

Paul Dwyer

Augusto Boal and the Woman in Lima: a Poetic Encounter

Twenty-five years after the landmark publication of *Theatre of the Oppressed*, there is no denying the continuing influence of Augusto Boal on theatre practitioners, community workers, and political activists worldwide. To judge by the number of recent publications by or about Boal (including five best-selling books from Routledge in little more than a decade),¹ the 'Boal Boom' shows no evidence of decline. There is also, however, an emerging culture of critique around various aspects of the theory and practice of Theatre of the Oppressed; and in the following article, Paul Dwyer argues that a reflexive, critical approach to using Boal's techniques should begin with an acknowledgement that they are not based on a stable theoretical foundation. Rather, the underlying principles, articulated by Boal in the many anecdotes that fill his books, lectures, and workshops, appear to have shifted over the years to become more closely aligned with the expectations of his audience. The theory of Theatre of the Oppressed should thus be seen as a co-creation for which the readers and propagators of Boal's work share a significant responsibility. Paul Dwyer is a lecturer in the Department of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney.

The trajectory of Augusto Boal's work can be mapped as a series of epiphanies, a series of discoveries, a continuous process of response to his own perception of the inadequacy of what he was doing before; this is a very self-critical work, which thrives on problems. Viewed over its forty-year history, the work glides naturally, organically, from the socio-political to the socio-individual to the individual-political and back again – but it is always rooted in practice, and it is always theatre. The main body of theory, as articulated in *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, has stood the test of time, and is constantly refreshed and invigorated by the energetic, urgent extension and development of practice.

Adrian Jackson²

AUGUSTO BOAL'S reputation as a theorist rests largely on his earliest (English-language) publication, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Whether or not this work should be taken on its own to constitute 'the main body of theory' underpinning Theatre of the Oppressed (or 'TO') practice is another matter. For one thing, the most explicitly theoretical section of the book, namely Boal's celebrated critique of Aristotle's *Poetics*, is more of a demolition job than a site of neat and tidy theoretical construction. (The fact that Boal, like Brecht before

him, offers some highly tendentious interpretations of Aristotle in order to articulate a counter-position to his 'poetics of oppression' need not concern us here – although it is odd that so many scholars have been prepared to take Boal's reading of Aristotle at face value.)³ More to the point, it is unlikely that Boal himself, at the time of writing, regarded *Theatre of the Oppressed* as a 'naturally, organically' conceived corpus of key theoretical texts.

What we have in *Theatre of the Oppressed* is an anthology of production notes, field reports, and essays relating to an embryonic stage in the development of TO practice. In Boal's words: 'It is a theatre that has just been born, and which, though breaking with all the traditional forms, still suffers from an insufficiently formulated theoretical basis. Only out of constant practice will the new theory arise.'⁴ Yet, as Drew Milne explains, this line of argument can be problematic: 'With practice the justification of theory, the theory's truth claims lie in qualities of practice which cannot be assessed as theory.'⁵ Hence, Milne continues, it might be more appropriate (and in fact more in keeping with the subtitle of the earlier Spanish and

Portuguese editions), to consider *Theatre of the Oppressed* as a statement of 'political poetics':

Here 'poetics' is helpful, suggesting a middle term between theory and practice, caught between description and prescription. 'Poetics' suggests both theory and its intelligibility as description: theory as an abstract, formalized account of the *techné* implicit in *poesis*, and description of that which is intuitively and theoretically immanent in practice.⁶

It is my contention that Boal most skilfully negotiates this 'poetic' territory between theory and practice through his descriptions of various paradigmatic TO experiences – the moments of 'epiphany' to which Adrian Jackson refers in the epigraph above. However, these epiphanies are not 'gospel truth', or, at least, their truth cannot be separated from the moment in which they are narrativized and transposed by Boal into the form of a quasi-theoretical anecdote.⁷

Furthermore, since Boal has been rewriting and retelling some of these anecdotes over many years, it is possible to read into them something of the way in which audience reception helps to shape the development of a rationale for TO practice. In other words, to a certain extent we all hear the version of Boal we want to hear. I make this point since, no matter how 'self-critical' Boal may or may not be about his own work, it is unrealistic to expect from him all the answers to the challenge of practising TO in contexts far removed from those in which a so-called 'main body of theory' first evolved. Indeed, the situation now with respect to Boal might best be described in the terms which Heiner Müller once applied to Brecht: 'To use [him] without criticizing him is a betrayal.'⁸ It is in such a spirit that I intend the following arguments.

A reflexive, critical approach – by practitioners other than Boal – to the development of TO theory and practice might best start by acknowledging the ways in which Boal's work is marketed internationally through conferences and academic publications, at theatre festivals, and on the workshop circuit. Certainly, his appearances in these contexts are framed by a significant level of consumer demand.⁹ I can still recall quite clearly, for instance, the revealing turn of phrase with which Boal was

introduced for a session of the 1995 International Drama/Theatre and Education Conference (IDEA), in Brisbane: 'For the next hour and a half, we've got him – he's all ours!'

Later, during Boal's keynote address to this same conference, I found myself sitting next to a Brazilian academic who explained, firstly, that she had never had a chance to hear Boal speak in Brazil and, secondly, that his book, *The Rainbow of Desire*, had not yet been published in Portuguese (when it had recently appeared in English, and despite the fact that the first edition, published in French, was actually based on a manuscript in Portuguese).¹⁰ Adopting the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu, we might think of the conference scene as an academic trade-fair, a privileged marketplace for the acquisition of *symbolic capital*. As with other markets, access to this trade in *cultural commodities* is not exactly free, and consumer demand does have some bearing on product development.¹¹

A Political-Theatrical Problem

Now, as it turns out, Boal's keynote speech in Brisbane was essentially another retelling of the 'three theatrical encounters' which appear in the prologue of *The Rainbow of Desire* and which, over a period of many years, have come to stand as defining moments in the development of TO. For my present purposes, I want to focus very closely on a story which has been in Boal's repertoire for at least thirty years and in which the development of Forum Theatre is ascribed to his momentous encounter with a 'large woman' in the audience of a performance near Lima in 1973 (her exact physical appearance and behaviour, as we shall see, alter somewhat over the years).¹²

The analysis below compares four distinct versions of the story. Their sources are:

(1) From *Theatre of the Oppressed* – this version was written in December 1973 and first published in 1974. The quotations below are taken from the 1979 English text, a very close translation from the earliest Spanish text. Hence, I will refer to this as the '1973/1979 version'.¹³

(2) From *Méthode Boal de théâtre et thérapie: l'arc-en-ciel du désir*, published in 1990 – this version is referred to below as the 'French Rainbow Text' although, for convenience, it is quoted in translation.¹⁴

(3) From the English edition of *The Rainbow of Desire*, published in 1995 and referred to below as the 'English Rainbow Text'.¹⁵

(4) From Boal's keynote address, also in 1995, to the Brisbane IDEA Conference – referred to below as the 'Brisbane Keynote'.¹⁶

The story revolves around a workshop during which Boal and his fellow theatre workers are developing short plays in response to themes suggested by local community members. As he explains in the 1973/1979 version in *Theatre of the Oppressed*:

*In a barrio of San Hilariòn, in Lima, a woman proposed a controversial theme. Her husband, some years before, had told her to keep some 'documents' which, according to him, were extremely important. The woman – who happened to be illiterate – put them away without suspicion. One day they had a fight for one reason or another and, remembering the documents, the woman decided to find out what they were all about, since she was afraid they had something to do with the ownership of their small house. Frustrated in her inability to read, she asked a neighbour to read the documents to her. The lady next door kindly made haste to read the documents which, to the surprise and amusement of the whole barrio, were not documents at all, but rather love letters written by the mistress of the poor woman's husband. Now this betrayed and illiterate woman wanted revenge. The actors improvised the scenes until the moment where the husband returns at night, after the wife has uncovered the mystery of the letters. The woman wants revenge: how is she to get it?*¹⁷

At this point in the story, Boal describes opening up proceedings to the audience, who make suggestions to the actress playing the wife. She improvises them all, one after another, but none appears satisfactory – none, that is, until a 'large exuberant lady' gets involved.

Before looking at this woman's historic intervention, it is interesting to compare the

above with the way the betrayed woman presents in the 1990 French Rainbow Text:

*One fine day, a shy woman came to see me. She said: 'I know that you do political theatre, and my problem is not political, but it is a very big problem and it's mine. Perhaps you could help me with your theatre?'*¹⁸

Five years later, for the English Rainbow Text, Boal expands on this conversation with the woman, adding the following paragraph:

*I told her that, in my opinion, all problems are political, but she replied that this was not so in her case. Why? Because, she said, her problem was her husband. 'You see – you said "my husband", and who tells you that that man is your husband? Society married you to him, so your problem is political.'*¹⁹

Finally, this conversation becomes even more animated in the following transcript from the Brisbane keynote:

A woman came to me and said 'Oh it's so nice that way [the way Boal and the actors would respond to suggestions from the audience], it's so democratic because all of us, we can say what we think.' And I said, 'Yes, did you like it?' And she said, 'Yes. The only thing that I did not like is because you only talk about political problems and I have a very big problem and this problem is not political. So you cannot do anything about it.' And I said, 'Madam, first of all, all problems are political. So you tell me what's your problem and I'll show you that we can do a play about it because it is political.' She said, 'No, no, my problem is not political.' And I said, 'I swear it is. Tell me what's your problem and I'm going to show you that it is political.' And she said, 'My problem is not political because it is between me and my husband.' And I said, 'OK . . . your husband – that's political, because who tells you that he's your husband? It's society. It's not "you and a man you know", it's not "you and somebody else". It's "you and your husband". And who can tell you that he's your husband? It's society. If society tells you that you are "his wife" and he's "your husband", your problem is a political problem.' And she was very happy and said, 'Oh, me and

my husband, we are political! I said 'Yes! Yes! As political as you can be! You are political.' And she said, 'So you can do a play about my situation?' I said, 'Yes we can do a play about you.'²⁰

Over the years, then, Boal has been at pains to emphasize the political dimension of the woman's problem; but was she herself ever all that mystified? Back in 1973, there was no suggestion that the woman was ever labouring under any kind of ideological false consciousness. Her first, hardly naive thought is that the husband's documents might have 'something to do with the ownership of their small house'. She then experiences the humiliation of having all her neighbours learn about the husband's mistress. Yet, far from being cowed by this, she decides to socialize the problem she is experiencing and proposes it (apparently without hesitation) as a 'controversial theme' for the workshop. The woman knows what she wants – namely, suitable revenge – and hesitates only as to the means.

Enacting the Birth of Forum Theatre

Now, to pick up the story again where I left off, a 'large exuberant woman' enters into Boal's narrative. In 1990 (the French Rainbow Text), he puts it like this: 'Suddenly I spotted a rather large woman, seated in the third row, who was shaking her head and bursting with rage.'²¹ For the English Rainbow Text, the woman becomes 'very large, powerful . . . built like one of those Japanese sumo fighters'.²² Here too, she's 'shaking her head and bursting with rage'. In the Brisbane keynote, she is 'a very strong woman, but not that she was fat, she was – she had big muscles'.²³ By this time, she is also 'like a dragon throwing smoke!'

In all three of these versions, Boal admits to being afraid of the woman – in the French and English Rainbow Texts, this is on account of the woman 'glaring at me with a look of absolute hatred';²⁴ in the Brisbane keynote, more candidly perhaps, Boal is afraid of the woman 'because she was really strong'.²⁵ Nevertheless, Boal summons up the courage to ask the woman for her suggestion and in each of these versions he is baffled by her

response. The English Rainbow Text, for instance, reads:

*'This is what [the betrayed woman] should do: let the husband in, have a clear conversation with him, and then, and only then, forgive him.' I was completely baffled. With all her huffing and puffing, and muttered comments, and looks that could kill, I was expecting her to propose solutions of a more violent nature. Anyway, I didn't argue, and I told the actors to improvise this new solution. They improvised, but without any real gusto. The husband protested his love and – all's well that ends well – asked his wife to bring him his supper. She went off to the kitchen and that's how the scene ended. I looked at the big woman; she was huffing and puffing more than ever and her fulminating glare was even more furious and murderous than before.'*²⁶

In the Brisbane keynote, Boal describes the woman, by this stage, as 'really almost levitating'.²⁷ The actors try again to improvise a 'clear conversation' without making much progress and an argument follows (in the later English-language versions, at least – not in French or Spanish) in which the woman accuses Boal of sabotaging her idea 'because you are a man and men don't understand women and you are not understanding what I said because you don't want to'.²⁸

Finally, the woman leaves her seat. In the French and English Rainbow texts this is to take up Boal's hesitant offer to come up on stage and act out the idea herself – he makes the same offer in the Brisbane keynote version although, interestingly enough, there the offer is made only *after* the woman has stood up to leave and out of Boal's mixed feelings of (a) relief at realizing she wasn't about to attack him physically; but also (b) pity at the sight of her leaving the theatre: 'Madam, please don't do that, don't go away. We are trying our best.'²⁹ In each of these three versions, upon Boal's suggestion that she come up on stage, the woman is 'illuminated and transfigured . . . "May I?" "You may!"'³⁰

The story ends happily with the woman's bravura acting out of what she means by a 'clear conversation'. Here is the English Rain-

bow Text, plus one of Boal's own bravura ad-libs from the Brisbane keynote:

*She came up on stage, grabbed the poor defenceless actor-husband (who was a real actor, but not a real husband, and moreover was skinny and weak), and laid into him with a broom-handle with all her strength, simultaneously delivering a lecture to him on her complete views on the relations between husband and wife. We attempted to rescue our endangered comrade, but the big woman was much stronger than us. [From the Brisbane keynote: She was so strong she did this to me. (Boal mimes receiving an elbow to the gut.) I went back to the setting over there, I ran over the setting . . . and then she kept hitting him and he was so Stanislavskian when he said, 'Forgive me! I'll never do that again!' And we believed him so well, he was so true to that.] Finally, she stopped of her own accord and, satisfied, planted her victim on a seat at the table and said: 'Now that we have had this very clear and very sincere conversation, you can go to the kitchen and fetch my dinner, because after all this I'm tired out!'*³¹

Boal concludes by explaining how this intervention made it clear to him that 'when the spectator herself comes on stage and carries out the action she has in mind, she does it in a manner which is personal, unique, and non-transferable . . . as no artist can do it in her place . . . This is how Forum Theatre was born.'³²

The Woman in Lima Transported

It is a good story – one that myself and other TO practitioners have told as part of warming up a Forum Theatre audience. However, the difference between the description above and the 1973/1979 version of the woman's intervention is also highly instructive. Here it is now, in full:

The last solution was presented by a large exuberant woman; it was the solution accepted unanimously by the entire audience, men and women. She said: 'Do it like this: let him come in, get a really big stick, and hit him with all your might – give him a good beating. After you've beat him enough for him to feel repentant, put the stick

away, serve him his dinner with affection, and forgive him.' The actress performed this version, after overcoming the natural resistance of the actor who was playing the husband, and after a barrage of blows – to the amusement of the audience – the two of them sat at the table, ate, and discussed the latest measures taken by the government, which happened to be the nationalization of American companies.³³

So, in this early version, the woman does not appear to shake her head, to burst with rage, to throw murderous looks in Boal's direction, to breath fire, to levitate – or, indeed, to leave her seat. She does not need to get up on stage and show the actors what to do, since everyone has understood, quite clearly, what she has said. In the English Rainbow version of the story, Boal is 'baffled' (in the French Rainbow text and the Brisbane keynote he is even 'disappointed') when the woman does not propose a violent solution. Yet, in the earliest written version, she does advocate violence – it is only the actors who hesitate. Also, in this early version, the whole audience (men and women) are united in their delight – a far cry from the stand-off between Boal and the woman, as it is described in later versions.

In 1973, the explicit 'political problem' is not the socially defined relations between men and women; on the contrary, the actor-husband and the actor-wife discuss together the issue of the day: the nationalization of American companies. This might sound a little fanciful, a case of the actors improvising and steering the scene towards a politically correct happy end. (This raises the question, of course, as to whether the story's ending in later versions is any less politically correct – at any rate, the 1973/1979 version, more so than later ones, clearly sets the story in the context of a theatre-based literacy project, sponsored by the revolutionary government of Peru in 1973.)³⁴ Finally, if we are to follow the 1973/1979 version, Forum Theatre was not born on this occasion: Boal tells the story in his first book purely to illustrate the technique of 'simultaneous dramaturgy' and Forum Theatre is not in fact mentioned till five pages later.³⁵

Testing Theory through Call and Response

In oral storytelling traditions, the performer listens out for what the audience wants to hear. So no two audiences should get the same story – indeed, this is a sign of respect. Certainly, part of Boal's effectiveness as a teacher is bound up with the way he is able to expand on his material in performance, slipping in and out of narration and enactment, varying his pace and rhythm, making sure his audience gets both the laughs and the more didactic punchlines. The facts of the Woman in Lima story are, partly, 'manufactured' – fashioned and re-fashioned by at least thirty years of performing, writing, editing, re-writing, translating, and so on. The story is a 'true fiction', to borrow James Clifford's description of ethnographic writing – a description which Clifford supports by citing both meanings of the Latin root *ingere*: 'making, but also . . . making up'.³⁶

In highlighting these discrepancies between the different versions of the Woman in Lima story, I do not mean to suggest, however, that Boal has simply made the whole thing up. Perhaps the 1973/1979 version is the closest to what actually happened. Perhaps the later versions are an amalgam of several similar episodes. Or perhaps, as the theoretical significance of the episode has become clearer to Boal, he has added details which did not seem relevant before. Thus, in the Brisbane keynote, he remarks how

*In the first moment, I saw the anecdotic [value of this episode] . . . It was a beautiful event. But then I started thinking – what has this woman done besides being enraged and going there [on stage]? Why was she so much enraged? And then I reflected about this – what makes theatre?*³⁷

Rather than seeking to establish, once and for all, the 'truth' of the matter, the main issue now is surely to understand the way in which the Woman in Lima story functions as a widely circulated pedagogical text. What do the shifts from one version to another signify about the relationship of Boal to would-be TO practitioners; and what do they signify about the changing context of TO practice?

To the extent that the story undergoes *systematic* transformations over the years, this might be a case of Boal revising and adapting the 'hypotheses' derived from his earliest, raw experiences. As Bourdieu would have it, the 'logic of practice' means that such experiences can take on an extraordinary weight. It is as if they support an immune system which keeps us from enquiring too deeply into the assumptions governing our daily practice – all those thoughts and actions that come to us as if by 'second nature', making up what Bourdieu calls the *habitus*. The 'original' accounts of early experiences are enshrined because the *habitus* tends to be self-sustaining: it survives precisely by limiting our exposure to new or potentially disturbing information, places, events, people, and so on.³⁸

Of course, a corollary to this would be that if we *are* exposed to new information, places, events, and people, the 'original' accounts are going to need some reassessment – and so, as Boal travels through Paris, London, New York, and Brisbane, the Woman in Lima is also transported out of her seat, her role in TO theory (as well as her physique) becoming more enlarged.

Jürgen Habermas suggests another angle here when he argues that ideology can deform discourse the way a neurosis manifests itself as a physical symptom on the body.³⁹ On this account, we might read Boal's changing description of the Woman in Lima's body as a sign of ideological uncertainty. Whether consciously or not, it seems that he does in fact rework the narrative at points which correlate to 'ideological fault-lines' in the transposition of TO techniques, from 'Third World' to 'First World' settings. Thus, among the more commonly voiced criticisms of Boal's work are, firstly, that his work in Europe and North America has become progressively depoliticized, moving into ill-defined areas of therapeutic practice, pandering to a bourgeois taste for individual psychodrama, etc.;⁴⁰ and, secondly, that his techniques rely on outmoded and restrictive binary oppositions between 'oppressor' and 'oppressed', between 'antagonist' and 'protagonist'.

On the issue of 'depoliticization', to charge Boal with selling-out to bourgeois individu-

alism does, as Adrian Jackson puts it, smack of a somewhat 'ossified, unreconstructed Marxist reading of [his] movement into the therapeutic arena. . . . Therapeutic is not necessarily a synonym for normalizing or societizing.'⁴¹ Nevertheless, many theatre workers seem unclear as to the rationale behind Boal's more therapeutic techniques and uneasy about whether they signal a radical new departure or simply an extension of earlier, more overtly political TO practice.

As far as Boal's reliance on binary oppositions is concerned, this view has been put forcibly by feminist practitioners of TO. Berenice Fisher, for example, argues that all too often Forum Theatre on issues such as sexual harassment or domestic violence reinforces stereotyped views of women as victims who collaborate in their oppression. When the basic rule of Forum Theatre – that spect-actors should only replace the oppressed protagonist of a scenario – is strictly applied, this could easily be taken to imply that women should be adapting their behaviour in response to violence rather than suggesting that men also bear responsibility for their own and other men's actions. Oppressed female characters, according to Fisher, are also frequently portrayed as so trapped and isolated within family structures that any 'attempts to break the oppression' are 'limited to individual heroics' – audiences tend neither to look for 'outside' interventions nor to challenge the 'individualistic, sexist or heterosexist assumptions built into the play'.⁴²

It is, indeed, tempting to see Boal's alterations to the story of the Woman in Lima as a reflex defence against such criticisms. As shown above, on the one hand he drives home the point about the political nature of the relations between the betrayed woman and her husband (in effect, he substitutes a universally relevant political problem for the problems specific to the 1973 literacy project in Lima); on the other hand, he draws out the confrontation between himself and the woman in the audience to the point where it becomes like a joust between a diffident 'snag' theatre director and a militant, fire-breathing proto-feminist. Of course, this struggle bet-

ween Boal and the woman ends in a victory for both of them: he empowers her by bringing her onto the stage and she rewards him by enacting the birth of Forum Theatre.

Experience, Discourse, and Power

To argue the merits of one practice in relation to another means weighing up the value of different experiences (thus, Boal's encounter with the Woman in Lima yields a possible solution to the shortcomings of some earlier, agitprop style work in North East Brazil – the subject of another favourite anecdote).⁴³ And when Boal conducts a TO training workshop it is indeed a very rich lode of experience which he is able to tap.

However, the fact that these workshops are, in turn, so strongly based on a model of experiential learning (participants learn the techniques by doing them under Boal's direction and by working on their own personal experiences) means there is little opportunity to raise questions about the relationship between the context in which the techniques were first developed and those in which they might subsequently be applied. Participants can become so caught up in the process of 'self-discovery' (this being also one of the strengths of experiential learning) that they assume a commonality between their experiences and those from which the techniques derive.

In this way, there is obviously a risk that some participants might fetishize the heavily mediated images contained in stories such as that of the Woman in Lima. Bewitched by what seems to be an enduring 'authenticity', participants might draw on these stories, parasitically, to justify 'conventional' TO practice in a radically different context – rather than adopting the sort of critical attitude whereby changed circumstances might suggest novel practices.

Of course, it is not simply a matter of writing up new experiences to weigh against Boal's account of his foundational theatrical encounters. What is also at issue is the way individuals come to 'experience their experiences' in the first place. This is a more fundamental problem, highlighted by the feminist historian Joan Scott:

When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject (the person who had the experience or the historian who recounts it) becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one's vision is structured – about language (or discourse) and history – are left aside.⁴⁴

Scott's argument suggests that there is ultimately no way for TO practitioners to have direct access to the truth of the Woman in Lima story. As I have argued above, the interaction between Boal and his audience over the years actually produces a *different* Woman in Lima, a woman who no doubt better fits the image of an ideal popular theatre audience – passionate, rowdy, resourceful, unpredictable, etc. Whether consciously worked out or not, this rhetorical manoeuvre also fits perfectly with the logic of Boal's broader argument, advanced in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, that popular theatre has been in a state of almost terminal decline since Aristotle perfected his 'coercive system of tragedy'.⁴⁵ The 'birth of Forum Theatre', via the Woman in Lima's experience, rescues popular theatre from this fate.

More disturbing, however, is the fact that later versions of this story have also taken something away from the Woman in Lima. She is, quite literally, rendered inarticulate. She loses the capacity to explain what she means by 'a clear conversation'. And in this respect, Boal's restructuring of the narrative might be said to force her onto the stage in order to recover the voice that was always hers in any case. Without the ability to speak clearly, this woman – like the participants in a TO training workshop – must learn by doing. Such, at least, is the time-honoured piece of TO wisdom that the Woman in Lima story seems now to authorize.

Of course, there is a visceral charge which comes with deciding as an audience member to intervene directly on stage in a piece of Forum Theatre, to enact your desire to change a scenario which connects with some part of your lived experience of a particular social problem. There is a kind of knowledge – or perhaps, better, a will to knowledge and

power – which is apprehended in such circumstances and which is qualitatively different from knowledge acquired sitting in your seat as silent witness. However, there is no reason to conclude from this that the onstage intervention is *always* more telling than the discussion surrounding it, as if actions always speak louder than mere words. After all, whoever plays the role of 'joker' (or facilitator) in Forum Theatre, like Boal, generally does a lot of talking as part of their act. Taken in this way, the Woman in Lima story can still perhaps serve as a useful cautionary tale about the subtlety with which experience, discourse, and power relations become imbricated in TO pedagogy.

Notes and References

1. Routledge has published the following books by Boal: *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992; revised edition, 2002); *Rainbow of Desire* (1995); *Legislative Theatre* (1998); *Hamlet and the Baker's Son* (2001). In 1994 they brought out an anthology of critical writing, *Playing Boal*, and a new study of his work is forthcoming in their 'Performance Practitioners' series.

2. Adrian Jackson, 'Translator's Introduction', to Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: the Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. xviii.

3. The outstanding exception in this regard is Drew Milne, 'Theatre as Communicative Action: Augusto Boal's "Theatre of the Oppressed"', *Comparative Criticism*, No. 14 (1992). Milne's close reading of Boal has passed without comment in at least two important anthologies of critical writing on TO: Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz, ed., *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, and Activism* (London: Routledge, 1994) and *Contemporary Theatre Review*, III, No. 1 (1995), a special issue on Boal.

4. Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 1979), p. 79.

5. Drew Milne, 'Theatre as Communicative Action', p. 114.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

7. Philip Auslander adopts a similar approach when he takes Boal's 'scattered and fragmentary comments on the body as theoretical texts' or, better, as 'accesses to important issues concerning the body in performance implied and engaged in [Boal's] work'. See Philip Auslander, 'Boal, Blau, Brecht: the Body', in Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz, ed., *Playing Boal*, p. 124–33.

8. Heiner Müller, 'Brecht zu gebrauchen, ohne ihn zu kritisieren, ist Verrat', in *Theater 1980: Jahrbuch der Zeitschrift "Theater Heute"* (Seelze: Freidrich Verlag Velber, 1980).

9. To give an indication of the level of this demand, in the twelve-month period from April 1994 to March 1995 Boal spent more than four months giving workshops and appearing at conferences in the following countries: France, England, the USA, Italy, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Sweden. This was a time when he was also heavily committed to work as a *Vereador*, representing the Workers' Party on the Rio de Janeiro

city council. (The information cited here was sourced from an occasional newsletter produced by the Centro de Teatro do Oprimido, which operated from Boal's council chambers.)

10. As another keynote speaker to the IDEA conference, Rustom Bharucha, observed: 'Those of us who are located in the so-called "Third World" find that the routes of cultural exchange are already mapped for us, even before we enter them (if, of course, we are invited to do so in the first place). Invariably, we meet through the patronage of First World economies, which have the necessary capital, infrastructure, and technology to 'map' the world in the first place. . . . So, the "Third World" meets, if at all, through the "First".' Rustom Bharucha, 'Negotiating the "River": Intercultural Interactions and Interventions', *The Drama Review*, XLI, No. 3 (1997), p. 33. I understand that a Portuguese edition of *The Rainbow of Desire* finally appeared in 1997 – Boal refers to it in an online interview with Adriana Lessa de Miranda for *Theatre Network Magazine*, <http://interlog.com/~artbiz/neterview1.html> (consulted 5 April 2000).

11. Pierre Bourdieu, *Questions de Sociologie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1984), p. 34–5; 133–6.

12. This story has indeed become so much a part of Boalian folklore that his theatre group in Rio performed a re-enactment of it as part of their contribution to the Seventh International Festival of Theatre of the Oppressed. See articles by Paul Heritage, 'The Courage to be Happy: Augusto Boal, Legislative Theatre, and the Seventh International Festival of the Theatre of the Oppressed', and Douglas Paterson, 'A Role to Play for the Theatre of the Oppressed', both in *The Drama Review*, XXXVIII, No. 3 (1994).

13. See *Theatre of the Oppressed*, p. 132–4. In an introductory note in the first Brazilian edition, *Teatro do Oprimido y outras Poéticas Políticas* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1975), Boal explains that this section of the book was composed first in Spanish in 1973. It was then published in Spanish in 1974.

14. Augusto Boal, *Méthode Boal de Théâtre et de Thérapie: l'Arc-en-ciel du Désir* (Paris: Editions Ramsay, 1990), p. 10–15. Where possible I use Adrian Jackson's English translation (see next note) – however, as my analysis demonstrates, there are occasional discrepancies between the two texts (including both cuts and interpolations, ranging from simple phrases to whole paragraphs). Where there is no direct correlation between the French and English editions, therefore, I have added my own translation.

15. Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: the Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 3–7.

16. Augusto Boal, 'Theatre of the Oppressed: Politics, Education and Change', Keynote Address to the Second International Drama/Theatre in Education (IDEA) Conference, Brisbane, 1–6 July 1995. (Audiotape obtained from the Australian National Association for Drama in Education – my transcriptions.)

17. *Theatre of the Oppressed*, p. 132–3.

18. *Méthode Boal de Théâtre et de Thérapie*, p. 11.

19. *The Rainbow of Desire*, p. 4.

20. Keynote, IDEA Conference, Brisbane.

21. *Méthode Boal de Théâtre et de Thérapie*, p. 12.

22. *The Rainbow of Desire*, p. 5.

23. Keynote, IDEA Conference, Brisbane.

24. *The Rainbow of Desire*, p. 5; see also *Méthode Boal de Théâtre et de Thérapie*, p. 12–13.

25. Keynote, IDEA Conference, Brisbane.

26. *The Rainbow of Desire*, p. 5.

27. Keynote, IDEA Conference, Brisbane.

28. Ibid. See also *The Rainbow of Desire*, p. 6.

29. Keynote, IDEA Conference, Brisbane.

30. *The Rainbow of Desire*, p. 6.

31. *The Rainbow of Desire*, p. 6–7; Keynote, IDEA Conference, Brisbane.

32. *The Rainbow of Desire*, p. 7.

33. *Theatre of the Oppressed*, p. 134.

34. This was part of the ALFIN programme (*Operación Alfabetización Integral*), based on Freirean methodology. This programme is well described by Alfonso Lizarzaburu, a member of the then government's Educational Reform Commission, in his article: 'ALFIN: an Experiment in Adult Literacy Training in a Society in Transition', *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Education*, VI, No. 1 (1976), p. 103–10.

35. Details of 'the birth of Forum Theatre' are ambiguous in Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz, ed., *Playing Boal*. In their introduction, the editors maintain that Boal was using Forum Theatre in Brazil well in advance of his work in Lima (this later period being marked, for Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz, by the development of Image Theatre). Yet, in the same volume, in an interview with Michael Taussig and Richard Schechner (p. 22–3), Boal once again ascribes Forum Theatre's origins to events in Lima. This view is most recently endorsed in Augusto Boal, *Hamlet and the Baker's Son: My Life in Theatre and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 309.

36. James Clifford, 'Introduction: Partial Truths', in James Clifford and George Marcus, ed., *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) p. 6.

37. Keynote, IDEA Conference, Brisbane.

38. Pierre Bourdieu, *Le Sens Pratique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980) p. 90 and ff.

39. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p. 217 and ff.

40. See, for example, an interview by Lionel Pilkington, 'Dan Baron Cohen: Resistance to Liberation with Derry Frontline Culture and Education', *The Drama Review*, XXXVIII, No. 4 (1994), p. 17–47. See also David George, 'Theatre of the Oppressed and Teatro Arena: In and Out of Context', *Latin American Theatre Review*, XXVIII, No. 2 (1995), p. 39–54.

41. Adrian Jackson, 'Translator's Introduction', *The Rainbow of Desire*, p. xxi.

42. Berenice Fisher, 'Feminist Acts: Women, Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed', in Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz, ed., *Playing Boal*, p. 189.

43. For a version of this anecdote, see *The Rainbow of Desire*, p. 1–3.

44. Joan Scott, 'Experience', in Judith Butler and Joan Scott, ed., *Feminists Theorize the Political* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 25.

45. *Theatre of the Oppressed*, p. x.