THEATRE *FOR* DEVELOPMENT

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THEATRE *AS* DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper will chart, via theoretical, ethical and aesthetic perspectives, a journey from Theatre *for* Development to Theatre *as* Development. It will explore the relationship between Development and Applied Theatre through a critique of instrumentalist approaches to Applied Theatre and an assessment of the developmental possibilities contained within an aesthetic that highlights contradictions over solutions and playfulness over measurable outcomes. Consideration will be given to the ethics as well as the poetics of social intervention.

There will be a brief look at the history of drama in the context of development agencies with a focus upon different understandings of the notions of participation and empowerment. Can revolutions be rehearsed? Is their performance always an anti-climax?

As the most widely practised form of Applied Theatre, particular attention will be paid to the politics and poetics of Forum Theatre; to issues it raises about the relation of democracy to art, to contradictions within the function of the Joker and to the ethics of 'oppression'.

In conclusion, the paper will attempt an interrogation of the paradox that the less overtly developmental the intervention, the more effective it may be in producing active social agency and sustainable social change among its participants.

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That if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak'd
I cried to dream again

(*The Tempest*, III, 2)

Introduction

Although drama in many cultures has, since records began, been used to critique social relations with a view to changing them, the bulk of drama consumed — today most commonly via electronic media — has been devoted to resisting change and buttressing the *status quo*: drama *against* social change. The dominant poetics of this type of drama is naturalism, in which calls for social reform may thrive, as in the works of Ibsen or contemporary television soap-opera — but which does not permit a questioning of the deep structures of our societies, still less propose an alternative to the dominant, all-embracing system which calculates value in human transactions solely upon the basis of profit. In applying our drama processes to an 'explicit social change agenda' we need to ask ourselves as practitioners whether we are servicing a reformist agenda to make neoliberalism more effective by smoothing off the rough edges of its most blatant inequalities or whether our agenda of change is directed towards the exposure of the contradictions which lurk at the core of our society, such as economic growth versus the survival of the planet, the desire to reproduce versus life-strangling overpopulation, automation versus unemployment. It becomes clear that the 'and' is critical in relation to the functions of drama with reference to social change.

Drama does not produce social change in any obvious cause and effect operation. This is one of the fallacies perpetrated by some of the practitioners of applied theatre, either knowingly in the search for funding or naively in a romantic overestimation of the possibilities. While processes of personal change — typically the building of confidence — may be inaugurated through drama, social change is not achieved without the engagement of other agencies. So, drama practitioners who aim for social change through their activities, need the humility and self-awareness to open themselves up to multi-agency approaches. This is not to decry the considerable power that can be exercised through drama but rather to be more exact about what that power actually is. A drama process which draws on the pedagogic concepts of Paulo Freire by insisting upon participants 'naming their own worlds' rather than accepting the language and values of the dominant and combines this learner-centred approach with Brecht's strategies for defamiliarising conventional notions of reality, can offer a framework of resistance which unlocks the human potential suppressed by the business of living within the prevailing capitalist structures. The key features of the process are play and imagination. The application of these to the realities of lived experience can be the catalyst for unpredictable but profound changes, both personal and social, provided there are the means to hand to act on the insights once outside the drama process. Boal famously declared that the Theatre of the Oppressed may be a 'rehearsal *for* revolution' (Boal, 1979:155). The difficulty, however, is to reproduce the conditions of rehearsal once back in the dangerous and unsympathetic world of most people's daily existence.

This article will chart a theoretical journey as a commentary on why the course team of the MA in Theatre and Media for Development at the University of Winchester (UK) recently determined upon substituting 'as' for 'for' in the title of the programme. What are the limitations of putting theatre at the service of development? What are the developmental possibilities of the theatre process itself? Before embarking upon these specific issues, however, I should like to dwell within the realm of interrogating conjunctions — both those of the MA title — and briefly explores some of the resonances of the 'and' which somewhat complacently link drama with social change in the generic title of this volume of the journal.

Development: The end of an affair

In his inaugural address to the nation on January 20th 1949, Harry Truman, newly elected U.S. President, coined the term 'underdeveloped' to describe most of the countries comprising the southern hemisphere. Subsequently global geopolitics saw a 'developed' North making interventions, both military and non-military, into the affairs of 'underdeveloped' nations in order to expose them to the benefits of development. Thus development became the new colonialism with transnational corporations, ably assisted by the global financial institutions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund performing the roles previously assigned to invading armies. Through the use of the notorious 'conditionalities', the repayment of loans became the mechanism by which most of the world's countries had to conform to a template of economic and social development imposed by the Washington Consensus. Rather than meaning the fulfilment of human potential, to be developed came increasingly to mean to be like 'us' — 'us' being principally the United States and their Western allies:

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

Theatre for Development — that is, theatre in the service of development agencies — inevitably becomes co-opted as a means of delivering the agendas of the old colonial centres to the underdeveloped peripheries if it garners its financial support from governments and NGOs that subscribe, willingly or otherwise, to the dominant model. All too easily, whether applied to the macro scales of national and community development or the micro scale of individual development, the undeclared thrust of the project is to make 'the other' like 'us'. In the former case this might involve the destruction of sustainable agriculture in favour of growing a cash crop for export and in the latter working with young people 'at risk' to ensure that they are included in a social formation from which they are trying to escape. This is why so many applied theatre projects are funded for participants who are, in terms of the prevailing social norms, deficient — prisoners, homeless, users of mental health services, the disabled, and so on.

However, the confidence with which President Truman inaugurated a brave new world of development with the U.S. as global saviour, has long since dissipated, smashed alike by the irrationality of man-made violent conflict and the natural forces of earthquake and *tsunami*. The world-wide neoliberal system, rather than producing a trickle-down of rising standards of living, has overseen an exponential rise in inequality both between and within nations. Yet even as faith in this system has melted like snow-flakes falling upon a bonfire, theatre continues to apply itself to the increasingly desperate task of sticking plasters on the gaping wounds in our societies. Applied theatre buys into the assumption that drama is intrinsically good for people and that, by participating in it, individuals and communities will improve their life chances. The measurement of its success, however, is extra-theatrical in relation to the chosen application. Has the rate of recidivism fallen among ex-prisoners who were exposed to a drama workshop? Has the number of users of mental health services able to take up employment increased among drama workshop participants? In other words the outcomes must be measurable and directed towards the social inclusion of the formerly excluded. This drive towards inclusion, however, sits awkwardly with those whose exclusion and oppression is the result of the basic principles and deep structures upon which current societies are built:

> Has not the world always been pitiless? Today's pitilessness is perhaps more unremitting, pervasive and continuous. It spares neither the planet itself, nor anyone living on it anywhere. Abstract because deriving from the sole logic of the pursuit of profit (as cold as the freezer), it threatens to make obsolete all other sets of belief, along with their traditions of facing the cruelty of life with dignity and some flashes of hope. (Berger, 2008:87)

If the macro-situation of Applied Theatre is ambivalent in relation to neoliberalism, the specific position of Theatre for Development is even more dubious in relation to the orthodoxies of the development industry:

> In development, priority was given to economic, technical and scientific growth in which culture was regarded as immaterial. Within the rights agenda, culture was a low priority, a complex and uncomfortable issue over which states held divergent views. (Gould and Marsh, 2004:13)

The watchwords of the MA in Theatre for Development when it was inaugurated in 1995 were participation, democracy and sustainability, words which seemed to endorse the importance of this new branch of socially engaged theatre and to point the way towards the transformation of NGO practices from the neo-colonial to the postmodern. However, all three terms have proved seriously problematic in relation to conventional development practices. The promise of participation was the feature that made the use of theatre attractive to NGOs, particularly those working in non-literate societies where the printed word was of no value in communication. Yet all too often, participation has meant being allowed to participate in the agenda set by the NGO, rather than participating in the setting of the agenda itself. Similarly, the practice of democracy has become a device where everyone gets a chance to speak in the name of 'full consultation' rather than a process which locates decision-making at the grass-roots of communities. As for sustainability, the project format of outside intervention renders it unattainable in most cases and the absence of long-term follow-up to development initiatives is notorious. The greatest strength of educational drama is its strategy of learning through experience

— or at least through the vicarious experiences achieved via empathy. But, as Raymond Williams pointed out long since, governments and their related agencies have accumulated a long list of failures based on their addiction to the colonial model of the centre transmitting its directives to the periphery:

> It is really a matter of how one would be told oneself — telling as an aspect of living; learning as an element of experience. The very failure of so many of the items of transmission which I have listed is not an accident, but the result of a failure to understand communication. The failure is due to an arrogant preoccupation with transmission, which rests on the assumption that the common answers have been found and need only be applied. But people will (damn them, do you say?) learn only by experience and this, normally, is uneven and slow. (Williams, 1961:302)

Experience is very difficult to regulate and the core of the issue is usually a question of control. The guardians of the dominant systems which control our world are also the beneficiaries of those systems and therefore have a vested interest in keeping them working in line with the current *status quo*. Helen Gould and Mary Marsh identify this contradiction in their report on culture and development, *Culture: Hidden Development*:

> The other, more insidious, possibility is that culture is invisible because cultural plurality is inconvenient for development. It is far easier for the machinery of development to function in a world where cultures do not get in the way of political and economic progress; where communities share a set of universal values which make them respond uniformly to change. Furthermore, culture is part of the landscape of human rights which makes it doubly uncomfortable — not only are people diverse in language, thought, belief and identity, but it is part of their inalienable rights to remain so. (Gould and Marsh, 2004:22)

In practice the way in which 'the machinery of development' deals with the 'inconvenience' of recalcitrant humans who insist upon self-expression is by control of the funds. Programmes and projects are more likely to be funded if they have clear development objectives — such as political and economic progress as recognised by the Washington Consensus — and can demonstrate how these intended outcomes will be measured in terms of quantitative data. The agendas of the donor ensure that projects which foreground cultural expression and self-determination are given a low priority. Jamil Ahmed's Bangladeshi experience can be replicated throughout 'underdeveloped' communities:

> It is a subtle form of manipulation, in that local NGOs are apparently not forced or even dictated to but are simply not funded unless they are willing to follow the normalising framework set by the donors. More often than not, local NGOs simply function as mercenaries who are first normalised by accepting donor funding and then they go out to normalize the 'community' and 'help' its members to lead docile lives. (Ahmed, 2007:209-10)

This process of 'normalising' presupposes a fixed notion of the human being as complete — a default position called 'normal' which development agencies seek to impose universally, trans-culturally, upon all those unfortunates presently excluded, systematically or wilfully from this norm. This idea is closely related to Paulo Freire's notion of 'banking education' where what is being banked is an image of the human being completed according to a set of criteria for normality supplied by the dominant global monoculture. The antidote is described by Freire as 'problem-posing education':

> Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of men *[sic]* as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation. In sum, banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixating forces, fail to acknowledge men as historical beings; problem-posing theory and practice take man's historicity as their starting point. (Freire, 1972:56)

[Incidentally, the above offers a cogent theoretical basis for explaining Brecht's insistence upon the historicising process in his production rehearsals with the Berliner Ensemble.]

Whilst the theories of Freire have occupied a core position in the conceptualisation of the MA programme, it has been increasingly clear, year on year, that much of its practice and theory has proceeded in spite of, rather than because of, its title. Like the overworked term 'empowerment', development is a dangerous notion if it is taken to mean the development of one person or community by another. At best the theatre process can be enlisted as an aid to removing some of the barriers to a person's or community's self-development. The challenge for a heavily time-constrained educational programme has been to offer students an understanding of those barriers through a highly selective glimpse into macroeconomics and the institutions of development while encouraging them into a set of practices whereby they can facilitate others in resisting their systematic dehumanisation.

Working within the kinds of ideological and funding constraints confronting applied theatre in all its various guises — Theatre in Education, Theatre for Development, and so on — can drama be employed to support social change or is its role restricted to the merely therapeutic?

What's drama but a second-hand emotion?

In the hope of finding a function for drama in the processes of social change that take us beyond the rehearsal stage, the term relational aesthetics may be of value. The relation being referred to is that between performance and audience and I offer it here as a theatrical equivalent to Freire's problem-posing education. A vivid example of what I understand by relational aesthetics is offered by the contrasting fates of two plays performed in 1976 and 1977 in which Ngugi wa Thiong'o was closely involved. One is *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* by Ngugi and Micere Mugo and the other is *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (translated from the Gikuyu as *I Will Marry When I Want*), supervised to performance by Ngugi and Ngugi wa Mirii. Although the former play takes as its structural focus the various 'trials' undergone by the Mau Mau leader Dedan Kimathi, it is by no means a history play on the independence struggle. The playwrights reserve as much criticism for the neo-colonial regime under which they labour, and the foreign interests they serve, as for the British colonisers:

> BANKER: . . .You are a wise man, Dedan. Yes, there's no need to fight the Banks. We are your true friends. At first we were a little apprehensive about a blackman's government . . . We thought that it might, well, be a danger to investment, assets, and all that . . . but…we have since learnt one or two truths from Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia and even India.
>
> (Ngugi and Micere, 1977:39)

The link between the old regime and the new is made explicit by the Business Executive who articulates the same division between politics and economics which was to undermine the Freedom Charter in South Africa twenty years later:

> No more racialism. No more colour bar. In public places. In administration. In business. In the allocation of loans. In the grabbing, well, in the acquisition of land. Partnership in progress, that's the new motto. Is this not what we have been fighting for? Any black man who now works hard and has capital can make it to the top. We can become local directors of foreign companies. (Ngugi and Micere, 1977:45)

As Kimathi comments, there are to be 'new overseers of our slaughter'. However, the play is no tragedy with Kimathi dying unrepentant and urging the peasants to continue the struggle as the mantle of resistance is passed from one generation, the Woman, to the next, the Boy and Girl, whose final words are 'Not dead!' Yet, despite harassment from government officials, the performances proceeded at the National Theatre in Nairobi where an urban, bourgeois and student audience came to consume the radical message, delivered in English, the language of the oppressor. Ngugi himself highlighted the disjunction between politics and poetics which disabled the play by destroying any possibility of a relational aesthetic:

> There are other contradictions too — these characters speak English but when it comes to singing they quite happily and naturally fall back into their languages. So they *do* know African languages! The illusion that in speaking English they were really speaking an African language is broken. The realism in theatre collides with the historical reality it is trying to reflect. It is only petty-bourgeois characters — those who have been to schools and universities — who normally and quite freely mix English with African languages in the same sentence or speech. (Ngugi, 1986:43)

The appeal to workers and rural peasants to reclaim the revolution and to continue the fight for real social change is therefore made not to them but rather to the beneficiaries of neo-colonialism. In other words, the aesthetic is not relational. Michael Etherton summed up the contradiction thus:

> If a play reflects the people as the makers of history, it must also make that history accessible to them as drama. Otherwise it may just as easily deprive the masses of their history altogether. (Etherton, 1982:178)

The second play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, was performed at the now famous Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre in Gikuyu to a mass audience of workers, peasants and urban intellectuals.

> *Ngaahika Ndeenda* was an immediate success with people coming from afar, even in hired buses and taxis, to see the show. Theatre became what it had always been — part of a collective festival. Some people knew the lines almost as well as the actors and their joy was in seeing the variations by the actors on different occasions to different audiences. There was an identification with the characters.
>
> (Ngugi and Ngugi, 1982:57)

Much of its content has strong echoes of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* but the circumstances of production were transformed by the Kamiriithu experience which meant that the realities recounted in the play were recognised and shared by the audience:

GICAAMBA: The power of our hands goes to feed three people:
Imperialists from Europe,
Imperialists from America,
Imperialists from Japan,
And of course their local watchmen.
But son of Gathoni think hard
So that you may see the truth of the saying
That a fool's walking stick supports the clever:
Without workers,
There is no property, there is no wealth.
The labour of our hands is the real wealth of the country.

(Ngugi and Ngugi, 1982:37)

Gicaamba, the worker with an acute consciousness of how class intersects with neo-colonialism, consistently lays bare the policies of the self-serving regime to an audience who are the victims of it — who have, therefore, an interest (in both senses of that term) in social change:

That group is now ready to sell the whole country to foreigners.
Go to any business premise;
Go to any industry;
Go to any company;
Even if you find an African behind the counter,
Smoking a pipe over a protruding belly,
Know that he is only an overseer, a well-fed watchdog,
Ensuring the smooth passage of people's wealth
To Europe and other foreign countries.

(Ngugi and Ngugi, 1982:113)

The appearance of the entire cast on stage at the conclusion of the play to sing in their own language of their demands for social change constituted an extraordinary act of defiance, made possible by a unique combination of political will and relational aesthetics:

ALL: *The trumpet of the masses has been blown.*
We are tired of being robbed
We are tired of exploitation
We are tired of land grabbing
We are tired of slavery
We are tired of charity and abuses.

(Ngugi and Ngugi, 1982:116)

The power of this moment to effect social change may be gauged by the reaction of the government to these performances — a reaction which simultaneously killed off the immediate threat of fundamental social change whilst also creating a lasting memorial to the relationship between drama and social change and, thereby, a future inspiration to practitioners seeking to engage with theatre for the purpose of creating change:

> On Thursday 11 March 1982 the government outlawed Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre and banned all theatre activities in the entire area. An 'independent' Kenyan government had followed in the footsteps of its colonial

> predecessors: it banned all the peasant and worker basis for genuine national traditions in theatre. But this time, the neo-colonial regime overreached itself. On 12 March 1982 three truckloads of armed policemen were sent to Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre and razed the open-air theatre to the ground. By so doing it ensured the immortality of the Kamiriithu experiments and search for peasant/worker-based language of African theatre. (Ngugi, 1986:59)

Taught only by reality

In a very different context, another experiment with relational aesthetics in performance has been made in the history of the working-class suburb of Ballymun, Dublin, through the creation and staging of the Ballymun Trilogy, written by Dublin playwright Dermot Bolger and presented at the Axis Arts Centre in Ballymun with a mix of professional and local actors. The characters begin their speeches at the start of the final part, *The Consequences of Lightning*, by saying 'I want to tell you a story'. This process of story-telling is the aesthetic opposite of the mode of delivering messages, so frequently beloved by applied theatre. It allows lived experience to be presented and critiqued by an audience who share the world of these stories and recognise the characters who inhabit them. I was never at Kamiriithu but I was lucky enough to be in the audience in the Axis and witnessed the vivid and varied ways in which it reacted to the performance — shouts, gasps, tears and, above all, those sharp intakes of breath that come with recognition. The performance belonged to the audience in a way that typically eludes the efforts of either mainstream theatre or applied theatre that is determined to develop its participants and audiences.

The first play in the trilogy is framed by the Ballymun Incantation, a poem written by Bolger 'to be recited by actors and local people as the centrepiece of a public wake on the eve of the demolition of the first Ballymun tower in the summer of 2004.'(Bolger, 2005:105) It opens thus:

> Whose voice can you hear?
> Who's calling down the stair?
> What ghost trapped in a lift-shaft?
> What child who played and laughed?
>
> Every touch and every trust and every kiss,
> Every feud, every fight, every lip split,
> Every face lost at the window of a tower block,
> Every loan shark with a list of women in hock. (Bolger, 2005:1)

The words are apt for what follows, for it is the mode of the trilogy to transform the everyday, the mundane, the desperate into lives with which the audience is totally engaged through the magnetic force of art, suffused at each moment by the particular atmosphere that derives from a powerful sense of place. The fictions of re-presentation afford the characters choices that lives lived at the tempo of actuality may not. So Christy, contemplating suicide by throwing himself off his tower-block balcony, is at once experiencing the moment and looking back at himself experiencing the moment. The double time of theatrical art holds emotions and place frozen for an instant:

> I stood right up on the balcony. I'd never leaned so far over. I had to close my eyes to stop myself swaying. Even with them shut I knew every light in every tower block and the city beyond. All the roads leading to other places. This was the view my slaughtered pigeons had memorised, somehow always finding their way back. My arms were outstretched, moving slightly, the way I'd seen them mark time in the air. Their ghosts were around me. I could feel their forgiveness and silent companionship and knew that if I leaned forward they would not break my fall. They would glide alongside me as I tumbled through the air and for those few seconds I could pretend to belong with them, like I pretended to belong among the hard men in the pub. I felt a sudden sense of power because for once I had a choice. I could step back and live or lean forward and die. (Bolger, 2005:44-5)

This working out of personal salvation against the backdrop of the Ballymun cityscape is transposed by the end of the play into the social mission of his son, Dessie, for whom the play is a kind of community life-map with the changing physical landscape of Ballymun as a pictorial graph of his aspirations:

> I was born in a tenement to a da with copperplate handwriting. Neighbours would get him to write letters for them, imagining his penmanship would impress officials. It didn't because nobody listened to tenement dwellers. Now I sit at meetings as a full-time union official arguing people's cases and the bosses and officials have to listen. They think me a jumped up little bollix but I make them nervous. When people were dumped out here in the 1960s nobody asked what we wanted — they made decisions for us. My journey is to make them listen. Not exciting, not glamorous, but I've travelled a long way from where Da started. (Bolger, 2005:87)

Throughout the trilogy Bolger presents vivid portraits of characters on, or close to, the edge who live out a constant love-hate relationship with Ballymun. They can be sustained or destroyed by the place but they cannot ignore its interventions into their lives. They can, however, harness the possibilities of art to help them make sense of those interventions. All of us recreate our experiences as stories and, in doing so, we all become artists and performers:

> JEEPERS: I want to drown out the pain on this earth with fantastical songs, shining nets of words that stretch out from the demolished towers and the new Ballymun being built to captivate this entire land. (Bolger, 2009:3)

The voice of youth is counter-pointed but not denied by Martin, the local priest who operates like a latter day fool, at once involved and semi-detached. Never cynical, he refuses his parishioners the false comforts of delusion, opening the passages that return them to their histories and their consciences. He, most of all, understands the intimate, deadly, glorious skirmishes between people and place:

> A lot of nil-all victories — draws that weren't defeats, achievements nobody else saw. There's always been two ways to look at Ballymun: an unmitigated disaster or the scene of thousands of daily unseen victories. I've seen so many lives wasted and the biggest waste is regret. (Bolger, 2009:74)

Those who survive with their spirit intact are those who are able to turn the base metals of existence into the philosopher's stone of art. As the old saying has it: 'not to be a poet is the worst of all our miseries':

Every whiskey, every Valium, every cigarette,
Every couple holding hands in a kitchenette,
Every laughing child being spun in the August sun,
Every boy with a piebald horse to gallop on.

Why won't the voices stop whispering,
Straining to be heard amid the babbling?
Lives that were ended and lives begun,
The living and the dead of Ballymun (Bolger, 2005:2)

In all its senses the trilogy is about regeneration — the means by which the community can make its world a better place in which to live and a method of playing, of re-creating themselves in 'time off' from the business of life. There may be no clearly defined social purpose, still less a programme of improvement, and yet the action of engaging in these artful processes can make a profound impact upon all who participate. Without any declared social goal beyond the performances themselves, it may be that Ballymun audiences for the Trilogy were able to experience drama as social change.

This thing of darkness: Drama as social change

> But culture is a dialogue between aspirations and sedimented traditions. And in our commendable zeal for the latter at the cost of the former, we have allowed unnecessary, harmful and artificial opposition to emerge between culture and development.
> (Appadurai, quoted in Gould and Marsh, 2004:17)

Arjun Appadurai's insight reveals one of the core reasons for employing drama processes in relation to social change — they enable a dialogue to be enacted between imagination and lived reality. Theatre might be described as the encounter between aspiration and tradition — the expression of a desire for something better, something more just, that has to take account of the actualities of existence if that expression is ever to become more than words and rituals. The United Nations' human rights framework, the contrary position to the neoliberal economic frame, operates mainly at the purely symbolic level but theatre has immediate appeal as a means through which its intentions can be rehearsed:

> The rights to culture include the possibility for each man [*sic*] to obtain the means of developing his personality, through his direct participation in the creation of human values and of becoming, in this way, responsible for his situation whether local or on a world scale. (UNESCO, quoted in Gould and Marsh, 2004:32)

Michael Etherton makes explicit the link between the assertion of rights and the possibilities for social change when reviewing his own work on child-rights Theatre for Development in Asia and Africa. Those who are traditionally patronised within conventional hierarchies are those who can tell us different stories and offer different visions of how the world might be changed:

> What constantly amazes us adults is the quality of the drama the young people create in the process of defining the infringement of their rights. In country after country, in culture after culture, children and young people have a beautiful sense of dramatic improvisation. Young people's art in all kinds of creative media, coupled with their struggle for their rights in an unfair world, stands a good chance of changing the future in ways we adults cannot now imagine. (Etherton, 2006:118)

The MA programme tries to present students with some of the reasons why there is a need for social change but is now much more reticent about prescribing the nature or direction of such change. We do not see this as a lessening of political commitment or a softening into dotage of those who have shaped this programme (though we may, of course, be deceiving ourselves). Neither have we swapped politics for poetics. Rather, we have sought a more dialectical relationship between the two in the belief that it is the sharpest, most effectively communicated theatre which expresses the owned political aspirations of a community. The experience of creating such theatre (or indeed film) can be the critical first step in a much longer process that might lay claim to that ambitious epithet, transformative.

Only by recognising both our possibilities and our limitations as human beings can meaningful social change occur. Drama is a particularly effective means, due to the encounter between imagination and reality, of bringing participants and audiences to this point of recognition. For all his dreams of control and progress, Prospero has ultimately to acknowledge 'this thing of darkness' for which he is responsible. There is no path to the light except through the darkness of our animal natures.

The 'and' bridge linking drama with social change collapses, leaving the applied theatre practitioner floundering in the torrent of 'messy, incomplete, complex'(Balfour, 2009:357) experience where, on the point of drowning, she clings on to the half-submerged rock of drama *as* social change.

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