of a perceived need. The historical moment is ripe for Tfd to undertake this role since it has escaped both the shadows cast by the so-called legitimate theater and the dictates of orthodox development models. It is no longer tagged by the label “community drama” as the poor relation of the real thing: well meaning, rough, and devoid of production values. Neither is it merely the icing on the cake of serious development—the show put on at the beginning or end of the project to give local dignitaries and funders something to see for their support and money—nor the vehicle through which the message from the center can better reach the ignorant and simple periphery.

Writing from the perspective of a facilitator of Tfd processes promoting children’s rights in both South Asia and several African countries, Michael Etherton (2004) makes the point unequivocally: “Far from Child Rights Tfd being an excrescence of either ‘Theatre’ or ‘Development’—as theatre and development establishments dismissively see it—Tfd should be seen as a radical new dramatic art, part of a whole new architecture of performance.” At the core of the content of this “new dramatic art” are the stories of individuals and communities, articulated in the learning space opened up by a Tfd process that insists upon the cultural right for that story not only to be told but also to be heard by an audience with a social responsibility (from the root *responsibile*, meaning just that: able to respond) to engage with its implications. The poetics of the devising process to which these stories are subjected are directed toward communicating the main, and any subsidiary, contradictions to an audience whose attempts to address them will constitute the motor of social change for that community. Herein resides the much vexed and often discussed function of the facilitator in Tfd: to assist in the structuring of the devising so that contradictions are drawn out of the stories in ways that can be made clear to both performers and audience alike. Where the performers might be tempted to elide contradictions or to resort to magical avenues of escape from prevailing realities, the facilitator (in Adrian Jackson’s translation of Boal’s term, “difficultator”) confronts the performers with the obligation to present the contradiction truthfully: not to solve it but to render it capable of analysis by an attitude of “defamiliarization.” It is not an accident that Boal has called the facilitator a Joker, thereby locating the figure within a popular tradition that in Europe reaches back to Socrates and the practice of dialectics and in non-European societies to the trickster in his various guises.

This tradition is fully exploited by Brecht as a key element in the practice of *Verfremdung*, in which his main protagonists take on the function of the Joker. Contradiction does not confine itself to the major structural principle of Brecht’s theater, moving him toward a dramaturgy that is fully

dialectical, but also operates on the level of attitude and tone: “The theatre of the scientific age,” he wrote in an appendix to *The Short Organon*, “is in a position to make dialectics into a source of enjoyment. The unexpectedness of logically progressive or zigzag development, the instability of every circumstance, the joke of contradiction and so forth: all these are ways of enjoying the liveliness of men, things and processes, and they heighten both our capacity for life and our pleasure in it” (1964:277). The joker wielding the weapon of contradiction opens up the cracks between appearance and reality, between the word and the deed. Theater is the ideal art form for representing contradiction since it moves between reality and fiction, placing different worlds in contexts that expose the fissures regularly masked by the hegemonic veils of “common sense.” This is the process employed so skillfully in *Woza Albert!* which exploits the “what if” capacity of theater to highlight the hypocrisy of the regime by placing its inhumanities within the discourses of its avowed Christianity.

Within the context of children’s rights Etherton identifies a similar trajectory of contradiction between the forces that organize the world’s economies and the young people of the majority world who are among their victims: “There is a hankering in many NGOs after an ever more convincing explanation of the ways in which macro forces—economic and political—impinge on the micro level of lives lived in obscurity and unfulfilled potential. To translate this hunger for a more convincing explanation why there is injustice and suffering to the level of children and young people is both startling and persuasive” (2004). This is the challenge to which Tfd must rise today: to become the form of cultural intervention that brings the local realities of poverty, privatized health care, and school fees—abuses of human rights—into a contradictory relationship with the global constructs of neoliberalism, structural adjustment, foreign investment, and rising share dividends. The macro and the micro are not parallel worlds but one world in which the two states operate in a dialectical relationship whose contours can be delineated only by an art form built upon the notion of contradiction set within the context of human rights. Waiting for the nation-state or the multinational corporation to provide will merely deepen the crisis. The task of Tfd is to supply a vehicle through which the dispossessed and marginalized can not only assert their rights as human beings but also raise their consciousness about the political causes of their dispossession.

While the art form can be used to sharpen the contradiction and to rehearse some of the means of addressing it, transformation can occur only beyond the learning space of the drama. However, for both performers and audiences the individual story is transformed into the collective responsibility of the community. In this way a focus is created for social action built upon the assertion of rights. Tfd is not a series of random production events but a process of grassroots, concrete analysis that inaugurates a cultural movement: not black consciousness, this time, but people’s conscious-

ness. This time the resistance to the “other” of apartheid does not end with the revolutionary moment of the transfer of power. The human beings who fought racism are now the human “becomings” caught up in the continuous process of taking control of their own lives, of transforming themselves from the objects into the subjects of development. The facilitators of grassroots Tfd processes have a key role here in supporting communities in making connections between the particular, micro-issues of daily living thrown up by the personal stories of participants and the policy choices of their national and local governments. Access to health care, education, and secure housing relates directly to the terms under which structural adjustment is implemented. The facilitator does not provide solutions to injustice and inequality, but she can present the contradictions between rhetoric and reality and use the theater process to support the rehearsal of alternatives to an unjust status quo.

Gillian Hart’s research into the impact of globalization on the socioeconomic life of KwaZulu-Natal concludes with a tentative analysis of the possibilities of resistance that would allow plenty of space for cultural intervention through Tfd to support an ongoing transformation of a structurally readjusted community:

The concept of multiple trajectories of socio-spatial change offers a way of grappling with the question of limits and possibilities: of recognizing that room to maneuver is always present, but never unconstrained. It is also, very importantly, a way of thinking about the politics of alliance: of the possibilities for defining broad constellations of shared or compatible interests, and mobilizing social forces across a wide spectrum while also recognizing irreducible differences. (2002:291)

By pretending that it is possible to subscribe to both the neoliberal global economic system and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the South African government, like most other nations of the world, condemns its people to the ever-widening chasm of contradiction that such a posture implies. Article 25 of the Declaration states that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.” The IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO were not established to guarantee the rights of the South African people but to secure the profits of North American and European capitalists. Halliburton has inherited Iraq in fire and blood. Will the ANC continue to wring its hands in impotent silence as accomplices of the neo-colonial project to extract the nation’s wealth at the expense of its people? Woza Bertolt!

Acknowledgment:

This article owes its origins to a paper given at the Dramatic Learning Spaces Conference, Pietermaritzburg, April 23–25, 2004.

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