



UNDER PRESSURE

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Under Pressure's New Edition

In the Preface of the French edition of Theatre of the Oppressed, Augusto Boal dedicates his book to the "oppressed classes and to all oppressed in the interior of those classes". This affirmation explicitly recognized that, besides of what the Left used to call "main contradiction", that is, the contradiction between capitalists and workers, existed also other forms of oppression which could not be reduced to that main one, especially women's oppressions.

So, it is only normal that this first edition of this new formula of *Under Pressure*, which, from this issue on, will be centered on a particular theme in each of its editions, has for subject "Theatre of the Oppressed and the Oppression of Women". To emphasize the specific oppression of women does not mean a desire to promote a historic reparation (we leave this task to the feminist organizations themselves), neither does it mean to forget other important contradictions that assail our society: it simply comes from our deep conviction that patriarchy has a strong hold on the ensemble of our social life, everywhere in the world.

As an evidence of the universality of this oppression, it is enough to mention the building of an immense brothel of 3.000 square meters and the importation of 40.000 prostitutes in Germany to satisfy the tourists who came to celebrate one of the biggest international gatherings, the recent World Soccer Championship.

Through the articles of this issue, which concern a contradiction that crosses our lives in all of its aspects, we meet, as it is normal, all questions we meet in the Theatre of the Oppressed: the stakes of the individual in a stage, the need to examine the dialectics between personal life and the role of social structures, the necessary challenge that it is urgent to make to the stable forms of oppression, the question of the strategies to be used beyond and after the theatrical representation, that is, into real life, and still many others.



I make a point of thanking all of our contributors: Bárbara Santos (CTO-Rio, Brasil), Amollo Maurice Amollo (Amani People's Theatre, Kenya), Muriel Naessens (French Family Planning Movement, France), Thissa D'Avila (European

Association against Violence against Women in their Work Place, France), Jale Karabekir (Tiyatro Boyali Kus, Turquie) and Sanjoy Ganguly (Jana Sanskriti, India).

If the fact that these writings come from so many countries proves the universality of the oppression of women, it demonstrates, at the same time, the universality of the fight against patriarchy.

I hope that this issue will be useful as a support for thinking, as a toolbox in that struggle and still, who knows, it can also be a step to the construction of an international front of Theatre of the Oppressed in that domain.

Julián Boal
Editor

PS – Still a few words about the next UP editions. If the new editorial line favours articles relating practical experiences to theory, it is equally open to all kinds of suggestions and is determined to cover all major events related to Theatre of the Oppressed, like Festivals, Meetings, Projects, etc. For example, the next editions will be about the big Jana Sanskriti's Festival in India, Theatre of the Oppressed in Prisons, Theatre of the Oppressed in zones where conflicts and wars took place, etc.

Encarcerated Women and Therapy of the Applause

By Bárbara Santos¹

(Translated by Carolina Ravassa)

These women are in jail. However, the jails are not for them. Designed primary for men the jails do not take female needs into consideration. They lack tampons, nor do they provide child day-care centers. They cells are tight for women that deal with premenstrual tensions, anxiety, happiness and depression.

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The distance from the family combined with a general lack of economic resources makes it difficult for mothers to see their children. Some go through maternity in jail, and give birth to "baby prisoners". These children are deprived of that fundamental "human right" to be with their mothers. These are children that lose contact with their mothers so as not to grow up in prison.

A woman prisoner in Garanhuns (a city in Pernambuco), fights to recuperate her child that was sent to adoption because she did not have family members that could take him in. A two year old baby, in Teresina (a city in Piauí), was born and lives in jail, she does not speak and smiles seldomly, her mother is scared to death of losing her to adoption, her family is from Minas Gerais, another state.

These women are victims of machism, of economic necessity combined in some cases with material interest or the insatiable need to consume. They are caught at the prison doors with drugs for their husbands; they are seduced by drug dealers, specialized in finding such women, single mothers with economic needs, who in spite of being poor, are subject to vanity and want to purchase whatever the TV says they ought to.

Offensive treatment affects them emotionally. Their sadness is easily transformed into anger. Many of them do not tell their children they are prisoners. They feel ashamed of the conditions they are in. In most cases, they are convinced that they are guilty and that they deserve the punishment they are receiving. They cry, they scream, and they are deeply affected by it all. Jails are unprepared and too small to deal with the complexities of women.

In spite of the growing number of women prisoners in Brazil – caused especially by women's roles in the drug traffic – the system has not prepared itself to both receive these prisoners and to re-insert them in society after their time is served. Brazil needs more female prisons, just as it needs the specific training for the prison guards that work with these women. There is no structure that considers the needs of maternity and that guarantees the fundamental rights of these children.

Just as it is in society, a woman's space in jail is precarious. The system is masculine in its concepts and essence. In cities like Caicó, Rio Grande do Norte, they don't even have feminine prisons! Female prisoners are put in an improvised area inside the masculine prison. In Mossoró, in the same state, female prisoners, await going to court in a tiny space inside the public male prison. Such an



impromptu female presence presents legal and security problems for the guards and for the women prisoners. Often times, physical integrity is violated.

In the public prison of Mossoró, the prisoners participate in the Theatre of the Oppressed in Prisons² project, a Center of the Theatre of the Oppressed- CTO-Rio and National Penitentiary Department- DEPEN initiative. It has been developing in seven Brazilian states: Rio Grande do Norte, Piauí, Pernambuco, Mato Grosso do Sul, Espírito Santo, São Paulo e Rio Grande do Sul.

In a Forum Theatre³ workshop the prisoners created a scene called "Without Space for Love" showing the drama of not having the proper space to receive their families on visiting days. Because of their horrible conditions, they cannot even have official intimate visits; love encounters are improvised and many times, watched by their own children.

"Without Space for Love" was presented in the first Potiguar Theatre of the Oppressed Festival, on May 23rd in the Lauro Monte Filho Theatre, in downtown Mossoró. The spectators were astonished; some even shocked by the unacceptable situation to which these women and their children were subjected, just kilometers away from the center of their city.

In the Feminine Correctional Facility of Teresina-PI, another group of prisoners presented a scene about the abuse of authority and sexual discrimination. Female prison guards oppress female prisoners by reproducing the machismo attitude without re-inventing or "feminizing" the structure of security there.

During one of the rehearsals, a female guard felt offended by the scene. She intervened aggressively, trying to provoke a reaction that would justify a punishment. The rest of rehearsal was quite tense. In the end, the prisoners surprised many, and also themselves; they asked to speak to the director about the guard who intervened so disrespectfully. They requested an apology.

² This project creates a space for open dialogue between the different sectors in the prison system and society. This is done through Forum Theatre shows produced by prisoners or guards, hoping for a transformation of the reality in prisons.

³ **Forum Theatre:** A Theatre of the Oppressed technique, created by Augusto Boal- A show based on real facts, in which oppressed and oppressors enter in conflict in a clear and objective way, defending their arguments. In the argument, the oppressed fails and the audience is invited by the Joker (a Theatre of the Oppressed facilitator) to come up on stage, substitute the Oppressed and find an alternative to the problem expressed.



The director was also surprised by this negotiating attitude with which the prisoners had come forth. She responded by negotiating as well! She suspended the guard who acted so inappropriately. She also asked the prisoners about the negative aspects of their scene, she asked for feelings and reflections. It was finally left open ended.

The next day, the prisoners re-evaluated their scene. They re-considered and rearranged their script. Besides representing what they truly desire to transform, the intolerance and abuse of power, they adjusted certain scenes highlighting the positive aspects of the facility, in fact, they highlighted the work of the more respected guards.

A transformation was occurring as their scene and representation of reality was taking place. As they acted, they analyzed. As they created, they finally saw what they had been looking for. This creation process was re-creating reality and revealing what was submerged by the mechanic, mundane reality they were living.

As they recreated what is real, the prisoners were seeing themselves in action. They analyzed their reality through the representation of what is real. As spectators of their own lives, they finally understand and even rehearse the possible changes that might take place.

This Forum exercise teaches the possibility of trying something different. In real life, they change their attitude along with their director's attitude. They realized that a meeting and conversation are more efficient than the uncontrolled screaming normally consumes us.

They can look for many ways to make a person understand what they truly feel, what they live through, for what they wish and who they are.

For the first time they leave the prison as a theatrical ensemble. They are going to perform publicly in a Cultural Center. As they enter the theatre, still as prisoners, armed police accompany them. Even though they are hand-cuffed, they are determined! They go through the ritual of getting un-cuffed. They go up to the stage and are actresses. They observe and make the space their own, they study and practice their scene, they have a general rehearsal and they are ready!

The auditorium is full, more than 300 spectators: students, workers of that system,



penitentiary workers, policemen, family members. Children went to see their mothers that were up on stage as protagonists of their own stories.

During the interaction with the audience, both the prisoners from Mossoró-RN and Teresina-PI realized that what was most interesting for them was not what the interactive audience said but rather what they display. The people were shocked by this jail reality, introduced for the first time to the injustice that exists. To establish this objective and sensorial communication with the audience, the prisoners discover that they are rendering a service; they are revealing a hidden world to the spectators. The prisoners feel useful, like agents of reality.

When analyzing the interventions, we find that the spectators make an honest effort to think of and act out an alternative solution to the problems presented on stage. In a Legislative Theatre session, we are surprised by the number of people that rather than just watch the show, also want to participate in the discussion in order to elaborate on legislative propositions that will help resolve the problem. Judged by the interest that the audience shows for this spectacle, we can see that the discussion and the event as a whole shows that the prisoners are interesting people and have something important to say.

This interest awoken in the audience is concrete proof that the prisoners can contribute to the transformation of reality. The fact that the prisoners are there, on stage, in front of an audience proves to be a sign that they can fill a place in society. That such places exist! The stage is an unimaginable place for many of them, offering a new perspective of the world. From the stage they re-discover themselves in society.

The applause they receive throughout the whole event symbolizes their recognition and approval. Recognition and approval from whom though? From Society itself. Socially invisible women win positive visibility. They become visible, not because of the crime they committed, but because of the ideas they have and the instruments that they use to communicate as real women.

The applause heals the soul, re-establishes social contact, reveals significance, recognition and approval; it adds new dimension to reality and ratifies visibility. But the applause is just one moment in a very long process. Just one moment! However, it can become one of those fundamental moments of life, those that need to be understood, delved into and multiplied.



Proud children want to hug their actress-moms. The mothers are proud to be the reason for their children's vicarious pride. They will flaunt their new story in school. Just before saying goodbye at the show, a daughter said to her imprisoned mother: "When you become free, I want to do theatre like you!"

Dramatizing Modern Rituals: The politics of woman and Violence in Kenya

By Amollo Maurice Amollo

Introduction

Genuine development and social-cultural growth demands a system of constant interaction with all the people, accessibility at all levels, a public culture which allows conflicting ideas to contend, and which provides for full participation in reaching consensus on socio-cultural, economic and political goals. Such interaction takes place at different levels both separately and simultaneously in the form of dialogue, which, when carried out in freedom, and equality of discourse, leads to a successful development of a universal, human civilization in whose idiom we all need to speak in order to understand the national, and local in their rich variety of human sub-cultures.

In this paper, I examine how Amani Peoples Theatre (APT), an organization of African Artist Peacebuilders, uses Drama and theatre, as a form of African traditional Media to help Kenyan women access knowledge they require in their fight against various forms of violence and for rights and recognition. It explains how the methodology of drama/Theatre provides the space within which women are fighting to eradicate the poverty of dignity that comes with being a woman in most of parts of East Africa, by engaging them in debates that are intrinsic to genuine democracy; reason, responsibility, mutual respect, freedom of expression and freedom of conscience that define ones identity

Founded in 1994, Amani Peoples Theatre (APT) is an organization of African artist peacebuilders employing Interactive Multi-Arts Approaches in Conflict Transformation, Peace-building and Development.

APT believes in the existence of a Peaceful, Developed and Egalitarian Society that respects Human Dignity and uses a theatre process that integrates education, entertainment and research in exploring context specific issues on Conflict and



development by enhancing the community's search for creative, non-violent responses.

The use of theatre as a methodology in combating violence against women in Kenya makes a difference by weaving together the performance arts, African traditional forms of performance and rituals, and other participatory processes in order to increase the public's knowledge and sensitivity, expand its awareness and creativity, sharpen its understanding with the conviction that cultural enlightenment and community involvement in fashioning stories of peace, can help lead to more civil society.

Women and violence in Kenya

The variety of types of violence African women face range from sexual assault, displacement, trafficking and dangerous actions against women's health, like the intentional infection with HIV/AIDS. It also includes indirect violence through discrimination, marginalization and poverty. At the same time we have intensified awareness of the magnitude of domestic violence, for example wife battering and marital rape. APTs work on Gender-based violence also brings into focus the question of the responsibility of governments, security institutions and the international community in addressing traditional forms of violence like Female genital mutilation and wife inheritance among others.

Generally, the work has included awareness campaigns of the consequences of women's suffering and obstacles to their empowerment, effective implementation of existing international laws and revisions of national legislation to end impunity, the increase of women's representation at policy decision-making and full support to men helping in re-shaping positive attitudes towards women. APT has been working with select communities in Kenya at developing a larger framework to comprehend the complex character of gender-based violence and to reorient research and analytical activities from the mere monitoring of atrocities and injustice to a full understanding of its root causes.

Why Theatre and gender violence?

The struggle for gender equality throughout the world has been an ongoing concern for a long time. One of the reasons for the need to highlight the suffering of women and protect women rights is because women and girls suffer disproportionately during times of violent conflict. While women and girls endure the same oppression as the rest of the population ... famines, epidemics, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, forced migration, ethnic cleansing, threats and intimidation — they are also targets of specific forms of violence and abuse, including sexual violence and exploitation. This reality has prodded APT to explore not only the



effects of violent conflicts on women, but, with a desire to empower, the effects women can have during violent conflicts.

In most African communities, when women make decisions they are considered emotionally driven. If a decision is accompanied by forcefulness then she is considered to be illogical. Women's aggression is viewed in these communities as a gender incongruent aberration or dismissed as evidence of irrationality. These cultural interpretations have enhanced sex differences by a process of imposition, which stigmatises the expression of aggression by females and causes women to offer exculpatory (rather than justificatory) accounts of their own aggression. This has invariably elicited a violent response from their male counterparts.

Theatre and other forms of drama are very popular in most parts of Africa and are excellent tools for raising human rights awareness and activism. As an arts organization embedded in the community, APT is configured and willing to be influenced by the groups of people and conditions surrounding them by knowledgeably creating situations that reflect or challenge community values. Our starting point is to artistically

- Examine the nature of women's consumption and access to security
- Determine what is a controversial subject in terms of women/men relationships, development and peace building for the collaborating community?
- Examine what cultural treasure exists in the community we work with but is primarily unknown to or unexplored by the inhabitants?

How APT works

APT's work is greatly inspired by the teachings and works of Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire. We employ various forms of performance art including, but not limited to, improvised plays, snap shots, African story telling, Role play, Short plays and forum theatre. The work targeting violence against women is based on two assumptions;

1. That there is a distinction between the human and social
2. That women are subjects rather than objects, they are independent beings able to transcend and recreate their world and not objects mouldable and adaptable.

To achieve this, artist facilitators adopt two specific stances;

- Individual and personal narration of events and experiences. In this participants are prompted to narrate their version of events and reflect on the drama as they tell these stories. They, for example



explain their actions against a violent husband, present and past, tell stories, and interpret tableaux. These are done in still images, movements, sometimes drawings, song and dance. All these are done with the consequence of interpreting the participants own previous actions.

- Challenging of individual current perceptions using possibilities of the future. In this, the artist facilitators present the future as another point of view in opposition to the one the participants are holding. Because violence against women is both a cultural and structural challenge, the future would be presented to participants as something to be *cautious* about, to *dread*. This works well in a genuine search for alternatives, an engagement through *active* consent to genuine dialogue, *not the dialogue of the powerful speaking twice*, in search for alternatives to oppressive lifestyles.

A structural reconstruction

As a first step in the process of changing the status quo, the theatre process transforms the women into peace breakers. This is not intended as an end in itself. It is meant to create public awareness of the issues and in so doing instigate an awareness of the need to initiate intervention. Peace breaking is one facet of ending violence against women. It is followed by peacebuilding which is meant to foster and support sustainable structures and processes that support peaceful coexistence between men and women. In so doing, peacebuilding aims to diminish the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation of violence and all forms of oppression. This process typically contains both immediate and longer term objectives. Thus in our work we see a two-fold process requiring both the deconstruction of the structures that sustain woman oppression and violence and the construction of the structures of justice and peace. The process of Amani Peoples Theatre as a two-fold process differs from other gender violence projects, for it incorporates peacemaking along with violence against women and peacekeeping methods to facilitate “peace”. Before women within a locality engage in peace-breaking they go through a peaceseeing process. This involves analysing existing options to determine which ones will effectively assist the achievement of sustainable peace, which is the ultimate aspiration of Amani Peoples Theatre. The work entails recognising the opportunities available and choosing which option offers the best route. Power balances between men and women has a lot to do with why one chooses to engage in violence. If the balance of power is uneven, then either women or men as an identity group or individual



may choose to engage in peace breaking as a form of peace making because it offers advantages other forms do not provide. Peace breaking by women in Kenya has initiated public awareness of the issues.

Conclusion

This broader awareness has provided enhanced power for women by opening the door for public support. The women in APTs project have noticed that the balance of power in their communities is uneven, they are creating public awareness, and they have recognised the opportunities and are choosing peace breaking as the best strategy to create just peace in their communities. More importantly, "Peoples theatre tries to develop the capacity of everyone to use that language, first with the objective of trying to discover what oppression they are suffering, second by creating the space in which to rehearse ways and means of fighting against those oppressions, third to extrapolate that into real life so that they can become free –which means they can become subjects and not objects of their relationship with others."⁴

Feminism and it's Relationship with Theatre of the Oppressed

By Muriel Naessens

(translated by Margy Nelson)

Augusto Boal first developed the Theatre of the Oppressed in France in the late 70s. An early student, Mado Le Pennec, created a forum called "Doctor, Tell Me Everything" with the Family Planning group in her home town of Rennes. This play was performed at a National Family Planning conference and so impressed Marie-France Casalis, then head of the French Family Planning Movement (MFPF), that she requested a TO workshop exclusively for militants of the organization. This workshop, co-taught by Mado and Margy Nelson (one of the original members of Augusto's core group in Paris), has led to continued, committed use of TO by and through the MFPF, especially in Paris/Ile de France under the leadership of another early student of Boal's, Muriel Naessens, author of this article.

What is the MFPF?

The French Family Planning Movement (MFPF) - known in the U.S. as Planned Parenthood - is a feminist non-profit organization and "movement of "popular

⁴ This is modeled on Boals arguments for the nature of theatre in his article Education and change in Drama Culture and empowerment: Idea Dialogues. 1996 Ed. John O'Tool and Kate Donelan



education” whose goals are sexual freedom, free and available access to methods of contraception, and freedom of abortion. The MFPF denounces any and all forms of violence committed against women: sexual aggression, rape (including as a weapon in wartime), conjugal violence (including conjugal rape), forced marriages (as well as resultant, associated rape), sexual mutilation, lapidation (slow death by stoning), sexual harassment at work, homophobia, lesbo-phobia, and prostitution. The MFPF denounces and actively engages in the struggle against sexism as seen in unequal social status in all areas: education, work, salary, health, family, public spaces, politics, etc. 51% of humans, which is over half of humanity, experience these oppressions. Sexism may manifest differently in different countries, but one can nevertheless not ignore its universal nature.

The Role of TO:

As a member of Augusto’s TO group in Paris and at the same time a militant in the Family Planning Organization, I was able to develop the use of TO on a regular but punctual basis within the MFPF, where it quickly found its rightful place on a national level. Boal’s techniques and philosophy have been most specifically embraced within the Departmental Association of the MFPF in Seine St. Denis (greater Paris/Ile de France area), a true “world department” due to the diversity of its population.

In 1997 I was commissioned to form a group of TO practitioners, to be financed through the MFPF for specific but ongoing projects. This group has since produced 4 forum theatre productions and is currently planning a request for 2007. Each production has marked key evolutions in thinking and in policy within the MFPF and in the French feminist movement.

The Forum “X = Y?” - Adult Patriarchy as Propagator of Oppression:

We created our first forum theatre: “X = Y?” within a framework of sexist violence prevention for teen-agers, stimulating youth’s reflection on how she/he experiences “ordinary” sexism in her/his daily life. We could have chosen this theme because it was a “hot topic” and would be easy to create and to “sell”, as many teachers complained of violent sexist acts in their schools. But we chose to begin by listening to what “young people” had to say about these sexist behaviors, and we discovered that their main complaint was, in fact, the responsibility that adults have in tolerating ordinary sexism in the lives of youth. From teachers (“professionals”) and from parents and other adults, youth see indifference or, worse, unequal attitudes, actions, and discourse towards girls, thus reinforcing male-dominant behavior both in education and in everyday situations such as assignment of daily



tasks, etc. Two of the situations proposed for debate in the forum “X = Y” show this view of adults as seen by the young people, and in public forums the audiences consistently confirmed the reality of this default behavior of adults.

The students’ witnessing of this subtle oppression did not go unheard, and we denounced this reality to the appropriate authorities, including the French Ministry of National Education. As a common voice we, the MFPP, and the youth who spoke up pointed out that a major aspect of sexism and violence that is normally attributed to young people is in fact a phenomenon reproduced by adults, not only in the schools but also through sexist publicity, conjugal violence witnessed at home, pornography, and prostitution.

(One cannot help but note that, during the recent World Cup competitions in Berlin in 2006, the German government imported over 40,000 prostitutes from Eastern countries and constructed a 3,000 square meter edifice near the main stadium to house them and their activities. Germany has a political position of being reglementary, that is, for the legalization of prostitution, rather than wanting to abolish prostitution, as is the position in France.

During our research for “X = Y?” the youth also said that sexism towards boys, transmitted through group pressure, is one of the consequences of a patriarchal structure, and that men and women need to fight together against patriarchy. Becoming a relay for this request, in our forum we invited men to take a position on sexism, with one of our scenes based on this reality.

Pre and Post Forum:

This analysis of underlying yet often un-recognized societal influences led us to create a “before and after” protocol connected with the forum experience. Pre-forum, we met with the teachers, in order to raise their awareness of these observations, inviting them to notice how they presented themselves as males or females. Post-forum, the Family Planning organization, class by class, continued the discussions and gave appropriate support to victims of sexism who might be speaking for the first time of this oppression in their own lives.

The Forum “Les Unes et les Uns”- Individual Responsibility for Sexism:

Our determination as feminists led us to create our first forum on “ordinary” sexism, fertile territory for more violent sexist acts, so as to show more clearly the continuum that exists between sexism and violence. To encourage the individual awareness of how each person’s actions propagate sexist images and social pressures, discoveries that came directly from the young people and our



experiences with the forum “X = Y”, we next created a forum called “Les Unes et les Uns” - roughly translated as “The Shes and the Hes.”

The Forum “What if We Spoke Up, Too?” - The Phenomena of Violence in Society:

For the Social European Forum held in Paris/Ile de France in 2003, we created a Forum Theatre with the theme of conjugal violence, as this subject directly affected all the countries represented at this conference. The forum “What if we spoke up, too?” came from the many victims of conjugal violence that we see through the Family Planning structures; victims who say that family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, or professionals from “the helping professions” are all rarely of any help or support when it comes to conjugal violence. Through this forum we presented the question “is conjugal violence everyone’s business?” Beyond the issues dealt with via the police and the justice system, does our civil society have any responsibility for the fact that a woman dies, from injuries inflicted by her spouse, every 4 days in France?

To approach this question, we took the viewpoint of a witness who wants to help the victim, but is told “that’s their business,” “but he seems like such a nice guy,” or “it looks like it’s just minor disagreements.” The oppressed person is thus the witness instead of the victim herself, a witness who tries to speak up in support of the victim, and who discovers the resistance of the family, the neighbors, and even the “helping professionals.”

Choosing this “witness” viewpoint was a result of a feminist analysis of the phenomena of violence per se. The perpetrator of violence puts into place mechanisms of isolation, belittling and bullying, humiliation, and destruction via both physical and psychological violence, which keeps the “victim” terrorized. She lives such a traumatism that a process of reestablishing her sense of self is necessary. This can be done with the help of friends, family, associations, and professionals who have become aware of the mechanisms of violence. Following this rebuilding stage, she will be able to go from a “victim” state of consciousness to a process of standing up for her self as “oppressed.” Just as the character of Claire, in our forum, speaks up in support and solidarity with the victim, we as a militant association take the same position and engagement in relation to the victim’s struggles.

The Forum on Forced Marriages - Universality of Oppression:



We are currently working on a forum-theatre on forced marriage, for the International Day Against Violence Towards Women on November 25, 2006. We have chosen to highlight forced marriages, a violence propagated most often against women, without presenting it as a cultural phenomenon. This would have distanced many spectators from the problem, or worse shifted the focus to a problem of immigration, the better to condemn and reject it as “other.” Instead, we focused the debate on what we all have in common so as to render the subject more universal, through a representation of what is forbidden in love relationships due to group pressure, be it from our family of origin or via whatever group allegiance defines us: religious, social class, profession, race, etc. We then made the connection between these group pressures about love choices and the pressures from the same social groups towards any kind of forced, restricted, or arranged marriage.

Last year’s International Day Against Violence Towards Women in 2005 was an opportunity to give witness, through different TO groups coming from Brazil, India, Mali, and France, to what extent the struggles here are the struggles there, negating the so-called cultural specificity of any one form of violence. These encounters clearly encouraged International Feminist Solidarity.

The Ultimate Forum - Prostitution:

Our most recent request is a forum for 2007 about prostitution. Basing our focus, once again, on a feminist analysis of the situation, we will not present the prostitutes as the “oppressed” but rather we will work on the role of the clients of prostitution, what their acts propagate, in what ways they, themselves, are oppressed by the patriarchal ideology, and where change can be most effective for this problem.

The Role of Feminist Analysis in TO:

The specific oppressions of women are often treated in TO. Through our experience both as a feminist association and as practitioners of TO, we continually contemplate the political analysis of the phenomena of oppression for women, so that the focus of our forums can be as clear and “right on” as possible. This helps us avoid forums that would be counter productive for women, even though they might be politically correct in the battle against patriarchy, for example. Imagine a forum during which a rape, presented theatrically of course, would take place in front of our eyes, and then the Joker would ask, “What would you do in her place?” That would imply that there was, indeed, something that could be done at the moment of rape, something that our protagonist would have “failed” to do. In



this case we would be reinforcing a belittling of the “victim.” Yet treating the act of rape through TO is possible, for example working on the mentalities that justify rape in terms of “irresistible male urges” and that turn the guilt back onto the woman, accusing her of having been “looking for it” or “provoking the man.”

This all implies that we reflect on the pertinence of the request for a forum, and that we intervene only if we can bring a positive response from the feminist point of view; this demands vigilance so we are not “used”- the patriarchy is everywhere, all the time, the system of domination and the unequal, sexist social relationships are deeply ingrained in our society. We must be as clear as possible about what we are defending. **We are not, in fact, neutral, nor are we just passing through.** On the contrary, we are working to create an effective voice for women everywhere. We are entering into a relationship of political resistance with our participants, via the Theatre of the Oppressed. For example, instead of becoming divided amongst ourselves as women of the world, elaborating our differences, the TO has allowed us to search and find what we have in common, what there is in common between a woman in Algeria and a woman in Mali, a woman in India and a woman in Brazil, or in France. Theatre of the Oppressed reveals the universality of the patriarchal oppression that women experience, and in that sense the TO itself is a feminist approach.

Vigilance is sometimes difficult to maintain. We need all of us, so thank you above all to Antony, Bastien, Delixia, Elisa, Ernestine, Fred, Herve, Jean-Francois, Leo, Marion, Phillippe, Sophie, Thissa; thanks to the MFPP, thanks to all the women and men who have had the courage to speak out, and who have entered into these feminist struggles through the tools of the Theatre of the Oppressed.

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Theatre of the Oppressed & Feminism

By Thissa Bensalah
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The European Association against Violence against Women in their Work Place (AVFT) and the Theatre of the Oppressed.

The AVFT is an independent feminist organization, which fights against and reflects upon all forms of violence against women while specializing in the denunciation of sexist and sexual violence in the work environment. The AVFT, in France, was the organization which conceived laws on sexual harassment.

- *The AVFT offers women, which have suffered from violence support and advice, including legal counsel.*
- *The AVFT intervenes with the employers, the government agency for the Inspection of Work, the court, the national or local police authorities.*
- *It enters a plea in court, as a civil plaintiff.*
- *It writes legislative proposals and keeps a close watch on violence and their legal treatment.*
- *Imagines and animates trainings and awareness campaigns in the work places, but also informs in order to raise consciousness amongst the public.*
- *Publishes articles, reviews...*

Our role, as a feminist association is to give way to the words of women (social group oppressed by the patriarchal system), to analyze these words (to dissect them in order to demonstrate the mechanisms of the patriarchal system), and this so as to obtain changes in society (whether they come forth by new laws, by the true and effective application of existing laws, or by changes in mentalities and behaviors...)

The Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) proposes to analyze relationships of power between oppressed and oppressors in order to fight oppression. Furthermore, the TO states it will not be content with being confined to a mere stage. It wants to inscribe its reflections in reality, its goal being to bring forth the possibility of emancipation through genuine struggle and fights. For this reason it presents itself as a "repetition" of change.

It is naturally that I, both a legal practitioner and an actress, have interested myself in the Theatre of the Oppressed and that- whilst working with the Theatre of the Oppressed



group of the MFPF (French Movement for Family Planning) alongside Muriel Naëssens- I decided to bring this tool to the AVFT.

Birth of a Forum Theatre and specific problems encountered:

Through the stories heard within the organization, we had noticed that more and more of the victims were young women in the early stages of their professional life. During their training courses, they would be sexually harassed on their new work place. We felt the need to address this problem and speak directly to this specific population by developing an action within the professionally oriented schools and the educational centers where the studies are often in direct relationship to the future work place by the mean of training courses during the years of study. We decided to build a Forum Theatre on sexual and sexist violence at work.

As a future “Joker” many questions appeared then as essential before I started on this journey (and I did not find all the answers before confronting myself to the actual experience):

- Which can be my place in all this? Could I have the needed “neutrality” of the joker (which exists to create the link between the audience and the space where the theatre occurs without ever showing my opinion or influencing either parties)? As an integrated member of the “AVFT”, am I not inherently biased? Will the audience be able to express all their thoughts when knowing I am a member of the AVFT ?
- With whom should I work? Actors or non actors-actresses? Was it not a theatre conceived by and for the oppressed? Would it then make sense to take actors-actresses?

The answer to this first question happened in three parts. Firstly, because of the beginning of this project coincided with my leaving the AVFT as a paid employee. But despite this genuine “financial” autonomy (which of course creates in principle an autonomy and a freedom of thought in relation to a given structure), I remained nonetheless a volunteer there, as well as a militant feminist. Furthermore, a militant convinced of the necessity and the good of the decisions and actions undertaken by the organization then and until now (and even sometimes taking part in some of the decisions).

The second stage was, for me, the need to form a group (an organization which we called the Compagnie De(s)amorce(s), which could be translated in its wanted ambiguous meaning, as the *Company of the triggers* and the *Company which unravels*) with people outside of the AVFT so that only the shared theme would



bind us, without any other “common adherence” to another structure. We then formed an entity which was neither solely myself, nor merely the AVFT. As for the 3rd stage, I must admit that- as the true answer to the second question- it did not appear clearly to us before we were confronted to our practice.

But at least here we already had a base: the group, which we formed and some intuitions and decisions in order to begin our creation.

Which we did.

Finally, with 5 actors, we worked during numerous days at the creation of this Forum Theatre with the active participation (on the basis of volunteer work) of 4 young women which had suffered sexual and sexist violence in their workplace, and whose cases were being followed by the organization. They worked and thought alongside the team, in accordance with the philosophy of the *Theatre of the Oppressed*. The objective being, of course, to start from experienced oppressions to create a “theatrical model” which could allow for the oppressed to conquer their words and their speech back in order for each to be able to free themselves from their oppression.

We chose to work not only with the stories and the ideas of these young women but also from our personal experiences (us the actors and actresses) as men and women, so as to interrogate our own private resistances to these questions and see how well we knew them intimately.

Two scenes were hence created, each of approximately 15 minutes, which dealt with the following questions:

- **“side joke”**: How to react when facing trivialization of sexist attitudes and violent behavior at work : verbal violence, and violence of the environment... This scene interrogates the social tolerance, which surrounds and sustains this violence on different levels whether it be with colleagues, a partner, the union or the school.
- **“not heard, not seen”**: How to take a stand as a witness to sexual harassment? How to bring to life a genuine solidarity? This scene interrogates the responsibility of the people surrounding the victim in the work place. In this second story, the oppressed is a man, Martin, who - when witness of the sexual aggression of a colleague - tries to start up a course of action but encounters some resistance.

A name came forth for this forum: **“abusive silences ?”**



Very rapidly some demands were addressed to us so as to debate with this setup not only with “youths” but also between adults (notably within firms or companies...). We then created a second version of this forum destined for adult professionals...

We first acted in high schools with a professional and technical orientation both in Paris and in the adjacent commune of the Seine Saint Denis; we then addressed Company Comities, unions, social workers, communal services, organizations which work with unemployed people arriving at the end of their government support...

It is only after dozens and dozens of debates following this form that I can today affirm that, **if it is with what the hundreds of people we meet tell us which we try to elaborate various hypothesis of change, of links, of new demands** as a theatre group but also as an organization... **It is also thanks to the people we meet that we learn about ourselves.**

And I have learnt this : maybe the specific nature of our struggle -feminism and the innumerable list of violence suffered by women (going from chauvinistic insults to rape and prostitution)- means that as a female Joker, I am not neutral, I am myself part of the group of the “oppressed” and that I am therefore at that specific moment not just any “professional” but someone who, as every oppressed, knows what she wants (the end of the power struggle between men and women, the effective equality between the sexes, the end of violence in a given situation). But does not know how to obtain it.

We hence return to the original philosophy of the Theatre of the Oppressed, a theatre made both *by* and *for* the oppressed... All these questions, which I asked myself fell flat. Our legitimacy came from there but it took me all this journey to understand the obvious which was nonetheless the fuel for all this action.

Indeed when I meet a young woman who has suffered from sexual aggression, I myself feel “aggresed” as a woman (even if the way I live this aggression is of a completely different nature). My struggle is not one of altruistic or compassionate nature, but a natural solidarity in regards to this specific aggression, to this specific injustice.

It was the same with the other members of the team, actors and actresses (and this as soon as the creation and it’s basis started, but also in a rising manner and a much more concrete one when in contact with the people we worked with): today, there is not one of us who can ignore what this injustice really is about, not one member of our team who does not have the **intimate** conscious knowledge of having suffered from this, whether up close or from afar.

This appears to me today as an implacable logic because potentially we could debate on these subjects with half of humanity- the one constituted by women- and even more, if we consider all the men who also feel oppressed by the patriarchic system : homosexuals,



political militants and many others, thankfully. Our themes are therefore not foreign to us. Even if lived at different levels, the roots are always the same, built in behaviors, mentalities and inscribed within the law.

And yet, I have needed all this journey... To feel it in order to understand it, or perhaps just to admit it ?

"Injustice hurts when it is visible, when it is invisible, the disaster is dreadful" (Edward Bond)

The Theatre of the Oppressed also serves this purpose : to make visible to a feminist to what extent she still basks in the oppression of the patriarchic system, and to what extent defending herself from it is still a way of not recognizing, or not admitting to, its tremendous scope.

We will never be done freeing ourselves from it, but anyhow, any liberation begins and continues by an effective and continuous rise in consciousness. And to this the Theatre of the Oppressed enables us.

Perspectives

I mentioned at the beginning of this article how the AVFT conceives the legitimization of each of its action- notably the writing up and/ or the critical observation of projects of law- in relationship to the criterion of the words and the stories of the women with which it works.

The Theatre of the Oppressed formulates this same ethic and Augusto Boal has, undoubtedly in a similar logic, thought of and created the concept of "Legislative Theatre" as an additional and logical step after the "Forum Theatre". It does not suffice to give the oppressed the possibility to talk. Let us give them also the possibility of participating in the laws which rule them, for we know too well that nowadays without this, *"the judicial discourse crystallizes the values of the dominant class : and it participates in the ideological framework of the social body."*⁵

After having brought together the organization and this method, we can no longer satisfy ourselves with putting together texts of law alongside women (even as their spokesperson). We now wish to do it with them. The next logical step for us would therefore be the **Legislative Theatre**.

⁵ DHAVERNAS Odile. *-Droits des femmes, pouvoir des hommes.* -Editions du Seuil, collection *Libre a elles*, 1978, p. 7.



In the same way, the encounter between the Theatre of the Oppressed (the Forum Theatre but also other games and exercises) and this feminist association has also had the effect of bringing closer the “victims” and the “militants/ employees of the AVFT” on a human level. How is it possible to make the link between “them” and “us”, not only theoretically (because from a feminist perspective this link is a given) but in practice, in daily life, and/or in the defenses of each and every woman. What do we have in common? And how can we meet otherwise ?

From this point came an idea, a wish : to create a new forum with, as actress, the victims and the employees of the AVFT. And to meet not only with the one who had been directly oppressed but also with “secondary” oppressed : which means the men and women who try and change things from within, from the places of “decision-makers” but who can not (position which we have all encountered at one time or other during judicial procedures, for example).

Next project ? The future only knows.

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Fighting against the Matrix: Gender, Women’s Oppression and Performativity⁶

By Jale Karabekir

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As a practitioner of the theatre of the oppressed, I am always thinking about “what is going on in the workshops and performances”. I am working with women’s groups in general. Women’s oppression and gender issues become the core of these practices. However, not only the practices of the oppressed make me think, but also the theoretical frame of these studies draws my attention. Socially, politically and culturally, the theatre of the oppressed practices seems to empower women in finding strategies and solutions to the particular oppression shown on stage. Beyond these, what significance of these practices have in terms of gender?

⁶ This discussion is mostly derived from my MA thesis, “Performance as a Strategy for Women’s Liberation: Practices of the theatre of the Oppressed Practices in Okmeydanı Social Center”, Bogazici University, Institute of Social Sciences, 2004.



Philosophically, what is happening by these practices? How does this empowerment occur?

Searching answers to these questions, Judith Butler's performativity theory provides a different perspective. However, it is quite hard to construct a relation between a theatrical theory and a philosophical theory. In this article, I will try to explain the close relationship between the theatre of the oppressed and performativity theory in terms of gender construction and resistance strategies. This is just an endeavor of explaining my personal experiences and approach to "what is going on in the workshops and performances".

Sometimes it is easy to give examples while writing an article, sometimes not. Here, I will not try to narrate how women's oppression and gender issues are presented on the stage. In contrast, I will try to narrate what is happening in the theatre of the oppressed in a theoretical framework. Maybe, it is time to give an example. Just remember *Matrix*, the movie. This film shows us the virtual reality of the world, a constructed world as it is called, the matrix. Neo is the main character, searching the truth. He is, then, offered to see the matrix and he chooses to see and resist against it. Matrix can be seen just as a movie, with its story, script, and characters, but it also enables us to think about the constructed life system in a fictive and virtual way. I do not want to go deeply through this popular film, which is already still discussed from various perspectives. The reason I use it as an example is just because approximately everyone knows it. This film shows us a system, a kind of system in which it becomes visible and in which resistance could be possible. Butler also states that we are living in a matrix. Of course the matrix she defines is different from the one mentioned in this film. In her theory of performativity, she focuses on the understandings of gender order within the patriarchal system. The matrix she defines constitutes itself performatively. The gendered bodies and subjects within the matrix are performatively constituted, produced and reproduced through citing regulatory norms. According to Butler, gender "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler 1990: 33). For Butler, the regulatory norms constitute a hegemonic matrix and the performative acts are the vital element of its constitution.

The importance of performance, according to Butler is its two-sided structure. First of all, within the matrix, better to say the hegemonic system constitutes gendered bodies. The construction of gender is performatively produced and reproduced



within this system. Gender shows us the bodies and identities that this system creates. It shows us the norms, the regulatory norms that could make the system possible and that could maintain the system. On the other hand, while constructing the hegemonic matrix, some bodies and identities should be excluded. In the original theory of Butler, she defines the matrix as the heterosexual matrix, and this excluded body is the lesbian body. She suggests that resistance is only possible if this excluded body and identity become visible. This visibility should be performative. If gender is performatively constituted, and if we want to resist the hegemonic matrix, we should find the excluded bodies and identities in order to resist. And these bodies and identities should be in performance.

I would like to clarify the relation of gender construction and resistance strategy of Butler and the theatre of the oppressed. Whatever the themes are we study in the theatre of the oppressed, we always deal with the gender issues. Those are the ones that we have already known, the ones within the matrix. It is quite easy to make a forum play out of what we know, where we are living in, the stories we have already been experiencing. The theme could be concrete or be pointing a social problem, but it is actually women's oppression in the patriarchal society which aims to examine how gender and identity is performatively constituted. The theatre of the oppressed practices shows and describe us the matrix, the system. They constitute a space for discussion to find possible solutions, where women's oppression should be investigated. It defines the matrix, shows the gender and identity constructions. The interactivity and direct intervention of the spect-actor points the endeavor for resistance. The intervention of the spect-actor becomes a search for the bodies and identities in which the matrix has excluded, we are searching for the resistance. We are searching for the "excluded" in order to resist. The regulatory norms (that constitute and maintain the system) are disrupted by the spect-actor. It becomes, then, the deconstruction of those norms. The performativity enables the visibility of women's oppression and how gender is constituted, but at the same time it enables resistance. The strategies or the solutions that are experienced by the spect-actor, show the performative subject positions, which are deconstruction of the gender identities, search for the bodies and identities and acts of the 'excluded' in order to create resistance.

Forum play provides a tool and a space for searching the 'excluded'. Beyond the discussion that is created by the forum play, the act of performing becomes the crucial element for resisting the hegemonic matrix. The construction of gender and identity, and resistance against the matrix could only be possible by performance since they are performatively constituted.



In Boal's words: "Forum theatre is a reflection on reality and a rehearsal for future action. In the present, we re-live the past to create the future." (Boal 1998:9). However, performativity provides a different perspective. Forum plays and theatre of the oppressed practices enable us the deconstruction and resistance at the present time, while spect-actor is intervening. It then becomes more than a rehearsal; it becomes the experience of resistance that is performatively expressed and disrupting the hegemonic matrix.

As a conclusion, performativity makes the constitutiveness of gender and women's oppression visible by performance, and the intervention of the spect-actor creates resistance towards the regulatory norms and the hegemonic matrix by performing. In sum, this is just "what is going on in the workshops and performances".

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Why we are working on the issue of violence on women? By Sanjoy Ganguly

VIOLENCE ON WOMEN: Oppression, and not aggression lies at the root

Can it be denied that the reason behind domestic violence and violence outside is patriarchy?

Patriarchy cannot be understood in all its dimensions theoretically. Because theoretical understanding has its limitations and cannot always take experience into account. Theory gives a clear idea about a fact but cannot analyze various dimensions of the fact. To understand various dimensions of a fact, experience is necessary. If I cannot understand various dimensions I cannot deal with the situation created by the fact.

Jana Sanskriti, from its inception, has studied the history of human development in an attempt to understand patriarchy. We have also been interested in knowing how patriarchy acts at various levels. And how patriarchal values penetrate into our minds in such a way that we cannot see it. This internalization of patriarchal values



takes place all the time. We have seen how women in our villages often accept oppression because they have absorbed patriarchal values in such a way that they do not see it as oppression. While practicing introspective theatre among women, we have encountered reactions like – “if a woman does not do her household duties properly she can be beaten up by her husband, not too severely.” Such attitudes are not unique to Indian society, neither are they a result of poverty. Such attitudes exist where there is patriarchy. Such attitudes exist everywhere because there is an internalization of patriarchal values. I have come across similar reactions amongst women even in countries like Austria, Germany and France, where women enjoy some economic power and poverty is not as serious as it is in our country. This is how patriarchal values are absorbed in human kind. We have also seen that there are very few organizations, which actually deal with and understand how patriarchy acts at various levels. Pro-women legislation, though we do resort to them at times, do not really help us in our work. The institutions, which bring about pro-women legislation are themselves steeped in patriarchal values. One of the strongest characteristics of patriarchy is centralization. The state sponsored legislative authority is also centralized. It is an assembly of patriarchal values. Even sometimes we see women in parliament. But they all represent parties which are out and out patriarchal. Therefore the pro-women legislations have limitations in real life. There is a conflict with patriarchal values at every level. The institutions, which come up with such progressive legislation, do not understand the conflict between laws and the patriarchal values acting at various levels in the family and society. Either they pretend as though they are against patriarchy while knowing that the laws are not helping women or it’s an unconscious attempt to fight patriarchy without understanding its presence in our every day life.

Through our plays we try to convey how patriarchy acts at various levels. On many occasions we have enacted these plays before the women we work with. It was for us an essential task to create a space for the women so that they can see themselves in their own reality, very minutely. An understanding of patriarchal values in their everyday lives is most important for our women.

We have said earlier that centralization is a characteristic of patriarchy. Centralization, in turn, gives birth to a culture of monologue. Boal has said “monologue is the root cause of all kinds of oppression” and this not something we understand theoretically. We all understand this through our experience in social, political life. In theatre of the Oppressed we try to practice a culture of dialogue. Dialogue offers space for all and makes everybody active. Nobody is reduced to



just watching, listening and carrying out orders. In a dialogue, everybody can speak, act and suggest. In the process, even the most dominating person enjoys the cope of rationalizing his emotions, his actions. One can become analytical about the society she/he lives in, thus she grows intellectually. In fact, the principle objective of us should be to establish dialogue in society at all levels – and the process should be continued at home and out side home. The family must be democratized to fight against oppression on women.

The question now is – how can this oppression be handled?

The first step is to start a process of empowerment. This first step can be taken in the following ways:-

1. Introspection through theatre – inside every human being is a store of talent and brilliance that we often do not know about and therefore suffer from a sense of inferiority. This sense of inferiority is also the product of a culture of monologue. Monologue is a product of centralization, which in turn is a product of patriarchy, in a centralized situation, a few act, speak and take decisions while the majority remains passive. The few, because of the power they wield, enjoy a sense of superiority, the majority, on the other hand, is pushed deeper and deeper into a feeling of inferiority. The conflict between superior and inferior marks the oppressor and the oppressed. Under these circumstances, a human being, a woman in particular, becomes a passive, mute, silent observer who always positions herself at the receiving end. She listens, she watches, she waits for instructions from the top. Thus she is oppressed. Through introspective techniques we try to bring about a meeting between the inner talent and the individual, which makes the individual articulate and confident about handling real life situations. She discovers herself, she discovers a new human being which was always there but unknown to her. Introspection through theatre brings out “the perfection and strength which is already there in every human being.”
2. Performing theatre – In daily life most women are not given much importance by the privileged sections of society, in fact their role is constantly undermined so as to create a sense of inferiority. For such an individual, the act of standing up on stage with a huge audience in front and acting in a full-fledged performance imparts immense confidence. What do we see during and after the performance? During performance the actors and spect-actors are engaged in a collective action. Oppressor finds themselves on stage and oppressed people tries out ways and options to discover the way for liberation. After the performance is over the actors and spect-actors go home with a reflective action. They reflect, introspect about what they saw, what they said. Reflective



action always follows the collective action. The sum total of these two actions creates empowerment within people. We can remember Mary who was sketched by Boal in his autobiography. Mary, a house maid by profession said after a performance that she discovered herself as a woman, as a human being. Theatre gave her a respectable identity, though housemaid but a powerful talented human being. Theatre of the Oppressed scripts power. It brings women like Mary outside the kitchen, makes their world bigger and inspires them to try to reconstruct a human society with the men around them. Yes we can see this around the world.

Most social action occurs as a result of the individual's inability to tackle his own problems alone. This is more so in the case of women's organizations – it is when a woman who has been victim of a violent incident appeals for help that some action begins. Most women's organizations come into being because of such cases – of domestic violence or rape, for instance – and continue to deal with such cases even after they are well established. There is an urgent need, no doubt, to provide services to such women – moral support, temporary shelter, arbitration, legal aid, support in approaching the administration and getting it to work and so on. We think these are necessary, but in order to provide even these services effectively, there has to be a comprehensive understanding of the conditions prevalent in our society as a whole. When a violent incident occurs, it is the aggressive manifestation of an underlying, sometimes chronic, oppressive situation. Dealing with such an aggressive situation, especially in the presence of an indifferent law enforcing machinery, is extremely difficult for a lone individual. Theatre of the Oppressed in this case can create a space where problem at the level of oppression can be dealt with. Oppressed people can go through the process of a collective and a reflective action. Jana Sanskriti has been dealing with the oppression on women for last one decade and our observation says that the oppression cannot reach at the level of aggression as the process of empowerment among the women and men takes place. They apply their rational thought and can fight the oppression. Aggression is always difficult to deal with. But undoubtedly aggression is the climax or manifestation of a state of continuous oppression. If a problem is dealt with at the level of oppression, perhaps it will not reach the point of aggression. So we must start working from the beginning or from the root. We must intervene at a time when the situation is still at the stage of oppression and has not become aggressive, or reached a point of no return. Aggression does not necessarily mean physical aggression. It can be emotional aggression. It can be any sort of mental crisis. And this is what we should aim to do in Theatre of the Oppressed. We see Augusto Boal in this book *Game for Actors*



And Non-Actors saying “ Let us clear about the concepts: we use the word ‘aggression’ to designate the last level of oppression. ‘Oppression’ is not an exclusively physical phenomenon, to be resolved in physical terms. Oppression is very often interiorized; the oppressed can still liberate themselves. Victims of aggression, if they are physically strong, can return the aggression- one possibility, that’s all. In the conclusion Boal has said here-“My conclusion is that Forum theatre is always possible when alternatives exist. In the opposite it becomes fatalist theatre”.