



**Tritagonist Theatre:
investigating the potential for bystander agency through three interconnected
solo performances**

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Tritagonist Theatre: investigating the potential for bystander agency through three interconnected solo performances

A Critical Appraisal by
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Doctor of Philosophy by Published Works
College of Arts, Humanities and Education
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*A submission in fulfilment of the requirements
of the University of Derby for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy by Published Works*

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Preface

I hereby submit this Critical Appraisal for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Published Works to the College of Arts, Humanities and Education at the University of Derby. I have been supervised by Professor Huw Davies, Professor Ang Bartram, and Associate Professor Christine Parker.

This Critical Appraisal with its appendices is my intellectual property and original work, except for other authors' citations, which have been appropriately referenced in the text, in the captions and in the bibliography at the end of the Critical Appraisal. This text has never been published or submitted in any form elsewhere. Any re-use of any portion or section of this Critical Appraisal should be referenced citing the author, title, university and pagination.

Abstract

This study demonstrates contribution to the field of knowledge and practice of applied theatre. Over a ten-year period, Ava Hunt researched, co-wrote, performed and toured three solo productions: *I'm No Hero* (2009, 2010), *The Kites Are Flying* (2013) and *Acting Alone* (2014–2018). The productions experimented with form, integrating film, immersive participation, and verbatim/autobiographical storytelling techniques to explore the intractable Israeli–Palestinian conflict, asking: How is solo performance able to engage diverse communities in difficult questions about social justice, and support the development of critical thinking skills to empower bystanders and to make a difference to marginalised communities?

Hunt, an artist, researcher and teacher, utilised a/r/tography, a practice-based research methodology (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo and Gouzouasis, 2008), to propel the development of the three productions and the published work. *I'm No Hero (INH)* interwove the heroic acts of two women: Irena Sendler (who saved 2,500 Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto under Nazi occupation) and Rachel Corrie (who was killed by Israeli Defence Forces while protecting Palestinian children). *The Kites Are Flying (TKAF)* was adapted from Michael Morpurgo's book for children. Set in Palestine, *TKAF* explored the pedagogy of hope in oppressed and incarcerated communities. *Acting Alone* utilised verbatim and autobiographical accounts of field research conducted in Palestine, together with participatory elements, to transform the hierarchical relationship between spectator and performer. These works led to the published article 'Acting Alone: exploring bystander

engagement through performer/audience relationship' (Hunt, 2019), which is submitted alongside the three performances as a coherent body of four published works.

The article coined the term *tritagonist audience* to empower bystander audiences through offering a rehearsal of agency in relation to an intractable international conflict. This critical appraisal frames and traces the development of Tritagonist Theatre through the four submitted works and proposes a toolkit that can be used in further research, pedagogic practice and applied theatre. The toolkit could be developed further and/or extrapolated to other conflicts. Using the active tritagonist model, the toolkit is intended to contribute to spectator empowerment.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my supervisors, Christine Parker, Huw Davies and Ang Bartram, for their patience and support. Thanks to Adrian Jackson for his guidance. To my son, Michael Johnston, my partner, sister and friends for their love and support.

Thank you to all the artistic collaborators, without whom I would indeed have been acting alone: Tilly Branson, Sarah Brigham, Lin Coghlan, Maggie Ford, Andy Purves and especially:

Roger Knott-Fayle

(16 November 1956 to 15 August 2022)

Dedication

David Johnston

(15 November 1948 to 23 November 2017)

Thank you for your shared vision, your inspiration, and your love.

Word Count: 14,237

Silence and indifference of good people

(King, 1966)

1. Introduction

At the heart of this study is a philosophical discussion of the actions of the individual versus a powerful state and whether one person, specifically a bystander,¹ can make a difference in an intractable conflict. It is driven by the belief that there is always *something* that can make a difference, that change is always possible, whether singularly or collectively. Through stories, theatre, and participation, artists and audiences can create, explore, and learn what may be possible.

The story, *The Starfish Thrower*² by Loren Eiseley (1969) has many unattributed adaptations.

This is my version:

A boy is throwing a starfish, which have been washed ashore by a violent storm, back into the sea. A passer-by calls out to him, commenting on the thousands of remaining stranded starfish on the beach:

‘You cannot save them all.’

¹ Bystander definition: ‘a person who sees something that is happening but is not involved’. A synonym is ‘onlooker’ (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).

² *The Starfish Thrower* (Eiseley, 1969) originally published as part of a 16-page essay of the same name. It is referenced, re-told and adapted commercially, and by used by motivational speakers.

‘No,’ he replies. ‘No, not all of them.’ He picks up another starfish and hurls it back into the sea. ‘But it will make a difference to *this* starfish, and the *next* and the *next*.’

Small actions taken by a few individuals can seem futile when the problem is so enormous. However, Erica Chenoweth’s study on the success of non-violent protest proposes that it only takes 3.5 percent of a population to create a tipping point and produce social change (2013). Campaigning groups, such as Amnesty International, act on behalf of individuals to bring pressure upon governments to address human rights violations. The United Nations can take international collective action through sending aid, introducing boycotts, imposing trade sanctions against nations that contravene the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), or even entering into armed conflict with a sovereign state. At the time of writing, there are many examples of populations demonstrating against military dictatorships or oppressive regimes. However, the role of the international community in supporting the will of peoples or challenging violence exerted upon them is sometimes sporadic and inadequate. Larger questions of overthrowing an invading or occupying force or oppressive government are not within the scope of this study. However, this body of work will examine what role theatre can play in exploring what agency is available to individuals/audiences witnessing atrocities from afar. A theatre space can offer the opportunity to come together, debate and rehearse potential agency as tritagonists.³

³ Latin meaning *trit* = third person. *agonist* = combatant, contests, to drive. Created by Sophocles 2,500 years ago (Boal, 2000). The third voice on stage counters the protagonist and antagonist within a dramatic conflict and is pivotal in shifting the power dynamics.

The term tritagonist, although referenced by Bala (2015), Boal (2000), Müller (1840) and Sappa (2020), has not been examined rigorously, either academically or practically. This critical appraisal demonstrates how my understanding, interpretation, and application of the concept has been developed across three interconnected solo⁴ performances from 2008 to 2018 (Appendices 2–4) and an article published in Taylor and Francis’ *Research in Drama Education* (2019) (Appendix 1).

PERFORMANCES:

I’m No Hero (2008–2010)



Figure 1: *I’m No Hero* (2009). Photographer: Richard Richards.

- *I’m No Hero* – Two tours in 2009 and 2010: 42 shows, 19 workshops = 2,700+ audience members, and 736 online views of trailer.

⁴ Solo performance is defined as one performer on stage taking on multiple characters, or a single narrative form.

- *INH* posed these questions to audiences: ‘Why would an ordinary person do something extraordinary for someone they didn’t know?’ and ‘Can one person make a difference?’ *I’m No Hero – trailer online:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gu6FsdOy8Fs>

[The Kites Are Flying by Michael Morpurgo \(2013\)](#)



Figure 2: *The Kites Are Flying* (2013). Photographer: Andy Purves.

- *The Kites Are Flying* – Five shows, four workshops, three Q&As = 422 audience members.
- *TKAF*, adapted from Michael Morpurgo’s book (2010), was workshopped with children, both in Derby city centre and refugee camps in Palestine. Pilot performances were delivered to children, practitioners, and academics at Nottingham Playhouse and Derby Theatre. The project explored the role of the observer/reporter, and how a symbol of hope can be a mechanism of empowerment to challenge institutionalised oppression.
- *The Kites Are Flying – online:*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMwRaaSsXNw&t=7s>

Acting Alone (2014–2018)



Figure 3: *Acting Alone* (2016). Photographer: Robert Day.

- *Acting Alone* (piloted 2014, toured 2015/2018). 35 shows, 10 workshops = 1,200+ audience members and 2,992⁵ online views.
- *Acting Alone* used immersive participatory elements and autobiographical material, inviting audiences to explore the bystander role by crossing the dramaturgical divide to rehearse agency, and developing Tritagonist Theatre.
- *Acting Alone* full production – online:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtuQYpL5MyE&t=166s>
- *Acting Alone* trailer – online:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smXueuHR2I4&t=5s>

⁵ At February 2023: *Acting Alone* trailer 914, *Acting Alone* production 466, Edinburgh Fringe Festival audience: 412 = 2,992.

PUBLISHED ARTICLE:

Hunt, A. (2019). 'Acting Alone: exploring bystander engagement through performer/audience relationship', *Research in Drama Education*, Vol. 25, issue 2, pp. 150–160⁶.

⁶ February 2023: *RiDE* article stands at 598 viewers, one citation.

The three productions and peer-reviewed *RiDE* article (2019) demonstrate a significant contribution to the field of applied theatre within which the majority of my practice resides. Applied theatre is an umbrella term⁷ that uses theatre to activate social change through political and educational engagement in non-traditional spaces in order to contribute to the empowerment of marginalised/oppressed communities. Both applied theatre and applied drama⁸ can support participants to actively inquire into power relations, developing reflective and critical thinking skills that may assist in challenging hegemonic power structures. Pedagogic outcomes through interaction and participation can result in behavioural change for participants.

A/r/tography methodology fluidly combines my roles of artist, researcher and teacher⁹ to create new embodied knowledge. Conceptualised in 2005 by Springgay, Irwin and Wilson Kind (2008, p. 205), the combination of inquiry, aesthetics and pedagogy used in the methodology can actively facilitate, or act as witness to, participants' contributions. This body of work is needed to expand and extend applied theatre's field of practice supporting practitioners and audiences, to consider the role of the tritagonist and what agency might be available within an international conflict.

I'm No Hero (INH) was inspired by the true stories of Irena Sendler (5 February 1910 to–12 May 2008) and Rachel Corrie (10 April 1979 to 16 March 2003). I was struck by Sendler's

⁷ The term applied theatre was first coined in late 1990s by academics that can include theatre in education, political theatre, theatre in health education, theatre in prisons, Forum Theatre, etc.

⁸ Applied theatre is defined as product – *for* audiences – whereas applied drama is process – *with* participants. However, elements of both are commonly intertwined.

⁹ In addition to my practice my pedagogic work also includes knowledge and reflection gained through teaching applied theatre to my students in higher education.

heroic, altruistic¹⁰ actions and the similarities to the *The Starfish Thrower* story. Sendler, a Catholic Polish social worker, witnessed the creation of the Warsaw Ghetto by the Nazi occupiers. Over a period of five years, she saved 2,500 Jewish children from transportation to the Treblinka concentration camp. The real identities of the children were written together with their new false Christian ones, stuffed into jam jars, and buried in Sendler's garden. This powerful, theatrical image also evokes her buried life story. At the same time, I came across an article about Rachel Corrie, an American killed at the age of twenty-three by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) while defending Palestinian homes in Gaza from demolition. Corrie is an example of an activist/international bystander who took action by joining the International Solidarity Movement. The two stories have similarities and, performed as a solo piece, they enabled me to explore how monopolylogue¹¹ can engage diverse communities in difficult social justice questions.

All three productions were solo performances. So, is there a contradiction here when exploring the tritagonist as a lone figure? For Boal, in *Rainbow of Desire* (1995), being 'I' on stage allowed spectators to observe themselves and examine in detail possible behaviour, producing a tele-microscopic property, 'allowing us to see things, which without it, in smaller or distant form, would escape our gaze' (Boal, 1995, p. 28). Focusing solely on the actions and feelings of the bystander in solo performance, the potential agency of the tritagonist is foregrounded. But by removing the protagonist and antagonist, and placing the

¹⁰ Altruism: 'helping others, contributing to the happiness and well-being of others whilst potentially risking your own well-being', a psychological term coined in the 19th century (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

¹¹ Monopolylogue is defined as one performer representing different characters/parts (Collins Dictionary, n.d.)

tritagonist as the sole voice – centre stage, the tritagonist now paradoxically becomes the protagonist. The combination of being both protagonist and tritagonist opens up further opportunities for the spectator to identify with the role, enquire into the potential agency, through self-observation and reflective learning. This duality was reflected in the title *Acting Alone*, an active term that invites spectators to consider lone acts, as represented by one person on stage, and how this might inspire collective action.

2. Research questions

Practice as research (PaR) and a/r/tography methodologies were sympathetically employed throughout this research. My research questions emerged from devising, script writing and collaborative creative processes informed by wider reading over a ten-year period. Through experimentation, performance and reflecting on the outcomes, additional questions evolved.

At the core of the research was to understand the actions or *in*action of bystanders and how theatre might encourage audiences to consider their agency in relation to a historical conflict and its contemporary legacy. Through touring *INH* over a two-year period to schools, community venues, arts centres and international festivals, and the reflexive process of examining audience responses, further questions emerged: could a more contemporary story make the conflict more accessible to audiences? Could younger audiences be empowered to take action? I explored these questions through adapting Michael Morpurgo's children's book *The Kites Are Flying* (2008) as a solo performance, again

using a mix of filmed material and live theatre. Pre-workshops¹² were delivered in primary schools alongside my undergraduate students, prior to my field research in Palestine.

However, it was during my visit to Palestine, as part of an audience, watching Freedom Theatre's Playback Theatre¹³ production, that I was challenged by a Palestinian farmer.¹⁴

This provocation/intervention contributed to further research questions which went on to form the basis of my next research enquiry – *Acting Alone*.

Acting Alone embodied and disseminated my findings from *INH*, *TKAF* and my experience in Palestine. The *RiDE* article (Hunt, 2019) proposed the terms Tritagonist Audience.¹⁵ TT was not something that I planned to create in 2008; however, it is the nature of using a/r/tography methodology that unanticipated outcomes emerge and, in this case, contributed to identifying further research questions retrospectively.

The initial research question at the heart of both *INH* and *TKAF* was:

How is solo performance able to engage diverse communities in difficult questions about social justice, support the development of critical thinking skills, and empower to make a difference?

¹² Pre-workshops are commonly used with theatre in education/applied theatre practices, giving children and teachers the opportunity to explore the themes creatively and actively before the performance.

¹³ Playback Theatre, created in 1975 by Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas, is a model in which a company of actors enact stories offered up by the audience. After each enactment, another story from the audience is enacted. There is a conductor to facilitate the action.

¹⁴ The Palestinian farmer story is central to *Acting Alone* referenced in the *RiDE* article (Hunt, 2019) (Appendix 1).

¹⁵ Tritagonist Audience is a term that I defined in my *RiDE* article (Hunt, 2019), meaning an audience is in the role of the tritagonist. This critical appraisal defines Tritagonist Theatre (TT) where spectators, in role as tritagonists, are immersed in the theatre experience, active through participation and where agency could be rehearsed (see Towards a Toolkit Appendix 7).

As Phillip Taylor noted, PaR methodology is ‘reflection-in-action not reflection-on-action’ (1996, p. 28). So, the process of creating material ‘on the floor’ and ‘being with’ audiences on tour produced powerful research outcomes, that I will expand upon later, but also produced more questions, resulting in a pilot performance of *Acting Alone* (2014), with the research question:

Through the development of solo performance, as an applied theatre practice, what theatrical tactics and techniques can be used to explore the ethics, politics, engagement and responsibilities of the bystander?

As part of *Acting Alone*’s development, Tilly Branson, my director, and I experimented with creating subtle moments of participation to gradually empower bystander audiences. Upon writing up my findings from *Acting Alone* for the *RiDE* article, I proposed TT as part of applied theatre’s potential skillset, which then formulated my final research question retrospectively:

What does Tritagonist Theatre contribute to an applied theatre practitioner’s skillset to empower and activate the spectator, as bystander?

This question then contributed to the development and drafting of the key component elements of the Tritagonist Toolkit (Appendix 7) to support applied theatre practice.

3. Methodology

Wide ranging, overlapping and interconnected methodological approaches were explored, including hermeneutic spiral, grounded theory and action research. My methodology

evolved across ten years, but as previously mentioned, a/r/tography (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo and Gouzouasis, 2008) became the most useful to me, allowing an organic, rhizomatic process.

The term rhizome, described by Deleuze and Guattari in 1987 (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo and Gouzouasis, 2008, p. 205), occurs when plants reproduce in multiple directions from a root origin, for example ginger or turmeric. In research, the term implies a process that is fluid and divergent, offering a range of new interpretations, disruptions and provocations.

Embodied knowledge created through inhabiting the roles of artist, researcher and teacher provides a rhizomatic starting point informing every aspect of the research enquiry, design and philosophy. New knowledge of the self is created but it is through the symbiotic relationship between performer and spectator that communities of practice are offered to delve more deeply into the conflicts presented. Kershaw (2001) expands on the concept of a rhizomatic structure to highlight the complex inter-relationship between performer and spectator as creating 'democratic processes of self-constitution *during* performance' forming 'democratic communities' (p. 138). Each performance is unique and specific to the geographic location, offering participating communities the opportunity to explore new and multiple perspectives and voices. Indeed, these multiple voices provided examples of heteroglossia.¹⁶ Pauline Sameshima, a Canadian visual artist and academic, investigated how a/r/tography methodology allows for embodied heteroglossia to 'interpret, analyse,

¹⁶ Heteroglossia was a term used by Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian theorist (1895–1975). The term comes from *hetero*, meaning different, and *glossia* (Greek), meaning tongue or language. The term highlights the historical, political and cultural nature of the different voices, distinct from the narrator.

and synthesize multiple narratives and to create multiple visual/performative interpretations and representations of emergent themes' (2009, p. 43).

The very nature of researching my role or the self by occupying three roles simultaneously offers a model of praxis as living enquiry and a pedagogy that is complementary to applied theatre arts-based research. The triangular relationship between artist, researcher and teacher reinforces the concept that all are learners within the performance/research. This holistic approach is what bell hooks describes as a 'model of learning [...] where teachers grow' (1994, p. 21). Meanwhile, Charles Adams (2013) states that the complexity of educational theatre provides an audience with multiple entry points by:

engaging heteroglossia and polyphony,¹⁷ by embodying complexity and contradiction in action, theatre has the potential to forge new and different connections, linking to theories of constructivist and experiential learning proposed by progressive thinkers such as Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey, Paulo Freire and others. (p. 292)

My research, therefore, has not only contributed to my practice as an artist but also to my pedagogic practice with undergraduates and MA students.

3.1 Data collection and analysis

All three productions produced qualitative data from audiences, teachers and young people via feedback forms, observational notes, field study notes, social media and published

¹⁷ Polyphony is a similar term that also recognises multiple voices that are distinct and 'other'.

critical reviews. The data was analysed using Saldaña's (2018) framework to code data and identify themes. Audience comments were entered onto grids, directly addressing research questions and identifying unexpected outcomes (Appendices 2.e: 17, 3.e: 44, 4.e: 67). These differences were important not to ignore; as O'Connor states, when using applied theatre arts-based methodologies 'multiple perspectives embedded in both the arts making and data-generating processes' (2015, p. 66) will highlight discourse that different audiences expressed. These differences and themes evidenced if the research questions had been fully addressed and informed my next research iteration (Blaxtor, 2002, p. 210). Leone Hervey (quoted in Leavy, 2018, p. 75), a dance/movement therapist, who uses a/r/tography as a methodological framework to guide the research process, states that this includes:

- Initial image or question
- Re-creation – reframing the original image through artistic presentation
- Evaluation of data generated
- The original art is transformed – a new creation
- New presentation to audiences

TKAF was pedagogically distinct with additional field research in Palestine, and in my role as educator with undergraduates (Appendix 3.e: 44). Cherney's (2007) educational psychology paradigms were used to analyse the drawings by Palestinian (Appendix 3.e: 54) and UK children in response to the workshops and to assess impact.

3.2 Research ownership

Applied theatre practice is a collaborative art form; therefore, as researcher and artist for this study, the nature of ownership and authorship needs clarification. I researched, raised funding (Arts Council), employed freelance artists, produced marketing materials, booked and managed tours, co-wrote the scripts with Maggie Ford (director of *INH, TKAF*) and Tilly Branson (director of *Acting Alone*), and performed. I gathered all the data generated from each of the performances for analysis. I worked with over four thousand participants as performer and researcher, assessing and observing audience impact. All artists working collaboratively on the productions were credited. For example, the productions employed designers, lighting and sound designers, film editors, and photographers.

4. Theoretical and geopolitical contexts

4.1 Theatre and conflict: Israeli–Palestinian context

The three productions all include reference to, or are exploring, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Britain’s occupation of Palestine and the subsequent creation of Israel are not taught in schools specifically¹⁸ and, together with limited mainstream media coverage contribute to a lack of understanding for both young and adult audiences attending performances. This lack of knowledge and understanding, as expressed by audiences, might contribute to a tacit acquiescence and subsequently, unknowingly, support the intractability of the conflict. Therefore, *Acting Alone’s* references to Britain’s historical occupation, ongoing demolition of Palestinian homes, and illegal occupation of Palestinian land¹⁹ were included as a result (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 51:25 and 1:11:58).

Britain occupied Palestine from the end of World War I (1919) to after World War II (1948). The division of Europe after World War I, both central and eastern, the destruction of Mesopotamia and the acquisition of Palestine were not only driven by reasons of economic benefits but for the purposes of ‘peace-keeping’ by France, America, the Soviet Union and Britain (MacMillan, 2003). When the British arrived in Palestine, the population of Jewish people was 60,000, and the notion of creating a Jewish homeland was predicated on the

¹⁸ Key Stage 3 History curriculum (non-statutory) only references ‘First World War and the Peace Settlement’ (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239075/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_History.pdf)

¹⁹ United Nations: Resolution 2334 (2016): Israel’s settlements have no legal validity and constitute flagrant violation of international law.

notion that the land was *unoccupied*.²⁰ Although equally hated by both Arabs and Jews (Segev, 2000, p. 442), Britain's occupation was driven more to achieve the Zionist objectives of Weizmann and Balfour (MacMillan, 2003, p. 415) and to find a solution to the vast numbers of Jewish people escaping persecution from Russia and subsequently Stalin's Soviet Union. The state of Israel was created in 1948 in response to the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees displaced from the Holocaust, honouring the 1919 Balfour Treaty while ignoring Britain's promises of independence to the Palestinians. The resulting removal of 750,000 Palestinians from their homes into refugee camps, known as Nakba Day²¹ (Balfour 2009, p. 56), would inevitably lead to conflict (Segev, 2000, p. 6).

My interest in the subject of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict sits within applied theatre's practice of empowering audiences to question the political ex-colonial history taught in UK schools (Ahmed, 2006; Balfour, 2009; Thompson 2011, 2012). Many academics and artists have written about the conflict; however, recently, Gillian Mosley produced a documentary titled *The Tinderbox* (2020), which sets out the historical creation of Israel. Mosley, of Jewish/British/American heritage, undertakes to 'educate' audiences worldwide, but specifically UK policy and political influencers, to redress and contribute to the Israeli–Palestinian peace process. Andrew Feinstein²² and Jeff Halper²³ discuss (2022)²⁴ the

²⁰ 600,000 Palestinians had been living there for over 700 years under Ottoman rule (Segev, 2000, p. 4).

²¹ Nakba Day (15 May 1948) is the date of the adoption of the 1919 Balfour Declaration treaty, which triggered the ethnic cleansing, or *Nakba*, of Palestinians from their homes/land.

²² Andrew Feinstein is a Jewish MP and investigative journalist of South African descent who participated in ANC peace and reconciliation talks and author of *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade* (2011).

²³ Jeff Halper is a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, anthropologist, lecturer and author of *War against the People: Israel, The Palestinians and Global Pacification* (2016).

²⁴ YouTube: Discussion between Andrew Feinstein and Jeff Halper: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= 1mRLCUpqzE>.

intractable nature of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. They specifically identify the lack of artists exploring this subject due to accusations of anti-Semitism²⁵ and argue that it is this silencing of debate that is also negatively impacting upon the peace process. They also note the effectiveness of the international economic and cultural boycott of South Africa as having contributed to the collapse of apartheid.²⁶ Feinstein posits that the only real hope for resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict through non-violence is from the actions of the international civil society. This position supports my research exploring the tritagonist as an active voice and its potential impact.

[4.2 Boal and the Tritagonist](#)

A key element of applied theatre practice is recognising the pedagogical contribution of participation. Augusto Boal's²⁷ Forum Theatre provides participants with a framework through which to examine and rehearse a response their oppression. In 1974, Boal, a Brazilian theorist and practitioner, wrote *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO). The TO canon includes Forum Theatre, Image Theatre and Invisible Theatre. Boal's early theatre work could be described as agitprop²⁸ or didactic theatre. After one performance Boal was approached by a worker (Virgilio) in the audience. Virgilio insisted that Boal take up arms with him and start the revolution (Boal, 1995:2). In that moment, Boal realised that, while advocating that the audience should take up arms, he was not willing to spill his own blood.

²⁵ *Acting Alone* received accusations of anti-Semitism (Appendix 4.e:74) as discussed in the *RiDE* Article (Appendix 1:10). Other productions receiving similar accusations include Hare's *Via Dolorosa* (1999, p. 147), *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (Viner and Rickman, 2005), *Seven Jewish Children* (Churchill, 2009) and *The Tinderbox* (Mosley, 2020).

²⁶ Amnesty International has analysed Israel's intention to create and maintain a system of oppression and domination over Palestinians. It has concluded that this system amounts to apartheid (Amnesty International, 2022, p. 280).

²⁷ I trained with Augusto Boal in 1990 in Forum Theatre and in *Rainbow of Desire* in 1997.

²⁸ Agitprop theatre was created in the 1930s in response to the rise of European fascist governments. Theatre companies would tour to community audiences to provoke and agitate, telling audiences what to do by rising up against fascism.

This event led Boal to create Forum Theatre, where the audience act not as passive spectators but as active spect-actors, creating and rehearsing interventions that challenge/change their oppression. Boal's theory, deriving from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996), offers spect-actors the opportunity to dialogically enquire into their experienced oppression and critically reflect on their rehearsed actions within a forum.

Boal's experience of being challenged by Virgilio had a profound impact contributing to the development of Forum Theatre. Similarly, being challenged by the Palestinian farmer, having watched his story being performed as part of Playback Theatre (Appendix 1) (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 1:18:16), also had a profound effect on my enquiry of how to empower and activate the bystander audience within a theatrical context.

Appendix 5 maps out the different terms used over the three productions and article, and how they relate to action versus *inaction*. The transition from in-action to action is underpinned by Kurt Lewin's 'theory of change' (1947): unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. The definition of a bystander is 'a person who sees something that is happening but is not involved', an 'onlooker' (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.), whereas the tritagonist is the *tri* – third player – *agonist* – person who drives, moves, draws out (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). This places the third person in the drama as an active player who can contribute to or challenge the action and is therefore not someone merely *standing by*.

Sophocles created the role of the tritagonist over two thousand years ago (Boal, 2000). In order of importance the roles were protagonist, duerotagonist/antagonist and tritagonist. The rule of three speaking actors was partly economic and partly the custom of the time

(Rees, 1908). The three actors could change masks and costumes and double up to present a wider range of characters, set against the chorus. The tritagonist could be either friend or foe, and, as in life, the third voice can either contribute to more suffering or aid the protagonist (Müller, 1840; Rees, 1908).

Karl Müller suggested that the tritagonist offers something new to the dramatic structure. For Müller, the tritagonist role was as instigator that could provide 'interest' or 'excite pity or anxiety' (1840, p. 405). However, Sruti Bala identifies the bystander within Forum Theatre, as one who can either complicate or make an intervention on behalf of the protagonist: 'the figure or the onlooker, sometimes also called the tritagonist ... [is] described as the spectator on stage' (2015, p. 37). By identifying the tritagonist role the third role is legitimised and made available for spect-actors to come onto the stage and rehearse action in a process of simultaneous dramaturgy creating an alternative outcome. Bala highlights the duality of the 'spect-actor replac[ing] an onlooker on stage, s/he does not simply transition to the position of actor but also transitions from one spectatorial practice to another, and this is not in contrast to, but in continuum with a so-called "active" intervention' (2015, p. 39).

Boal refers to the tritagonist in both *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2000) and *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (2006) but does not expand on the potential agency of the third voice. TO practitioner Luc Opdebeeck of Format Theater in the Netherlands used the term tritagonist with young people within a school playground bullying context. Opdebeeck explains how *Vieren* (2006) (Je zocht naar Vieren – Formaat, 2021) explored 'the dilemma of the

tritagonist not acting in real life' (Opdebeeck, personal correspondence, 2018) and how TO can offer a space for the tritagonist to rehearse taking action.

David Diamond developed the *Theatre of Living* programme during the early 1990s. Inspired by Boal's TO practices, he proposed that, although oppressed, oppressors, and bystanders are all present in the audience, it is important that 'the oppressed find their voice [and others do] not to speak for them' (1994, p. 35). Diamond coined the term 'powerless observers' (PO) (2007, p. 115) to distinguish the bystander role. The term PO offers members of the community, i.e. non-oppressed spect-actors, the opportunity to explore issues such as white privilege without fear of being judged. This opportunity is central to Diamond's work in Canada exploring the legacy of Britain's colonial past within indigenous communities. However, by providing the opportunity for POs to replace any character within forum theatre it can also contribute to *theatre of advice* for the oppressed, which needs to be curated carefully by the Joker.²⁹ Paul Dwyer is critical about the Joker within this context, stating that they are responsible and 'crucial in shaping the ideological contours of the event' (2004, p. 201). Sappa and Barabasch also invite spect-actors to take on any role: 'the joker encouraged participants to propose strategies to empower the tritagonist instead of focussing on the oppressed only' (2020, p. 154).

The term 'tritagonist audience', as I proposed in the 2019 *RiDE* article (Appendix 1), builds on Boal's forum theatre but offers a nuanced distinction. TT does not divert attention from TO and applied theatre's primary focus on the empowerment of marginalised communities

²⁹ The term 'Joker' is used within TO to describe the person who facilitates the forum.

but is instead a recognition that, although bystanders do not share the lived experience of the oppressed, leverage from the international community can make a difference. The facility of a theatre space enables a tritagonist audience to critically engage with these questions, and explore agency. I will now turn to the three productions to illustrate how TT evolved.

I'm No Hero

The development of *INH* began in 2008, to explore the experiences of bystanders, who had risked their lives to save others, and to allow audiences to critically reflect upon their own agency. A narrator character was introduced that could address the audience directly. The narrator could voice some of the audiences' concerns by questioning Sendler and Corrie's actions directly. This device of using the narrator to be the audience's voice was, on reflection, testing elements of TT (Appendix 8.a), and as this was early on in my thinking and development of the Toolkit this proto-tritagonist provided a useful model for further research. Audience feedback was also encouraging:

[the] multi-media will engage young people's interest in politics,
world affairs & history

pupils overheard discussing as they left & keen in following lesson
(Appendix 2.e: 22).

But with some schools noting that 'pupils with a lack of historical knowledge struggled' (Appendix 2.e: 22), it was important for the 2010 tour to include some supporting materials. Nottinghamshire County Council's Citizenship Team produced a Teacher's Pack to help contextualise *INH* (Appendix 2.h: 26) in response to feedback. However, I also received

comments from adult audiences requesting greater detail and explanation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict: ‘I really knew nothing before I came’ (Appendix 3.e: 49). Elizabeth Segal discusses the potential consequences when complex political and social events that are difficult to engage with are reduced to soundbite reporting on mainstream or social media, and how this can contribute to racial scapegoating (2011, p. 271). This contributed to my creative decision to examine the history curriculum and to work with younger audiences.

The Kites Are Flying

In Morpurgo’s *TKAF*, the proto-tritagonist character, Maxine, was an observer/reporter, and following my Palestinian field research I was keen that this character was challenged within the performance (Appendix 8.b: 138). Because this question is not in the original Morpurgo text, and because of not wanting to impose too heavily, I was unable to fully explore the responsibilities of observer/reporter or for audiences to be empowered to consider agency. Reflecting upon audience feedback, it was also clear that I had not been able to develop my ideas around the proto-tritagonist further. This realisation formulated further questions as part of my creative process, which were then developed in *Acting Alone* (Appendix 8.c: 145).

Acting Alone

Commissioned by Amnesty International (Derbyshire) *Acting Alone* would specifically address how to develop the proto-tritagonist. *Acting Alone* would not only provide a wider historical context but also create moments of participation, creating empowerment and ensuring that audiences did not remain, as Boal suggests, ‘the perplexed bystanders’ (2007,

p. 71) but empowered tritagonists to further debate. Jill Dolan supports the necessity for multiple spaces in our communities for debate and dialogue, quoting feminist, writer, activist and academic Nancy Fraser on the importance of 'arrangements that accommodate contestation among a plurality of competing publics' (2005, p. 25).

The tritagonist or third position within a conflict is complex, dangerous, and often an overcrowded space. Indeed, to occupy the third position between the oppressed (protagonist) and the oppressor (antagonist) can sometimes even be life threatening. The role of a bystander can be complicit/passive but can also be active: onlooker, ally, helper, rescuer, white saviour, whistle blower, activist, or even altruist (Appendix 5). In Bala's 2015 article, the tritagonist can come onto the stage:

when an act of injustice takes place. S/he may not necessarily be directly affected, but could potentially play an important interventionist role. (p. 39)

Bala's premise is that the tritagonist could take on a role of importance within Forum Theatre and that this active role of spectatorship contributes to a 'continuum' of 'active intervention' (2015, p. 39) but the primary focus of Forum Theatre is still that of the oppressed. *Acting Alone* activated spectators by replicating my experience of being in the Playback Theatre audience in Palestine. The oppressed/protagonist (farmer) challenged us (the audience/international bystanders). The actors stopped acting, and the audience then became the subject. We transformed from being passive bystanders to becoming complicit through our *in*action. In the absence of a mechanism to take action, feelings of shame and humiliation resulted. By re-creating this dramatic moment in *Acting Alone*, spectators are

invited/enabled to critically consider agency (Appendix 8.c: 162) (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 1:20:19). The transformation from bystander audience into active tritagonist was created through a number of processes, which are explained later.

Through this reconstruction the tritagonist audience was now the centre of the drama examining what it takes to cross the boundary (Appendix 8.c: 161). Taking a lead in any movement for change is perhaps a fundamental psychological dilemma: survival versus taking a leadership role to address larger existential threats. So what are the risks of speaking out? What if no one else joins in? These themes have been explored for centuries, as in Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes* (1837) or in Derek Sivers' TED Talk *How to Start a Movement* (2010).

The first person to stand up needs to be willing to feel the isolation, the humiliation. But it is the second or third person to join in that helps to create momentum. Nevertheless, it cannot be assumed that everyone in the theatre is in agreement or shares the same perspective. *Acting Alone* audiences were of diverse opinions. Some spectators were perhaps neutral, unsure or unwilling to express an opinion, and in a complex conflict, like the Israeli–Palestinian one, it could even be argued that 'neutrality' bends, conforms and supports the oppressor. Elie Wiesel suggests, 'Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented' (1986, n.p.). As a solo performer I was able to directly address the audience as surrogate, asking questions they might identify with. As Anthony Jackson posits, 'audience-surrogate-characters who stand for us' (2005, p. 111) go together on a journey questioning and expressing the fears of getting involved. The audience-surrogate can view the conflict from an alternative

perspective by projecting themselves onto the protagonist. Bruce McConachie quotes Bernard Beckerman's spectator theory, which establishes the audiences' potential to develop an 'empathetic parallelism' (McConachie, 2008, p. 71), as the ability to join with the character shifts in tension. However, for some spectators, this was not possible, and some even questioned the truth of my experiences in Israel and Palestine. This, of course, was expected: not all audience-surrogates will share the same opinion/belief, no matter how empathetically the characters/narratives are presented. As discussed earlier, I believe that theatre – and particularly applied theatre – should not be didactic, supplying easy answers, but should maintain and encourage heteroglossia: multiple voices to contribute and challenge 'audience's preconceptions, requiring active engagement and reflection both during and after the performance' (Jackson, 2005, p. 112). Opposing beliefs about who is the perpetrator of the oppression will be present in diverse audiences. It is the very nature of art that it cannot be neutral – every choice is informed pedagogically and politically. Dwight Conquerwood comments on the innate practice of applied theatre opening up a dialogical space as a way of 'having intimate conversations [...] the sensuous immediacy and empathetic leap demanded by performance is an occasion for orchestrating two voices for bringing together two sensibilities' (quoted in O'Connor, 2015, p. 38). It was not *Acting Alone's* intention to eradicate differences but, by creating a space to examine the potential agency of the tritagonist contribute to the dialogic space in order for complex questions to be countered without threat or fear.

Published article: 'Acting Alone: exploring by-stander engagement through performer/audience relationship'

The article analysed the performer/spectator relationship created in *Acting Alone*, using participative elements and verbatim/autobiographical material, by transforming the bystander audience into active tritagonists (2019). This article drew together my findings from the performances together with audience feedback, and proposed the term tritagonist audience.

In conclusion, the term Tritagonist Theatre (TT) is a development, enhancement and clarification of Sophocles' third voice. Within Boal's Forum Theatre the third voice is never explicitly examined in isolation.³⁰ But by isolating the perspective/experience of the bystander the third voice can be examined in depth, to understand what agency is possible, or to consider the consequences of *inaction*. The term tritagonist may not be a term that spectators are aware of, but for those people who do not share the lived experience of oppressor/antagonist or oppressed/protagonist, they are, by implication, occupying the third role – the tritagonist – and this legitimisation of the role is empowering. Therefore, for applied theatre practitioners, the pedagogic and aesthetic possibilities of using TT can open up powerful new lines of enquiry.

³⁰ Boal's Legislative Theatre (1998) engaged whole communities, producing legislation/institutional change at a local governmental level.

Acting Alone was not constructed to be a piece of didactic theatre but a dialogic space for spectators to consider Britain's post-colonial responsibilities and what actions may be possible. It is through the awareness, education and empowerment of the bystander that TT can rehearse agency and potentially contribute to social justice and change.

[4.3 Social psychology of the bystander](#)

John M Darley and Bibb Latané established the Bystander Effect Theory in 1968 (Cook, 2015). Darley and Latané's experiments demonstrated that bystanders were less likely to act or intervene if they were part of a crowd. Known as diffusion of responsibility, in the example of the Kitty Genovese case,³¹ the bystander theory proposes an abdication of personal responsibility, or what Catherine Sanderson more recently terms 'social loafing' (2020, p. 32). Sanderson's *The Bystander Effect* suggests that we can have a predisposition towards responsibility, but we can also learn, change and even rehearse a response – although she does not suggest how this might be achieved. *Acting Alone* explored how social loafing might be examined or even transformed into a compassionate response by rehearsing an initial request – 'will you help?' – at the start of the show (Appendix 8.c: 145). Spectators responded to the request for help, enabling others to mirror this behaviour (Dore et al., 2017; McConachie, 2008), and this request was relied upon later in the performance.

³¹ Kitty Genovese, a young single woman, was 'allowed' to die after a brutal, unprovoked attack. Genovese died unaided on the streets of New York in 1964 due to the thirty-eight witnesses who did not want to get involved.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the French philosopher, proposes people are perhaps intrinsically compassionate and that it is society and culture that 'beats it out of them' (Drew, 2002, p. 636), and thus contributing to what Norman Geras describes as 'mutual indifference' (1998). Hannah Arendt's famous *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (2006) examines the actions of Nazi leaders and the indifference of the wider German population. These social science studies examine the culpability of the silent bystanders: 'the road to Auschwitz was built by hate and paved with indifference' (Geras, 1998, p. 18).

In the context of World War II, there were many examples of individuals who, as altruists, saved Jewish people/families despite potential personal risk. Another's suffering can trigger altruistic behaviour through empathetic distress so that 'helping relieves the negative feelings aroused through empathy with a person in distress' (Drew, 2002, p. 35), reflecting aspects of Buddhist spiritual and philosophical values. Research demonstrates that compassion can both contribute to our own well-being (Dore, Morris, Picard and Orhsner, 2017) and increase compassionate behaviour in others. For Kristen Renwick Monroe (1996), altruism is innate to the person and cannot be learned. An altruist's beliefs and behaviour 'centres on this sense of shared humanity, a perception of the self at one with all mankind' (Monroe, 1996, p. 206).

INH demonstrated that Rachel Corrie's interests in social justice and wanting to make a difference began early in her childhood. Compassion fuelled her decision to go to Gaza as part of the International Solidarity Movement in 2003. Holloway Sparks explores female political activism in *Dissident Citizenship: Democratic Theory, Political Courage and Activist Women* (1997). Sparks proposes that the actions of women who undertake courageous acts

of dissidence are frequently written out of history, and this marginalisation is evidence of hegemonic structures silencing women's voices. She defines dissident citizenship as:

Practices of marginalized citizens who publicly contest prevailing arrangements of power by means of oppositional democratic practices that augment or replace institutionalized channels of democratic opposition when those channels are inadequate or unavailable. (Sparks, 1997, p. 75)

Placing Corrie and Sendler's actions within a feminist framework gives recognition to the courage of their actions, as both dissident citizen and altruist, by positioning them in relation to dominant patriarchal constructs.

4.4 Verbatim and autobiographical processes

As part of the development of the proto-tritagonist in *INH* verbatim³² material was used to contribute to audiences' understanding of Corrie and Sendler's real experiences making it easier to identify and empathise with the women. Verbatim theatre emerged as a term in the mid to late twentieth century and, often highly political, is characterised as 'giving voice to the point of view of the dispossessed' (Derbyshire and Hodson, 2008, p. 202). A perceived lack of diversity in political discourse in mainstream media has recently created an appetite for truth-seeking audiences in Australia, the US and the UK. There has, therefore, been a resurgence in verbatim offerings that challenge a reductive simplified mainstream media

³² Verbatim theatre evolved from documentary theatre in the 1960s. British theatre director Peter Cheeseman recognised that only certain voices/stories in the theatre were being told.

narrative (Anderson, 2007). Through the positioning of untold stories, verbatim can challenge the status quo.

Part of my creative decision-making process for *INH* was to ensure that a back story enabled audiences to connect and care about the characters – verbatim is not simply a list of facts (Rynhart, 2018). For example, in Corrie’s story we chose to insert a scene from her mother’s perspective – again, although some of the text was inspired by Cindy Corrie’s speeches we found on the internet, it was fictionalised to produce a rounded emotionally resonant portrayal. This, of course, raises questions for audiences trying to appreciate what is real and what has been an imaginative leap (Bottoms, 2006). This approach of blending real events with imagined is a commonly used theatrical device by playwrights such as David Hare and Max Stafford Clark, but what was essential when scripting *INH* was to ensure that both Corrie and Sandler were fully rounded, believable people (Appendix 8.a: 110) (Bottoms, 2006).

Criticisms of verbatim theatre are that it raises complex ethical considerations³³ regarding the representation of the ‘other’ and by mining already marginalised communities’ thus further ‘exploiting people’s goodwill’ (Young, 2017, p. 25). While recognising that the theatricality of the performance is important for audiences, verbatim must work against verisimilitude by ensuring that the performance is not just a likeness but also avoids being reductive and presenting a simplified versions of events. It is interesting that Forsyth and

³³ See Appendix 6.a. page 6 on ethical considerations of representation of the ‘other’ and using verbatim material retrospectively.

Megson (2011) were critical of *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (2008)³⁴, noting that although the audience felt compassion for the character the script failed to ‘improve our understanding of the situation in Israel-Palestine and from this understanding help to create progressive change’ (2011, p. 78). This highlights the complexity and need for balance by the theatre maker; verbatim is not just what is said, it is creating a whole empathetic person, while giving a clear context to their story. The recognition of this balance using verbatim can result in a change of perception, behaviour or agency by an audience. As Anderson and Wilkinson observed:

People are coming out [of the theatre] saying 'I am going to do something' [...] it has been able to change people from a theoretical interest to a gut and heart response [...] groups of schoolkids are writing to refugees. (2007, p. 14)

Although *Acting Alone* was mainly autobiographical, the production replayed verbatim sections from *INH* and my wider research. The feminist autobiographical canon generated during the 1970s defines autobiographical performances as exposing oppression from a personal perspective (Heddon, 2008).³⁵ However, criticisms of autobiographical work are that it can be too self-reflective or self-indulgent. James Thompson is cautionary, claiming autobiography needs to be carefully placed: ‘narratives, remembrances can blame, enact revenge and foster animosity’ (2005, pp. 25–26). Feminist discourse places autobiography

³⁴ *My Name is Rachel Corrie* is a verbatim play written and produced by Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner based on Corrie’s writings and recordings.

³⁵ Autobiography also challenges the concept of authenticity by questioning the two selves (performer and performed) represented as a curated/edited version of the performer on stage: ‘The performer may perform the self, but one can never be entirely sure who the self that is being performed is’ (Heddon, 2002, para 6).

(within a context of artistic expression) as a powerful tool when challenging patriarchal values (Claycomb, 2012). Feminist theory shares dialogic principles with theatre addressing post-colonial themes. As Gilbert and Tomkins propose, 'it follows that post-colonial theatre (much like feminist theatre) finds in the body more than mere "actor function" or "actor vehicle"' (1996, p. 204). Therefore, the autobiographical form contributes to the real by presenting the authentic self, creating connection, challenging the hegemonic structures and creating a dialogic space that can be interrogated.

Autobiography, similar to verbatim theatre, requires a unique form of performance.

Referencing Louis Renza's (1977) notions of fusing truth and fiction, Emma Govan et al. propose that the audience are the arbiters of what is perceived: 'postmodern theories of selfhood are used to challenge the perception that autobiographical performance offers a transparent representation of subjectivity' (2007, p. 56). This can challenge audiences with differing opinions to question the authenticity of the narratives (Appendix 1: 10).

The nature of performing oneself on stage could be described as 'modernist avant-garde [and therefore]... is not a mimetic practice' (Govan et al., 2007, p. 60). Within *Acting Alone*, Branson and I enhanced this notion with non-scripted sections, producing the appearance that my performance was real, spontaneous, happening in the moment, and thereby further encouraging an empathic connection (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 29:15). This was me, my story.

Autobiographical material used in this way 'engages audiences in active reception' (2007, p. 72) being 'drawn into relationships with the performer due to the authentic nature of the material and the fact that the story is being told directly to them' (2007, p. 61). Spectators

were enabled to participate in 'a creative aesthetic that challenges the patterns established by traditional plays' (2007, p. 57). *Acting Alone* also meshed fables into the performance by splicing the verbatim and autobiographical, providing yet another lens through which to view the conflict and thereby contrast and situate the real, bringing it into *relief*. These fictional offerings provided 'multiple forms of identification with others, rather than those simply inscribed in dominant or conventional social narratives' (2007, p. 75). Therefore, through the use of fables (fiction), verbatim (the real words of real people), and autobiography (my own truth), it was anticipated that *Acting Alone* could create empathetic connection with audience members, thus contributing to an increased social responsibility and willingness to become socially involved (Segal, 2011, p. 271).

4.5 Effect/affect: function of hope within Tritagonist Theatre

TT aligns with many of the theories discussed by academics such as Boal, Thompson, and Jackson relating to balancing affect, effect and hope. Applied theatre's intention to create effect, while equally not dismissing the importance of empathetic theatre that soothes or offers 'theatre of relief' (Thompson, 2012, p. 175), is central to many well-argued theories. But affect is paramount when producing dialogic theatre. As Thompson suggests, this prevents the theatre from becoming 'restricted or weakened' (2011, p. 7). If we sacrifice the theatrics solely to effect we risk creating a dull and didactic experience. Anthony Jackson states that an interdependency is essential, questioning why so little applied theatre is ever considered as art, given 'the pivotal place the word "theatre" [has] in our terminologies [and] that the artistic dimension is so rarely addressed' (2005, p. 107). It was important,

therefore, that the shows were high quality, and that, wherever possible, were critically reviewed in order to create additional media coverage and thus contribute to increased awareness of the issues to a wider public beyond the theatre space (Appendices: 2.d, 2.g, 3.d, 3.g, 4.d, 4.g). The balance between affect and effect was achieved as demonstrated by comments such as: 'Hunt forces audiences to assess what they would be willing to do for people they did not know' (Klayman, 2010: Appendix 2.e: 20). The *Morning Star* agreed, stating 'the contrast between victim and oppressor lies as an acid subtext to an affecting and effective performance' (Parsons, 2010: Appendix 2.e: 20). However, as Thompson describes in *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre the End of Effect?* (2011), it is important to recognise that although spectators may be affected and be inspired to take action, it may, for some, be futile or even life threatening to do so. *Acting Alone* explored these risks of taking action (Appendix 8.c: 162) (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 1:18:53), equating them to Corrie's death. Thompson suggests that artists and spectators must fully appreciate the distinctions between theatre and the real risks within an armed struggle by proposing the difference between tactical and strategic action. Boal defines this as the 'Che Guevara syndrome' (2006, p. 126), meaning that we have to analyse the reality and not be seduced by romantic ideas of heroism. Thompson states the use of affective theatre can open up 'highly contested' and 'violence-infested contexts' to create 'a fleeting moment of comparative potential that leads to something greater' (2011, p. 1). *Acting Alone* created strong visceral affects for spectators, producing moments of laughter, heat and protest during the performance (Appendix 1: 10). For Dani Snyder-Young, affect and efficacy within applied theatre are not opposites and, when combined with participation, can provide the building blocks to achieve effect (2013, p. 8). But, as stated earlier, claims of effect, taking action in

the real world, must be tapered accordingly as they are difficult to evidence. Having said this, it is essential, therefore, that TT offers spectators hope, particularly when considering action within a long, ongoing conflict when feelings of overwhelm and resignation can contribute to a *fait accompli*. In *Acting Alone* the function of fables was to offer spectators an alternative perspective, offering images of hope (Appendix 8.c: 159). As audiences observed:

Fables [...] illustrate the consequences of standing by, the value of insight and vision, and tellingly, the unexpected benefits of simply doing our best. (Appendix 4.e: 68)

The role of hope, combined with a safe space for discourse in shared publics, is also an essential part of Jill Dolan's theory of utopian performatives (2005), offering spectators a vision of the future. The interweaving of hope is essential to counter narratives of victimhood, preventing audiences becoming voyeurs of others' distress (Salverson, 2001) and thus mitigating against becoming theatre of the depressed. Also, maintaining the conflict in the public consciousness offers hope to spectators who feel that the conflict has been forgotten: 'Being Tunisian, I am particularly sensitive to the Palestinian tragedy and it is so moving to see that other human beings are not indifferent to injustice' (Appendix 2.g: 25).

In conclusion, when analysing the responses from spectators the productions did achieve high-quality affective theatre that offered hope. Research outcomes achieved were unexpected and sometimes not easily evidenced; however, examples of efficacy within the

theatre and, effect – action taken outside the theatre – did result from *Acting Alone*, and this will be discussed later.

5. Response to research questions

5.1 How is solo performance able to engage diverse communities in difficult questions about social justice, support the development of critical thinking skills, and empower to make a difference?

INH and *TKAF* researched the actions of individuals by mirroring the singularity of a sole performer on stage. The power of the solo performer on stage created greater intensity of connection through the semiotics of the lone body in space, the quality of the performance, and well-crafted material. Criticisms of solo performance include that, when done badly, it can be narcissistic, confessional and self-indulgent (Brockway Schmor, 1994). The relationship between the solo performer and the audience, therefore, when performing controversial material to diverse audiences, needs to be imbued with humanity, humility and vulnerability in order to open a dialogic space of enquiry.

INH successfully engaged diverse audiences in social justice issues as can be evidenced by critics and post-show audience feedback (Appendix 2.e and Appendix 2.g). The framing device of the narrator character directs the spectators to reflect on the physical risks that both Sandler and Corrie faced (Appendix 8.a: 122). *INH's* solo performance highlighted the aloneness of the actions taken, producing an alignment of both form and content contributing to the development of critical thinking. One reviewer asked:

Why don't we do what they do?

And what does that mean that we don't? (Appendix 2.e: 20)

In schools, teachers were keen to discuss the dramatic styles and techniques used with pupils as well as raise questions around human rights and heroism. Teaching materials supported school audiences to explore questions of social justice more deeply by considering their own actions (Appendix 2.h: 27). Leading practitioners, such as Dorothy Heathcote, commented how *INH*:

Deserves to be used in every school [...] I would use it to teach abroad. (Appendix 2.e: 23)

Although *INH* contributed to the development of critical thinking, and some people had considered taking action (Appendix 2.e), there was insufficient evidence to support my claim of empowering audiences to make a difference. Feedback suggested that a lack of knowledge of the conflict and perhaps the historical nature of the two women's stories had contributed to this effect.

These questions further impacted upon my artistic journey to explore the role of the bystander within a contemporary, accessible story. But I was also interested in working with young marginalised black and Asian communities in Derby and Nottingham and whether there were connections with Palestinian children's incarcerated experiences in the West Bank. They may not experience physical barriers, but perhaps there were *invisible walls* that prevented them from achieving their ambitions. The role of the bystander in *TKAF* was also different: bystander as observer/reporter. These new elements contributed to supplementary questions: Could children connect to the conflict? Could they be empowered to make a difference? And, more generally, what could applied theatre students learn from this research?

Central to Morpurgo's text is the symbolism of flying a kite over the wall. Pre-workshops helped UK children to connect to the story by identifying how to overcome barriers/walls in their lives. Applied theatre students recorded the children's responses:

Whatever happens to our dreams, don't give up.

If something comes in the way of your future, don't worry because we can overcome them.

(Appendix 3.h: 57)

Students reflected on the children's responses during the workshops and how this contributed to their own understanding, commenting:

I was surprised that the children were able to comment [on the conflict] and put themselves in the characters' shoes.

Learning about the history of Israel and Palestine [...] lots of aspirations for the future! (Appendix 3.e: 44)

The children's ability to connect the story with their personal ambition was strongly evidenced in their completed questionnaires:

That the living conditions for those living in the shadow of the wall [should] improve.

[They wanted] to be a business woman and to help Israel and Palestine to get along.

(Appendix 3.e: 46)

Teachers also commented on the wider learning that had been achieved, saying the project had:

helped to bring the book alive, deepen understanding of the text and enabled them to think more about the issues tackled in the book. (Appendix 3.h: 57)

TKAF workshops delivered in Palestine supported Alrowwad's arts curriculum – 'beautiful resistance' and their commitment to not having the 'luxury of despair' (Balfour, 2009, p. 57; Thompson, 2012, p. 138; Appendix 8.c: 158). Palestinian children's lived experience in the refugee camps demonstrated by depression, trauma, insomnia, psychosomatic disorders, aggression, concentration problems, and hyperactivity (Johansson, 2017, pp. 251–252) contributes to a 'culture of incarceration' (Al-Yamani, 2012, p. 74). Following *TKAF* creative workshops, the children drew pictures of the story. These clearly demonstrated the hope that the children had for the future by colouring the kite to depict the Palestinian flag flying over the wall and placing themselves on top of the wall in the drawings (Appendix 2.e: 54).

However, for some children in the UK watching the performance questions were raised about my monopolylogue choice:

It would be better if it had more actors.

Make it better with more people. (Appendix 3.e: 48)

Although these comments amounted to less than a quarter of the twenty-four questionnaires in total, further analysis was required. It is difficult to establish whether the teacher had facilitated a discussion about the nature of solo performance before the children completed the questionnaires. As solo performance is a specific genre of theatre, a combination of a lack of theatre experience and not knowing the story could have influenced their response (Appendix 3.e: 48). However, four adults also questioned the use of solo performance. One suggested that perhaps there was 'more scope to explore the drama with the use of another actor' another commented that a two-hander 'would give

more possibilities' (Appendix 3.e: 53). There is no doubt that when adapting or creating solo performance it can be extremely challenging. With *Via Dolorosa*³⁶ (1999), David Hare worried whether a solo voice on stage would be 'boring' (p. 5) for audiences. Performing long passages of dialogue between two characters can become rhythmically predictable. In *TKAF* I made small costume changes between characters and for some audiences this was not always successful (Appendix 3.e: 51). Therefore, as part of my creative process with Sarah Bringham (artistic director of Derby Theatre) when devising *Acting Alone*, we established a palette of vocal and physical motifs for different characters instead. These motifs meant transitions could be fast, clean and effective (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 33:41). Other observations, following *TKAF* Q&As, contributed to my creative decision to further explore the power of my lived experience – the autobiographical voice (Appendix 2.e: 51).

In conclusion, although not exclusively, solo performance, as part of my research, can engage diverse audiences to critically enquire into difficult questions around social justice. Diverse audiences, of course, produced mixed responses about the success of the solo form, however, there was encouragement to explore the autobiographical direct address elements (Appendix 3.e: 51). Both children and adult audiences still required more knowledge about the conflict (Appendix 3.e: 49). Although, pedagogically, participation in the workshops, with children and students, had produced a greater sense of empowerment and agency, I was still left with the question: could solo performance find a pedagogic

³⁶ *Via Dolorosa* is referenced in *Acting Alone* (Appendix 8.c: 51) (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 32:09).

mechanism to enable *all* audience/bystanders to equally feel empowered to make a difference?

5.2 Through the development of solo performance, as an applied theatre practice, what theatrical tactics and techniques can be used to explore the ethics, politics, engagement and responsibilities of the bystander?

Misri Dey's *Making Solo Performance* identifies solo work as 'a proposition of oneness, of being alone, unaccompanied or unassisted' (2018, p. 2) but also that a significant amount of monopolylogue work resides within performance art practice, whereas John Brockway Schmor (1994) describes solo performance as a post-modernist Brechtian genre of theatre. Brecht's political influence on applied theatre practice is extensive; however, solo performance work has not been explored extensively by academics. Paul Dwyer (2010) and David Hare (2009) both produced autobiographical solo performances exploring colonial history from an international perspective. However, in *Critical Perspectives on Applied Theatre* (Hughes and Nicholson, 2016), Dwyer does not elaborate on the nature of the solo performance and is cautionary about applied theatre's efficacy (2016, p. 146), while Hare would not describe his 'one man show' (1999, p. 203) as an example of applied theatre.

In 2002, David Johnston and I set up Tangere Arts. Driven partly by the economics of restricted funding and ease of touring for a small company we were curious to develop our practice of solo performance as a part of the applied theatre canon. During a five-year period we produced a wide variety of solo performances supported by pre- or post-

workshops for school audiences. So, when considering my research questions of developing solo performance work as part of applied theatre in the context of touring to young people in schools and adult audiences in non-traditional community spaces, I proposed integrating participation while using a cabaret-style staging. This immersive approach contributed to an informal atmosphere that supported 'casual conversation' and pre-show participation, intended to contribute to greater connection, investment, and empathy, and preparing spectators to become actively engaged throughout (Babbage, 2004). Nevertheless, I still needed to perform in fixed-seating theatre venues. Susan Bennett's reception theory highlights the differences between fixed-seating venues and informal spaces, suggesting that traditional theatre architecture does impact on audiences' responses and even reinforces audiences' need to be anonymous in the dark – to observe (1990, p. 141). Therefore, interactive/adaptive techniques were flexed; for example, the use of house lighting remaining on, adapting or introducing additional participatory exercises, and changing the proximity, connection and symbiotic relationship with spectators (Appendix 8.c: 145) (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 9:30).

Participation: Tactics/techniques

Acting Alone's development of participatory elements was influenced by Tim Crouch's³⁷ immersive work (Appendix 1: 8). *Acting Alone* was structured so that spectators were not

³⁷ Tim Crouch is a theatre maker who uses immersive and participation in his productions including *The Author*, as discussed more fully in my RiDE article (2019).

exposed or humiliated, but, through a process of a gentle immersion, participation was enabled (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 9:00). *Acting Alone* employed White's 'aesthetics of participation' (2013, p. 25), fluctuating between the explicit and implicit throughout drawing on a range of applied theatre tactics and techniques. An example of this is documented in *RiDE* (Appendix 1: 8) during the enactment of the children's names being buried in Irena Sendler's garden (Appendix 8.c: 152). White's use of the 'procedural author' (2013, p. 31) recognises that the performance material can consciously construct signals of convention. These participatory tactics were developed throughout the tour, adapting/accommodating and extending the activities dependent on the nature of the venue.

Boal's Forum Theatre enables spect-actors to challenge the oppression in their lives by rehearsing for 'life' within the safety of the theatre space. Without the opportunity to rehearse a response to the oppressor, Boal argues, spect-actors remain passive. Frances Babbage supports this by stating 'true radicalism comes [...] only through participation in, and ownership of, the processes of production and hence in the creation of meaning' (2004, p. 41). Some of the integrated participatory techniques used in *Acting Alone* included all of the spectators while other moments were selective/voluntary (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 51:01). Ethically, it was important for spectators to be able to opt out; however, observing participation does not always imply passivity. The distinction between active participation versus passive voyeur is central to Jacques Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009). Rancière rejects spectator passivity in the theatre, arguing that, whether directly involved or not, spectators are each making meaning, producing new understandings and knowledge. Dwyer supports this, stating that spectators within Forum Theatre are critically and actively

engaged even when they are observing fellow audience members take to the stage (2004, p. 200). Caroline Heim describes this as affective empathy or where audiences ‘join with’ (2016, p. 21) to produce an ‘emotional contagion’ (2016, p. 22), thereby creating the circumstances within which spectators might feel more comfortable to participate. As Afolabi states, when ‘participation is conceptualized and enacted in its holistic form, it will produce a highly contagious intelligence and creativity, conducive to people’s collective efficacy’ (2017, p. 79).

Autobiographical material in solo performance may engage spectators empathetically but, in the end, *Acting Alone* also, through the re-enactment of my story, stimulates critical thinking and enquiry into the dilemma: if we remain silent bystanders, are we implicated? What are our responsibilities?



Figure 4: *Acting Alone* (2016). Pre-show invitation: ‘Will you help?’

By joining with the spectators in the auditorium/seating area (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 1:18:21), the spectators become performers alongside me in the recreation of my story, while also

simultaneously being an observer (Parker-Starbuck and Mock, 2011, p. 214). This duality enables the spectators, in role as the tritagonist, to be empowered. My absent body in the now empty performance space becomes a source of possibility for spectators. This non-inhabited, non-embodied space creates expectancy – *what next?* This empty arena opens up a space for the spect-actor, as tritagonist, to ‘draw upon their own corporeal experiences’ (Parker-Starbuck and Mock, 2011, p. 214) and consider taking action. The Brechtian structure of *Acting Alone’s* stripped back aesthetic, with the auditorium not always in darkness and the use of direct address, maintains spectator visibility and culminates in a moment of implication, contributing to a sense of empowerment. Spectators observed:

We’re all interconnected – and when we care – when we feel – it hurts. Inaction hurts. (Appendix 4.e: 73)

Evaluation of participation

Acting Alone provided a dialogic space for participation, connection, and engagement after the performance and beyond. The tactics and techniques used created a cohesive intimacy and connection:

You cleverly involved the audience right from the beginning. This was an interactive, thought provoking, passionate and compassionate play. Your personal account of events was thoroughly compelling. (Appendix 4.e: 73)

Made me want to do more. You have made a difference. (Appendix 4.e: 72)

These and other comments demonstrate that *Acting Alone* engaged spectators empathetically and cognitively contributing to increased sensitisation to social responsibilities, as Segal, states:

The most effective way to change structural inequalities and disparities is to provide people with opportunities to gain deep contextual knowledge and have experiences that create empathic insights into the lives of people who are oppressed. (2011, p. 268)

Opportunities for spectators to participate, deepen their understanding of social inequalities and create reciprocal relationships occurred frequently during touring. As Heim discusses, spectators and performers 'feed off' each other (2016, p. 150), producing a form of co-creation. However, when evaluating the participatory elements of *Acting Alone* as discussed earlier, claims of effect are frequently contested and difficult to prove (Balfour, 2009, Synder-Young, 2011, and Thompson, 2011).

As discussed in the *RiDE* article although no one physically moved from the seated area into the performance space at the end of the show, and thus did not 'cross the dramaturgical divide' (Hunt, 2019, p. 2) to create an alternative ending, spectators did, sometimes shout out at the end, or come up to me immediately afterwards. There were also examples of people taking action subsequently. At the International Performance of Hope Symposium in New Zealand (2015), following *Acting Alone* and as part of the final plenary, one academic stood up and requested that all delegates take future action by upholding the Palestinian cultural boycott.³⁸ Another outcome, as a result of working on the productions, was by Andy

³⁸ Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) was introduced in 2004.

Purves (lighting and sound designer) who continues to work with Freedom Theatre Company in Jenin, teaching emerging Palestinian artists while also lighting their professional productions.

In conclusion, *Acting Alone* developed different levels of participation, tactics and techniques to explore and critically analyse the responsibilities of the bystander. As can be seen from the comments above, empowerment was achieved through participation, with spectators commenting on the affect and effect of the tactics and techniques employed. What can be demonstrated from analysing the qualitative data is that participation contributed to social empathy and engaged spectators in the politics of the bystander.

5.3 What does Tritagonist Theatre contribute to an applied theatre practitioner's skillset to empower and activate the spectator as bystander?

TT offers applied theatre practitioners the opportunity to extend and explore the powerlessness that individuals and some communities feel in response to abuses of human rights, whether that is an international conflict or within one's own workplace. It is interesting to note that, since my research began, some UK organisations have introduced staff training that actively encourages staff, as bystanders, to take action in response to offensive behaviour in the workplace. Examples include intervening in sexual assault

(2012),³⁹ the whistle blowers surrounding the Jimmy Saville⁴⁰ (2012) case, and most recently in response to the BLM⁴¹ protests (2020). Indeed, corporations and higher education institutions are investing in ‘active bystander awareness’ and ‘unconscious bias’ training. These training programmes use dialogue, case studies and some role-play techniques to challenge unacceptable behaviours and empower the bystander. The use of these training programmes demonstrates an increasing interest in bystander agency and how TT could contribute to wider applied theatre practice.

Most of applied theatre practice is focused on empowering marginalised/oppressed communities to find their voice through action and to create social change. One of Amnesty International’s intentions for commissioning *Acting Alone* was to raise funds, increase membership, and bring greater pressure to government/s, MPs, or people of influence to address human rights abuses. The pilot performance of *Acting Alone* (2014) was already situated in a context where spectators saw themselves as politically active. It could be argued that my first audience was already ‘on side’. Following additional Arts Council funding (2015), I was able to use my reflexive practice to develop the material in both form and content, touring to more diverse audiences who may be less familiar with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

³⁹ The National Library of Medicine has conducted extensive research with control groups on university campuses, evaluating the efficacy of bystander education programmes to combat sexual violence (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23215986/>).

⁴⁰ Jimmy Saville (1926–2011), a UK celebrity, was allegedly known to be an abuser of young people for decades. The silence of those surrounding him and the failure of the organisations that he worked for prevented any criminal action being taken.

⁴¹ Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a grassroots social movement set up in the USA (2013) to challenge racism but attracted worldwide attention in 2020 in response to the murder of George Floyd by police.

TT provides applied theatre practitioners with a space within which action can be explored or even rehearsed, replicating the 'as if' in a dialogic space and thus transforming the bystander from perplexed onlooker into tritagonist. *Acting Alone* audiences stated:

Many lone voices eventually become a crow [...] we should speak out against violence.

Waking me up!

I cried few times, could not stop tears [...] made me think about who am I, and what I am doing here.

It didn't prick my conscience, it stabbed it. (Appendix 4.e: 74)

5.4 Development of a Tritagonist Theatre toolkit

INH initially proposed and experimented with a proto-tritagonist, meaning that the role of the bystander was examined in relation to actions taken (Corrie/Sendler). In *TKAF* the fictional character Maxine, as observer/reporter, is challenged but does not take action (Appendix: 8.b: 137). As has been discussed *INH* and *TKAF* did not have participatory elements; however, feedback demonstrated a keen interest to explore the proto-tritagonist:

would [ordinary] people do the same? (Appendix 2.e: 20)

whole lessons taken up discussing issues (Appendix 2.e: 22)

[the] role of Internationals in West Bank – awkward

(Appendix 3.e: 50)

Feedback, together with my reflexive journey, was set out in *Acting Alone's* opening sequence (Appendix 8.c: 145) (*Acting Alone*, 2020, 10:20). *Acting Alone* was constructed to create a fluid and symbiotic relationship with the spectators using immersive tactics. Much of immersive theatre is site specific but touring productions rely on different tactics to 'accentuate the sensual involvement of the audience-spectator-participant' (Machon, 2013, p. 75). *Acting Alone's* participation is reminiscent of Misha Myers *percipients*⁴² when discussing 'active embodied and sensorial engagement [that] alters and determines a process and its outcomes' (2008, p. 173). At the beginning of *Acting Alone* I confirm the audience's expectations, stating, 'I'm an actor, you're the audience. You're expecting me to act' (Appendix 8.c: 145). This is more akin to a warning – these expectations/rules *will* be broken, and *they* – the spectators – will be asked to act in the end. The opportunity to transform from spect-actor to protagonist 'implies a figure who deliberately and self-consciously inhabits both worlds, observes *and* acts' (Boal, 1992, quoted in Babbage, 2004, p. 43). This duality can be defined as alternating between different frames of participatory activities as defined in Bennett's reception theory (1990) or, as proposed by Alison Oddey's spectatorship studies (2007, 2009), the tri roles of 'spectator-performer-protagonist'. TT's use of immersive tactics contribute to creating the conditions within which the spectators transform into spectator-participant-tritagonist. The new lived experiences of spectators, as embodied tritagonists, contributed to the development of a practical toolkit. The toolkit comprises of a series of consecutive or simultaneous processes (Appendix 7). It is not definitive but is offered as a starting point. The individual component parts are frequently

⁴² Percipients are defined by Misha Myers (2008).

employed as part of applied theatre practice, but it is the selection and alignment of exploring the third voice together with pedagogic objectives that constitute TT.

Towards a Tritagonist Theatre toolkit

1. Empathy: spectator/performer relationship
2. Pedagogic: historical aligned with focus on bystander experiences
3. Activation: participation/as tritagonist rehearsal
4. Dialogic space: democratic communities/reflection/critical thinking

The above elements underpin the development of the proposed Tritagonist Theatre toolkit.

Appendix 7 lays out in more detail how *Acting Alone* tested these elements and the techniques used as part of this research. As discussed throughout this critical appraisal, by identifying the tritagonist role as having a specific role to play as part of an international civic society, and as referenced by Feinstein regarding the collapse of apartheid in South Africa, the international community can have a significant role to play and perhaps a moral responsibility to address human rights abuses. When the moral compass starts to shift, Feinstein suggests, the 'psychic corrosion of being an oppressor is profound' (2022, 1:04:09).

The toolkit, as part of an applied theatre practitioner's skillset, builds on and develops Boal's Forum Theatre by creating a new distinction for spectators to consider/rehearse: the active role of audience as tritagonist within a theatre space. This possibility of being active within the space is what Boal calls being '*inside* the drama' (Babbage, 2004, p. 42). Rehearsing a response and empowering the third voice is pivotal to challenging the complacency and mutual indifference that might have otherwise prevailed. The facility to explore and

empower spectators as the third voice creates a catalyst for change. As Keith Mckenna of the British Theatre Guide stated about *Acting Alone*:

Theatre can help ensure that those suffering injustice are not isolated. The solidarity of those inside Palestine and those beyond make sure that those wanting change are not acting alone. (Mckenna, 2016, n.p.)

As programme leader for University of Derby's MA Applied Theatre & Education programme, I have intended that the toolkit also has a pedagogic function. One alumna, a white teacher, working exclusively in all-black schools in Washington, DC, was keen to explore her role more fully when discussing the role of the tritagonist. We discussed issues around perceptions of 'white saviour' during tutorials, and I was able to offer additional referenced sources, to identify further professional development.

This critical appraisal is by publication, and although this Toolkit (Appendix 7) has not been published independently at the time of writing, it is offered as a supplement demonstrating pedagogic value, originality and coherence of the research development throughout the previous publications. Additional research would need to be conducted to further test the efficacy of the toolkit.

6. Contribution to knowledge

The body of work presented here explicitly explores the role of the bystander to empower spectators to actively consider their responsibilities in response to an international conflict. The term tritagonist is used here to recognise that silent bystanders can have a voice – the

third voice – and this can be dynamically explored in a theatre space. The monopolylogue productions considered offer beneficial methodologies for artists, performers, writers, and students interested in making impactful applied theatre. They are also relevant for practice communities, such as Amnesty International, and training organisations as a pedagogic tool rehearsing bystander training.

What was unique about *Acting Alone*, as a model of TT, is that the play is purposefully unfinished. The show stops at a pivotal point in the drama. TT, as tested within *Acting Alone*, arrests the drama at a specific moment of conflict for spectators to consider their responsibilities. *Acting Alone's* use of solo performance created a powerful empathetic relationship, affectively and effectively, which also enabled me as performer to step out of role to provoke and challenge passivity to consider the tritagonist position, as British theatre reviewer Keith McAlister stated when reviewing *Acting Alone*:

The mechanics of theatre are used for her to ask whether we should be a sedate audience or stand up and become performers for what we believe is right, regardless of the cost. (Appendix 4.e: 67)

Breaking the fourth wall by leaving the performance space and directly engaging spectators in the dilemma transforms the spectators into the tritagonist role. This is immediately followed by engaging spectators in an active and reflective debate. TT is an addition to Boal's TO and applied theatre practice; though the differences between Forum Theatre and TT are subtle, the discourse created is nuanced and complex. In Forum Theatre there is an expectation that spect-actors will primarily identify with the oppressed, and through facilitation by the Joker rehearse a response. In TT, although spectators are actively

participating throughout, it is by specifically addressing the possible unforeseen responsibilities of the bystander, together with arresting the performance at a point of dilemma, which opens up the space for dialogic exploration.

I have evidenced in this critical appraisal that although the term tritagonist is being used by scholars and some applied theatre practitioners, it is sporadic, and has not been extensively explored through practice or interrogated academically. Sappa and Barabasch highlighted the fluidity of the tritagonist role, suggesting that, within Forum Theatre, spect-actors might, with the help of the Joker, explore multiple roles, including ‘oppressor or tritagonist instead of focussing on the oppressed only’ (2020, p. 154). It is clear from these references that a small vanguard, including me, is extending Boal’s work by highlighting the tritagonist role. But as Rand Hazou’s paper at an IFTR conference (2016) suggested *Acting Alone’s* contribution was its use of theatrical interventions and ‘believability [that] can move audiences emotionally and experientially as a precursor to ongoing political engagement’ (Appendix 4.e: 74).

Balfour (2007) and Thompson (2009) have both published research on Alrowwad’s ‘beautiful resistance’ and the role that hope plays in the lives of young people within the Palestinian community. *Acting Alone* built on this research directly by highlighting Britain’s colonial past, questioning the limits and responsibilities of the international community within the conflict (Appendix 8.c: 155). Thompson, as editor of the *RiDE* journal, stated that *Acting Alone* highlighted ‘relations between theatre practice and political action or responsibility [...] exploring the Israel–Palestinian conflict and how we make demands on the response of the audience or bystander’ (Thompson, 2020, pp. 147-149). Reem Allam

proposed that *Acting Alone* 'questions the very core of using art as a platform to shed light on problems', commenting on the impact that the performance has on the audience: 'such a scene leaves viewers in heart-breaking stillness' (Appendix 4.e: 67).

TT builds on spectator studies; whether as spectator, active onlooker, or Rancière's emancipated spectator within the theatre space, interpretation and making meaning of the theatre experience will be dependent on the spectator's cultural, social and political understandings at the time of the performance (Bala, 2015, Bennett, 1990, Oddey, 2009, and Rancière, 2009). Given the diverse nature of audiences attending *Acting Alone*, appreciating the autonomy of spectators, rather manipulating a political steer, was essential (Tomlin, 2019). *Acting Alone* embraced the creative tensions between content and form, affect and effect by ensuring spectators could identify and empathise with the bystander narratives. Indeed, how the participatory and pedagogic elements were constructed determined the success of spectators' transformation. The spectators' ability to identify with the bystander, whether through solo performance or not, contributed to the change in perception and/or embodied occupation from observer/bystander role to participant/tritagonist role. Once in role as tritagonist, the performance raises many questions of individual responsibilities, but in order to maintain a dialogic space, *Acting Alone* deliberately does not propose the answer. The opportunity to intellectually engage with the tritagonist dilemma exploring nuanced choices contributes to public discourse. As Freire's (1996) dialogic pedagogy states, it is the mutual learning experience and pursuit of knowledge combined that demands action. In TT there are no easy answers, but equally if

spectators are too afraid to engage with the questions for fear of getting it wrong, then no action will be taken. As Stephen Walker's review of *Acting Alone* states:

Hunt is unafraid to ask hard questions of herself: to confess the difficulty of acting alone, and of facing a moment of truth—the admission that she has no answers and that perhaps there are no right answers to give. (Walker, 2015)

Acting Alone was performed at six international academic conferences, engaging with hundreds of academics and researchers. At Auckland University's Performance of Hope Symposium (2015), a chaired debate was recorded the day after the performance (Appendix 4.h). One academic reflected on the tritagonist role stating:

What are our responsibilities [?] ... I think it [*Acting Alone*] asks the questions of all our hypocrisies that we have every day. (Appendix 4.h: 79)

As outlined earlier, the use of the a/r/tography methodology continues to contribute pedagogically with my applied theatre students' practical and written assignments as well as alumni. Following *Acting Alone* one ex-student tweeted:

[Ava] continues to educate me beyond my uni years. (Appendix 4.e: 71)

Artists, both nationally and internationally, have been impacted by my research.⁴³ TT opens up the opportunity to explore other conflicts; indeed, it is essential for applied theatre practitioners to continue to question the contexts within which we work, raising existential questions around intentionality, responsibility and action. Theatre that explores the differences between 'humanitarian and political advocacy and about the role of a

⁴³ This research continues to inform my collaborative practice with UK-based Vital Sparks Theatre, and Palestinian artists.

committed theatre' (Bernard, 2014, p. 168) requires the audience to explore 'where they stand themselves' (Bernard, 2014, p. 170).

In summary, TT offers applied theatre a distinct but nuanced practice that builds on Forum Theatre in that it specifically engages spectators to explore the power of the third voice within a conflict. The tactics, techniques and sequencing of participatory interventions may vary, but it is the construction and dialogic intentionality of TT that will provide rich opportunities of enquiry for bystander audiences where silence may be (knowingly or unknowingly) complicit with those in power.

7. Conclusion

I began with Martin Luther King's 1966 quote – 'silence and indifference of good people' – and *The Starfish Thrower* story as an example of the potential agency of the bystander versus the dangers of complicity and mutual indifference. The three interconnected performances and peer-reviewed article demonstrate cohesion, originality and a contribution to knowledge within the field of applied theatre. When the *protagonist* and *antagonist* are locked into an impasse, the intervention of the *tritagonist* can offer hope through solidarity.

My research develops existing knowledge and practice by proposing that the role of the tritagonist can transcend terms like powerless onlookers (Diamond, 1994), ally or bystander and move towards empowerment, dynamism and agency. This is not speaking on behalf of

others or speaking for them, as in Boal's *theatre of advice*, and it must remain integral that 'the oppressed find their voice [and that we do not] speak for them' (Diamond, 1994, p. 35).

A/r/tography's rhizome structure enabled me to grow my practice from the middle – within the research – as well as form communities of practice. Outcomes were fluid, divergent and sometimes unexpected, contributing to further research questions and the next iteration of practice. This new embodied knowledge facilitated further multiple and divergent voices, producing a heteroglossia within communities of democracy.

The ten-year journey across these four peer-reviewed publications utilising a/r/tography, solo performance, verbatim and autobiographical material has allowed for the creation of a Toolkit for further exploration of TT and its current and future possibilities for engaging diverse audiences in difficult questions of social justice in a global context. I have demonstrated how the use of TT can contribute to an applied theatre practitioner's arsenal, empowering and activating the bystander audience and suggested how this work might continue to be developed as part of applied theatre's wider genealogy.

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