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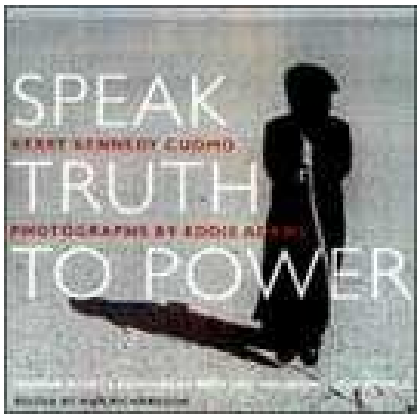
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Towards a poetics for Theatre as activism within the context of human and people's rights in Southern Africa:

An exploration of Speak Truth to Power and the March against Xenophobia of 2008.





A Research Report and Creative Project submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg by Grace Meadows, in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Master of Arts Degree in Dramatic Arts.

Johannesburg, 2009

Abstract

This research report attempts to investigate and articulate issues pertaining to Theatre as Activism within the parameters of applied drama and theatre as experienced in Southern Africa. This analysis is situated against the predominant use of Theatre for Development and opens out the possibilities for a more inclusive approach to awareness building and activism through theatre. The particular focus of this study lies within the perspective of Human and Peoples Rights , an area of important concern globally but with particular resonances within a post-apartheid, decolonising South Africa.

Using the March against Xenophobia that took place in 2008 in Johannesburg as well as the play *Speak Truth to Power* as illustrations, *Towards a poetics* uses these two case studies through which to explore different aspects and implications for Theatre as Activism. These choices are opposite as they provide very different but equally pertinent examples of the ways in which performance can provide an 'activating' experience. Through these examples the paper raises important questions in relation to ethical considerations accruing around the performativity of activism. The case studies are then set against the very public awareness of Human Rights created through the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. The role of the modern media and technology in relation to activism is also questioned as is the debate over the place of aesthetics within activism.

This reports advocacy for Theatre as Activism is set within debates of social constructionism most particularly those of Foucault relating to the construction of power and those of William de Certeau and Ngugi wa Thiongo on "scriptocentrism", "orature", and "intextuation." In accordance with this belief that action, as opposed to intellectual theorizing, is the way to truth and constructive social change this research report is compliment to a broader creative project which comes in the form of a short film. Done primarily to use "performance both as a way of knowing and as a way of showing" (Kemp, 1998; 16)

Whilst used to allude to the famous poetics of Aristotle, Brecht and Boal, the theoretical perspectives of these theatre analysts are also inscribed to examine issues of audience involvement and response and debates around catharsis and activism. This paper concludes with a strong plea for the development of Theatre as Activism through the identification of its essential elements.

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Declaration

I declare that this research report and creative project is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts (Dramatic Arts) to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other university.

Grace Meadows

_____ day of _____ 2008

Acknowledgments

Using the self-reflexive experience of my year as a Drama for Life scholar, this report reflects on class experiences, and explores the personal journey of Southern African theatre practitioners who have grappled with questions surrounding the role, function, power dynamics, and what it means to give a voice to, and activate through performance. To everyone involved in the Drama for Life programme I thank you.

To my family and loved ones, whose immeasurable support, emotional training and unconditional love have been undeniably linked to this process. Your passion and faith has inspired mine.

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1. Introduction

Poetry typically relies on words and expressions that have several layers of meaning and may make a strong appeal to the senses through the use of imagery. The term poetics, which in its broader sense is generally used to describe the study of poetry, is used in this work to surpass poetry's perceived literary confines, and to deliberately include the performative act. I use the term poetics to offer a way of reading and 'feeling' theatre as activism, to assist me in exploring a suggested theoretical framing and to find out how it all fits within the greater Human Rights agenda.

> In the beginning the theatre was the dithyrambic song: free people singing in the open air. The carnival. The feast. Later, the ruling classes took possession of the theatre and built their dividing walls. First, they divided the people, separating actors from spectators: people who act and people who watch – the party is over! Secondly, among the actors, they separated the protagonists from the mass. The coercive indoctrination began! Now the oppressed people are liberated themselves and once more, are making theatre their own. (Boal1985).

Towards a poetics intends to comment on two very different strands in performance theory; through its obvious allusions to the great poetics of Aristotle, Brecht and Boal, and its tendency towards expressionism[1] and emphasis on the perceiving subject. Expressionism is the tendency of an artist to distort reality for an emotional effect; it is a subjective art form that can be exhibited in many forms, film, literature, theatre - three forms which this paper will comment on, as well as industry and institutions which, particularly in recent times, have been regarded as highly contentious 'art forms' in their own right. The media, set up to 'mirror' and report on daily happenings broadcasts the evening news which often unfolds like an elaborate melodrama. The president of South Africa, or should I say 'ex' is axed. Whilst Zambia's President Mwanawasa or rather 'post' is declared dead even before he's died. Botswana welcomes in a new president, Malawi's crosses the floor and not even Zimbabwe's election poll results can get rid of theirs. The media, politics, political power and corporations

[1] In an attempt to distance my use of the term expressionism from the frequently understood usage in early 20th Century German film/drama/ art, I use the term with more activist overtones which is less nihilistic and with less fatalistic pessimism.

are so far embedded in activism and the social conditions that the term expressionism- which often implies emotional angst- is therefore alluded to in this paper to imply a greater social unrest. The most pervasive pattern to emerge from this research is the persistence of activist performance in periods of social flux - either leading up to, during or just after a shift in the status quo. "When one needs most to disturb the peace, street performance creates visions of what society might be, and arguments against what it is" (Jan Cohen Cruz 1998:4)

The above notwithstanding, theatre as activism is a deceptive term from which little can be generalised. Activism despite its general identification with left wing projects can equally refer to right wing agendas. Though usually considered in terms of mass movements, theatre as activism may operate on an individual level. Partly because it is so varied, theatre as activism cannot easily be pigeon-holed.

Theatre in this context will be used as a general term to include performance i.e. the dramatisation of public action, the facilitation process using applied drama methodologies, the aesthetic and performativity of style and 'scripting', and the resultant effect of these applied drama practices. Taking a cue from Erving Goffman, scholars and practitioners have long since sensed that performance in the broader sense of the word is co-existent with the human condition. So while Goffman did not propose that "all the world is a stage' a notion which implies a falseness or elaborate conscious display, what Goffman meant was that people are always involved in role playing, in constructing and staging their multiple identities. (Goffman in Bial 2004)

The central question concerning performance studies theory is "what is performance?" Thus, performance studies is always in search of new theories that might open up new ways of seeing and interpreting performance. Theory is understood as the conceptual tool used to "see" performance' (Auslander 2008:8). This broad theoretical perspective is at the heart of this qualitative research. So, whilst this paper will identify and explore core themes that performance needs to inhabit in order for it be 'activist' by nature, it doesn't purport to develop a critical theory or prescriptive speculation, in any way intended as a model for the region. Rather this research report aims towards a poetics, allowing room for a myriad of ideas influenced by humanist and social disciplines as well as the influence of cultural studies and postcolonial theory, arguably an important critical lens to frame this paper – particularly in relation to Africa.

Like Schechner, who was instrumental in bringing into existence the concept of performance studies and out-rightly admits to continually being educated about performance, (Schechner in Bial 2004) the journey and account of this research mirrors one intense phase of my education – a journey that embraces the performing arts and also puts them in active relation to social life, political agendas, ritual, play and emancipation, core principles of Theatre as activism.

This paper will draw on the self-reflexive experience of my year as a Drama for Life scholar, a postgraduate initiative involving theatre practitioners representative of nine countries in the SADC region (www.dramaforlife.co.za). This report recognises context and environment and\ or 'space' as being crucially linked to theatre as activism and will reflect on the seminal experiences from 2008 as its' primary reference point. My experience - a South African woman concerned with social trauma, a stakeholder in Human Rights and a believer that 'theatre [can be] the rehearsal for the revolution' (Boal 1985)

Political theatre of protest and resistance in African drama made its formal mark in the West through increased awareness of the struggle against apartheid and the exposure of black South African plays, such as *Woza Albert* to international audiences. Now, 14 years after apartheid has ended, it is pertinent to be curious about what form the development of theatre [as activism] has taken in present day South Africa and in the region. The new challenges this form of theatre is faced with, its relevance, as well as the need to engage with changes of attitude evident in African drama.

Ngugi wa Thiongo eloquently contests that the 'real language of African theatre is to be found in the struggles of the oppressed, for it is out of those struggles that a new Africa is born.' (wa Thiongo 1998:32) By referring to the tradition of Theatre of the Oppressed, Boal's collective theatre, as well as paying homage to the community consciousness developed and performed in Theatre in Education (TIE) and Theatre for Development (TFD), a movement which we have seen grow particularly within the Southern African Diaspora over the past decade, one must ask what is the role of theatre within our contemporary political and cultural landscape?

It has been argued forcibly that theatre in a variety of forms and contexts can make, and indeed has made positive political and social interventions in a range of developing countries throughout the world. This paper rests squarely in the same conviction. Theatre has the power

to engage creatively, productively and meaningfully with a wide range of issues; from extreme poverty to AIDS, violence, sexual and racial intolerance and Human Rights. (Boon & Plastow 2004)

The belief that everyone, by virtue of her or his humanity, is entitled to certain Human Rights is fairly new. Although its roots lie in earlier tradition and the documents of many cultures, it took the catalyst of World War II to propel Human Rights onto the global stage and into the global conscience. In Europe, the Americas, and Africa, regional documents for the protection and promotion of Human Rights extend the International Bill of Human Rights. For example, Muslim states have created the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990) and African states have created our own Charter of Human and People's Rights (1981), with the charter here, extending to the rights of the community and the recognition of a *people* as opposed to solely the individual. The African charter is used in this research report to locate the work i.e. Southern Africa, as well as to hint; not only at the fundamental premise of the charter and the age-old African adage *Ubuntu* (I am because we are), but also to highlight a core principle of theatre as activism, that being a collective consciousness.

There is a critical debate regarding Human Rights activism. Can we consider human rights activism as performance? If so, who are the main "actors" or agents in staging human rights, and to what extent is there a global human rights "script"? What is the role of theatre in promoting human rights activism? What ethical issues does making a "spectacle" of human rights abuses raise?

With these core research questions in mind, this report intends to explore the arrival of a human rights discourse on global performance practices (drama, film, new media, political activism, etc), and its effect on these practices locally. The inclusion of the developed world is a valid one, as it is a false contention that the kinds of performance often referred to as TFD are only relevant to the political south. It is assumed far too often that development is something that needs to be 'done' (economically and/or ideologically) to the South whereas the North has always achieved some higher level of enlightenment (Bell 2008). The following paper not only contests this notion that development can be 'done' to anyone but instead will focus on the 'doing', the shared participation, the public performance, the activity. Theatre as Activism.

The word activism is derived from the Latin, actum, a thing done. It further encompasses; firstly the belief that action, as opposed to intellectual theorizing, is the way to truth and constructive social change; secondly metaphysics: the theory that activity (process, change, action) is the essential and necessary feature of reality. (www.Harperacademic.com)

In outlining his "innovation" for theatre, Brecht responded to the split between reason and argument (rhetoric) and entertainment and pleasure (poetics) inherited from the Ancient Greeks. His solution was to bring rhetorical studies to performance, in practice the techniques he outlines often fell short of accomplishing the social and political goals of resistant performance. Brecht's ideas however were later revised and refined by other performers and directors working for social change especially Augusto Boal, a director, theorist and political activist.

Boal, experimented with egalitarian forms of theatre he believed would foster democracy in an increasingly socially and politically repressive Brazil. Following the military coups in 1964 and 1968, Boal worked with groups of Brazilian citizens in performances, teaching and encouraging them to enter the action on stage. Later, he refined his ideas and techniques which culminated in the publication of *Theatre of the Oppressed*. In 1974 Boal (1985:122) writes that the objective of Aristotle's poetics is for the spectator to delegate power to the performer to think for him which creates catharsis. The objective of Brecht's poetics is for the spectator to delegate power to the performer to act for her, but to reserve the right to think for herself which causes critical consciousness. In contrast Boal's poetics of the oppressed focused on the action itself. "The objective is for the spectator to become the performer, to change the action, try out the solution, discuss the plan for change and train him or herself for real action" (1985:46).

We can think through performance along three criss-crossing lines of activity and analysis. We can think of performance firstly as a work of imagination, as an object of study; secondly as a pragmatics of inquiry (both as model and method), as an optic and operator of research; thirdly as a tactics of intervention, an alternative space of struggle. (Conquergood 2002) It is my argument that a performance studies agenda should collapse this divide and revitalise the connections between artistic accomplishment, analysis and articulation with communities; between practical knowledge (knowing how), prepositional knowledge (knowing that), and political savvy (knowing how, when and where). This epistemological connection between

creativity, critique and civic engagement is mutually replenishing and pedagogically powerful. (Conquergood 2002)

This interplay between different ways of knowing carries the most radical promise of performance studies research. Performance studies struggles to open the space between analysis and action and to reduce the binary opposition between theory and practice. This embrace of different ways of knowing is radical because it cuts across to the root of how knowledge is organised in the academy.

Michel Foucault coined the term "subjugated knowledge" to include all the local, regional, vernacular and "naïve" knowledge's at the bottom of the hierarchy – the low other of science (1980:81-4) These are the non-serious ways of knowing that dominant culture neglects, excludes, represses, or simply fails to recognize. Subjugated knowledges have been erased because they are illegible, they exist, by and large, as active bodies of meaning outside of books eluding the forces of inscription that would make them legible and thereby legitimate (de Certeau 1998, Scott 1998) Activism in this regard, falls under subjugated knowledge as does the term 'poetics'; that we cannot explain through language and words, that which we feel and are emotionally drawn to.

In his critique of the limitations of literacy, Kenneth Burke argued that print-based scholarship has built-in blind spots and a conditioned deafness:

> The [written] record is usually but a fragment of the expression (as the written word omits all telltale records of gesture and tonality; and not only may our 'literacy' keep us from missing the omissions, it may blunt us to the appreciation of tone and gesture, so that even when we witness the full expression, we note only those aspects of it that can be written down) (1969[1950]:185).

In even stronger terms, Raymond Williams challenged the class-based arrogance of scriptocentrism, pointing to the "error" and "delusion" of "highly educated" people who are "so driven in on their reading" that "they fail to notice that there are other forms of skilled, intelligent, creative activity" such as "theatre" and "active politics." He argued that "the contempt" for performance and practical activity, "which is always latent in the highly literate, is a mark of the observer's limits, not those of the activities themselves" (1983 [1958]:309).

More often than not, subordinate people experience texts and the bureaucracy of literacy as instruments of control and displacement, e.g. green cards, passports, arrest warrants, deportation orders – what de Certeau calls 'intextuation': " every power including the power of law, is written first on the backs of its subjects" (1984:140).

Among the most oppressed people in the Southern Africa today are the "undocumented" immigrants, the so called "illegal aliens," known in the vernacular of the people as *makwere-kwere.* They are illegal because they are not legible, they trouble the "writing machine of the law" (de Certeau 1984:141).

Moreover Ngugi wa Thiongo's concept of "orature" complicates any easy separation between speech and writing; performance and print, and reminds us how these channels of communication constantly overlap, penetrate, and mutually produce one another (1998). Performance studies bring this rare hybridity into the academy, a commingling of analytical and artistic ways of knowing that unsettles the institutional organisation of knowledge and disciplines. Hence this is my justification for privileging this kind of subjugating knowledge with reference to Theatre as Activism in the academy.

Like other performance studies-allied scholars who create performances as a supplement to, not substitute for, their written research, the complement to *Towards a poetics* is presented in the form of a short film. The choice for this creative work is available for a multitude of professional reasons: to deepen experiential and participatory engagement with the material for myself and my audience; to provide a dynamic and compelling alternative and to offer a more accessible and engaging format for sharing research and reaching communities outside academia. To borrow Amanda Kemp's apt phrase, to use "performance both as a way of knowing and as a way of showing" (1998). What has increasingly emerged as the most credible quality of Theatre as activism is its' inherently visual element. Whilst not disputing the social impact of radio drama and the heard word, a consideration particularly relevant to Southern Africa where the radio (before the television and/or proscenium arch theatre) is more accessible, the scope of this research will be focused on the live event and lived experience of activist performance.

Using the self-reflexive experience of my year as a Drama for Life scholar, this report reflects on class experiences, and explores the personal journey of Southern African theatre practitioners who have grappled with questions surrounding the role, function, power

dynamics, and what it means to give a voice to, and activate through performance. One practical way to practice self-reflexivity, and the chosen style of the following testimony is auto-ethnography. Auto-ethnography:

> Is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographic gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations (…). As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition (Ellis & Bochner 2000, 739).

Speak Truth to Power in relation to African activism is a pithy phrase which evokes a postcolonial world crisscrossed by transnational narratives, Diaspora affiliations, and, especially, the movement and multiple migrations of people, sometimes voluntary, but often economically propelled or politically coerced. "In order to keep pace with such a world, we now think of 'place' as a heavily trafficked intersection, a port of call and exchange, instead of a circumscribed territory. A boundary is more like a membrane than a wall" (Conquergood 2002).

In current cultural theory, "location" is imagined as an itinerary instead of a fixed point. Our understanding of 'local context' expands to encompass the historical, dynamic, often traumatic movements of people, ideas, images, commodities and capital. It is no longer easy to sort out the local from the global: transnational circulations of images get reworked on the ground and redeployed for local, tactical struggles.

The best of the new cultural theory distinguishes itself from apolitical celebrations of mobility, flow, and easy border crossings by carefully tracking the transitive circuits of power and the political economic pressure points that monitor the migrations of people, channel the circulations of meaning, and stratify access to resources (Gilroy 1994) a struggle which emerged in spurts of Xenophobic violence in South Africa in the months leading up to (and preceeding) a public protest in the streets of Hillbrow Johannesburg in May 2008. This report will explore the march defending the immigrants in closer detail as an example of public activist performance whereby the circuits of power were linked back to the people

themselves, the few who started the riots, the xenophobic bigots who purported to be representative of the South African condition.

De Certeau's aphorism "what the map cuts up the story cuts across" (1984:129) points to transgressive travel between two different domains of knowledge: one official objective, and abstract – "the map", the other practical, embodied and popular – "the story". *Speak Truth to Power* is one such story, a testimony from 52 human Rights defenders and a play staged at Wits in August 2008 which this paper will further elaborate on. I will comment no further on the film – the documentary half of this research, but pause to remind the reader about the very nature of the medium; a video text implies a point of view, a power structure and a separate authorial position. This concept is fundamental to this debate: what is recorded, how it is represented and what is considered irrelevant and by whom?

The following chapters will be an exploration of my case studies, i.e. the March against Xenophobia and the play *Speak Truth to Power* respectively. The differences between these two examples of Theatre as Activism are radical, and the greatest comparisons can be drawn along; form, content and intention. As a direct example of street performance and public protest, the March set out to comment on the socio-political aspects that compound xenophobic violence. In the form of mass demonstration, chapter one uses this analogy to unpack what is meant by theatre, and seeks to underline the notion of 'active participation' which encourages a holistic, triple role of being at once the 'spect-actor' as termed by Boal, as well as the actor and the spectator simultaneously. Theatre as activism is more about communicating through informed action.

Concerned with these varying communication strategies; chapter two directs its attention to the proscenium arch for the opening night of *Speak Truth to Power.* The play inhabits a core principle of Theatre as Activism that being - speaking your truth. Often reliant on memory, when viewed from a docudrama perspective, storytelling is transformed into testimony. Through this authentic representation, the emotive experience of the cast, the audience and the actual people whose stories were being performed are explored in greater detail.

Chapter three, by way of explaining how therapy and healing is located within this poetics, pays homage to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and serves as the meeting ground between the characteristics of the two aforementioned case studies. Highly publicised in the media, these proceeding were open to the public and to global scrutiny. Many pieces of

theatre stemmed from the TRC experience, and the staging of Human Rights presented challenging ethical implications.

Towards a poetics concludes with its final chapter which intends not to be an ending but rather an offering of suggested reading strategies which seek to encourage the development of a critical theory towards theatre as activism, an ideal which this paper greatly supports. This recommendation offsets an exploration of what activism means in contemporary Southern Africa and acknowledges the role of technology, the media and the challenges facing Theatre as Activism.

.

2. Chapter One: Defending the Immigrants – The march against Xenophobia (May 2008)

Jozi Maboneng.[2]

Approached from both the east and west, Johannesburg, the city of gold presents a lyrically beautiful cityscape, nestling between ridges and flanked by mine dumps of gold mine effluvium that have grown into the landscape as hills, it rises up as a characteristic vista. There are the 50 stories of the Carlton centre alongside, in this long view, the Brixton Tower, still broadcasting signals. Over there the outline of new construction, cranes gracefully picked out in relief against the sky as the World Cup 2010 stadiums take shape. The serrated edges of the city's skyscraper profile, framed by highway overpasses and the natural landscape, are hung here and there with Christo-like, building-sized advertising drapery, recognisable as one draws nearer.

Gradually another city looms up – murder capital of the world, walled in suburbs, rampant gun crime, drug running, prostitution, homelessness, AIDS, poverty, money, energy, art. Welcome to Jozi. Every city is an ambivalent organisation. Alongside its readable structures – the mappable territory that has been planned in advance, that shapes and arranges, lies the other structure of contingency – the city that's been created by its users and inhabitants. This type of city, evokes, determines and produces behaviour, styles, attitudes, values and pathologies. Each city therefore, has at least a double character, and a double narrative, and its inhabitants play many roles within them. The surfaces and depths of the city's structure, its being – from the towering replications of its skyscrapers, to the hollow aortas of its covered car parks, to the secret somatics of its circulatory systems of tar, wire, cable and pipe – all form a paradigmatic sign system, a 'primary cybernetic machine.' (Sey 2008). Seen as such a sign system, the city should be the true locus of modern aesthetic philosophy. Cities are sites of great novelty, innovation and overload. The early avant-gardes and the great *litterateurs* of the industrial era focused on the city as a field of possibility, inextricable from the technologies and sites that enabled those possibilities – traffic, advertising, cinemas, factories, theatres, concrete underpasses.

[2] Jozi Maboneng is a colloquial nickname for Johannesburg. Derived from the Sestwana word meaning many lights. It depicts Johannesburg as Southern Africas big city with bright light and even bigger stars.

The Jozi that I was born in to in 1982 was on the brink of radical transformation. As South Africa's biggest city and its financial capital, Jozi is one of the finest examples anywhere in the world of the mutability of cities, their propensity for change and reorientation. Since the demise of institutional apartheid in 1990 and the advent of the democratic African National Congress-led government in 1994 the city has been subject to a process of constant physical and ideological 'renewal' in order to try to change its older character, which exemplifies apartheid architecture and radical inequality.

Many different kinds of wars have been fought on the streets of Jozi, the most recent; being the most ironic – the xenophobic attacks against migrant workers themselves, who created this city – literally built it – as its cheap labour for the gold mines. There is more than just meaning and representation at stake, there is a reason that Jozi is one of the most dangerous and criminal cities in the world. Territories are protected here with deadly force, by suburban homeowner, housebreaker and carjacker alike.

The city, we should remember is a giant circulatory system. It recycles things, including water and air. Images and meanings are not exempt – new billboard images replace yesterday's products, today's headlines usurp yesterday's. There's a continuous circulation of urban meaning: noises on top of each other, fashions colliding and stealing from each other.[3] During the time of this research, the energy is very much on the streets and its clubs rather than in its theatres. Capturing and transforming that energy is, in an important sense, what Theatre as activism is about, and lies at the heart of public protest performance.

But is it theatre?

Arendt assumes that "drama comes fully to life only when it is enacted in the theatre" (1958: 187). But drama does not necessarily only have to come alive, as Arendt argues, in the enclosed place of theatre, nor is it only the imitation of acting, rather drama can also be the live imitation of action occurring beyond the enclosure. Beyond the enclosure lies also the ability to transcend the affected place and this might occur by using the definitions of applied theatre and applied drama, belonging to Nicholson and Thompson respectively.

[3] Published on the occasion of the exhibition Robin Rhode: Who saw Who, The Hayward, London ,Uk, 7 October – 7 December 2008

There is the application of 'forms of dramatic activity that primarily exist outside conventional mainstream theatre institutions, and which are specifically intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies' (Nicholson 2005:2) and there is 'the practice of theatre where it is least expected' (Thompson 2003:15). Definitions like these assist in mediating the live and unconventional qualities of drama practice outside the framework of institutionalized theatre. They also make this kind of applied drama/theatre practice complicit with applying dramatic practice or theatrical practice in public spaces, after all there is still a difference between applied drama and applied theatre, simply as terms, drama and theatre are different (Taub 2008:www.dramaforlife.co.za). It is not my intention to engage with semantic debate surrounding terminology, hence this paper will use 'theatre' for anything deliberately organised; using sign, metaphor or symbol; done to affect watchers and that might be seen by non-participants. Using the term 'drama' may relate to the nature of the action occurring on the 'stage'.

Augusto Boal further debunks the rising contestation concerning the site or space where theatre takes place, as having nothing to do with buildings or other physical structures. There is an unfortunate tendency to project street theatre as a rebellion against the proscenium theatre, or as standing in opposition to it (Hashmi 1998). I, like Boal find this notion absurd, as both theatre forms belong equally to the people. The two case studies I have chosen to focus on within this paper, fall on either side of this debate i.e. street and proscenium theatre, to highlight the contradiction between reactionary proscenium theatre and progressive proscenium theatre or between democratic street theatre and reformist and government sponsored street theatre (Hashmi 1998). An exploration that is *Towards a poetics* is intended to potentially base a new critical theory of Theatre as Activism in Southern Africa.

Boal's ideas in *Theatre of the Oppressed* refigured the relationship of actors, performers and passive spectators to one of audience in action. Boal developed a technique that moved the theatrical stage to the streets and drew on varying degrees of audience participation including simultaneous dramaturgy, image and invisible theatre and forum theatre. In invisible theatre participants take the play to a place which is not the theatre and perform it for an audience that is not an audience (Boal 1992), who are unaware that they are the observers of a planned event.

The march against Xenophobia was not an example of invisible theatre, however on the morning of the 24 May 2008, when more than 8000 people gathered in Parktown's public

park to march for the inclusion of foreign nationals in South African communities, the stage was set – the city streets. The roles clearly defined. The people who participated in the march as well as all those that they were representing marched as protagonists, antagonised by the violent offenders, the ambivalence that still exists concerning xenophobia, the government who largely remained silent. The onlookers were thrust into the role of audience; some of whom cheered, others frowned frustrated at the task of having to find an alternate route to get to work, whilst still others threw stones at the protesters. According to these angry onlookers, by marching and defending the 'foreigners' we were standing with them, and in taking that stance we were rebuking South Africa. An interesting consideration; the gaze of the onlookers - our immediate audience, and how they might've seen or interpreted what they witnessed. In each context, Boal's techniques offer new endings for dramatic form and action. "The performer-audience relationship is adapted and revised to meet the needs of the situation and to reflect the complex shifting and multiple identities of the participants" (Howard 2004:231).

Whilst Boal's objectives in wanting to convert the spectator into actor are valuable, he takes it one step further in that he advocates for a negotiation between these two roles. We are actors AND we are spectators simultaneously. This is an important point and lies at the basis of the functionality of theatre and drama. Many writers on drama therapy for example Phil Jones, talk about the dual experience of being inside the dramatic/theatrical reality but being able to observe oneself in it as well. This is why the process of theatre as activism can be therapeutic and also why it can be enlightening and educating. The Boalian phrase 'spect-actor' is therefore an appropriate appellation, however I would caution readers to not negate the power that lurks within the specificity of these roles, particularly- as was contextualised in the march - that of spectator. Whilst observing ourselves or to put it more simply to engage in interior spectating, the influence of others i.e exterior spectating (and then the effect it has on the self) is equally as revealing. This domino effect, relating what we see back to self sets off a cycle and strives to explain what some psychologists refer to as mob mentality.[4]

[4] The term "mob mentality" is used to refer to unique behavioral characteristics which emerge when people are in large groups. Sometimes used disapprovingly, the term "mob" typically conjures up an image of a disorganized, aggressive, panicked group of people. Social psychologists who study group behavior tend to prefer terms like "herd behavior" or "crowd hysteria" yet, however placed, this condition speaks to the influence that others (particularly a large group of others) has on the actions of an individual. More than just

By this virtue, the main "actors" or agents in staging human rights are performing the role of audience as well as actor, as well as the dual role of spect-actor, hence revealing a more holistic approach to active participation. The relationship between these three roles particularly pertaining to activism runs simultaneously, each one necessary to fuel the other.

Action, as Aristotle (Sachs 2006) uses the word, refers only to what is deliberately chosen, and capable of finding completion in the achievement of some purpose. Animals and young children do not act in this sense, and action is not the whole of the life of any of us. The artist must have an eye for the emergence of action in human life, and a sense for the actions that are worth paying attention to. They are not present in the world in such a way that a video camera could detect them. An intelligent, feeling, shaping human soul must find them. By the same token, the action of the drama itself is not on the stage. It takes form and has its being in the imagination of the spectator. If no one had the power to imitate action, life might just wash over us without leaving any trace. The imitation of an action is an important device for understanding it better – one of the reasons why we create theatre.

Defending the immigrants



Fig.1.1 Frontal view of the march



Fig1.2 View of the march from the back

The lived experience of the march against Xenophobia, which this chapter will outline in greater detail as an analysis of theatre as activism, forges interesting reflections and further propagates complex enquiry. Whilst questions aimed at the theatre fraternity as to where the voice of theatre was during the xenophobic violence, and critiques of the timeous relevance

'peer pressure', the term 'mob mentality' is often used in analysing the moment when demonstrations turn violent.

of the art form, or lack thereof, is a valid consideration. This chapter will argue that the active participation in the March, as well as the many volunteers providing aid through their action *was* the theatre. This is the performance – the responsibility not left to trained professionals on a stage, but rather the combined energies from a critical mass, speaking from a collective consciousness.

By exploring the state of activism in the region at present, as well as addressing the after effects of theatre as activism, this chapter will return to the transient notion of power, using Foucault's ideas on capillary and arterial modes of power as an underlying metaphor for activist performance and as an attempt to clarify what is meant by power.

Foucault's conceptual idea about power and how power acts on us - specifically the idea of capillary modes of power that infiltrate every level of our selfhood, provides an interesting proposition. Theatre [as activism] is the antidote to capillary modes of power - it fights back and tackles issues on the microcosmic and individual level. I use the metaphor of the capillary in the body (personal and politic) as an appealing way of juxtaposing the ways in which oppression functions to disable and/or disempower the individual by filtering through the "arterial" modes of state/ political/ church power into the capillary modes of self - in the same way theatre as activism can subvert these tactics - fight back on the level of the capillary to ultimately target the arterial modes for change.

Foucault is concerned with the materiality of power. He speaks about the capillary mode of power that operates on the body and that deeply controls individuals and their knowledge of themselves. But in thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.

There is also critical interference which civil society might practice upon the institutional bodies that it operates alongside. Somewhere along this interrelationship a Faustian pact is made by civil society with the institution that it might examine, about which observations are made about good governance and good practice. In Foucault's view, power has an insidious hold on the body; it is a hold that simultaneously relies on knowledge and produces knowledge. He states: "In becoming the target for new mechanisms of power, the body is

offered up to new forms of knowledge." (Foucault 1982:71) The power-knowledge relations that condition the emergence of the individual are focused on the body.

> What is in fact curious about all these gestures, these angular and abruptly abandoned attitudes, these syncopated modulations formed at the back of the throat, these musical phrases that break off short, these flights of elytra, these rustlings of branches these sounds of hollow drums, these robot squeekings, these dances of animated manikins, is this; that throughout the labyrinth of their gestures, attitudes and sudden cries, through the gyrations and turns which leave no portion of the stage space unutilised, the sense of a new physical language, based upon signs and no longer upon words, is liberated. These actors, with their geometric robes seem to be animated hieroglyphs. Antonin Artaud (1958:54)

Whilst the above describes Artaud's thoughts[5] whilst observing a group of Balinese dancers, what impresses Artaud is the immediacy of the performers, the sense in which their performance is not an act of re-representation, but instead a kind of 'pure theatre' where everything, conception and realisation alike has value and has existence (Worthen in Bial 2004). I use Artaud's wild ethnology in order to tease out some contemporary assumptions concerning the liquidity of activism. Whilst this paper has pinpointed 'activity' (physical and ideological) to be in the body of activism, social unrest and the oppressor/oppressed interplay, a critical consciousness is at its heart. Activism is often thought to be improvised, usually, but not always, to include story, song and dance (especially within the Diaspora) and perhaps the most pivotal of all, activism is understood to bring about transformation and provide a heightened sense of solidarity. An analysis of the march against xenophobia helps to further understand and contextualise these concepts.

The script for the performance came in a literary form with banners and placards ranging from the general, those reading "Xenophobia hurts like apartheid" and "We stand against xenophobia", to direct attacks to positions of arterial power for e.g. "Mbeki their blood is on your hands" and "where are our leaders?" Newspaper headlines and the media reports which followed, many of which were filmed at the march, created a dialogue with the global society

[5] It is useful to mention Artuad as the author, as the ritual that he is talking about □□alinese□masked drama□is very different from the rituals of everyday life that □oucault is discussing.

empathetic to the action on their screens. The crowd comprised of the usual suspects, the mutual friends, the theatre goers, art lovers, middle class South Africans attended in their thousands. Picket cards and banners like loud voices spoke of each individual viewpoint and the collective expression of our common goal. Africa for Africans. Flags from South Africa and other countries coloured the streets and the sounds of cameras flashing formed the score along with the chanting of old struggle songs and toyi-toyi dance moves being re-learnt.

The Mail and Guardian reported on the weekend of the march that:

> As we assess this most devastating week for the beloved country, it's vital to first drop the language of "us" South Africans versus "them" foreigners. A history born of migration and raised on migrant labour, the struggle against apartheid and a commitment to pan-Africanism -- all these demand a more inclusive definition of who is a South African, of who belongs and who doesn't. Neither can this awful week be wished away as a story of "them" the mobs, versus "us" the peace-loving, inclusive South Africans. We can march against xenophobia and violence, but it is a fool's protest to march against "them", for what's happening is a reflection on us all.
>
> (A Mob Nation: Percy Ndaba May 2008)

Like a river that begins with a small trickle or, to use the Foucaultian metaphor, the thousands of capillaries in the body, the numbers picked upped as the march began with an injection of hundreds more arriving on buses coming from Soweto and more rural, further afield communities. What surprised me was the amount of non-South Africans who were present as well as various organisations, NGOs and businesses who, adorned with t-shirts with their respective emblazoned logos, stood together to declare the position of their community in the face of xenophobia. Strength in numbers is not just a phrase reserved for community watch programmes, but rather connotes to a sheer force, without which the arterial modes of power, in this example the state wouldn't take cognisance.

A few days prior to the march, whilst at Wits University, I witnessed the warning given to my DFL colleagues by the project co-ordinator as she expressed her concern for their safety. A wise precaution considering that Kudakwashe, a Zimbabwean Master's student was assaulted on the streets of Hillbrow, and Remo, another Zimbabwean graduate and theatre practitioner was jailed for not having his passport, during the time of the attacks. The figures from police

were extremely disturbing: 12 people had been killed, more than 200 have been arrested and at least 3000 were left destitute. The truth about statistics is that they only become tangible when the results are 'close to home'. The foreign nationals who joined the march that day, as well as the South Africans whose friends, colleagues and family had been hurt or killed by the attacks were angry. The caution not to attend the march was disregarded by the many that attended, and for those that did heed the warnings, their absence seemed to further motivate and reinforce participants' attitudes. 'People don't take to the streets in protest when there is an alternative mode of communication' and 'Sometimes you need to scream to be heard', were the general sentiments expressed by many of the protestors who I had interviewed to enquire about their motivation for protesting. The march gave people the power to express themselves and to be seen and heard standing up for their beliefs.

The field of psychology is very interested in the ways in which human behaviour changes in response to new social situations. People behave very differently in small groups of individuals than they do in big crowds, for example, and their behaviour in crowds is affected by a wide variety of factors. The study of crowds has also been used in alliance with Human Rights topics like the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany under Hitler, the riots between Muslims and Hindus which broke out when India was partitioned, and the genocide which took place in Rwanda in 1994. Social psychologists like Gabriel Tarde (In Brewer & Hewstone 2004) and Gustave Le Bon (In Brewer & Hewstone 2004) hope that by studying mob mentality and crowd behaviour, they can prevent such events from recurring. Similarly Aristotle (in Chainani 2007) understands the recognition of a special and powerful form of drama built around pity and fear as the underlying emotion used to ellicit action.

In the one case the tension built up along the way is released within the experience of the work itself; in the other it passes off as we leave the theatre, and readjust our feelings to the fact that it was, after all, only make-believe. What is wrong with that? Aristotle (in Chainani 2007) asks. There is always pleasure in strong emotion, and the streets [within the context of a theatre] are not always the safest place to indulge it. Getting shot by the police or stoned by spectators are often occurrences at public protest gatherings. This kind of treatment can sometimes result in strong feeling. The consequence of indulging the 'desire for that thrill' may be high. People speak of watching football, or boxing, as a catharsis of violent urges, or call a shouting match with a friend a useful catharsis of buried resentment. This is a practical purpose that drama may also serve, but it has no particular connection with beauty or truth; to

be good in this purgative way. No one would be tempted to confuse the feeling at the end of a horror movie with what Aristotle (in Chainani 2007) calls "the tragic pleasure," rather participants in the march, concerned with the outcome, commented on their action. Feelings of 'doing something', 'standing up for a good cause' and reveling in freedom of speech were expressed once the march disbanded.

Article 12 of T*he Human and Peoples' Rights Charter* (www.hrcr.org) addresses every individual's right to citizenship. It outlines the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to leave any country including one's own, to seek asylum when persecuted and further stipulates the prohibition of mass expulsion of non-nationals. Since the early 1990s, citizenship has emerged within the discourse of politicians, educators and activists as a key aspirational value, one embracing political, social and moral ideals. A useful contemporary interrogation of citizenship as a concept has been provided by Peter Figueroa. He recognises it as a contested idea, emphasising as it does an individual's relationship to either the state or society as a whole, embracing legal rights and obligation within nation state and more specifically…civil, political and social rights and duties (Figueroa, 2004). Within such a framework, the concepts of citizenship and human rights are therefore joined by a double bond; one's enlightenment to citizenship acts as a guarantor of one's own rights – indeed, as one's right to have rights – but simultaneously carries with it an obligation to respect the rights of others. Martha Nussbaum has argued from within this liberal tradition that, within a globalised world, people need to be encouraged to forge identities that 'recognize humanity in the stranger and in the other', and to respond humanely to the human in every cultural form (Nussbaum 1994, 133).

The theories of Hannah Arendt (2006) are helpful in providing a theoretical understanding of how the form of drama [as activism] creates public space that mirrors the public sphere of politics. Arendt's analogy of a dining table is strikingly evocative. The table provides the diners with an individual space that at one and the same time places them in relation with one another. It is the shared space rather than inner qualities or beliefs that unites them in a common purpose, that allows a 'we' to be established – in material, spatial and temporal terms – in order to encourage purposeful, collective action. For Arendt, appearance before an audience is a critical component of genuine politics and therefore a key element of citizenship, where action is a public matter. '…a worldly reality, tangible in words which can be heard, in deeds which can be seen, and in events which are talked about, remembered and

turned into stories.' (Birmingham & Arendt 2006) If the writings of Arendt are useful in providing a theoretical basis for advocating drama as a vehicle for teaching the values and practices of citizenship, the purpose of using the March against Xenopobia as a form of Theatre as Activism is not to seek further advocacy but to contribute to knowledge of how and when it might be claimed to do so.

From the DFL group, I was accompanied to the march by my Batswana colleague Moabi Mogorosi, who since has gone on to produce work centred around xenophobia and the re-telling of his lived experience as a foreigner new to the country (SA) through modes akin to playback theatre. "I remember coming to Johannesburg to come and hand in my application for the Drama for Life program (January 2008) and being harassed by taxi drivers who searched my bags and took off my shoes. I was scared. My saving grace it seemed was when I spoke to the perpetrators in Sestwana. Only then did they hear and understand who I was. They gave me back my shoes, repacked my bag, without taking anything and called me brother. I couldn't believe my ears. Brother? They didn't even apologise."

The importance of 'story' in creating the art of activism works to achieve two goals, firstly it sets up the premise of the event which includes motivation and personal experience, which at the same time provides a framework of reference points and contexts; and secondly the use of story has long since been used as a device that people can relate to and therefore be incited by. Most drama is created around story – the march is created around the public 'stories' in the media, for example the iconic burning man which emblazoned the front page of the newspaper, and they are reinforced by personal stories, like the one shared by Mogorosi, which motivate individuals to march.

Similar to the 1976 Soweto uprising protests, and protest marches around the world, the space within which the performance occurred mirrored the site of the injustice. The march proceeded through Hillbrow, home to many African immigrants, past the police station where many of those affected were being housed as a place of safety. I couldn't help but wonder if those in the 'prison' safe-houses heard the chanting from the masses drawn outside. I wondered if the audible performance affected them, one of our target audiences who we couldn't see. The procession stopped at the Departments of Home Affairs and Housing a pivotal symbolic reference to those who didn't have any homes and the vast majority of those displaced, before ending at the Library Gardens.

The Library Gardens are in the centre of Johannesburg CBD, adjacent to the City Hall and the train station. It is the site of a lot of activity, a hub for commuters from all over the province. The day of the march was no different. Onlookers were drawn into the performance by virtue of the crowd and the spectacle. At the Library Gardens a stage and speakers were set up where musicians, who sang reggae-infused songs centred on Pan-Africanism and emancipation, took to the stage breaking only for the speeches which were delivered in true evangelical style. The march was organised by the Anti-Privatisation Forum, The Social Movements Indaba and a coalition of organizations, so I naturally assumed that they were behind the speeches, however I still cannot be sure. As researcher, I further investigated, however no-one could give me any answers, as the people behind the static microphones were unknown. What was blatantly obvious was the absence of recognizable government leaders publically visible against the scourge. The stark contrast between the idea of story which serves to incite and the rhetoric which followed in the speeches was distinct. Why did the speeches not work to hold and activate people?

The finale of the march seemed to be a failure and to dissipate any energy left to the marchers. Just as soon as everyone had gathered at the Library lawns, the march stopped and the group started to disband almost immediately and strangely haphazardly. Protestors who had initially stopped to listen to the speeches, and take the first 'rest' in the last five hours of walking and dancing, didn't hesitate for too long before starting to find ways of getting back to their cars or busses at the march's starting point (almost 10 kilometers away). Many of the participants had never walked in town and now without the safety of a police barricade and the 'safety of numbers,' found taxis or walked off to a nearby restaurant for lunch. The notion of the actor now becoming the spectator, made to listen to 'talking heads' on stage combined with the frustration of now having to find their way home at the end of the march which was commendably well organized (albeit with a very strong presence of the SAP, which is always slightly unsettling) seemed a paltry finale to activism incited to bring about exposure and change. As the people filtered out in groups and the solidarity disintegrated, there was no bow, no curtain-call, no strategic planning or implementation agenda. There was no conclusion. What happens after the event? Is theatre as activism a sustainable model to ellicit social change?

As soon as issues around representation, identity, gender and power come to the fore, theatre as a medium by which these issues can be explored and through which communities (possibly whole societies) might be transformed, must be considered. This transformational intention

can only be achieved if it is firmly rooted in the cultural soil of a particular community. The desire for and means of cultural development can be nurtured or even provoked by an outside facilitator (as is the case with Theatre For Development) but if it is not located within the community, transformation is not sustainable beyond the life-span of a particular project or theatre event. Governments, Aid agencies, NGOs and the like have agendas and issues but people have stories. As soon as a project frames its activities in terms of issues, it places itself within the discursive paradigms of those agencies and starts to manipulate community experience to fit them. Participation is reduced to rhetoric if it merely means being included in prescribed agendas rather than being allowed to set the agendas or even to operate outside agendas.

> I believe that the government agrees or like this thing. If they hate it, why then dont they just stop it? All they know is sending soldiers to other countries; they are needed here to stop this. How can someone say 'we are arranging a transport for those to be taken back to their countries' why dont you stop this?
>
> Petrus Ndimande, 26. (A survivor of the Xenohobic violence and Hillbrow resident)

□ hy don□t you stop this?

The above quoted Mail and Guardian article continues to say;

> Us, with our machetes, pangas and AKs. Us, with our broken bodies and our broken hearts. Us, with nowhere to go except a pavement or a church pew or a police yard. Us, with our useless government first blaming an inchoate third force, then the IFP, then a criminal element and, most laughably, a hidden hand intent on destabilising the government ahead of the 2009 election. What moegoes[6] lead us? Or don't lead us, as this week has revealed
>
> (A Mob Nation: Percy Ndaba May 2008)

The South African government was criticised for its slow reaction to the violence, the worst since apartheid ended 14 years ago, and for not addressing the poverty that is widely blamed for the bloodshed. Then President Thabo Mbeki said South Africans should not turn on other Africans and pledged that his government was committed to ending the violence. "Today we

[6] A colloquial term for imbecile

are faced with a disgrace, a humiliation as a nation in that we have allowed a handful of people to commit crimes against other Africans living in our country," Mbeki said on a visit to a mission school in the Eastern Cape. The politics of denial and of scapegoating, synonymous with the Mbeki dispensation was again on display. As with crime, Aids and Zimbabwe, President Thabo Mbeki refused to acknowledge the problem and buried himself in the sand once more. Then he retreated behind intellectualism and appointed a panel to investigate the violence, as he boarded a plane to Tanzania.

It is important to locate those qualities in the action of theatre itself where acts of transformation, profoundly subversive in the "real world" of political decision (which falls outside the theatrical space) can be valued. Therein is the very stuff of which theatre as cultural intervention is made. The action of protest, engaged participants and audiences in an act of groundroots' expression which was owned by people who do not consider themselves as artists, yet who perform to the most exacting artistic standards by using ~~theatre~~ performance as the motor of social transformation. The participants were speaking for themselves through spectacle and the thousands of capillary modes of expression were centralised and combined to advocate before the arterial mode of the state. In other words, theatre was activated to move from the periphery to the centre, functioning to offset the euphoric ideal of one unified voice, one which cannot be ignored.

Jonathan Neelands argues that issues of social and economic justice cannot be readily separated from the aspirations of identity politics, and that local politics of place should not be necessarily privileged over and above the universal claims of democratic practice. He proposes that theatre provides a model for how people can take part in a collective artistic practice which embodies the practices of civic dialogic democracy (Winston 1998). Others like Gallagher, propose drama as a critical form of pedagogy, with the potential to confront what Michael Apple describes as a key weakness in liberal theory, namely its 'inability to see events as signs of serious structural issues… rather than instances of economic, ethical and political conflict' (Apple 2004:16).

The challenge for Theatre as activism is to concern itself with more complex communication strategies, than simply the transmission of a message, but rather how to use it in ways which will enable the periphery and the centre, the oppressed and the oppressor, the capillaries and the arteries, to engage each other in dialogue which leads to social action.

Whilst the country saw a decline in xenophobic violence post the march, and the region slowly started to feel the solidarity associated with the first African World Cup (2010) in June and July, I cannot say for sure whether it was as a result of the performance of the 8000 that protested that day, or in fact whether the march did anything at all to affect the actions of those who attacked immigrants and refugees alluded to in preceding paragraphs. What was strikingly evident, however, was the overriding sense of achievement and jovial spirit that seemed to remain in the air long after the performance was considered 'over.' As the crowd dispersed, groups of people who had started the day as strangers now walked back to their cars as friends. My group was invited to have a sidewalk lunch at a neighbouring restaurant from random journalists who we happened to walk beside during the march. I heard comments from numerous passersby as to how 'typical' it was for policemen to be nowhere to be found after the event' , but couldn't help noticing others who walked the crime capitol Jozi's streets feeling invincible and comfortable in town for the first time. That day, many protesters who walked back to cars and busses, or hailed down cabs, were able to experience what thousands of commuters in Jozi feel every day. I was immediately reminded of the urban aesthetic tactics exemplified by Michel de Certeau's famous essay 'Walking in the City', where the cities inhabitants find their own routes, their own streets, which have a multitude of meanings for them[7] (1984).

By following Aristotle's (Sachs 2006) lead, we have now found five indications of 'tragedy' the thing that he terms in his poetics to be the inciting, read activating, component of theatre: firstly it imitates an action, much like the stones that the antagonists threw at the protestors during the march mirrored the stones thrown at the immigrants in communities all across the country, secondly it displays the human image as such, inherently fallible, prone to extreme emotions like the anger and compassion displayed during the protest thirdly it ends in wonder, and fourthly it is inherently beautiful. As evidenced in recounting my amazement and surprise at the shift in tone when the march ended with the feeling of emancipation fifthly it arouses pity and fear (Sachs 2006). We noted earlier that it is action that characterizes the distinctively human realm, and it is reasonable that the depiction of an action might show us a

[7] □□ alking n the city□ is a series of interviews which allows us to follow the sub□ects□ individual routines, composed of the habits, constraints, and inventive strategies by which the speakers negotiate daily life. Through these accounts the speakers, □ordinary□ people all, are revealed to be anything but passive consumers. Amid these experiences and voices, the ephemeral inventions of the □obscure heroes□ of the everyday, we watch the art of making do become the art of living.

human being in some definitive way. What do pity and fear have to do with that showing? The answer is everything.

> A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred; he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity. (Nelson Mandela In Martin & Rose 2003)

Speak Truth to Power; the play outlined in the next chapter uses pity and fear as undercurrent sentiments that set up the binary between the Oppressed and the Oppressor. The protagonists in the play, the Human Rights activists who endured nightmarish torture, are witnessed by the audience. This witnessing effectually results in empathy, compassion and understanding (pity). The antagonists, representative of state power, political corruption and capitalist exploitation are beacons which exist and can at any moment usurp their power to yours (fear).

If the theatre were not a safe space, a site where the 'rehearsal for the revolution' (Boal 1985) can take place, a space secure enough to allay that fear, then other emotions would not be allowed to emanate. Emotions like passion, anger, conviction and motivation. Therein lies the objective of activism i.e. to be the action, as well as to evoke action. It is with this objective in mind that I explored the March Against Xenophobia, for its action and *Speak Truth To Power* for its advocacy.

?. Chapter 2: ?pea? truth to po?er

Documentary drama:

Speak Truth to power, the play written by award winning Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman came to be staged at Wits through an email to Warren Nebe; the head of Division of Dramatic Art, from the Speak Truth Organisation in America. Upholding his dual role as head of division and the director of Drama for Life (DFL), Nebe ~~he~~ would later express in his address to the audience on opening night, that, one of the course's main objectives is "to instil in the scholars a sense of activism. This directly correlates to DFL's main intention to 'speak truth' to HIV and AIDS within the context of Human Rights…to address the power relationships within HIV", and was core to his motivation in accepting the rights and invitation to stage the play. Commissioning Ndiyapho Machacha (DFL Honours scholar from Botswana) as the director of the piece proved to be as easy a decision. Expressing a desire to direct as well as researching the notion of 'finding a voice', Machacha was interested in using drama as a metaphor and as a channel through which the silence can be broken, particularly that of HIV positive women in Botswana.

The play chronicles the struggles of 51 activists, including the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, Wangari Mathai, Helen Prejean, and many other lesser known people who have been championing human rights the world over. Actors portraying these individual human rights defenders tell their stories of torture and despair, of agony and hope, and of overcoming overwhelming odds against authoritarian rulers.

The use of testimony or verbatim text on stage and the various challenges this creates for the director, actors and indeed the audience are complicated as well as ethically astute. "Questions surrounding personal and authentic representation, and the re-telling of a real lived experience; based on reflected memory, continues to haunt this theatre making technique and provokes a critical debate surrounding documentary drama" (Goodwin, Andrew, et al.1983:3).

In order to investigate these challenges, I will be examining the collaborative effort that has positioned Ariel Dorfman alongside various other well known documentary theatre makers including Emily Mann, Robin Soans, David Hare, Anna Deavere Smith and Moises Kaufmann. Docudrama is an interesting form of theatre making, as it also serves to encourage

a culture of research amidst practitioners through its autobiographical representation. While there's no denying the tradition of 'paying homage to the past' that is evident in the countless examples of African docu-films like *Tonship Stories*[8], and *Amandla*[9], neither is there a shortage of African literature with examples of creative transcripts of the past. When it comes to theatre however, the most pronounced example of this form of theatre-making in Southern Africa stemmed from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings in South Africa which chapter three will elaborate on further.

The docudrama is a fact-based representation of real events. It may represent contemporary social issues - the "facts-torn-from-today's-headlines" approach - or it may deal with older historical events. Thus, the docudrama is a mode of representation that, as its name reflects, combines categories usually perceived as separate: documentary and drama. This transgression, however, is not an actual one. Texts that claim to represent the real may be created out of various sorts of documents such as photographs, interviews, tape recordings of sounds, printed words, drawings, and narrators who attempt to explain what happened. Non-fictional texts may also use actors to re-enact history. In all cases, the real is being represented and is thus never equal to the reality it represents. "The docudrama should be distinguished from fictional dramas which make use of reality as historical context but do not claim that the primary plot line is representing events that have actually occurred" (Goodwin, Andrew, et al.1983:16).

My in□ol□ement □ ith *Speak Truth to Power*

From the time initial correspondence was made to the first August 16th performance, six weeks lapsed in a tumultuous flurry of an audition process with very low attendance numbers, strong creative briefs from the Americans pertaining to directorial notes, clear instructions that nothing in the play could be changed because of copyright, visual slides and aesthetic cues, a strict pronunciation guide and countless production meetings with the Law School, the hosts of the Speak Truth Organisation and defenders.

It had more to do with the desperate need for help emanating from Machacha, director and personal friend that made me sign on to be the production manager; however it was the investigative journalist in me that first attracted me to the script. The human ethnography and

[8] *Tonship Stories*, directed and produced by Maishi Teffo

[9] *Amandla*, directed by □ee □irsch