

PSYCHOSOCIAL
NOTEBOOK

VOL. 3, JUNE 2002

**PSYCHOSOCIAL AND TRAUMA
RESPONSE IN WAR-TORN
SOCIETIES**

**SUPPORTING TRAUMATIZED
COMMUNITIES THROUGH
THEATRE AND THE ARTS**



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Produced by IOM

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The video *The Exiled Body* is inclosed with this volume.

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ISSN 1680-1970

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Psychosocial and Trauma Response in War-Torn Societies

Supporting Traumatized Communities
through Arts and Theatre

Psychosocial Notebook
Vol. 3, June 2002

Edited by

Michele Losi, Steven Reisner and Silvia Salvatici

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to all of the contributors to the theatre and arts stages within the Psychosocial and Trauma Response Programme: Maurizio Agostinotto, Andrea Balossi, Andrea Bertoni, Renata Ciaravino, Agnese Bocchi, Silvia Briozzo, Laura Cicognani, Luca Cusani, Giulietta Debernardi, Anna Fascendini, Martino Ferro, Alessandra Ghiglione, Robert Gourp, Annie Lafontaine, Sara Luccarelli, Anna Mascheroni, Soledad Nicolazzi, Donatella Poliandri. Many thanks to Theater Against Political Violence of the International Trauma Studies Program, New York University.

Thank you also to the staff of IOM Pristina, especially the PTR team, IOM Rome and IOM Geneva, and particularly the Research and Publications Department, for their invaluable work and guidance.

We are very much obliged to the Directorate General for Development Cooperation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Italy, the Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration of the US Department of State and the Swiss Government for their financial contributions to this project.

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Introduction

Michele Losi, Steven Reisner,
Silvia Salvatici*

The Arts and Theatre modules were a component of the Psychosocial and Trauma Response (PTR) programme in Kosovo, which has been implemented by the International Organization for Migration since 1999 and is still in progress. The aim of this programme has been to create a structure of response for the emerging psychosocial needs of the population following their experiences of war, exile and return. The main activity of the PTR has been a training course for psychosocial counsellors, consisting of both theoretical courses and practical fieldwork with communities and individuals in need of support (IOM, 2000).

The programme was planned using a culturally sensitive, participatory and community-based approach. All of the training activities have been oriented towards enhancing and strengthening the resources of the local population, adding value to their own modalities and traditions for coping with traumatic events and offering collective recognition to individual suffering (Losi, 2000). Moreover, the programme was based upon a multidisciplinary approach, which appeared most appropriate in order to deal with the multiple components (psychological, social, cultural, historical and anthropological) that affect the psychosocial well-being of individuals and communities (Losi, 2000 and Reisner in this volume). Therefore different disciplines and competencies were brought together in order to explore modalities for facing and overcoming trauma through theatre and the arts.

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“Why is theatre such a powerful instrument for breaking the chain of projections and revenge aroused in conflict situations? From Aeschylus to Shakespeare, theatre has had a fundamental role in the formation of humanity, bringing to the set all of the leading characters involved in the conflict with their own points of view, their own afterthoughts, their own possibilities of action. Theatre helps the actors reflect on their passions and on the futility of the violence that never achieves its goals” (Losi in this volume). Theatre is a very powerful tool for the inter-cultural transmission of a people’s experience; the core of this process is provided by the dynamics of relationship and the validation of differences. These issues have been at the centre of the theatrical workshops carried out within the two courses for psychosocial counsellors in Pristina implemented between 1999 and 2001. The workshop brought together groups (the students and the trainers) which were bearers of very different experiences. Moreover, within both groups there were significant differences due to gender, religious, political and social divides. The training team encompassed various professional profiles: artists, psychoanalysts, historians and anthropologists. In the first training course (see Losi article) such variety allowed the trainers to focus the workshops – continuously redefined while the project was in progress – not only on the expression of the experiences lived at the individual and collective levels, but also on the interaction within the group of students and between the students and the trainers. The group workshop, according to categories used by the Psychosocial Gestalt, was a venue both for individual training and for amplification of the training process within the community. In The Exiled Body workshop, the catalyst of this reaction has been the body, identified as the privileged place of memory and relation in theatrical processes. The basic category of the relationship between history and theatre to which we referred was the category of the *erlebnis* (lived experience). The theatre promotes the discovery of *erlebnis*, as well as the attribution of significance to it; at the same time the theatre becomes part of the *erlebnis* itself. As Steven Reisner writes in his article in this volume: “First and foremost, the theatre provides an active outlet for the energy stirred by the memory of the trauma. The theatre is physical, it engages the body and the voice; it returns the energy to the world in the form of performance, as a creative, interactive force, rather than in the form of disconnected destructive discharge. In fact, in theatre, the expression of the stirred passions can be magnified, their meanings can be enhanced and their effects can be profound.”

The experience of the first year of the PTR paved the way for the workshop devoted to arts and theatre in the second year training course for psychosocial counsellors (see Schininà in this volume). During the second year the process was focused on the students’ on the job training. The future counsellors were able to directly experience several potential models of psy-

chosocial intervention based on the theatre as a catalyser of relational processes. As Guglielmo Schininà explains in his essay, theatre can be fruitfully used in order to promote social healing in many crisis and post-crisis contexts: in refugee camps; with communities of refugees and returnees; for the empowerment of marginal communities in war-torn societies; in the “enclaves” of ethnic minorities, and as part of peace-building processes. “Relationship, communication and role are the three key words on this list. The culture of relationship is the proper culture of theatre; communication is its field of action and its performative reason; the role and its construction have always been its technique, even in the more commercial aspects of the art. Therefore, the theatre as an instrument of relationship, communication and creative expression for the construction, reconstruction and adjustment of the role can respond to these needs. This modality also has the capacity to work at the limits and on the borders, to open fractures to be explored, to create passages and relationships between individuals and between groups. This is unique to theatre among all forms of creative communication, because the theatre, thanks to its performative nature, has its natural outcome in social communication. This is particularly important in war-torn societies, as well as in all situations in which the inclusion of a group and its thinking in the arena of communications between political bodies with decisional power is necessary to elaborate its role.” The techniques and models of intervention experienced by the students were rooted in this awareness.

As has been pointed out, the language of the body is very helpful in overcoming the restraints of verbal communication, in order to express not only anguish and suffering, but also the individual and collective lacerations produced by experiences usually defined as traumatic. At the same time, the use of body and gestures lead us towards the exploration of new languages, which can be shared not only within the community, but also between communities; such exploration seems to be particularly meaningful in a social and political context – such as that of Kosovo – that assigns to language a basic role in the construction of opposed national identities. Non-verbal modes of communication and theatre representations introduce new narratives and open spaces of narration which can be more fluid and flexible, able to leave the stage to unexpressed stories, feelings, thoughts.

The theatrical workshops proceeded in collaboration with the PTR component dedicated to the Archives of Memory (Losi, Passerini and Salvatici, 2001). They contributed to and enriched the picture of Kosovar experiences offered by the materials (interviews, diaries, letters) preserved in the Archives, aimed at supporting the socio-cultural contextualization of suffering and distress produced by the war. In addition, they contributed to the

collecting of different memories, which have the potential to become the multiple voices and narratives of a common, plural memory, rather than remain divided.

The interaction between the theatre and the Archives of Memory component of the PTR programme has proven to be particularly powerful. For example, the theatrical forum offered a safe space for the re-elaboration of the socio-cultural conflicts resulting from the war and depicted in the Archives of Memory. (Schininà in this volume) The work on different experiences and on the forms of their re-elaboration has been the most significant point of intersection between the theatre used in the framework of psychosocial intervention and historical-anthropological research.

As Steven Reisner points out, arts and theatre can be powerful tools in drawing towards a memory able to take the place of revenge in the complex process of overcoming trauma. It means that art and theatre can stimulate a memory able to welcome different stories, to leave the stage to multiple voices and to give value to a variety of languages and narratives. The artistic and dialogical negotiation of such articulated and fragmented memory provides basic components of identities which do not rely exclusively on ethno-national belonging, but rather, are open to exchanges and contamination. Arts and theatre can therefore strongly contribute to bridging “the past, [...] the act of remembering in the present, and, perhaps most important, the vision of the future in which the documented memory will have meaning” (Reisner in this volume).

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Chapter 1

Staging the Unspeakable: A Report on the Collaboration Between Theater Arts Against Political Violence, the *Associazione Culturale Altrimenti*, and 40 Counsellors in Training in Pristina, Kosovo

Steven Reisner, Ph.D.

Introduction

From my journal, if I had written it then knowing what I know now:

February 21, 2000. First day. Robert and I have arrived in Kosovo. The Kosovar countryside, along the road to Pristina from Skopje, is dotted with empty houses; shells of old houses, once white, now burned, and new, brick houses, just being built, almost complete. None of these houses, old or new, have windows. The torched, once white, houses have blackened gaps with gray shadows staining the walls above; the new brick ones have empty spaces, gaps for windows that haven't arrived yet. The houses are scattered upon the empty hills, nearby and distant; for every burnt house, its windows put out, blinded, there is a new brick house, that does not yet have windows, is not yet able to see.

February 26. Departure from Kosova.¹ Last night, which was the culmination of the first phase of the theater project, we tried to celebrate at the Schota, the National Dance Theater of Kosova, where we have been given rehearsal space. Maurizio created an installation, an environmental work of art, within which we danced and laughed and consolidated the experience of the past three weeks of the theater project. On the walls were photographs, on the floor were candles and objects, on the ceiling slides and films, images and symbols, solid, transient, transforming, evocative of the surprises and familiarities of the three weeks of theatrical imagination

afoot. Rock music aspiring to be a common language of the youth of Europe, interspersed with the folk music of Kosova; formless wild dancing alternated with the familiar forms and steps of folk dance. Suddenly, the music changed... A heavy, relentless beat, a chorus of voices intoning a repetitive drone, which sounded to me like "oojekay! oojekay! oojekay!" I dimly realized that these sounds had been coming from the café across the lobby all evening long; only now they had been introduced into our sound system. Michele leaned over and spoke into my ear, translating for me what the music was saying: "U-Ç-K! U-Ç-K! U- Ç-K! (K-L-A! K-L-A! K-L-A!)" The café of the Schota, it turns out, is a gathering place for Kosovar Nationalists in general and former members of the KLA in particular. Eventually, we reclaimed our sound system, and the sounds of folk music and rock music were restored, and the heavy echo of the music of the KLA withdrew to the other side of the lobby.

On the two sides of the lobby of the Schota National Dance Theatre of Kosova, on the evening of 25 February 2000, could be found two responses to war trauma. These two responses frame what I have to contribute to a discussion of international interventions in trauma in general, and about using theatre specifically as a response to trauma.

First, I must offer a context from which I write. Who am I? What brought me to Kosovo on that frozen February afternoon? And why should anyone care what I have to say?

I am a psychoanalyst, a teacher and a theatre director. I come to trauma by birth, that is to say, vicariously and seductively: my mother survived Auschwitz, my father, whose family was killed in the Warsaw ghetto, fought as a soldier in the Soviet army. He was wounded twice and he killed people. I have turned vicarious traumatization into a relationship with trauma, a relationship that includes elements of witnessing, voyeurism, and an urge to make changes, to do some good for others and myself. I do these as a psychoanalyst, as a professor of psychoanalytic theory at Columbia University and of trauma interventions at the International Trauma Studies Program at New York University, and as the director of a theatre group called Theater Arts Against Political Violence, which creates works of theatre derived from our dialogues with people who have been victims of political violence, torture and exile, and with those who work on the front lines of human rights interventions with such people.

These various aspects of my life contribute to what I have to say about trauma, trauma interventions, and theater as a response to trauma. So, with that full disclosure, I begin. It is helpful for me to begin theoretically, with the earliest psychoanalytic view of what trauma is.

Theoretical trauma

The term ‘trauma’ is used in two distinct ways that, in recent parlance, have been confused for one another. A ‘trauma’ can refer to a *traumatic event or circumstance* and it can refer to a *traumatic response or effect* (it’s the latter that I will be referring to as a ‘trauma’). It is important to distinguish these two because, contrary to the writings of many recent trauma theorists, traumatic *circumstances* do not always lead to traumatic *effect*, and calling them each a ‘trauma’ can cause people to believe it does.

A traumatic circumstance can be defined, in part, as an overwhelming physical, emotional, social experience – a shock or disaster, acute or chronic, which tears through or tears apart the ego’s protective organizational fabric. This organizational fabric is woven from many threads. An individual’s protective matrix includes the physical body, the social support network, and individual and social customs and belief systems. This organization or ‘ego’ (individual and social) is formed of beliefs and practices that allow for a measure of predictability, social order, and means to ensure or restore safety and/or stability. Some circumstances are quite terrible, but research shows that if they are predictable and find a place within individual and cultural meaning systems, the incidence of trauma which follows is relatively low. On the other hand, circumstances which may not cause extreme damage, but which undermine the organizational fabric, can lead to traumatic reactions.²

Thus, it is not the traumatic event *per se*, but the event in its context and its meaning, that leads or does not lead to trauma. As Freud and Breuer pointed out in 1893, trauma is produced when there are traumatic circumstances and where there is no opportunity to *react* to those circumstances:

The fading of a [traumatic] memory or the losing of its affect depends on various factors. The most important of these is *whether there has been an energetic reaction to the event that provokes an affect*. By ‘reaction’ we here understand the whole class of voluntary and involuntary reflexes – from tears to acts of revenge – in which, as experience shows us, the affects are discharged. If this reaction takes place with sufficient intensity [as for instance, with revenge] a great part of the affect disappears as a result... (Freud and Breuer, 1893: 8)

Freud and Breuer went on to add an alternative means of avoiding being traumatized by traumatic experiences: “[Energetic reaction] is not the only method of dealing with... a psychological trauma. A memory of such a trauma, even if it has not been abreacted, enters into the great complex of associations, it comes alongside other experiences which may contradict it, and is subject to rectification by other ideas” (Freud and Breuer, 1893: 9).

Taking this further, it might be said that trauma results when there is a tearing of the integrity of the psycho-physiological or psychosocial system – and where that system cannot be psychically restored and/or energetically reasserted. But where strong reaction is possible, or where a belief system is reasserted, trauma may well be averted.

Thus one might say, with Freud, that to avoid trauma a person must react to the traumatic circumstance in an active way; a way in which previously held meanings are reasserted, energies are discharged, the social fabric is rewoven and belief systems and practices are reinforced.

It is well known from trauma research that people who go through traumatic circumstances with strong belief systems – religious, political, cultural – and who are able to emerge with their belief system intact are less likely to suffer traumatic reactions. For example, Tadeusz Borowski survived Auschwitz and was able to write his searing memoirs and become an active member of the Polish Government following the war, in part because he hadn't lost his faith in the liberating power of communism throughout his time in the camps. However, after working within the Polish Communist Party following his liberation, he became disillusioned with the ideals that kept him alive in Auschwitz and he committed suicide, by gassing himself.

Extensive research on populations surviving traumatic circumstances shows that only a small percentage – some say fewer than 10 per cent – show the kind of psychological or familial dysfunction that justifies ongoing therapeutic intervention.³ This is surprising if one reads much of the trauma literature. The fact that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is, in fact, a rare occurrence, however, indicates to me that individuals, families, and cultures have mechanisms for dealing with traumatic circumstances that are underestimated.

Individuals, families, and cultures make use of habitual, culturally sanctioned ways of coping with trauma, particularly if their history is one with repeated traumatic circumstances. Whether these mechanisms consist of customs of forgiveness and hope for a better afterlife, beliefs that suffering and mourning are inevitable aspects of the cultural identity, customs of adaptation and cultural malleability, traditions of individual or social alcohol or drug use, or customs of revenge – each supports a belief system, reinforces social ties, elaborates a historical narrative, and permits some discharge of pent-up energies. Each, in its own way, facilitates the avoidance of a traumatic reaction.

In other words, not only the *individual's* 'ego', but entire cultural identities and traditions, are formed by processes of structuring potentially traumatic

experience. Cultural systems, to a certain extent, can be understood as group modes of coping with traumatic circumstances. As Geertz put it, in “Religion as a cultural system” (1973: 100):

There are at least three points where chaos – a tumult of events which lack not just interpretations but interpretability – threatens to break in upon man: at the limits of his analytic capacities, at the limits of his endurance, and at the limits of his moral insight. Bafflement, suffering, and a sense of intractable ethical paradox are all, if they become intense enough or are sustained long enough, radical challenges to the proposition that life is comprehensible and that we can, by taking thought, orient ourselves effectively within it – challenges with which any religion, however “primitive”, which hopes to persist, must attempt somehow to cope.

Many of the traditional, cultural responses, too, serve the interests of *trauma avoidance*, rather than trauma integration. In fact, it could be argued that *the press to avoid the effects of trauma* is the single most pervasive individual and cultural response to traumatic circumstances.⁴

The psychosocial interventions for trauma in Kosovo and elsewhere often attempt to accomplish two things simultaneously, while only acknowledging one. And those two things are at odds.

First there is an attempt to treat the traumas of war, genocide and exile using the accumulated knowledge of trauma treatment. To accomplish this, creative mechanisms are being employed to allow the safe confrontation and working through of the traumatic experience and the reduction or repair to the functioning of the system which has been traumatized.

Second, and this is most often unacknowledged, there is the attempt to deter the survivors of traumatic circumstance from using their culturally familiar methods to avoid being traumatized by these circumstances, when those methods clash with the values of the therapists, or the aid organization. Cultural mechanisms to avoid traumatization which are thus overtly or covertly frowned upon may include, but are not limited to: fantasizing or carrying out revenge strategies; strivings for an ethnically unified or spiritually liberated environment; sanctioning social models which are traditional and non-egalitarian; isolating certain segments of the population as cultural scapegoats, or espousing a religious system which depicts the suffering as somehow holy or valuable, guaranteeing a better life in the next world.

These methods do not fit the western image of the traumatized as innocent, isolated sufferers, whose lives are to be restored to its prior idealized state; nor do those who practice these methods make for useful objects of sympathy and narcissistic identification. If, as Natale Losi has argued, the

covert structure of western international intervention is defined (by those who intervene) in tripartite terms: the foreign or political *aggressor*, the displaced, disenfranchised *victim*, and the international *saviour*, most often those receiving foreign aid resent and resist the passive, grateful *victim* role that is offered them (Losi, 2001). However, their own culturally sanctioned responses to trauma (which in Kosovo, and elsewhere, include practices of revenge) are often a direct challenge to the position offered and paid for by the well-heeled aid organizations.⁵

The unfortunate result of the covert attempt to deter survivors from using familiar methods to avoid the traumatic effect of traumatic circumstances is that it supports a lack of understanding and communication between the parties. Experts in the field of international trauma intervention have long been puzzled by the fact that psycho-social treatment does not reduce the incidence of revenge or violence (Soeren Jensen, personal communication) following genocidal clashes. But this is not surprising, since most international trauma treatment covertly suppresses acknowledgement of such culturally sanctioned, collective modes of response, while, as in Kosovo, international military intervention suppresses organizations whose aim is to carry out such responses. In this way, trauma treatment, like much international intervention, becomes an unacknowledged struggle to influence the outcome of treatment according to the values and fantasies of the therapists.

An alternative approach would be for the help to be contextualized as a dialogue among equals. It is a dialogue that is familiar to the psychoanalyst: it is the question of what method is best employed in response to traumatic circumstance. Should the trauma be discharged and avoided, or should it be acknowledged, symbolized and transformed? Is the most benefit to be gained by tying the social knot and tradition tighter through acts of revenge, penitence, scapegoating, prayer and/or rewriting the cultural narrative into a story of heroism, punishment, or martyrdom? Or is there a greater benefit in acknowledging the rend in the social fabric, mourning the tragedy, and attempting to transform the experience into a reorganizing of the cultural structure so that it includes a humbler acknowledgement of limitation, mortality and human compassion. This is a question of competing values, and has been the subject of debate within and between cultures, worldwide, for centuries. If psychoanalysis can contribute one thing to the discussion it is that imposing values and repressing alternatives does not work. The repressed returns, often with a build-up of explosive energy. The alternative is dialogue, articulating a value system, and upholding it by choosing the response to trauma. A chosen response is invariably painful, because it includes compromise with complete energetic discharge, and it does not permit the simple characterizations of the participants proposed by both the survivors of trauma and by those who would aid them.

Without finding the space for bringing these different perspectives to the surface we, who offer our aid in trauma circumstances, run the risk of taking a superior, moralistic position, which is given lip service by those we are attempting to 'aid', who all the while privately maintain a distance, perhaps a contempt, for what we are imposing.⁶ The danger is that international aid organizations will be seen as a new kind of missionary, espousing the religion of human rights, while creating an environment of western social and economic values.

From a psychoanalytical point of view, we know we are asking a lot of both sides by inviting them simply to engage, instead, in a dialogue. It is difficult for the 'helpers' to dispense with their own mechanisms for avoiding trauma – in this case, the position of superiority. Even more difficult is to ask that the traumatized abandon their familiar modes of avoiding trauma – in Kosovo for example, we are asking the Kosovar Albanians to give up the opportunity to avenge their dead and memorialize them with an independent Albanian country – because all we have to offer in their place is the experience of the pain of trauma, coupled with techniques of treatment that most often focus on the individual experience of, and working through of, that pain.

As my own analyst, Martin Bergmann, put it, we are asking for the trauma survivor to exchange revenge (or a host of other mechanisms of trauma avoidance) for memory:

I believe that the cultivation of memory is a sublimation of the wish for revenge. It is certainly nobler and more civilized than revenge, but it also raises problems. Revenge is a form of discharge. By contrast, the cultivation of memory remains a psychically active force, but one without an outlet (Bergmann and Jucovy, 1982: 324).

Bergmann's biases are clear, and I have to admit, I share them. I believe that, although we are asking a lot, what we have to offer in exchange is something extremely valuable. What we are offering is the opportunity to learn something new from the past, to transform the traumatic experience into a gain for humanity, so that victims do not continue the cycle of violence and hatred, so that survivors transform, rather than join, the evil. The psychoanalytic position, I believe, is that if the traumatic pain can reach a level where it is tolerated, rather than avoided, there is an opportunity in which everything may be productively questioned, and psychical and cultural alternatives may be posited and put into action.

A major difficulty, as Bergmann has pointed out, is that when we offer the exchange of revenge for memory, what we are really offering is a way to keep the trauma *active*, but with no *outlet*. Memory and memorializing

maintain pain, maintain energy, but do not present a mechanism for returning the energy to the world; memory, whether in memorial or archive, does not make for an active response to trauma.

I believe that to make this exchange – the exchange of trauma avoidance in favor of trauma transformation – possible and worthwhile requires at least two things: it requires a mutually respectful dialogue, validating the humanity of the experience and response of all participants, and it requires an active outlet for trauma integration, to counter the many active outlets for trauma avoidance (nationalism, religious fundamentalism, revenge), an active outlet that is creative, rather than destructive. For this, I believe, we must turn to art. As Adorno put it, in a way retracting his own statement (1981) that there could be no poetry after Auschwitz:

It is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it (Theodor Adorno, 1982: 318).

Theatrical trauma

What does art, and, in particular, theatre, have to offer?

1. First and foremost, the theatre provides an active outlet for the energy stirred by the memory of the trauma. The theatre is physical, it engages the body⁷ and the voice; it returns the energy to the world in the form of performance, as a creative, interactive force, rather than in the form of disconnected destructive discharge. In fact, in theatre, the expression of the stirred passions can be magnified, their meanings can be enhanced and their effects can be profound. In this way art offers not simply the sustaining of the trauma through memory, but the mode of its transformation. In Bergmann's terms, it makes for a more successful form of sublimation of the wish for revenge than memory alone.

2. Art, and in particular, theatre, provides a series of relatively safe spaces for exploration of trauma, analogous to the therapeutic space, but without the emphasis on the individual, the confidentiality (which implies a secret that must be kept) or the pathologization (which implies shame) that the therapeutic space assumes. In art, trauma is not viewed as an individual, private, or pathological experience, but as shared experience, appropriate to a public forum. This is an essential antidote to the tendency on the part of those who would intervene in trauma to designate the sufferers as in some way abnormal or psycho-socially disturbed, rather than as having experienced something terrible which shakes human values. The space of theatre is safe, symbolic and communal.

3. The artistic response to suffering offers an alternative to the tendency to construct memorials after trauma, and offers a different standard. The memorial has as its premise the loyalty to the pain, to the dead, and to the memory of the dead. The work of art has as its value loyalty to the work of art *as art*; artistic truth in the place of historical truth.
4. The artistic response to trauma has as its most essential aim to allow the difficult questions to linger, even if unanswered. But this does not mean that the energy of the pain lingers, it is expressed interrogatively through the work of art itself.
5. The artistic response, like the therapeutic response, aims to provide a forum for testimony, witnessing, symbolization, and transformation of experience that had heretofore been unsymbolizable, because of the very nature of trauma. Art provides an active response to trauma where the action is a form of language, rather than a form of discharge. Therefore, the artistic standard eschews cliché or shortcuts. The aim of art is to make full use of the moment, including the traumatic moment.

February 21, 2000. First night in Pristina. Robert and I were taken by our Italian colleagues to an Italian restaurant. After 20 hours of travel from New York, through Zurich, to Skopje, then overland across the border, past the blinded and sightless houses, the wreckage of bombed factories, the tanks and soldiers, and after arriving into this frozen, darkened city with occasional electricity, no traffic lights, and buzzing generators, we found ourselves eating gnocchi among a robust collection of Italian theater artists and historians. The other tables were occupied by people of every race except Albanian, looking more comfortable and gregarious than I'd expected of foreign aid workers. In fact, they seemed altogether like tourists. Trauma tourists.

February 22, 2000. Second day. We arrived at the first workshop, late because I had to have a coffee before I could be coherent. We enter the lobby of the National Theater to see a familiar theater exercise in process. A group of 19 student counselors is walking in a procession around the room. They have lifted the 20th student up into the air and are carrying him high on their uplifted arms. I know this exercise; its aim is to build cohesion of the group, to offer a sense of strength and sensitivity in acting together, and most of all, to help engender, in the one being carried, a sense of complete trust in the group. He is let down slowly, and another is lifted. There is the delightful sound of their thrill of discovery, their pleasure in working together. An Italian woman is giving instructions firmly yet sensitively. A young Albanian is translating. The process reaches completion, and the woman announces our presence. She suggests that we be brought

into the exercise. The translator repeats this and in a moment I am lifted up by twenty Albanian strangers. I have done this exercise before many times and am quite comfortable. I feel the strong hands of the ablest men and the gentler hands of the women. They carry me around the large room and then slowly, carefully, gently, I am lowered to the ground; many hands touch me, as I am let down. I come to a rest and find the hands do not leave. They brush me off, they rest softly on my chest and legs, one adjusts my arm to make it more comfortable, one strokes my face, as if to make sure that I am settled and arranged in the right way.

In the year 1999, there were two theatre groups attempting simultaneously to use theatre to create an international dialogue on trauma and exile. In New York, Theater Arts Against Political Violence had been working with Chilean and Tibetan torture survivors, with asylum lawyers, poets, and front line human rights workers. In Italy, the Altrimenti group was planning their Kosovo theatre project, *The Body in Exile*, sponsored by the IOM. After a collaborative meeting between the two theatre groups in Milan in January 2000, two members of TAAPV (myself and Robert Gourp, a French theatre director) were invited to participate in the Kosovo project, at first as consultants and eventually as full participants.

The Kosovo theatre project was an essential component of the IOM Psychosocial and Trauma Response in Kosovo, the aim of which was the training of forty Kosovar Albanians as counsellors in trauma (Losi, 2000). The IOM PTR-K was divided into three aspects: the psychosocial training, the Archives of Memory (Losi, Passerini and Salvatici, 2001) and the theatre project, *The Body in Exile*. The theatre project took place over three periods in the year 2000; in February, in June and, culminating in a performance at the National Theatre of Kosovo in Pristina, in October.

Both the historical Archives of Memory project, and the theatrical *Body in Exile* project aimed to address the formidable, interconnected issues of memory and trauma, the archives through history and history-making, the theatre through art (verbal and imagistic) and play-making. Yet each approached the material of memory, history and cultural interchange with different values and expectations. The Archives set out to engage survivors in the field in a way which opened communication of painful events and preserved the history of those events and experiences both in recorded language and in memorial objects. The theatre aimed to create primarily non-verbal representations derived from the imagery and emotions of the recent painful events.

One of the strengths of the Archives of Memory project was that it benefited from half a century of research on the experience of survivors of the Nazi holocaust (“a cross reference [which] seems to refer almost exclu-

sively to the experience of the Holocaust and the Shoa,” Losi, 2001:5). But there are key differences between the circumstances of the survivors of the Nazi holocaust and the survivors of the Kosovar war. The research on the experience of the survivors of the Shoa was undertaken, for the most part, long after the event itself. The survivors were refugees, living on foreign soil, with little expectation or desire to return to their former homes. The Kosovar survivors had, for the most part, returned to their homeland. They were interviewed very soon after the terrible events. The role of memory among the Holocaust survivors was complex and changing, but for many of the Holocaust survivors, ‘memory’, and the dictum ‘never forget!’ served primarily to overcome a desire *to* forget, on the part of the world at large and, to a great extent, if only unconsciously, on the part of the survivors as well. Memory in Kosovo, on the other hand, is seen by all sides to have a value; the meaning of the memory, however, is the subject of contention. In Kosovo, there is little attempt to forget the recent tragedy.

In fact, given the intense energy devoted to documenting trauma in recent years, one must question whether there is any longer a connection between trauma and forgetting. Once, trauma-memory was the subject of individual and cultural repression; today, trauma-memory is a commodity, subject to a struggle for control of its meaning and value. In today’s world of international trauma intervention, the question is not so much, will the traumatized be able to remember and will memory serve as a basis for healing, but rather, to what use will the memory be put? What are to be the meanings of the memories and what are the values held by those who gather, hold and present the narratives of memory? Orwell (1950) foresaw this use of the politics of memory in his novel *1984*, when he wrote, “Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.”

As it must, the Archive of Memory project has a value system. As Salvatici (2001:49) has described it, “In order to be included in the construction of a healthy community, however, each story has to leave the stage to multiple voices and give value to the variety of narratives. The awareness of the differences existing within the boundaries built up around the community is the first necessary step towards the breaking of those boundaries themselves. Further, such awareness would allow for the recognition and acceptance of these ‘others’, whose similarities and differences cannot be merely considered as descendent from their national belonging.”

Where Bergmann asserted that the cultivation of memory is “nobler and more civilized than revenge”, Salvatici believes that multiplicities of narrative are nobler still than memory alone. I share these values, and would add one more: that multiplicity is born of a dialogue which finds a place for even those voices that are antagonistic to multiplicity.

An archive of memory, as I see it, is not only about remembering the past, but also about the act of remembering in the present, and, perhaps most important, the vision of the future in which the documented memory will have meaning. In other words, the archive is not only about the claiming and constructing of the past (individual, collective, and multiple), but about *envisioning a future* for which the memories are collected and given meaning. During the collecting of the memories, one progressively discovers and interacts with the future that is envisioned. As Nietzsche (1995: 130) put it, “The voice of the past is always the voice of an oracle: only if you are architects of the future and are familiar with the present will you understand the oracular voice of the past.”

One may discover, for example, that the interviewees believe they are giving testimony for war crimes cases, that they are contributing to a national inventory of persecutions requiring revenge, or that they are creating an archive of human experience to teach lessons of the horrors of ethnic hatred. At play is the unfolding understanding between interviewers and interviewees as to the hoped-for meaning of the memories collected in the archive. If this process is overt, the interaction between interviewers and interviewees is dynamic. One cannot know beforehand how it will unfold, thus those involved in the project do not always know themselves what the future of the memory project will entail or require. The project itself mimics the constructed and reconstructed nature of identity and memory (re-collection).⁸

In the theatre, there is also an improvisational quality of the interaction. The theatre exploration, which attempts to transform the traumatic impressions into shared artistry, complements the archival research, which aims to transform the traumatic impressions into shared history.

February 23, 2000. Third day. Robert decided he would begin our contribution by leading the two theater workshops in the ‘puppet’ exercise. A large square cloth is tied with five knots, one at each corner, a fifth tied in the center. The cloth lays on the ground, lifeless. Five students surround the cloth. Each is to take hold of a knot; one for each leg, one for each arm and the center knot becomes the head. Robert, explains, “The puppet does not yet exist. You bring it to life. You each take a knot into one hand and work together to wake it up to life. The puppet wakes up, it takes a nice walk, and lies down again.” In the morning session, the ‘younger’ group tried the exercise. The first five students leaned down, surrounding the puppet. They each gingerly and tentatively took a knot in one hand. The puppet jerked up and jumped about, but was not very coordinated. A second team tried it; Robert, ever the teacher, knew to remain silent, allowing the second group to learn from the first. The puppet arose with greater coordination, and was

soon leaping about. The third and fourth group taught the puppet to dance, before the puppet dropped to the ground lifeless again.

In the afternoon, it was the 'older' group's turn. Again the first five were clumsy. The second five were better, raising up the puppet more slowly, a bit more lifelike this time, but instead of walking, it glided across the floor like a ghost. Robert spoke to them, as the third group of five took up its position, "Very lovely. But you must take your time. And remember to welcome the emotion. Always welcome the emotion. The puppet is born, gets up, takes a walk, and lies down again. When it returns to the ground, the exercise is over." The translator translated Robert's French-accented English into Italian for the Altrimenti group and into Albanian for the students. As the third group gets ready to begin, Robert invites the other students, not directly involved in the exercise, to make sounds and add light to the scene with a flashlight. Slowly, with exceptional coordination the puppet begins to move. It sits up and rubs its eyes. The sound of an infant crying is heard. The puppet tries tentatively to stand; the sound of tears turns to curiosity, a bit of laughter. It's up! Then a few fitful, toddler-like steps. The steps turn into a walk, slowly across the room. The sounds of animals are heard, the puppet stops and listens. Then it continues, as if growing older with each step. A drumbeat accompanies the puppet as it walks through its life. Suddenly, the drum beats out a harsh series of taps. Gunfire. The puppet shakes. It stops, and then it sits, wounded and simultaneously tired. More gunfire. The puppet is hit again, and slowly descends to the ground completely. It is dying. A mournful song arises from somewhere. The puppet lies still. The exercise is at an end. But no, it continues. A student lifts the arms of the puppet and crosses them. Another brushes off the body, another straightens the legs, a fourth strokes its face. The light shifts from the puppet to the students, from face to face. One student leans over and kisses the puppet; another whispers a prayer. The mournful song becomes a funeral dirge; the faces of the students are streaked with tears.

This workshop took place less than a year after the end of the war in Kosovo. Conditions were harsh. Aside from the water and electricity outages, the soldiers, the tanks and patrolling helicopters, there were violent outbreaks, protest marches, fear among the girls of abductions. Nonetheless, the workshop of 40, divided into two groups, dedicated themselves completely to learning these theatre techniques, with their emphasis on the non-verbal communication of meaningful experience. With great enthusiasm, they learned to become more trusting of one another; improved their communication skills; developed a sense of their own creative abilities; came to feel more confident that people who don't know each other can have something valuable to offer one another; and came to understand, through experience, that people from different backgrounds can share val-

ues and deeply emotional experiences in a mutually beneficial way. They also learned the value of creative expression as a way of responding to and transforming traumatic experiences in a manner which neither forgets the past nor maintains the trauma. And, most important for me, was the verification of my belief that in the immediate aftermath of suffering, the soul cries for attention and expression as much as the body, and that offering artistic expression to the survivors is as important as offering any other kind of medicine to the wounded.

Interestingly, the two groups of student counsellors demonstrated different group ‘characters’ and created different styles of improvisation, along with differing themes. It happened that one group of 20 consisted predominantly of the younger students, whereas the other group was, on average, substantially older. The ‘younger’ group was more playful, interested in moving onward, and in ending things happily; they tended to structure their improvisations with the conflict coming early and ending in a resolution, which could include nationalism, marriage, birth, and a return to a fantasied normalization. Bad experiences were quickly turned to action; in other words, the younger group tended to prefer scenarios of trauma avoidance to scenarios of trauma transformation. When a group of young male students was complimented on a piece of work, one shouted, “We are more than good! We are perfect! We are Albanian!”

The older group was more able to tolerate the complex feelings brought on by the war; they addressed their mourning processes symbolically. They were less likely to turn the work towards nationalism, towards happy endings, towards answers. In the puppet exercise with the younger group, the puppet tended to dance, and the group followed Robert’s instruction that when the puppet lay down again the exercise was over. For the older group, only when the puppet lay down at the end did the puppet scenario begin in earnest.

February 23, 2000. It is midnight, and Robert and I are each writing our impressions. A bright spotlight from a noisy military helicopter sweeps past our window and over the entire area, reminding us that the streets are still not safe at night. I am covered by three blankets and a sleeping bag. The thermometer on my clock reads 6°.

Earlier this evening,, at a meeting of the Altrimenti group, I was presented with a problem. The group did not know how to end this first part of the theater intervention with the students. They had decided on a closing ceremony for all participants: an installation and party which is to be a work of art, a feast, a sharing celebration of what has been accomplished so far and a promise of what is to continue. But what to ask of the students for the final class? I told them that my teacher in the theater, Joseph Chaikin, taught me that the ending of a piece of theater is the most important part of

the work because it determines how everything that came before it is to be remembered. I suggested that we meet tomorrow with the entire group of 40 students and ask them, as a final exercise, to present us, their guests, with a parting gift: an improvised performance which makes use of what they have learned so far.

The final workshop of the February session brought together both groups of future counsellors, translators, theatre artists and guests. The students were presented with the final task, to give us, as a farewell gift, an improvised performance, which makes use of what they have learned so far. They were given an hour to prepare.

The younger group went right to work. You could hear them arguing and planning, searching for props and laughing. The older group dispersed; they did not speak to one another very much, other than to share a cigarette or gather around the heaters. A few of the women disappeared into the bathrooms. I was perplexed at the apparent lack of response among the older group. The younger group presented their improvisation first. They had recreated Robert's puppet. Five of the students brought it to life with an energy and focus that they hadn't been able to give it before. The puppet stood and walked towards those of us watching. It approached each one of the teachers and offered a silent, specific and emotionally rich farewell. The puppet could bow, entreat, and cry on behalf of the students. They found a perfect gift for us, a farewell completely inscribed in the non-verbal realm of the theatre, which expressed complex emotions in the simple poetic movements of a piece of white cloth.

Then, the older group began its performance. Certain actors arranged themselves onstage in full costume, with instruments and props, drawing on Kosovar folk traditions. It became evident at once that the older group hadn't needed the time to develop an idea because they had organized and rehearsed a farewell performance for the teachers on their own, in secret. It consisted of the enactment of the story sung in a traditional folksong: a bride is preparing for her wedding with her family and friends. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to them, the groom has been kicked in the head by a horse. He is lying dead, while the family awaits the moment of the wedding. Slowly, one, then another and eventually all, including the bride herself, discover that the bridegroom is dead. The bride is a widow before ever experiencing the joys of married life. The performance had no dialogue, only the mournful singing of the folksong by the women onstage. The audience watched and cried. Tears flowed unabashedly as the story of unexpected tragedy unfolded.

That afternoon, the final one of the first workshop, the students were given a homework assignment to be completed before the next workshop would

begin, three months later: to imagine characters, conflicts and settings which might make for interesting scenes of theater, and to choose themes related to their current experience which might inspire them to transform these into a performance of some sort. In collaboration with Silvia Salvatici and Annie Lafontaine, we offered certain themes derived from the interviews of the Archives of Memory, including:

Conflicts erupting in social roles: gender, generational.

Authority – family, village, political.

The occupation and organization of space.

Alterity – the role of the ‘other’.

The dead.

The presence of, and relation to, the international community.

Identity.

Reorganization of the economy.

I added one more, derived from my experience in the workshop:

The role of translation.

If trauma is a tear in the soul, it seemed to me that during the theatre workshop this tear was symbolized by the gap between the spoken word in one language and its translation into another. Whenever someone spoke, there followed a moment of waiting, during which there was complete ignorance of the content of what was being communicated. Often under stress, especially following traumatic circumstances, people tend to fill that gap with suspicion, with an anticipation of danger. I soon discovered, however, that in the theatre workshop, everyone filled that gap with the best regard for what the other might be saying and their best impression of the other and the other’s intentions. For me, this was the single most hopeful sign that the theatre work could have a profound positive effect, even immediately after tragedy. Everyone helped with translating, and the response to the translated message seemed to be better than it would have been if everyone had spoken the same language.

February 25, 2000. Leaving Kosovo. Thinking about the play put on by the older group yesterday, I am struck by something that has been nagging at me. I had wondered, at the first workshop, at the students arranging my clothes and arms and stroking me as they put me down after the trust exercise. I vaguely connected that feeling with the care given to the body of the dead puppet. And then yesterday, in the scene after the corpse of the bridegroom is discovered, the women, singing that song of pain, kneeling by the dead body and stroking him and arranging his clothes, his hair, his arms and feet, kissing him and praying. These people so need to take care of their dead.

*April 6, 2000. E-mail from Robert. "Doing clown and mime shows for children, long ago, taught me that **the most important thing in life is to give the thing we have to give.** And our experience in Pristina also reminded me of that. Meanwhile, I am also trying to picture a theater performance in Pristina that would be a reflection of something beautiful. May be the thing that brought those people together and that transcends cultures and divisions? I feel invaded by the presence of a drama that is more present in the audience than on stage, a drama against which none of the dramatic situation one can think to stage, cannot compete.*

"The students did the improvisations the last day as a gift for us, and that gift moved us deeply, but which performance would they like to give as a gift to the people of Pristina – I mean all the people living there now.

"I felt that sleepy national theater in Pristina was like a sun that would have stop to shine just because of a terrible storm. Wouldn't that be an interesting objective – to turn this theater into a lively one again? Since theater gave the students something valuable, wouldn't that be a gift to the students to give to their theater? Well, so that if there was a little break through the cloud, the people could feel the sun.

"That makes me remember that in all this turmoil, you saw the blinded houses. We gave a lot of thoughts, and the Italian company not the less. But those thoughts and words were for the people and I think we forgot that Theater means also a place. It's also to create a life in a place or to make a place alive after the storm. And you saw the blinded house. We all saw the bricks..."

The Kosovar theatre project continued in June. I could not be there, but Robert and the Altrimenti Company continued to work with the students in the exploration of theatre techniques, this time bringing the themes of their experience in war and exile more directly into the work. In addition they began to develop a vocabulary, not only of movement and non-verbal communication, but of theatre, including conflict, character, lights, setting, costume, music, publicity. The themes derived from the Archives of Memory, introduced at the end of the first session, were unfortunately lost in the process and replaced by nostalgic themes having to do with loss and the desire to restore or reconnect with what had been lost.⁹

In the final phase, which took place in October, the group worked to put together a performance on the stage of the National Theatre of Kosovo. The play was conceived by Alessandra Ghiglione, along with the entire Altrimenti group, and with the help of Robert Gourp. To bring it to realization, the group of student counsellors were divided into various sub-projects: the acting project, the sets and costume project, the multimedia

project, the publicity project, etc. In the end, after an exhausting three weeks, two performances were held, one for adults and one for families.

When I arrived, at the start of the third week, I was tapped, not for my abilities as a director or a psychoanalyst, but as an actor. As the audience was expected to be evenly mixed between Albanians and members of the international community, the part of storyteller/narrator was split in two, one Albanian and one English. This coincided well with my feelings about the role of translation. One student had begun using the theatre techniques at a school for deaf children where she was a teacher, so a group of these children were invited to be part of the play. Since their classmates would be in the audience, a third storyteller, an interpreter into sign language, was added.

The production brought to fruition Robert's vision of the students' giving *a gift to the people of Pristina*. The gift succeeded in a number of ways. It provided a safe, symbolic space for exploration of the experiences and conflicts aroused by the shared traumatic experience. These explorations took place in public, rather than private, communally rather than individually, and were portrayed as expectable rather than pathological. The theatre piece offered images and words to spur discussion about the events, permitting a sharing of painful feelings, in many cases for the first time.

The play was not without its faults and limitations. Too often, it presented the fantasies of the students or of the aid organizations in clichéd fashion, instead of raising difficult questions and challenging the audience to abandon habitual responses. In other words, the piece occasionally fell into the sentimental discharge process of trauma avoidance, rather than the transformative process of mourning and integration.

February 25, 2000. Plane from Zurich to New York. Just woke up from a bad dream. I was back in Kosovo, although the setting was more like my brother's roof in Jerusalem. A helicopter flies past, swoops down then up – turns slightly in a pause in the air. I hear myself say, "Oh no!" It drops out of my view. I hear an explosion.

I woke up feeling quite afraid. I am quite suddenly feeling the fear that lay beneath the five days of laughter with Robert. Last night, at the party at the Schota theater, after we turned off the pounding music of the KLA, after the high official of the KLA, in his black Italian suit, grabbed Robert and me to pose with him for a photograph, and after I had had a bit too much to drink, I leaned over to Robert and suggested we make a puppet out of the red and black cloth I spotted at the bottom of the stairs. "Do you want to get us shot? That piece of cloth is the flag of Kosova!"

I came to understand in Pristina that when the soul is traumatized it must be attended to with a sense of humanity; otherwise the inhumanity that underlies the trauma will take hold there and be repeated. This appeared to me to be the ultimate conflict I saw in Kosovo, the question of what will fill the place left by the tear in the soul of the people: will it be a nationalistic desire for revenge, or will it be a compassion for fellow human beings, in all our complexity and suffering.

February 25, 2000. Plane from Zurich to New York. Nearly home.

After the 'older' group finished its performance, I couldn't stop my tears. The image of the bride turned widow, the tender caring for the dead bridegroom. I wasn't the only one crying. And after the applause died down, one of the older Albanian men in the room began almost shouting, "If there was a psychologist in this room I would ask him a question." A few people knew I was a psychologist and said, "Steven! Ask Steven!"

He looked at me, his eyes red, his voiced choked. He spoke, and the translator translated: "I have seen now more than I ever thought I would see in my life. I went back to my village after the fighting stopped. The villagers dug up a grave and lined up thirty corpses. My neighbors. My friends. My cousin. I didn't cry. I saw many terrible things, and I did not cry. But today I am crying. Why? Why? Before now I couldn't cry. But today I am crying. Why – Why???"

I was shaken up, and gave an answer that I can only hope was improved by the translator. But the answer I wish I had given would be, "Before, there were no tears because, before, tears were not enough to express what you were feeling. Before, there was no use to which the tears could be put, and there was no place where the tears could be put to use, and there were no tools to put the tears to use. Here, together, we created the use, the place, and the tools, to use tears and art and laughter to make something of greater significance than grief alone.

The dangerous result of traumatic circumstances is not that trauma will result, but that the attempts to avoid trauma will be destructive – to those who have been traumatized and to others, when the traumatic affect is discharged destructively.

The danger after traumatic circumstances is not that it will cause trauma, but that there will *not be trauma where trauma belongs*, and the destructiveness inflicted in the traumatic circumstance will be perpetuated in the traumatic reaction. The theatre work is one attempt to tolerate and creatively transform trauma in a public and artistic sphere, with the hope of securing an artistic and perhaps moral gain from the traumatic experience

in the name of humanity and compassion. And perhaps, there will be a side effect of healing as well.

Notes

1. 'Kosovo' is the Serbian spelling for the country. It is also the name preferred by the international community, because the aim of the Americans and Europeans has been the ultimate reunification of the country, in some manner, with Serbia and Montenegro (which until recently had been called 'the former Yugoslavia'). The Albanian spelling is 'Kosova', reflective of Albanian nationalism and the desire for a country independent of Serbia. In speaking the name of this country, then, there is no neutral position; one aligns oneself immediately with a political vision of the future and a story of the past. I find myself using Kosovo at certain moments and Kosova at others; the usage can be taken to reflect my emotional allegiance (or my antagonism) at a given moment.
2. For example, here in New York City, following the September 11 massacre, the appearance of anthrax was extremely distressing, raising the anxiety levels considerably, and returning people to the feelings of helplessness and fear which followed the attack. However, the crash of a jetliner in the city had no such effect for those not on the scene, because, even though there were many more fatalities than had been caused by anthrax, the plane crash, though terrible, was an event which was understandable within our organizational fabric.
3. This figure reflects the likelihood of developing PTSD following a traumatic event. Of course, the percentages vary according to circumstance, but the 10 per cent figure is most often cited in survivors of war, natural disaster, and accidents. Higher percentages are found in survivors of genocide and rape (in studies in the United States). Of all the research I have come upon, the highest incidence reported is of Nazi holocaust survivors, at 50 per cent with diagnosable PTSD.
4. Cultural trauma-avoiding mechanisms are especially dangerous because they are 'contagious'.
5. In this way, western interventionists can be like western tourists, in that tourists entertain the fantasy that they can temporarily become a part of the foreign, idealized, authentic culture and are not, simply by their presence, radically altering that culture. Similarly the interventionists aspire to restore the authentic (idealized) culture, with little regard for the radical transformation their presence engenders (for example, in offering salaries for local employees that are of an order of magnitude above the salaries of traditional authority figures; in challenging traditional gender hierarchies and undermining family and community power structures; in imposing alternatives to traditional justice systems; in enforcing their own cultural ideals using economic power. This list could go on and on.
6. One Kosovar participant in our project described this process as a "parallel system", a reference to the covert Kosovar system for maintaining Albanian culture during the Serbian occupation. In contemporary circumstances, this referred to a surreptitious, culturally sanctioned, mode of dealing with international aid organizations, almost as if they constituted another occupying power.

7. In fact, the theme of the IOM Kosovar theatre project was *The Body in Exile*. The expectation was that the body would bear the scars and deformations of exile, even after the refugees returned to their towns and villages. Even in the IOM Project, there was a fantasy of a return to a former idealized state, in that it was thought that the theatre work would restore to the body the freedom and innocence that was enjoyed before the trauma. This, too, was a fantasy – in fact, the bodies of the students were actually engaged by the theatrical response to the trauma in ways that they had never been engaged before. The result was not a restoration, but a new and enriched bodily experience, derived from pain, pleasure and the creative, energetic interactions the theatre work provided.
8. Unfortunately, much collected trauma testimony follows a tight, predetermined interview structure. Wittingly or unwittingly, the form limits the meanings that may be discovered in the act of remembering and in the dialogue which elicits the memory.
9. One limitation of this first experiment in such a multi-modal approach to trauma and memory, was that each section found itself enormously overworked; each had to create, adapt and execute an intervention for which there was no model. As a result, there was little time for maintaining optimal collaboration between the sections of the project. At the same time, and this cannot be emphasized too strongly, those who work in international trauma response are subject to the stress of witnessing so much suffering. Members of each aspect of the project tended to regroup and refuel together, emphasizing the biases they entered with, and therefore not taking full advantage of the opportunity to be challenged in inter-group communication.

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The Exiled Body: A Training Project for Psychosocial Intervention Using the Instruments of Theatre and the Arts

Michele Losi

Introduction

*Balkans is an Ottoman name that means wooded mountain.
It denotes a territory between gorges and woods of Croacia and Turkey,
between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.
Balkans are not essentially different from Europe...
They are its removed, its unconscious, its mirror and in one sense
Its inwardness and its truth.
Rada Ivekovic (1995)*

Dzevad Karahasan, a Bosnian poet and writer, said that the proof of existence of a human being is not in thinking: “The proof that you really exist is that someone is thinking of you”. Relationship and communication, central in theatrical dynamics and in everyday life, was an essential part of our work in Pristina.

Kosovo seemed to represent a contrary perspective, one that doesn’t look inside itself but finds in others all of the negativity lodged in its own soul. Ritual circles and physical spaces of cohabitation do not offer any opening to the outside. Either you are there, inside, or you are not. It seemed to us in December 1999 when we arrived in Pristina that there was a double “occupation” of the city of Pristina, an “occupation” by international actors, and by Albanian-Kosovars coming back from all over the world or

coming from the countryside. Meanwhile places of slaughter and war cemeteries were rapidly becoming places of memory and places of new national mythology.

All war propaganda is based on the degradation of enemies, who are reduced to animal-like, untrustworthy, harmful creatures. In a sense, combatants have to turn metaphorically into wild animals, as others become their legitimate quarries. It is not by chance that the most famous Balkanic para-military group is named Arkan's Tigers, borrowing the name from the ferocious plunderer.

Family myths, collective myths and even false collective myths contain masked rules of relationship.¹ They are often so even outside group, would not dare to debate or refute, but rather, defend the collective stories as absolute truths. well-integrated into the daily life of the community that not only the belonging group, but If it is true that myths can turn into pathologies when the group considers them above all else, we had the impression that this was exactly what happened in Kosovo, in those months, in those years.

When our team arrived in Pristina in December of 1999 it seemed to us that the processes of projection used by the local population were elaborations of common dynamics of self/out of the self. The role played by collective memory in the construction of ethnic identity was expressed by the creation of myths framed in a public discourse which was largely monolithic (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Losi, Passerini and Salvatici, 2001). The generations most involved in this process seemed to be the youngest, since they had not previously experienced a time of Serbian – Albanian coexistence.

It seemed to us – coming from abroad – that people projected outside of themselves inner contradictions of local society. We had the impression that the Kosovar-Albanian community was anxious to build rituals and identifying landmarks. Similar processes have been analysed by historians and anthropologists in war-torn societies. The specificity of the Kosovar context was illuminated by the presence of the international community, to which we also belonged. It was therefore inevitable for Albanian-Kosovars to meet people from outside of their community – UN experts, soldiers, members of NGOs – which brought differences into the community.

A psychosocial project

A psychosocial project that intends to be useful must act within the constraints of these mechanisms, allowing the group to survive with its internal contradictions. Individuals must find within the same group the space for relationship and communication, which are rarely possible in conditions of conflict. Theatrical work, based upon communication and relational

techniques, allows memories to emerge through body and emotions; it engages work on redefinition of the individual role in society, and exposes the value of differences.

Why is theatre such a powerful instrument for breaking the chain of projections and revenge aroused in conflict situations? From Aeschylus to Shakespeare, theatre has had a fundamental role in the formation of humanity, bringing to the set all of the leading characters involved in the conflict, each with their own points of view, their own afterthoughts, their own possibilities of action. It helps the actors reflect on their passions and on the futility of the violence that rarely achieves its goals. In our work in February 2000, during an improvisational scene, one student acted the part of a man who chose not to take revenge: laying down his rifle he started crying. That was one of the most important moments in our work; we saw the deep connections between individual memory, culture, and local tradition, together with what we brought, with our differences, into the group.

Theatre, community and uneasiness

In his book, *From Ritual to Theatre*, Victor Turner (1982), a British social anthropologist, writes that theatrical art and rite are both borderline areas, thresholds where conditions of experience that are usually stationary are in continuous motion and mutation, and where man can undertake a periodic reorganization of the vision he has of himself and of the world. The theatre, born between Greece and the Balkans as the rite of the founding, mythical memory of the community, or as the performative action of elaboration of the collective mourning of a hero's death, has always been connected to the cathartic function of transformation of experiences of loss to regeneration of the individual and community.

Unlike ritual, theatre is art; it searches for truth through beauty (Hillman, 1999: 85-101), and offers itself to the community as a place of celebration, of free participation and of the playful re-creation of reality. It was the great masters of the twentieth century (Cruciani, 1985) who discovered the pedagogical and anthropological value of theatrical art. By placing the actor and the relationship between the stage and the audience at the very heart of their visions, Copeau, Artaud, Stanislavskij, and later Grotowski, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba with Odin Teatret, Julian Beck, Judith Malina in the Living Theatre and numerous other individuals and groups who appeared in Europe and the United States,² identified the exact points which can be used to rearrange the not only the aesthetic, but also the ethical, basis of the theatre. Community, body, game, rite, feast, memory, myth, symbol and transgression are the key concepts in artistic research, which is, at the same time, anthropological, social and cultural, as well as, at times, political.

Beginning in the sixties, first through Anglo-Saxon studies which move between anthropology and theatre (Goffman, 1969; Schechner, 1984 and 1993; Turner, 1986), and then in the seventies, through the Italian experiences in theatrical (Rostagno, 1980: 342-3; Contessa, 1996) and American political animation theatre,³ the theatre begins its journey out of the theatre itself: from theatrical art to performance, from show to feast, from dramaturgy to social drama. An exploration of the limits between art and society that develops within and outside artistic practice, of theatre-therapy experiences, of social theatre⁴ and of uneasiness, has finally allowed us to affirm the social function of the theatre as a place of expression and of the transformation of individual and community identity. From this point of view, while the theatre to be watched periodically undergoes a crisis, with attempts to renew and conform itself to the spectator/audio-visual model, theatre created in schools, in companies, in prisons and in refugee camps, has increased exponentially during the past two decades.

Theatrical laboratory practice has become a module of social-cultural action directed primarily at the well-being of its participants. Carried out with very different approaches and means, some of which are more closely connected to therapeutic practice, while others are much more deeply rooted in artistic experience, the theatrical laboratory is a complex of aesthetic, ritual, formative and psychosocial experiences. This complex of experiences does not only concern the actors in *avant-garde*⁵ experimental theatre, but is also one of the most evolutive types of practice experienced by groups working on individual and social relationships.

Moreover, starting a theatre in a community in which the participants have suffered some trauma, such as refugees, or people who have been displaced by war, involves creating a theatrical laboratory that includes the participants themselves. However in many cases this activity comprises also the realization of a more complex festive dramaturgy, in which the performance is only one component of the whole process and of the final event that includes various playful and aesthetic experiences (from dance to set installation, from creation of the environment to a ritual feast consumed together). Through these events, the participants represent their personal social-cultural identity in a symbolic way.

As the English historian H.J. Hobsbawm says in his fundamental text on the Imperial Age, "...for every one of us exists a crepuscular zone in between history and memory; between past as general archive opened to a quite dispassionate inquiry, and past as one part or setting of our personal memories. The existence of this zone can change, and the same is true for obscurity and the obscure perception that characterizes it. But this tempo-

ral no man's land is always there, and it is the most difficult part of history to be caught, for historians and for everybody.”

General outlines of the project

The segment of the Psychosocial and Trauma Response in Kosovo Project entitled *The Exiled Body*, functions in a multi-pronged context. It is part of an evolving continuum that starts with an experimental phase, continues with an educational phase and ends with a performative phase. This process also serves the function of complementary documentation to that of the Archives of Memory (Losi, Passerini and Salvatici, 2001) through the collection of video and photographic materials.

The link between the interaction of memory and that of the Archives will be the phase of visual material production that represents the path of memory revisited through the didactic and artistic experience.

As already explained in the aims of this project module, it is a model of experimental relationships that will allow the passage “from the individual to the group”, on a plane that is not purely performative-theatrical, but also on a more general artistic and didactic plane. It is important to underline the significance of oral narratives in the formation of historic auto-imagery. They are irreplaceable, as are written narratives, audio-visual media, and photographic or painted images, precisely because of the capacity of oral stories to construct and stimulate the mind to create myths (Passerini, 1988: 184).

The work of strong inter-linking between the artistic path and that of the Memory Archives allowed the construction of a bridge that linked the activity of scientific research in a historical and anthropological context and the artistic communication/social communication aimed at bridging the local communities.

The work on the body's memory, is based upon the re-possession of one's own experience for now and in the immediate future via a physical representation. The narratives of the experience of war and the experiences of the present, as well as hopes for the future, were all reviewed and analysed through the gathering of interviews, letters, diaries, photographs, and also through movement, gestures, exercises and theatrical training devices that were used as catalysts in the process.

After the analysis and organization of the materials, the principal themes that emerged can be used as a reference point on which to build paths of social communication that use art as their vehicle. The theatre is thus used as an instrument of analysis and as a means of representation and commu-

nication. To this extent we believe the function of the sharing of experiences in the creation of a group, and its transfer to the community as a whole, to be fundamental. In the world of theatre, the co-existence of both individual and collective memory is important and, thanks to the theatre, it is possible to go beyond the process of memory selection, the components of which are memories, oblivion and amnesia.

The example quoted in Annie Lafontaine's work, and presented in the *Psychosocial Notebook*, vol. 2, (Losi, Passerini and Salvatici, 2001), illustrates how the suffering or the resources which emerge during a traumatic period such as war, can be recalled through acting. It is important to underline that, in the same way, the theatre can work on personal oppression, and thus can also be therapeutic, even if it is not, technically, a therapy.

The students in our project, both individually and collectively, expressed the experiences of displacement and suffering through theatrical interpretations that could be understood by the other students and by the world outside. In this process of artistic communication, the suffering of war and exile became a shared experience for the group of students, using the metaphor of represented legend. The theatre permits such experience because it takes place in a protected setting, with clear outlines of space, time and roles.

Another important aspect of the connection between the work of the Archives and the theatre involves the comparison of the internal and external views of what took place. Within the theatre laboratory this was possible through dual leadership⁶ and the use of cameras and video cameras. This also allowed the counsellors to see themselves from the outside and to better understand the group dynamics, in exactly the same way that the analysis and reading of the Archives by Silvia Salvatici focuses on the importance of the dialectic relationship between the internal and the external point of view in the processes regarding analysis and the re-elaboration of memory. The dual internal – external relationship could potentially become one of the most important factors in the training experience for the counsellors, and could lead to a moment of final comparison between the material created and produced by the leaders and the material devised by the counsellor/students.

Another very clear element that emerged from the work of the Archives and the theatre was the use of the relationship between suffering and resource. Suffering can be a strong unifying factor between different experiences, resulting in formalized and highly protective structures, a formidable instrument for national cohesion. However, in this environment the emphasis given to the role of the victim can often be limiting, particularly if people come to see themselves exclusively as victims and thus fail to call upon their own inner resources to resolve and rebuild. In order to re-

discover these resources, the training and improvisations were geared to the empowerment of the individuals, and the transfer of the theme of war to themes such as love, sensuality, games and everyday life.

Another theme common to the Archives, and seen immediately in the theatrical laboratories, was the change in roles within the family and, more generally, the changes in society. Internal themes in the conflictual society, like the diminished role of the father figure, urbanization, and the loss of the countryside, were the subjects of many improvisations, and of extensive video and camera work. These improvisations demonstrated the centrality of these themes in the perception of the Albanian men and women of Kosovo, and also in the research carried out in the Memory Archives.

The exiled body: aims and objectives

The artistic theatrical project, *The Exiled Body*, represents part of the dynamics of work within a wider laboratory to create a memory archive on the trauma of war that guarantees the possibility of facing individual suffering collectively. Trauma is an attack on the individual which strikes the community: the aim of an artistic group response is that of facing and overcoming the trauma, placing the individual's experiences within a ritual-group frame.

However, not everyone who has suffered a traumatic experience finds it easy to speak about the past. The majority of people involved in events that tore them away from conditions of relative social, psychological and material stability have feelings of resistance and insecurity at different emotional levels. Theatre and art in general are able to touch and work concretely at the deepest levels of personal experience from the very moment at which they begin to establish various links with different and diverse types of people, using a distinctive level of communication (for example, they work with many different symbols as language, not only verbal). Since theatre, itself, is a performance, it becomes an effective instrument that can draw out the roots of suffering, joy and pain and make them visible to both the participants themselves and to others in a group situation.

Our work started from the premise that people who have lived through an experience of war and violence are normal people who react to abnormal conditions.

In February 2000 *The Exiled Body* project took place at a double level of intervention. There was a theatrical laboratory that had the aim of enabling the participants to express their personal experiences connected to the war and exile, using language and techniques characteristic of the theatre, starting from the here and now of their lives and enabling them to share them in a group experience. Parallel to this, there was video-photographic docu-

mentation work within the laboratory, as well as work outside the laboratory which provided an overview of life in Kosovo. This started with a glossary of terms defined collectively by those responsible for the Archives of Memory and with those supervising the laboratory process.

In the second phase, the intervention was based upon the functioning of the workshop using diverse artistic instruments and artistic and social communication tools in order to undertake a final festive evening of dramaturgy.

The first part of the work of this project was based upon the centrality of four elements in theatrical experience: the body, the group, the playing, and use of symbolic language. In effect, the theatre is a complete art, individual and collective, in which numerous different languages interact. The body is the fundamental element of the theatre; there cannot be theatre without the body of the actor, the spectator, without the direct relationship, here and now, that is created between them. As Artaud said, “theatre is made of sweat and blood”. Also in a psychosocial approach, the body is the element of origin as long as it is possible to recognize the place where emotional experiences are nested, and where one can create a link between emotive experience and cultural belonging.

Theatre is born when a relationship of action and eye contact between at least two people is created. The same creative work in theatre is the fruit of a multiple relationship that is formed like a group system in which the single individuals with their identities, abilities and different roles all contribute to the common creation. Accordingly, it is the only work of art of this nature. And it is the ideal venue to explore the relationship between the individual and the group amidst the multiple identities of each member. The playful element of theatre creates the opportunity to act “as if”, allowing the liberty to imagine oneself and experiment outside normal habits, every-day rules and the ordinary, by inverting roles and bringing out other planes or hidden parts of oneself.

Finally, the true language of theatre unites material and imaginary elements by making the creation of meanings work not only at a logical level, but also at a poetic one, through the metaphoric and symbolic use of signs. In this light, the representation of reality is not unambiguous but rather multi-plural, rich in shadows and light, mysterious connections and unheard of revelations of the senses.

The Exiled Body begins with the idea that the bodies of the workshop participants are the storehouse of not only the memory of war and exile but also of numerous other identities and experiences. The Exiled Body uses the means of the theatre – play, group, symbolism – to reinforce the

positive and constructive resources of the individual through empowerment. This framework allows him to bring out his most negative experiences, giving them names and reliving them, with the ultimate goal of contributing to the process of healing.

The intervention team

The team which participated in February had been chosen expressly for the project. Comprised of professionals from two areas of expertise, pedagogic-theatrical and historical-audio visual,⁷ it was coordinated by the Educational Association Altrimenti. There had been two preparatory seminars in the two months prior to the intervention, with the aim of increasing their knowledge of the formation of group dynamics. Robert Gourp, Esther Perel and Steven Reisner, of the team Theatre Against Political Violence,⁸ participated in the second seminar with, a view towards a possible research collaboration.

External professionals collaborated with the team of The Exiled Body project with specific functions. Annie Lafontaine, an anthropologist from Montreal University, was the anthropological supervisor and monitored the entire theatrical workshop. She also collaborated in undertaking interviews and in creating video materials recording the work process. Salvo Inglese, an ethno-psychiatrist; Steve Reisner, a psychoanalyst, and Robert Gourp, actor and director, were responsible for the psychological supervision of the group dynamics of the leaders. Antonio Viganò, actor and director of the Teatro La Ribalta, who contributed to the project planning, presented his play, *Ali* (Wings), in Pristina and also led work with the course participants.

Schedule, contents and methodology of the intervention

December 1999: first contact with the course participants

The intervention of the leaders of The Exiled Body project took place at the conclusion of the initial field work, following development of the first educational model of this kind in December 1999, and was conducted by Dr. Natale Losi and Dr. Silvia Salvatici. During the module of the Memory Archives, the course participants themselves experienced the importance of relating and dividing their personal war and exile experiences in a group through personal narratives, role-play and other techniques. Later, they applied what they had learned by carrying out numerous interviews with various social groups affected by traumatic experiences.

Certain conditions created by the preceding formative activity in the group were taken into consideration during the intervention, including:

- a) Expression of vast narrative material (events, images, characters, situations, actions) at a level of events experienced in their lives as fruit of the imagination, linked in particular to the more painful moments of recent experiences;
- b) Development of strong cohesion and “reciprocal helping” amongst the group of course participants;
- c) Presence of significant trust in the positive role of the project leaders; and
- d) Predominant use of words as a means to express and communicate reflections as experiences.

The theatrical nature of the second educational module, the idea of theatre running through the project and the meaning itself of using theatre in this context, had been presented by the representatives of The Exiled Body to the 40 course participants and their tutors, and to officials of the University of Pristina, with some concrete performative situations at the opening of the IOM course in December. During that one-week stay in December it was also possible to get to know the course participants directly by monitoring the presentations they all made of themselves at the beginning of the course and by participating in some of the first meetings of the Memory Archives. It was also possible to make the first contacts with the Dodona Theatre, the National Theatre and the National Dance Group Shota, with the double aim of forming a network of artistic relationships that could be linked to the project, as well as developing cooperation on the logistics of the project.

February 2000: subdividing the intervention

The laboratory intervention took place in two phases.

In the morning there were similar work sessions for both groups, consisting of three hours of training, games and improvisation (free form or on a structured theme), with the following purposes:

- At an individual level: allowing one’s body to play (physically and vocally), with relaxation exercises and training to use it expressively; encouraging the use of imagination and its symbolic representation with gestures, voice and movements and objects.
- At a collective level: formation of relationships of trust amongst course participants and between themselves and the leaders, the consequent formation of a group dimension at the level of language perception, and the creation, as a group, of collective theatrical actions.

The stimuli were provided both verbally and physically by one leader, if the group needed encouragement, while the other leader would act as an observer, monitoring individual and group reactions, viewed in the dynamic terms of identity and relationship, as well as the form/language and the contents/stories-imagery contributed by each participant. The verbal indications were translated by an interpreter⁹ who was asked for a theatrical translation, such as taking into consideration the tone and rhythm of the voice used by the leader in the input.

The working sessions were divided into work themes (body, group, subjects such as relationships or individual states of mind, or representations of an experience, such as a flight, a conflict, a trip) and at the end of each session the participants were requested to associate the experience generated by the exercise with images, sounds and situations later recorded in a personal notebook. From time to time some participants were asked to share their experiences during the feedback sessions. The feedback sessions had two functions: one consisted of sharing the emotive perceptions that arose from the work, explaining them individually to the group and the leaders. The other consisted of expressing other observations – either cultural or artistic – that were connected to the work.

The decision to introduce observations at a methodological level corresponded to the formative training needs of the counsellors, and at the same time, their limited number enabled them to protect the dimension of experience and the sense of being liberated by the work.

From the second week on, thematic theatrical performances were requested, both individually and as a group. The themes were chosen on the basis of what had appeared during the training and improvisation sessions, thus stimulating the work of dramatic research and the invention of vehicles of expression.

The afternoon session consisted in a thematic work of creation. The first week concentrated on exploration of the theme of “space”, both as the threshold of the home and as the space in the theatre, something exceptional or festive. The second and third weeks concentrated on exploration of the relationship between the body and desires. It was decided that the workshop would end with a concluding day of viewing of the video and photographic materials, the transfer of the “baton” for the continuation of the theatrical path and finally, a feast-installation, in the rooms of the Shota. There was dancing, eating together (everybody brought something) and an artistic and performance space with the use of photos, video projections and a set of installations that had been created by each member of the team on the theme of his/her own relationship with Kosovo and with the experience that had just ended. The feast was also understood as an opportunity to demonstrate the form of a festive community dramaturgy.

Specific domains of the intervention

The setting

Within the definition of the setting of the theatrical laboratory, certain choices were made regarding work rules and conditions based upon a specific methodology of theatrical involvement.

As has been explained, The Exiled Body is not a theatrical-therapeutic intervention, since it has its own aims and uses artistic/theatrical vehicles and, accordingly, is linked to the formative and ritual experiences that were developed in group theatre and in experiences which bordered on theatrical practice, such as animation, para-theatre and social dramaturgy. Nevertheless, the artistic goals are not separate from the psychosocial intentions expressed in the goal of the common well-being of the participants and of the entire group through a creative process.

From this point of view certain elements were used, such as monitoring group dynamics, the internal observation process, and use of feedback.

Participation in the laboratory

In undertaking this project we clarified that participation in the laboratory was to be experiential and active and was not aimed solely at acquisition of professional competencies or perfect technical execution. The basic requirements were the continuity of participation and the willingness to put oneself into play. However, there was always the opportunity to decline to take part in an exercise if it seemed unacceptable or uncomfortable.

The following stages of The Exiled Body intervention include part of the methodological and formative elaboration, starting on the continuum that was followed throughout.

Expression of the cultural specificity of identity and the leaders' work instruments

The leaders presented themselves in the introductory phase in their own ethnic, cultural, and social diversity by using knowledge, theatrical techniques and the use of instruments of the visual arts, which were sometimes unfamiliar to the counsellors' culture.

We believe that no type of intervention can be culturally neutral; the exposition of one's own diversity, and the tension felt when encountering the diversity of others as a source of identity and relationship, are the fundamental

ethical and methodological elements of our approach. Accordingly, each stimulus offered was developed according to ‘potlatch logic’, as a reciprocal gift, as an exchange between symbolic cultural objects. Each stimulus was meant to produce a personal response, not a performance. Moreover, the work revealed that the assumption of expressive forms which differ from one’s own can be experienced and utilized as a release of identity, which otherwise, in the usual traditional ritual, would not be able to emerge (Turner, 1986).

At the same time, the meeting of two cultures within the project coincided with the meeting of two functions: one of leading, the other of being led, thus limiting the creation of a true and real intercultural dynamic. It might be more correct to speak of interchange between the cultures within the general context of the course, during which the formative part was mostly transferred to the non-Kosovar educators.

The presence of the video camera was made known from the very start, and served the function of documenting the work as well as facilitating creative cooperation in the laboratory. In some situations, with agreement of course participants, it was decided that filming would not take place. Moreover, from the second day on, the course participants were invited to use the video-camera for theatrical plays and performances which could be filmed, shown and used as a starting point for successive theatrical events.¹⁰ The video work was later taken out of the laboratory and into the original communities of the counsellors.

The training

We use the term “training” to indicate a phase of the project carried out in two subgroups during the three-weeks of morning sessions. From a historical point of view, training is a complex of techniques used by the actors as their psychophysical ‘exercise’, elaborated during the sixties and seventies in the Third Theatre, by figures such as Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba, with particular methodological consideration paid to the expressiveness and creativity of the body.

Today, in professional artistic work, the term training is understood as a scheme of functional exercises undertaken both to increase the expressive ability of the actor’s body and, in particular, in the formation of a language that is shared by the ensemble (this approach was applied by Eugenio Barba, Peter Brook, Ariane Mnoushkine, the CSRT of Pontedera, Italy, Danio Manfredini, Marco Baliani, etc.), as well as in the creation of specific conditions of emotive experience and of expressive forms.

The training which applied to the working sphere with people who are not professionals took two directions: first, to form a group language and to

stimulate emotions that could express themselves in a form. For example, the work on body control opens a sphere of experience of natural association with individual and group moments, internal or external, where control is especially meaningful. The individual methods already emerge during the training, even in the sharing of the exercise form, of the expression of experienced events that the exercise itself involves. Secondly, it is possible to construct a process of symbolic elaboration and performance after the training phase which allows the events that were experienced through the training to be activated and to manifest themselves in a collective performance. We must underline how, even in the context of social dramaturgy, training, as an important way of exercising the limits of rigorous use of expressive body forms, can be extremely meaningful. Training is useful both in enabling individual emotions to find individual and collective opportunities for expression in the individual/collective and structured forms which control and express them, as well as enriching them with a new vocabulary of the individual, something that is not every-day, something intercultural.

During the first week of the laboratory the work of training kept the group as its main focus. It was a precise methodological choice since the formation of a cohesive and strong group is indispensable if the consequent work of improvisation and creativity is to occur without the resistance so often linked to embarrassment or unease, as well as to foster respect for reciprocal needs. The *game* is an essential instrument in attaining these goals. All of the exercises had a playful element, which meant that one could let oneself go, feel free to exaggerate, or simply free oneself from normal inhibitions and reserve. Freeing oneself of the worry that someone present may make judgements is fundamental to the dynamics of the game. Another of the fundamental goals in order to work in an atmosphere of utmost respect for the others, is the creation of reciprocal trust.

The evaluation from both groups at the end of the first week's work was very positive. We noted a relative facility amongst the participants to undertake group work, to coordinate themselves as a group, and to accept the idea of putting themselves to play as a group amongst the participants. During the laboratory it often occurred that the group organized themselves without any help, following the instructions for the game or for improvisation. Automatically, a consolidated relationship of leadership was attained, such as the relationship that exists between professors and students, or between different generations.

As noted by the anthropologist Annie Lafontaine, it was a coherent result both with regard to Albanian social-cultural specificity, which has a stronger element of identity in a group structure (especially in an ethnic

one), and with regard to the methods of resistance used by the Albanians from Kosovo during the ten years of Serbian discrimination and the successive period of conflict, in which the collective structure of the family or clan was the only socially recognized and shared system of reference.

More difficulty was noted in recording the individual improvisations that evolved from a direct self-exposition while relating their own experiences. The reaction of the group during this process often consisted of contesting the work of the other, or attempts to “guide” him from outside (like a director guiding an actor on the stage) without adopting rules of reciprocal respect for diversity in the means of expressing oneself and one’s individual opinions. It was for this reason that we chose to concentrate on the reinforcement of the individual role within the group dynamic. Within the training session and after a phase of collective research, we then proposed a series of individual improvisations in which the counsellors were asked to demonstrate the work they had done individually, highlighting not only the experiences of “watching-being watched”, but also those of competitiveness.

Not all members of the group reacted to our request in the same way. Some of the counsellors needed more time to assimilate the idea of exposing themselves to a group that had now become an audience. This method also enabled us to work on the actor-audience dynamics in which the person watching has an active role in the creation of a communicative process. The result of this dual directional path towards both the group and the individual allowed us to investigate the complexity of relationships and the importance of the definition of a movement that starts from an individually experienced event and brings us towards a ritual collective dimension.

The performances

During The Exiled Body laboratory numerous performances were undertaken. In the theatrical approach that was adopted the performances consisted of:

- Representation of a theme or of an agreed scenario;
- Action executed by the group;
- Body language (gesture, movement, sound, song) and/or the word (not in the case of The Exiled Body Project, which preferred non-verbal language).

The performances can have different functions at a formative level, stimulating work as a group, the formation of a symbolic language or the connection between emotive experience and symbolic forms. The performances were always part of a formal and emotive context, an expressive group dynamic context that is produced by the stimuli of the training.

The training included two types of exercise:

- Those relative to the body: body-movement (relaxation, warming-up, training), body use, and control through sequences of movement and respiration; and
- Those relative to the relationship of the body-imagination (with the use of objects, music, etc.).

Indeed, on the one hand training determines the acquisition, at the individual and group levels, of an expressive competence, of a “technical” and creative knowledge of the forms, and of theatrical language. On the other, it creates a specific emotional condition¹¹ in the individual participants and in the group. Accordingly, each performance is also an ulterior mode for the leaders to get to know the participants by observing the body language of the individuals, the types of stories they create, the forms they choose to express them, and their emotive reactions in respect to the situation-condition that was created by the preceding theatrical work.

In working group B, performances closely linked to dramatic formation were carried out, using the technique of association. At the end of one of the training sessions the participants were asked to write what they had thought about during these exercises, either in the form of images and/or descriptions. They were also encouraged to note the names of films, novels, songs, legends or objects that they associated with them. This technique allows the current situation, the here and now, to be linked with one’s emotive memory, while at the same time it develops the use of analogy, metaphor and symbolism as a specific language of art and theatrical drama to name the experience. For example, during the first day’s work, the act of walking slowly in the space was associated with “...when one returned to one’s home and explored it after the war” Pausing during these walks was associated with “...being stopped while escaping, when we were afraid with every step we took or when we received orders from the Serbian soldiers”. Games involving clapping one’s hands to the same rhythm were associated with “weddings and country feasts”; the game of “walking funnily” reminded them of “the games I played as a child”.

It is also possible to share these associations during the feedback sessions by asking the individuals to relate them freely, using this as an occasion to begin the dynamics of understanding and comparison of what happened, at both a formal and psycho-dynamic level, during the training. It is also possible to continue from this phase to the phase of performance, asking the participants to divide themselves into small groups, to share their associations and to use this as the starting point for a scenario that will be performed collectively in the form of improvisation. Ultimately, some of the performances did indeed demonstrate that the group had gained considerable dramatic competencies.

The second day of the laboratory the leader constructed a square space using small rugs each participant had brought from home. The group was asked to divide into sub-groups and share the associations of the morning (amongst other exercises, work had been done using sticks, a ball, exercises with “threads” on trust and leading, relaxation exercises with a shower-massage, finding common elements, and recognizing expressive forms through signs (gestures, movement, sounds, etc.) with which they had been working in order to prepare a scenario together.

The first group, comprised of the younger members, presented a rhythmic march along the border of the square with gestures of self-introduction, moving a stick they were carrying. The impression created was that of an expressionist cabaret on military marches. The rhythm was the compositive principal element of the improvisation. The movements were energetic; the group was in excellent harmony, with coordination of their movements and the feeling of going beyond the threshold of the non-theatrical space to that of the theatre.

The second group, which was composed of adult women, presented a scene in a circle moving their arms as if they were flying, making short happy sounds and ending with a round dance. The atmosphere was extremely peaceful, almost idyllic, and pleasant for the participants to perform; the gestures were imprecise and the conclusion was unclear.

The third group, which was composed of not only the participants, but also a tutor, presented a scene in which a man – the tutor – took a piece of string with which the others were tied like puppets, put them into a bundle, loaded them on his back and dragged them around the space. At one point he then cut the string and everybody fell to the ground; after a short time they got up and formed a train in motion, ending the action with a gesture of victory.

The fourth group, which was comprised of the most senior women, presented a scene in which one person pushed the other three outside of the space with great force, forcing them into a different space where she sprayed them with water. When the three women were sprayed, they immediately fell to the ground, immobile. The group was emotionally very involved but had difficulties in ending the action and finding a resolute gesture.

During the feedback that followed, the participants were asked how they felt during these performances. Everybody underlined the feeling of strong emotional involvement, above all the second and fourth groups, who admitted the sensation of being completely “inside”, almost as if there were no audience. Some emphasized the sense of enjoyment, the playful aspect of the experience. They were also asked what observations they wanted to make, with regard to both the form and the content of the experiences

dramatized in the performances. The group recognized the use of symbolism in the exercises and underlined the linkages with the associations. The methods by which each group arrived at the individual associations of the scene were also discussed. Finally, the leader asked the participants to give a title to their performances and that of the others. They chose “March” for the first; “The children’s world”/“Happiness”/“Butterflies in spring”/“Birds of freedom” for the second; “The train to freedom or towards the future” for the third, and “Torture, suffering and endurance” for the fourth. The association of a title with birds led to a group discussion on the Phoenix as a symbol of the experience of Kosovo and to the first distinction between pretty/good birds and ugly/bad birds, symbols and subjects that were chosen for continuation of the work.

During the afternoon of the next day, still in the context of the work on space, an unexpected lack of electricity led to a proposal for a spontaneous performance: they were asked to construct a path inside a sort of “enchanted woods” using their candles and rugs. The group was subdivided into three groups, which were respectively to interpret the role of the enchanted trees, the inhabitants of the woods and a group of children who venture into the woods. The task was to show the children’s journey into the woods, meeting the inhabitants of the woods. The improvisations that emerged in the three sub-groups took place with two exchanges of roles (“the children” were “the trees”, etc.). In discussion during the feedback session, participants discussed the experiences of change, fear and aggressiveness (there was a bad wolf); the numerical imbalance between the groups (in the second performance the “children” were more numerous than the “inhabitants of the woods”); and the pleasure/difficulty in playing such distant characters. The link with traditional narratives of Kosovo (fairy-tales, legends, etc.) was also discussed, as was the effectiveness of communication and expressive beauty found in the forms and gestures that were used.

The following day the work continued on the theme of “flying”, with a proposal by the video group for the viewing of a video on “crows” (there are a great many in Pristina). Everybody was asked to prepare an improvisation on flying for the next day. In this case the performance could be prepared with dramaturgical and scenic research for textual materials, objects, gestures, constructing a sequence of actions. In actual fact, there was only one structured proposal in which a course participant presented the story of a bird that dies so he can give his friend, a prince, a red rose – red because of his blood – so that the prince can win the love of a princess. For this she used a small ceramic bird, a cloth and a red rose. The participant explained that this story is part of a legend from the tradition of Kosovar songs. The other course participants presented improvisations they had created the same day. They performed their work individually. Most dealt with birds

that had been seriously hurt and could no longer fly; others were closed in cages and were flapping their wings frenetically; still others made shrill cries, flying down from the air and attacking those on the ground. The course leader then asked one of them to enter the theatre space and to act, and invited anyone else who wanted to, to enter the same space and relate to what the others were doing. The result was a group improvisation that revealed expressions of care, solicitude, solitude and aggression.

The following day a stimulus was given for a performance on the theme, “being an animal”, with the goals of continuing exploration of the sphere of imagination and culture linked to the symbols in nature, and working at an emotive level on the “lower spheres” and on aggression, and also working on allowing the individuals to emerge in their diversity.¹² They were asked to choose one of the animals that had been named during the association exercise, to identify themselves with it, assuming its body, energy, rhythm of breathing, movements and even to move with the same sensitivity (fear and desire, action and reaction) of that animal. Finally, everybody was asked to look around and react to the presence of the other animals. This resulted in a sequence of actions that were aggressive, with some caring for the wounded animals while others were isolating. Of particular interest was a conflict that was introduced by extremely aggressive actions by one of the female participants in the improvisation, with a reaction of attack when she was provoked by two “cats” that had become “tigers”. At the same time she was defended by a man – recognized as a leader by the group – who was acting the part of a monkey. The ensuing discussion was extremely interesting because it led to a closer examination of the theme of aggression within and outside of groups and the behaviour of the individual in such situations.

The group proposed the last meaningful performance independently on the last day of work. Following the female participant’s proposal to work on the legend of the bird and the rose, the group prepared a performance at home and brought suitable costumes, based on a song telling of a wedding that becomes a funeral because the groom is kicked by the horse he is mounting and dies. In vain, the mother tries to hide the truth while the guests celebrate. When the truth is finally revealed, everybody starts to cry for the groom and to console the bride.¹³ The actions used by the whole group included songs, dances, some gestures (carrying someone on their shoulders) that were taken from the training exercises. The group offered this performance, which was of great emotive involvement and remarkable aesthetic beauty, as a farewell gift to the laboratory leaders. Afterwards, the group emotion that was created was followed by the group’s desire to explain the origins of the work and its connection with the experience of war weddings (interrupted by the death of either the bride or groom), which

had just been experienced indirectly by many of the participants. In this context one of the course participants affirmed that this had been the first time since the war that he had been able to cry after having recognized 197 corpses.

The creative autonomy and dramatic and interpretative complexity that was closely linked to the value of the elaboration of traumatic experiences demonstrated in this performance, revealed the group's considerable success in the use of theatre as psychosocial therapy and also as a venue for artistic creation.

The creation

Silvia Briozzo¹⁴ says of her work:

The first attention paid in the meeting with the participants was to look at them. Thoroughly, for a long time, to see everything they showed and to gain insight into the mystery that accompanies everyone. There was no intention of giving my fantasy too much space, not inventing anything, but of letting oneself be led by the look in their eyes, their body, their uncontrolled action which could be interpreted as an extraordinary place of life and memory. The work was not of a pedagogic type, there was nothing to teach, no abilities to show, but rather to try and provoke a feeling of sensitivity and consciousness so that we can talk about ourselves with extreme liberty. Knowing how to use the body to communicate one's own pain, anger, nostalgia, joy, fear, desire with a restless, new and still unknown gesture that becomes a drawing, a spell, emotion or unease in the sharing of theatrical action.

To try and achieve this the leader divided her intervention into two parts: the first was based on the search for confidence (both physical and emotional) in one's own body and in that of the others; the second was based on a series of theme-based improvisations that attempted to allow completely personal experiences and expressions to emerge. The first part of the work took place individually or in pairs but simultaneously with the division of space between the actor and the spectator. This was to create a protected climate in which all participants were free to express themselves without the fear of being judged, and also so that they could all work with each other without choosing a particular partner. For example, using their partner's body as a blanket, feeling the weight, the warmth, the feeling of abandonment, the possibility of movement, immediately created an atmosphere of hilarity and generated great embarrassment; or during the moment of having somebody else's body on you, being embraced, breathing together, the resistance was almost imperceptible, the exercise became a search for each other between human beings. Then, finally, the abandoned bodies began to speak, with expressions full of amazement and tenderness, not in

one form, but in a succession of completely spontaneous impulses that were all centred on the real pleasure in the discovery of the other person.

Therefore, each gesture is my relationship with the world, my way of seeing it, feeling it, my inheritance, my education, my surroundings, my psychological constitution. My whole biography is in the violence of my gesture, in its delicacy, or in its indecisive or uncertain tone, the quality of my relationship with the world, my way of offering myself. Passing right through existence and flesh, it creates the unit we call body because it is not the body that determines the gestures but the gestures that bear a body from the immobility of the flesh (Galimberti, 1997: 91).

These words are a suitable introduction to describe the second part of the work that was centred on the construction of theatrical actions in which the gesture takes the place of the word and in which a song or ritual replaces the oral tale. The first problem was the question of how my suggestions, a stranger to them and their history, would be able to reawaken the path of memory without being violent and intrusive. After the first improvisations it became clear that the more attention that was paid to theatrical form, precision of movement, awareness of action and reaction, the more “daring” I could be with the themes I proposed. The title “Open your eyes and find yourself in a well-known or completely unknown place” led to very different reactions. Woods, streams, flowers, vast skies (mainly the more adult participants) together with fields where they searched for the remains of something or someone, undefined spaces where one feels in danger or under observation, a woman’s body to caress and the place of horror, of destruction, of the loss to mourn.

The leader was always guided by their suggestions and feedback in the choice of the path to follow. And every day a different awareness could be seen and, at the same time, a deeper understanding of vulnerability that was shown by almost everybody. The grasping was different, the references, leaving and keeping. In each gesture there was more experience and more innocence, more fear but also a desire to overcome resistance, more fun but also a great attempt to talk about oneself through dreams and wounds.

The feast

On the last day of work the group leaders asked the counsellors and the “project community” – IOM, Pristina University and the theatre groups involved – to have a concluding feast to mark the pathway of the separation with collective, playful and creative meaning.

The feast was held in the rooms of the Shota,¹⁵ where some of our activities had taken place. It consisted of a dinner to which all of the course members

and leaders contributed (food and drinks were brought from home); a visit to the installation-space created by the leaders, and a dance towards the end of the evening. The rooms of the Shota were transformed by introducing video images of the laboratory that were projected onto the ceiling, the walls and on television screens. There was also a photo installation, which consisted of pictures taken during the three weeks of work. These installations were also considered as a “farewell gift” to the course participants.

Thus, the workspace was transformed into a space for remembering the group, rich in metaphorical symbols, multiple perspectives and the language of experience. In this same space there was dancing, and the exchange of music and dance forms.

The idea underlying this feast was also that of being a modality of group drama and festive performance. Therefore such experience anticipated, at least in part, the forms, language and artistic and human experience to be carried out at the end of the project in October, but with a greater completeness and complexity of the senses.

The performances

Two performances were part of The Exiled Body project: *Ali*, (Wings), presented by the Teatro La Ribalta and *Per amore* (For love’s sake), presented by the Cultural Association Scarlattine. The two performances are the work of three of the actor-leaders of the course.¹⁶ The logic of the events was a logic of gifts from the actors to the counsellors in exchange for many other gifts, of the counsellors discovering themselves, “showing themselves nude” during the theatre laboratory.

The evaluation

The last two days of the laboratory were divided into four different phases. On the first day the course participants worked on some pieces of dramatic construction and the theatrical representation of the group, using the images in videos taken during the laboratory itself and also images taken outside. The second day, however, was divided as follows: during the first part the course participants put on performances that told of their experiences during the theatre laboratory. During the second part there was a concluding feedback session of evaluation and discussion regarding the future of the project. At the end of the day there was the party with dinner, dancing and installations.

The evaluation took place separately for both groups, and the whole team of The Exiled Body took part, together with three observers (Annie La

Fontaine, Robert Gourp, Steven Reisner), and several of the tutors. The day before, the counsellors had been given five questions regarding their experience aimed at revealing their subjective perception of the theatre laboratory itself and the perception of their own contributions in connection with the theatre experience.¹⁷ The members of the team and the three observers had agreed upon the questions.

The evaluation took place along the same lines as the feedback session, with everyone sitting in a circle. The leader responsible for each group asked them to respond, first of all to the first question (positive elements), then to the second (negative elements). Due to lack of time, they were asked to answer the last three questions in writing as part of the planning for the future. The leaders and observers also participated with their own answers during the final feedback session. Review of the responses of both groups revealed a very positive evaluation, in which the participants indicated that the laboratory enabled them:

- a) To forget the war and experience a relief of emotional tension connected to trauma;
- b) To “heal the soul”, experience a “catharsis of the soul and body” and generally a sensation of “feeling oneself free on an emotional plane”, (for example “getting rid of the aggression I felt inside”). One person said that he/she felt he had become optimistic and “looked at the world and all the positive things in it with love”;
- c) To have “a feeling of liberty to shout out in the middle of the street”, to express oneself freely as an individual, to eliminate one’s own complexes and timidity (above all the younger participants);
- d) “To increase our relationship within the group”, to feel like a family, to communicate better;
- e) To have a better relationship with one’s own body and therefore get to know others and oneself better;
- f) To keep one’s own identity even in a group (adult women);
- g) “To have the possibility to transform oneself into many different people and therefore be more able to feel how other people feel, inside their different identities”;
- h) “To meet good people who shared their experiences and knowledge with us”;
- i) “To have more imagination”, creativity of vision and a more vibrant approach to life;
- j) To gain knowledge of body language and theatre games that can be used as a counsellor, in particular with traumatized children.

The negative elements that were highlighted concerned the overall length of the laboratory, which was generally felt to be too brief.¹⁸ However,

others felt that the commitment was quantitatively excessive. There was a request for more detailed explanation of the meaning of the exercises. Some spoke of an initial feeling of diffidence; others felt inadequate when faced with certain requests and in particular had difficulty in the exercises with role-playing. Some would have preferred to work with the whole group of 40 participants; others expressed the need for a greater balance in the group composition regarding the ratio of men to women. One woman spoke of the ambiguity of pretending (to appear good or bad), in a particular reference to the increase of crime in the Kosovar-Albanian community. One man questioned the “infantile and animal regression” he experienced in the work and evaluated it in relation to his formative functionality.

The tasks

On the last day of the laboratory, together with the concluding performances and the evaluation, the counsellors were given themes for which they had to collect materials of various types (pictures, tales, legends, songs, objects, characters, etc.). The themes¹⁹ were formulated theatrically as titles of improvisations, underlining the creative nature of the work. Furthermore, it was explained that they were created as a synthesis of the work which had been done, and the list was distributed in an “open” form, that is, with the possibility of adding other titles. The participants were asked to work in groups or alone, considering at least three of the titles. Similar information was given to the tutors who were to support the groups during their work.

Video and photographic work

The starting point of the work carried out in February by the video group within The Exiled Body project was the need to document the evolution of theatre work. We had already foreseen two different final products for the documentation we were to collect in the initial project, two different “editions of what was filmed”:

- A longer video production which is to serve as an archive of the work carried out for the University of Pristina and for the Memory Archives, a useful consultation instrument for the counsellors;
- Another version, which could be defined as a “documentary format”, lasting approximately 30 minutes. This could be used as an instrument of disclosure and a testimony to the Kosovo community, and as a narrative instrument of the path followed during the laboratories.

The main purpose of the editing process was to describe the meeting of two cultures and the different views, at times conflicting, that this meeting produced. During the editing of the collected material we maintained the

centrality of individual memory within the construction of a more expansive common memory. In this process, the formal solutions of the audio-video document are derived from the subjects and language of memory and testimony.

The experience of war, interpreted as a moment of epochal severance able to modify the memory of the past, is reflected in a complexity of analysis and visions; this in the face of an auto-portrayal of the Kosovar-Albanian national identity founded on war and apparently monolithic. For this reason we created a path that was based on three fundamental dichotomies: city-country, young and old generations, our view and that of the counsellors.

The video work took on an aspect of autonomy during the first phase of the theatre work.²⁰ The initial function of documentation took on other important functions in the area:

1. An aesthetic function centred around the possibility of enriching theatrical work (in the laboratory) with suggestions, images and visions from the external world to the laboratory;
2. A dramatic function based upon the use of film sequences to allow theatrical improvisations. This exercise was the first of the four phases of the concluding²¹ theatre performance in February;
3. An objectifying function based on the possibility of re-seeing and verifying one's own work on video, allowing oneself to distance oneself and therefore learn to be a spectator;
4. A function of external documentation of the laboratory carried out through interviews, as a way of giving back through offering their perspectives and images of the Kosovo situation.

Working along these lines, the video group felt the need to discuss their work with the project group of the Memory Archives, with whom they began a common project of defining a set of questions that referred to the interview model prepared for the project by the Archives. However, it was necessary to redefine a more synthetic structure that was more closely linked to the centrality of visual documentation than to the narrative tale.

The idea of this short set of questions, given to the participants to define the places and moments for the outings with the video camera, referred to the following subjects in particular:

1. The individual and common context in relation to traditional Albanian identity (since all of the counsellors were Albanian);
2. The identification of images belonging to different phases of the region's history (the era of Tito, the years under Milosevic, the war months, the post-war years);

3. Analysis of the current situation in the territory of Kosovo, and future perspectives for the area;
4. The vision of places with a strong symbolic value, in particular in relation to themes of authority and individual and group identity.

It was immediately clear that the main link to the outside was to be through the participants whom we asked to accompany us on our discovery outings.

As far as the aspect of pure documentation is concerned, the first questions the video group asked, once they had become used to working with the counsellors, were all related to the role and possible intrusiveness of the video camera during the theatre work in the laboratory and during the interviews that were to be carried out outside. As far as the theatre laboratory itself was concerned, we started with the notion that the video camera is not usually used in this type of setting. Theatre settings require a dimension that protects group intimacy, allowing the individual to overcome natural resistance to discovering oneself in front of others. Accordingly, the video camera might have inhibited the overcoming of this resistance.

Therefore, as a video group we decided to experiment with the dynamics of interaction with the video camera ourselves in a laboratory that was held in December 1999 as part of a theatre laboratory. Through this we confirmed that once it had been accepted, the video camera did not hinder the group work in any way. Once they entered into the spirit of the project, the counsellors helped us a great deal. Only two of them, during the second day of work, complained about the presence of the video camera. However, the following day, they insisted on filming part of the work, thus gaining confidence with the instrument (and getting used to an active role in the laboratory). We also offered the opportunity to decline to be filmed while working.

At the end of the first week of work we showed both groups short segments of films taken both in and outside of the laboratory. One of the films was built on the theme of the flight of crows in the Pristina skies. Whilst these pictures were full of negative and distressing images, for those who made the video and for the actors because they reminded them of the famous sequence in Hitchcock's film *The Birds*, it depicted a normal and everyday sight for the majority of the participants.

In one of the two work groups in which the counsellors had been divided, the discovery, by means of video, of how much progress had been made during one week led to a dynamic of objectification and understanding of how to put oneself in the shoes of a spectator. In the same way the theatre was seen as a ritual moment of exchange between realities experienced by the individual and the larger group of the audience, in this case the participants themselves.

Another interesting exercise was based on the mechanism of editing. Six different film sequences were shown to seven groups with five or six counsellors in each. Each group was then asked to define a macro-sequence of an edited segment and to construct a short theatre improvisation around it. The ensuing viewings were able to break the strong dynamics of identification that the group itself, as part of the larger Kosovar-Albanian community, had often represented. The results of the work varied greatly, both due to the different compositions of the sequences they proposed (some ended with a scene of conflict, others with a wedding), and to the different interpretations they gave to the same sequence of pictures. For example, within the theatre improvisations in working group A the same image took on completely different meanings (giving birth, an abortion, a magic rite), allowing the largest group of counsellors to have a substantial discussion on “group identity”. The exercise proved to be a perfect example of interaction between video work and theatre work and allowed the counsellors to work around the infinite ways of interpreting an image and constructing a story.

At the end of the three weeks of laboratories the counsellors were assigned the task of collecting video images, photographs, drawings and written texts according to certain outlines proposed by the leaders. The work produced, in particular the video-photographic work, showed us how the picture is charged with strong symbolic value that is very closely linked to the sense of national identity, especially if elaborated autonomously and not guided in any way. In one of the films the video camera frames the bound hands of a prisoner behind the bars of a gate. The sequence that follows identifies a path that leads to freedom, first showing birds in flight, then the Albanian flag together with the flags of some of the countries of NATO and relevant international organizations. Finally, the places and objects of the study are shown as symbols of freedom.

As far as the work outside the laboratory was concerned, once again the counsellors proved themselves to be more than willing to participate. We agreed with some of them upon a series of dates for our outings that covered the whole of Kosovo. Amongst the venues and themes chosen for filming, the following were of particular importance: the student years for both males and females, symbols of the Kosovar-Albanian student community; Milosevic’s apartheid policy; the Koranic school; the underground university network; the electric power plant and coal mine in Oblic; the city of Malisheva (destroyed by the Yugoslav federal army because it was occupied and governed by the UÇK for a period of time); the region of Drenica and the house of the “martyr” of the UÇK, Ademia Sharif; the Peja market; the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchy of Pec, and various other places and people connected to the counsellors’ personal lives. We thus collected a vast range of pictures and tales that enabled us to create a strong link between

the visions of a world made up of a community of more than one individual and the interior of the theatre laboratories during which the centre of action was the attempt to make personal experiences reappear and bring them to the exterior, thus making the experience of a single individual a group experience in the group-community.

The photographic work

Initially the photographic work was meant to be done exclusively in the theatre laboratories with a descriptive/documentary function. As the work evolved, however, in agreement with the video-documentation group, the theatre work group and the group of counsellors, the role of the camera within the project assumed a more complex character:

- Within the laboratories it fulfilled the task of documentation and interaction with the theatre work;
- Outside the theatre laboratories the camera had the task of capturing the photographer's autonomous view of the Kosovar reality, comparing it with the view of an Albanian-Kosovar perspective that had been acquired during the sessions of photographic documentation with the participants.

At the end of the session in February the material that had been collected, such as the video materials, was selected with the aim of defining a plan for exhibitions that would allow the dissemination of materials both within the Kosovar community and in a context of international referents who were interested in the project. All of the pictures used in the photographic exhibition were left in the Memory Archives at the University of Pristina. Although the exhibition creates, in itself, a structured artistic representation, each photo contained the necessary data for contextualization and understanding of each image, when and where it was taken and what or who is depicted. In this way the photographic materials may easily be consulted and, together with the interviews, videos, reports, diaries and other materials, could prove a useful reference sample within the Memory Archives.

As noted above, some of the photographs had already been used for the creation of video installations in Pristina during the concluding party for the first laboratory phase. In addition, a photographic exhibition was held in Pristina in October 2000 as part of the presentation of the results of the IOM Project. The main idea behind the exhibition was that of creating a means to allow the student/counsellors to re-discover the key moments of their theatrical experience and to re-experience the emotions and their deeper meanings.

Notes

1. In Western tradition the passage from myth to theatre is deeply linked to the stories of Cainus and Abel and of the Erinyes. Politics – in its noblest expression – rose from the overcoming of revenge, and Western culture has got its deep roots in these mythes, which remember to humanity the need of breaking the vicious circle of revenge in order to build civilization. Cain killed his brother, but God prevented humanity to revenge Abel and after having marked Cain he condemned him to the exile. Then Cain founded the city of Enoch. Multiple passages happened: from the countryside to the city, from the simple world of the village to the urban complexity. This reminds us to Belgrade, Sarajevo, Vukovar and Pristina and to their conflict with the countryside. It seemed to us fundamental to start working on differences (given by ethnic, religious, gender and generational divides) and their recognition within the community, at individual and collective level.
2. Complete historical background and essential bibliography on the second avant-garde and the experimental theatre in De Marinis, 1997.
3. Besides the already mentioned Living Theatre, see also the Bread and Puppet, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, l'Open Theatre, El Teatro Campesino, the Theatre-Black, the Performance Group; De Marinis, 1997: 117-150.
4. "Social theatre deals with expression and interaction of individuals, groups and communities through pre-educational activities, which include different theatrical genres, such as game, feast, rite, sport, events and cultural performances. Social theatre differs from social and theatrical animation, because it is more decisively oriented towards the community dramaturgy. It differs from artistic, commercial or avant-garde theatre because the aim is not the aesthetics of the product. The social theatre is also different from the theatre-therapy, the various expressive techniques used by psychologists and psychoanalysts. Actually, the boundaries between these three domains are very fluid and we can easily find art theatre promoting social interventions, as well as we can find the aesthetic component in performances and laboratories of theatrical therapy and in performances of community dramaturgy"; Bernardi, 1998: 157-171 (quotation translated from Italian).
5. The theatrical workshop as a place of research and creation was introduced by Grotowski and Eugenio Barba.
6. Each group included: one external leader, one internal leader and one psycho-anthropological supervisor.
7. For the theatrical section: Maurizio Agostinetti, scenographer; Agnese Bocchi, pedagogist and actress; Silvia Briozzo, actress and director; Giulietta Debernardi, actress; Anna Fascendini, actress; Alessandra Ghiglione, dramatist. For the section on visual arts: Andrea Balossi, photographer; Martino Ferro, writer of screenplay; Luca Cusani and Michele Losi, experts of social-cultural interventions. Michele Losi coordinated the whole project.
8. In collaboration with the International Trauma Studies Program of the New York University.
9. Then the leaders explained the instructions by gestures.
10. The presence of the video group members changed during the workshop: at the beginning they had just the role of observers, then they started to take part in specific exercises.

11. The change of the physical conditions leads to a change of the emotive conditions. According to Grotowski and to the theatre of the body (in particular Eugenio Barba), theatre work creates a specific emotive condition in the actor through physical stimuli. This solution is functional both to the actor's work of interpreting a specific character, and to facilitate the "creative attitude" of the actors. The "creative attitude" is the ability to present dramatic material (characters, stories, situations, etc.) through improvisations, which are then used by the producer to create the performance. This method of creative dramaturgy has been used by many experimental and avant-garde theatres since 1965; see De Marinis, 1997.
12. See the fighting scene in the video *The Exiled Body*.
13. In reference to the Grotovskian dialect of "apotheosis and derision" in which the great passages of human life's experience are derived from mythical archetypes.
14. See the video *The Exiled Body*.
15. Group of traditional dance and music.
16. Giulietta De Bernardi and Anna Fascendini for the Cultural Association Scarlattine; Antonio Viganò for the Theatre La Ribalta.
17. a) Positive elements of the theatre workshop.
b) Negative elements of the theatre workshop.
c) During this period did anything particularly negative and/or positive happen in your life?
d) Was it related to the theatre workshop?
e) During the theatre workshop did anything happened that in your opinion was particularly impressive?
18. The workshop was three weeks long.
19. Saying goodbye; Feeling weak; Either with me or against me; To be free; There's a place called utopia; In my desires; Puppets do exist; Not feeling alone; A place where you feel at home; A place where you don't feel at home; Things that change; Men, women, old and young generations; Looking at something different; Feeling invaded; Keeping with love; Being a large group; Rediscovering the body; Being creative.
20. During February 2000.
21. The following phases were: the counsellors' collection of materials for the dramatic sketch to be performed in October; the production of a final improvisation related to the work carried out during the seminar; a final feast organized by the educators.
22. Questions asked to the participants:
 - Did the war change the physical occupation of some Kosovar places? If it did, take us to these places.
 - Take us to the places where you feel there is power, any kind of power.
 - Show us the symbols of the Albanian-Kosovar identity.
 - Show us how the Albanian presence in Kosovo is changing both materially and culturally.

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Chapter 3

Arts and the Theatre: A Circle of Barthers and Encounters – A Training Module on Community Needs Pristina, 1 March-31 May 2001

Guglielmo Schininà*

Introduction

The aim of this article is to describe the training module, “Community Needs: Arts and the Theatre”, addressed, in the period of March-May 2001, to 42 students of the second one-year training course, “Psychosocial and Trauma Response in Kosovo”, organized by IOM and the Tavistock Clinic in London and held at the University of Pristina in 2001. The aim of the training was to create a new professional profile urgently needed in the province: the psychosocial counsellor, able to respond with a multi-disciplinary approach to the psychosocial needs of a war-torn and very transitional society.

Specific aims of the “Community Needs: Arts and the Theatre” module were to teach the students, through a very interactive and group-based methodology, a theatre approach and some practical models and tools of the creative arts to use in work with communities and groups.

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Organization of the article and its goals

One might wonder how theatre fits into such training, or might ask why theatre should be, together with family therapy, systemic approaches, psychoanalysis and ethno-psychiatry, a subject of study for a psychosocial counsellor; why theatre can be a practical tool to work with communities and groups and, finally, why theatre should be used within a training designed to address the psychosocial needs of communities in a war-torn, transitional environment. Therefore this article will be divided in three primary sections. The first will provide a definition of social theatre, since the experience we are going to describe refers specifically to this latest configuration of theatre transition, and will also offer a brief historical background. The second will offer a brief overview on the use of theatre and creativity in working with disease, marginality, and more specifically, for working in conflict and war-torn societies and in the mental health field. The third section will describe the training module on the use of theatre and creativity held at the university of Pristina, including its general approach, its methodologies, its didactic organization and its scheme of intervention, with a short description of each phase, emphasizing constraints, limitations and special needs.

PART I

The Development of Social Theatre

The theatre in transition

According to the majority of the anthropologists and historians of the theatre who have studied the evolution of representation, at one time there was only the religious ritual (Girard, 1972). But with the centuries, and especially in the western cultures, following the evolution of the concept of the human as independent from the holy and of mankind independent from the gods,¹ social ritual was born, which became independent from the religious sphere. This process helped the theatre become, after many centuries, an autonomous form of human action (Bernardi, 1996: 17-34). According to Victor Turner (1982: 60-92),² with industrialization, the former “integrity” of the well-organized “religious Gestalt” that once was the ritual of liminal societies, disintegrated and left space for a number of performance arts such as theatre, ballet, opera, cinema, the novel, poetry, classical and rock music, carnivals, processions, popular theatre, sport events and many

others in the liminoid sphere. Thus there was a transition from a collective and compulsory theatre ritual that was a self-representation of communities and enforcement of shared and common values, through the symbolic inclusion of dissent and marginality in the system, to the theatre as part of the individual and optional activities of spare time and the entertainment industry. In the 1950s, following Artaud's fascination with Balinese dancers within the "liminoid" sphere of entertainment, the search for a new "ritualization" of the society began, such as the search for a "liminal" society, which would give back to the theatre its fundamental role and heritage of political intervention, peaceful redefinition of the rules of the society, cultural discussion and social therapy. The starting points of this new transition were the experiences of Julian Beck and Judith Malina, and then Richard Schechner and Teatro Campesino and Bread and Puppets in the States; of Augusto Boal and Vianna Filho in Brazil, and many more groups in South America, and of Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba in Europe.³ In the meantime sociologists such as Goffman, began to study the importance of representation, with its ritual and "performative" aspects, in everyday life (Goffman, 1959). On the other hand, the *dramaturg* and director Pier Paolo Pasolini in his *Manifesto for a New Theatre* wrote that the theatre is "anyhow, in any case, always and everywhere a rite",⁴ and numerous other experiences have joined those of the founding fathers of this new theatre transition. In the Seventies, the search for new forms of participation in alternative movements found in this transitional theatre one of the strongest means of communication and symbolic self-representation, as well as a powerful cultural "arm" (Schininà 1998: 7-9). From a theatre perceived as part of show business, almost destroyed by new means of representation such as movies and television, a widely disseminated "theatricality" evolved, which infused schools, institutions, political groups, marginal communities, suburbs and cities, while new models of dramaturgy emerged, as the collective work and the workshop-theatre, perceived as "the time/space which keeps in itself the full responsibility of the performance to be." (Dalla Palma, 2000: 14-17). The first trend took the name of theatre animation or community animation. The second took the name "third" theatre. They have much in common, since they both refer to what Peter Brook calls the third culture. According to him, three cultures exist: the collective, the individual and the culture of the relationship: "...relationship between the individual and the community, between different communities, between micro and macro cosmos, between the visible and the invisible, between categories, languages, genders. This is the proper culture of the theatre" (Bernardi, 1996: 34; Brook 1987: 25-64).

Theatre animation faced a crisis in the eighties with the defeat of the ideals of the political movement of the seventies, when the demand for new forms of participation weakened⁵ and left space for a new individualism, and also

because of the very superficial methodologies and the lack of professionalism (a quite common negative aspect of theatricality) to which the fragmentation of these experiences led.⁶ The third theatre faced a crisis in the same period because of its obsession with the transcultural value of the body. Indeed, in its search for the universal relation, the third theatre concentrated its effort on the aware use of the body. For bio-anthropological reasons, the body was perceived as the element common to all mankind, and for artistic reasons, the body was also perceived as an element of theatre which was neglected and almost ignored by the dramaturgy of official theatre from the eighteenth century onwards.

But the third theatre lost its political value because, in aiming towards a transculturality of the body, it ignored other languages and the importance that the social and cultural contexts, the symbolic elements and individual memory have in the formation of the individual body and on the social perception of bodies (Schininà, 1998: 82). On the other hand, the actors in these groups achieved an outstanding technique of “performative” use of the body and of community dramaturgy, but this brought the third theatre into the cloisters of the theatre world (from Hostelbro to Pontedera) and to a new stereotypical mannerism. To use the words of Victor Turner, the third theatre, as well as theatre animation, willing to be radically liminal and to play an active role in the symbolic and political redefinition of communities, ended up again being part of the liminoid sphere of show business (the first) and of spare time (the second), and, as Patrice Pavis stresses, they are even a minority phenomenon within this sphere. Thus they were able to change neither the society nor the entertainment scene itself (Schininà, 1998: 82; Pavis, 1990: 135-155).

The social theatre

Fortunately, this period of crisis did not prevent the latest theatre transition, and with the end of the eighties a new form of theatre, taking inspiration and methodologies both from the experience of animation and of the third theatre, found its way into direct interaction with individuals, groups and problems of specific areas and territories. It is a theatre equally close to and remote from the therapeutic approach and artistic use, based upon the body and relationship, but with no radicalism. It is, in fact, less self-centred and ready to become an instrument of social action, through laboratories, workshops and performances with a healing goal, and with the aim of the relational and social quality of the interaction (Schininà, 1998: 9). This is called social theatre.

As Claudio Bernardi stresses (1998: 157-168), “The social theatre is part of the today anthropological involvement...” whose strongest points are,

according to Tambiah (1985: 380), "...the social construction of the individual; the interpersonal relations dynamic and the inter-subjective comprehensions, the structure of the community and of the small scale social forms."

Social theatre thus aims to be "...an action or liturgy of communities, which risk extinguishment because of the homogenization and the personalization of the cultures in the media society. Its second aim is to achieve the psycho-physical wellness of the members of any and each community, through the identification of practices of communication, expression and relationship, capable, at least, of alleviating individual and social diseases" (Bernardi, 1998: 158) typical of many societies.

The principal difference between social theatre and social and theatre animation can be identified in three points:

- 1) The care social theatre exhibits for the role of the individual within the group and the empowerment of differences rather than the collective experience and the unifying (transpersonal and transcultural) elements;
- 2) The importance given to the training of individuals and groups rather than the community dramaturgy and the events;
- 3) The new professionalism of the trainers. While the animator of the seventies and eighties was often superficial, the new trainers are usually skilled professionals able to consider in depth all of the social, psychological, relational and theatrical implications of their interactions with the group and the context.

The main differences between social theatre and the "third theatre", commercial theatre and the avant-garde include three primary elements:

- 1) The aim of social theatre is not the aesthetic result but the process of building up relationships through creative communication; to this end, the aesthetic result can be one of the means, but is certainly not the primary goal;
- 2) Social theatre is not included in the socio-economic structure of the theatre; and,
- 3) Social theatre perceives the theatre as an activity which can involve everyone within its purview, and is not the prerogative of only the most talented actors or theatre communities, who build up their technical capacities in the cloisters of the theatre. The assumption of the third theatre is that both a worker from Dalmine⁷ in Italy and a New York anthropologist, if they leave their purview, their job, and train hard for eight hours per day in a no-place, no-time environment, can achieve an extraordinary physical technique, and, therefore, can communicate better and improve their relations. The assumption of the social theatre is rather that both a worker in Dalmine and an anthropologist in New York,

through the use of theatre and creativity, can improve their wellness and that of their groups and communities, as well as their everyday relations with colleagues and family, in their own contexts of work and life.

The third pole of attraction-differentiation is that of theatre therapy and drama therapy.⁸ These are techniques used by psychologists and psychoanalysts in their work on the relational problems of individuals and small groups. Theatre and drama therapy can be considered part of social theatre, but the role that social theatre can play in the field of mental health is wider than the therapeutic use of some theatre techniques.

Finally, social theatre usually takes the form of a workshop, a laboratory, a process or a project, rather than a performance for the public. On the other hand, the performative nature of theatre makes it very easy to open these workshops, laboratories and projects to an audience/public in order to communicate the work experienced within the group to other groups, to open the group to the community/society and to enlarge the relationship. The necessary (in a liminal perspective) link between creative communication within the group and the social communication found in the theatre, thanks to its performative nature, the best creative medium to work on relationships within and between communities.

As Schechner points out in his essay on the future of ritual (1990: 23-49, 1995: 20-21), the future of performance is developing in four directions: entertainment, therapy, training and rituality, and we cannot strictly divide these areas since performance is that practice of communication-relation which involves politics, medicine, religion, the traditional and popular cultures and the everyday interactions between individuals, groups and communities (Bernardi, 1998: 164). Finally, social theatre is theatre aware of all of this and ready to use its power for social aims and the wellness of communities.

PART II

The Theatre of Social Healing

The uses of theatre in war and in war-torn communities

Social theatre can be useful in multiple ways in numerous crisis and post-crisis conditions,⁹ and the work of theatre can be vibrant and dynamic in the following situations:

1. In refugee camps, with communities of refugees, IDPs and returnees, by responding to:
 - The necessity to find a creative and symbolic answer to grief and loss;
 - The necessity to re-create a social life and reconstruct individual roles, lost or changed by the forced separation from the affective and practical links with the persons and places of one's own territory;
 - The necessity to re-create a social life and to reconstruct the individual role, after the return, during the process of adaptation to a territory which is no longer the same because of the challenges and changes faced during the war and thereafter, particularly since the post-war territories are the most transitional ones;
 - In both cases, the necessity to create a new community, to restore old rituals and to create new ones;
 - The necessity to integrate local populations and refugees and, after the return home, the native population, the displaced persons and the new migrants, in order to create relationships and give the new components of the community a functional and creative role through social communication;
 - The necessity to create a community (which is a new one because of the tragic events that have occurred, rather than by choice), empowering the differences contained in it and reaching its limits (at least the creative ones). This is the only way to create groups which are not "communities" but "free spaces of exchange and mutual empowerment".¹⁰ In conflict and post-conflict situations, the group-communities are most often based on nationalist ethnic belonging, more than on mutual respect. Working on differences means struggling to overcome the nationalist anger, the racism and the celebration of the killing of the enemy in refugee communities, and the one-dimensional nationalist triumph of the winner as well as the exclusionist, victimized nationalism of the losers, after they return (Bonomi, 2002).

2. For the empowerment of marginal communities in war-torn societies:
 - The strong transitional aspect of war-torn societies can have positive elements. Indeed, in the process of building up a new community, groups who were traditionally marginalized by that community even before the war, can find their "roles" in the society and can open channels of relationship.¹¹ The theatre can address:
 - The opportunity to work on creative identity and the social role of marginalized groups, through the inclusion of their thinking and their self-representations in the social arenas of communication. In other words, the possibility of creating a group due to the pluralization of

problems and resources and to enlarge it due to the performative aspects of the theatre.

3. In the “enclaves”, by responding to:

- The necessity of helping the enclaved communities (especially the children) develop their coping mechanisms and work on freeing the imagination, perceived as the only possibility of evasion in the short term. Secondly, it can work on creativity and performance to establish the basis on which to implement, over the long term, possible intercultural relations, an intervention that must be based on the community since shared problems exist, including stigmatization, or worse, violent attacks, the origin of which is communitarianism on an exclusively ethnic basis.

4. For training and team building, by:

- Responding to the urgency to train, in a short period of time, professionals able to respond immediately to the incoming needs of war and war-torn societies. Rapid training is necessary for projects such as the psychosocial projects in Kosovo, which started during the emergency phase and required cultural sensitivity (that only local staff can have), long-term implementation and a sustainable approach. In emergency training, the use of theatre techniques, with their ability to create actions and living experiences, bring to bear a unique force, speed and intensity of learning.
- Responding to the urgency to build, in a short time, teams who will share very intensive and stressful experiences.

5. For peace building, through:

- Exploring the need to work not on a “communion” of individuals but on a “circular space of exchanges”, the only possibility of dialogue between individuals who are not only different but consider each other as enemies.

Relationship, communication and role are the three key words informing the above descriptions. The culture of relationship is the proper culture of theatre; communication is its field of action and its performative reason; the role and its construction have always been its technique, even in the more commercial aspects of the art. Therefore, the theatre as an instrument of relationship, communication and creative expression for construction, reconstruction, and adjustment of the role, can respond to these needs. This modality also has the capacity to work at the limits and on the borders, to open fractures to be explored, to create passages and relationships between individuals and between groups. This is unique to the theatre among all other forms of

creative communication, because the theatre, thanks to its performative nature, has its natural outcome in social communication. This is particularly important in war-torn societies, as well as in all situations in which the inclusion of a group and its thinking in the arena of communications between political bodies with decisional power is necessary to elaborate its role.

The uses of theatre in the mental health field

The creation of relationships, the opportunity for everyone to find a role in the group, the community building, the work on limits and borders, and finally, the possibility of communicating in different and creative ways, facilitate the mental wellness of the individual and are critical elements of psychosocial well-being. Thus they can be very closely related to aspects of mental health, particularly if we think in terms of prevention rather than therapy or treatment.

On the other hand, the relationship between theatre and diversity and marginality, and especially between theatre and madness, is somehow fundamental and refers to the symbolic relationship between the visible and the “repressed” (Bertoni, 2001: 190). Madness, perceived as “tragic awareness” which displays the truths present in the “repressed” part of the human being, like “desire, violence and death”, is the focus of the history of dramaturgy (Bertoni, 2001:187): from Oedipus to Hamlet and Othello, to the abnormal psychology of the characters of the American dramaturgy of the fifties (Tennessee Williams, for example), to the theatre of the absurd. Moreover, over the centuries, the religious and social rituals of many communities have used madness as justification and as an alibi for the explosion of the “repressed” in the social field, such as openly criticizing power and rules and representing their symbolic destruction, to be performed on specific ritual days when everyone was allowed to be “fou”.¹²

In the second half of the twentieth century, and especially during and after the seventies, the relationship between theatre and mental health has evolved and taken on new forms.

The first such form is the use of theatre as therapy; just to mention the most known methodologies, Moreno’s psychodrama,¹³ the “second phase” of the Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal 1990; Schininà, 1998: 65-74), and most recently, drama-therapy,¹⁴ which, using the above-mentioned methodologies as well as others, aims to perceive the theatre as a form of psychoanalysis. The underlying idea is that the characteristics of psychosis are the loss of one’s own proper limits; impossibility to relate with others and to communicate with reality, while the theatre is relationship, symbolic com-

munication and structurization of personal experience in relation with the context and the world. Thus theatre can have therapeutic impacts upon mental pathologies (Bertoni, 2001: 187-188).

The second is more closely linked with the experience of the third theatre and theatre animation, which were perceived in the seventies as valid instruments to facilitate the community work of so-called third-psychiatry. Especially in Italy and France, Basaglia's (2000) ideas on the de-institutionalization of psychiatric patients and the perception of psychiatric illness as a social rather than medical phenomenon, seemed to perfectly adapt to the notion of celebration of madness as a space for truths, which, again using the example of Artaud, fascinated the third theatre. On the other hand, theatre animation, with its capability to create relationships, to include marginal groups in the community and to work on the group's creative self-representation for social communication, was perceived as a useful instrument for working on the social role of psychotics, on their empowerment, and on erasure of the "stigma" which surrounded them. Thus it was found to be a proper tool for their integration into the society.

This short and superficial background responds to at least some of the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter, and can facilitate comprehension of the training module, described below.

PART III

The Training Module

Background

The training module held at the University of Pristina from 1 March-31 May 2001, aimed to train a group of 42 students of psychosocial counselling in use of theatre and the arts for the wellness of communities. While the preceding paragraphs provide a general perspective on the background and context of social theatre, we should not forget that the module was included as part of a one-year training with other modules, including anthropology, family and systemic counselling, ethno-psychiatry and introduction to psychoanalysis, and that the training was more focused on psychological counselling. The training was addressed to students in their last year of studies and those who had just graduated both from the Faculties of Philosophy (which in Kosovo also includes History, Pedagogy and Sociology) and Medicine of the former Albanian parallel education system. This became the official education sys-

tem after the entry of the international forces into Kosovo. The students were tutored, during the general training, by ten psychiatrists and sociologists, who were invited to attend this specific training module. When the module was designed it was known that at least 25 out of the 42, at the end of their studies, would subsequently work, with different profiles, in community mental health centres established in Kosovo by the World Health Organization and the Department of Health within the Mental Health reform plan, as psychosocial counsellors in the Penal Department or as social workers.

Thus it was understood that their working environments would largely be institutional and, in some cases, quite medically-oriented, while in other instances the work would be more socially oriented towards the empowerment of very marginalized groups and individuals. More generally, all of them would be working in a war-torn environment. Another characteristic of the working group was the mono-ethnicity; the students were all Kosovar-Albanians and included no members of the ethnic minorities living in Kosovo (Serbians, Roma, Askalijas, Egyptians, Croats, Turks and Muslim Slavs), who were unable to attend the training either for security reasons, or due to the imbalances in accessing higher education services which characterizes Kosovo today.

Specific objectives

Given the situation, the specific pedagogic objective of the module was to create opportunities for use of theatre in their future professions, including:

- 1) Use of creativity and the body (theatre games and approaches) for group and team-building;
- 2) The possibility of using theatre for self-representation and to strengthen and empower individual differences, while also working on the “pluralization” of problems and resources and on the solidarity of the group with regard to individual problems and resources;
- 3) The use of theatre and its “performative” possibilities to include marginal groups and psychosocial problems in the arenas of social communication. More practically, to work out how to use theatre and creativity to build up and implement social awareness processes, campaigns and events relating to selected problems;
- 4) The attempt to link all of these functions as steps of a unitary process rather than to perceive them as separate activities. This included exploration of how to build a group made of differences, and the capacity of the group to communicate its achievements to other groups, institutions and communities, through an ethical process, a creative methodology and a perspective of social marketing.

Together with these objectives, there were three other pivotal goals:

- 1) To try to adapt this process to relevant institutions (schools, centres for social work, etc.) keeping in mind the professional aims of the training;
- 2) To create a strong link with the Archives of Memory, perceived as a possible destination of the achievements of the training, a source of cultural and historical information about the context of the work, and, finally, an element of necessary contextualization of the experience;
- 3) Since the group was mono-ethnic, to work on empowerment of internal differences and on its limits, as the beginning of a long-term process which might lead, over months, to possible integration.

As for the specificity of the use of theatre in the mental health field, it was decided not to concentrate on the use of theatre as therapy or on drama therapy techniques, but rather on the use of theatre as an opportunity to work on the integration of marginal individuals and communities, such as psychotics and other individuals with various types of psychiatric problems. This was for three principal reasons: 1) Simplification: since the process can be applied to psychiatric patients as well as other groups in need; 2) Balance: the general training was more focused on counselling and therapy while this module was the only one specifically addressing “community needs”, and 3) Professional profile: the psychosocial counsellors working for institutions, in their outreach work, would benefit more from this expertise than from drama therapy. It clearly would have been a different matter if the training had been a retreat specifically for training therapists.

Finally, the last objective was to work on team/group-building with the students, since this module was the first interactive and lengthy one.

This strengthened the training, since the group was able to experience its development as a group according to the methodology adopted, rather than just learning or applying the model. The experiential part was very important in and of itself, as should always be the case when talking about theatre, while it was also critical to the pedagogic aims of the process, including the clarity and ease of the learning process.

The model adopted

To achieve these objectives the model adopted was called the complex circle. As Eugenio Barba (2001) says in one of his essays:

The image of Theatre which guides me is not that of the action that unites, but that of a circle of encounters and barter. Various people gather around an action that binds them and allows them to debate, to

discover a territory, a time in which to exchange something. It is the very fact that each one can deepen his knowledge of his own specificity that creates the solidarity between them.

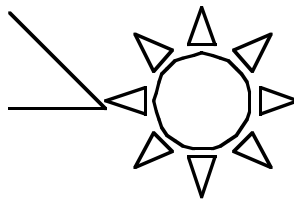
While Eugenio Barba writes about moments and single actions in an extraordinary context, the model of the complex circle tries to adapt the same idea to the action and the moment of the workshop as well as to long-term processes and projects in every day life.

The complex circle¹⁵ is the result of a process, which involves different individuals (a group to be). First they must build relations according to the following model:

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The individual is on his own and always free, but his actions interact with the actions of others and modify them and are modified by them in a linear relationship, until the line contains the entire group. At that point the line is transformed into a circle.

The ritual circle is comprised of individuals who retain their characteristics and their individuality but also develop relationships with other individuals, express curiosity and questions and respond to the others. The group in the circle becomes the place where each and every type of diversity and each and every personal and collective relationship is known to everyone, and thus it is pluralized and shared.

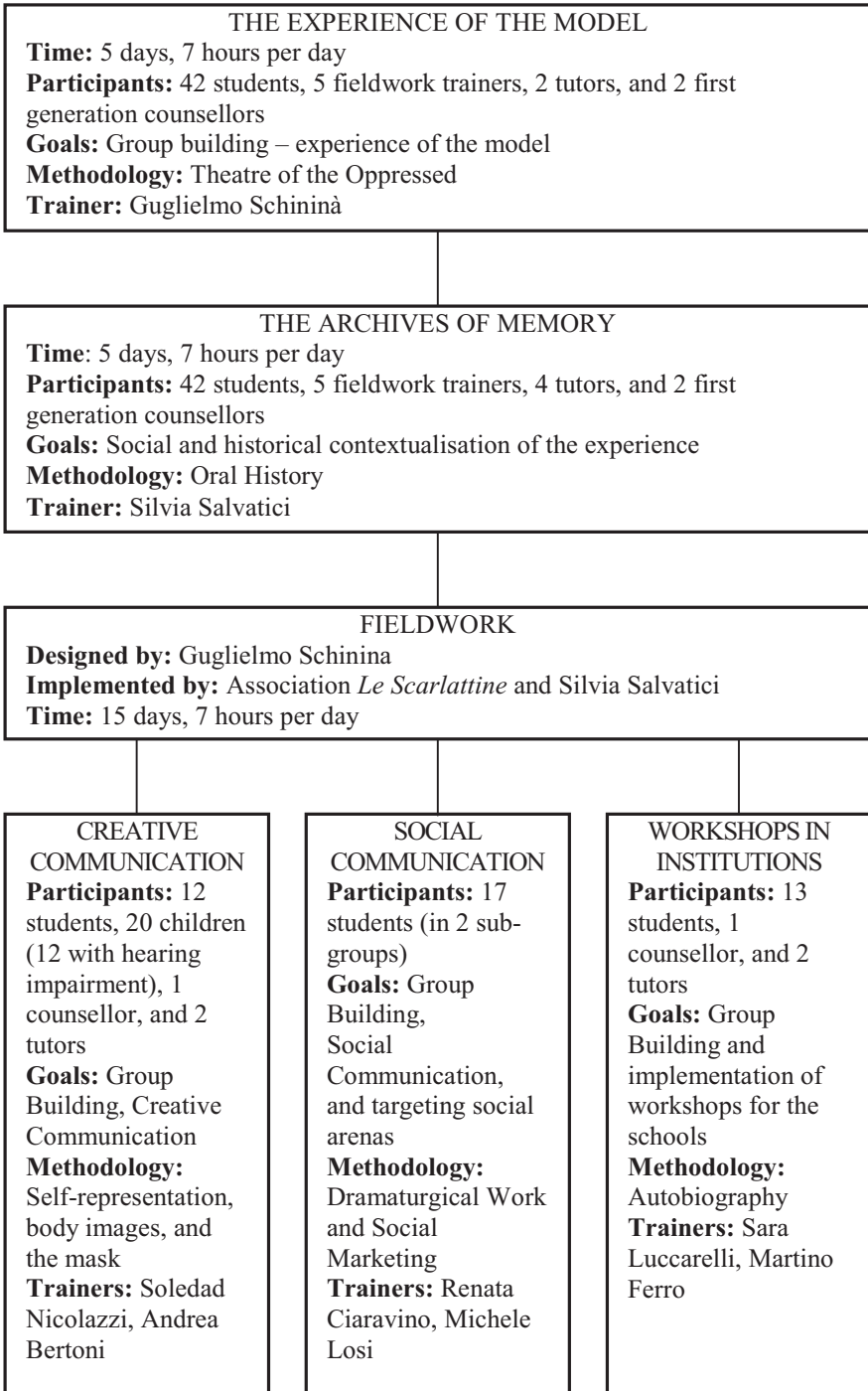


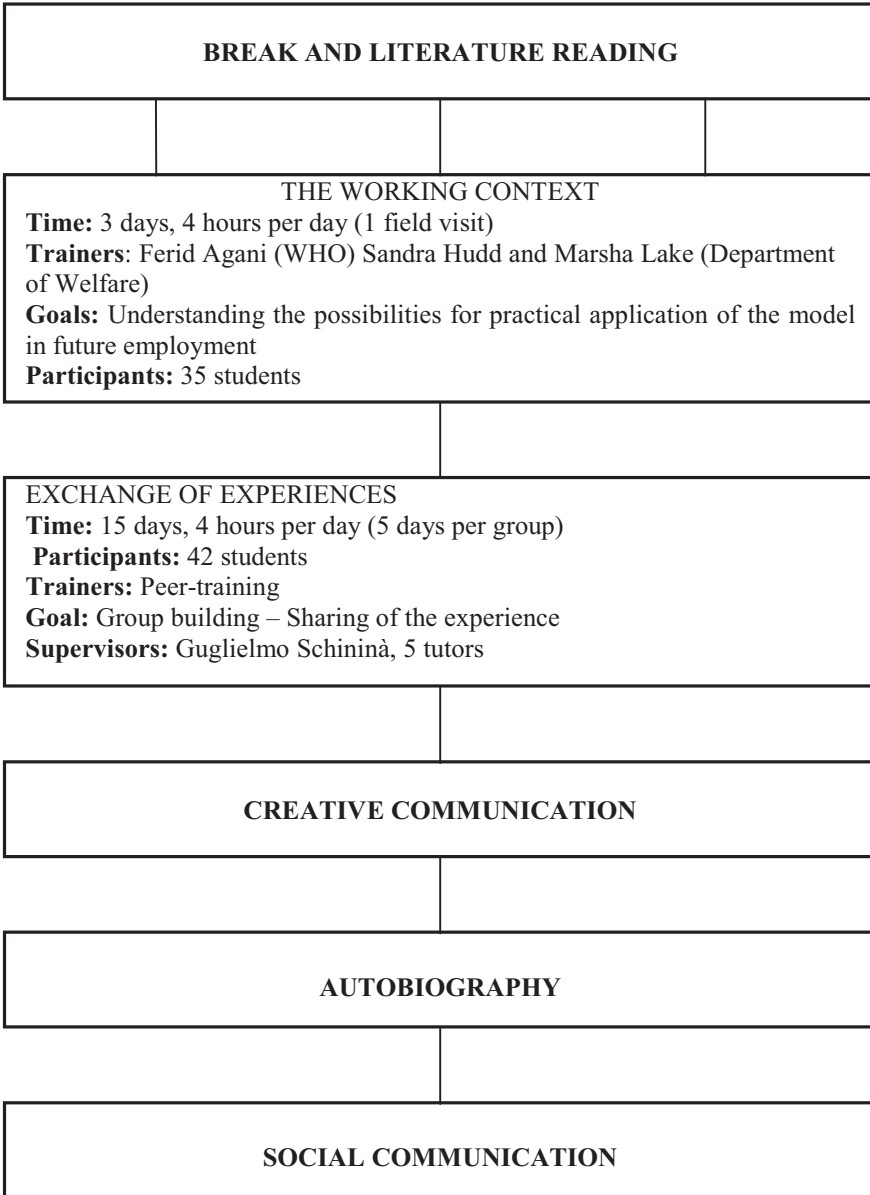
This model can be applied with numerous types of groups with whom trainers work. In this model every point is an individual, the lines some of the possible creative relationships, the circle the symbolic structure, the group and the setting. The same model can be adapted between different groups; in this case the points are the different groups, the lines their relations through creative processes and results, the circle the symbolic structure and the event. Finally the same model can be applied in social communication.

In this case the points are the different associations, institutions, formal and informal groups which form parts of the process, the lines their relationships, as well as their “performative” way of communicating, and the circle is the social arena and venue for presenting results, discussing contents and communicating problems.

The didactic plan was thus designed according to this model. The first week the students experimented with the model of the complex circle within themselves, creating a circle of encounters and exchanges of their own differences. During the second week the reality outside the circle was analysed. During the third, fourth and fifth weeks the same model was adapted within the group but also between groups and in social communication. Thus the students divided into three fieldwork groups, experimenting with the different steps of the process, with each module going deeper into a single aspect of the process. The first concentrated mostly on application of the complex circle model within the group, a group which was very complex and full of differences from generational, background, and even physical perspectives, comprised of both the students in the training and a group of students from a primary school with very different abilities and capacities, including some students with hearing impairments. The second concentrated mostly on the second and third steps, how to adapt the complex circle model for use between groups and in the organization of a social communication event. The third explored the ethical and constructive application of the model in working within institutions.

The didactic plan





FEEDBACK/EVALUATION

Time: 2 days
Participants: 37 students
Trainer: Guglielmo Schininà
Methodology: Creative Therapy/ Questionnaire

MODULE ON ANTHROPOLOGY

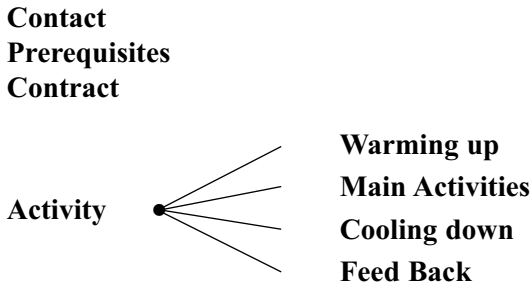
Time: 2 weeks (4 field visits)
Participants: 40 students
Goal in relation to the “Theatre Module”: Learning about cultural context
Methodology: Experimenting and analysing ritual models in different fields, viewing of original videotapes, field interview.
Trainer: Prof. Zekerija Cana, Ph.D.

The first week: the experience of the model

The first week the laboratory, which I conducted, took place in the training room of the Folk and Cultural Association Shota and in the University Sport Hall in Pristina. The module included as participants the students, two of their tutors, the fieldwork trainers and two counsellors of the first generation (having graduated the year before), who would be tutoring the first and third field groups. On some of those days I asked the fieldwork trainers to conduct the warming up exercises and eventually some of the cooling-down games. The aims of the first week of work, from my perspective, were mainly three:

- 1) Team-building;
- 2) Introduction to theatre methodology;
- 3) The opportunity to pass on the theoretical model of the complex circle through the direct experience of the workshop; in practical terms to help the group communicate through creative games (mainly body image games), to work on the empowerment of differences and on solidarity and communication between and amongst the differences, and to open the experience from the individual to the collective sphere and to social communication.

We followed the structure below:



Evaluation/outcome

The first morning after the contact, the prerequisites were analysed. There was a brainstorming session with regard to some keywords critical for the laboratory – *Creativity, Theatre, Disease* and *Psychosocial* – and the results were written on a panel. As for the term *psychosocial*, the panel was divided in two and the group was asked to write the words/concepts they wanted to express in two lines, one below the word *psycho* and one below the word *social*. Obviously many words could not be divided in these two ways, such as the words *relation, communication, role* and certain others. Other panels were made for these words and I outlined some descriptions, stressing that they would be important for the work over the coming days. In addition, the structure of the workshop, as noted above, was made explicit. Then the group proceeded with developing the contract, the aim of which was to determine the general objectives, the working hours, the use of breaks, the specific goals and the relevant groundrules. It was agreed not to video-record the workshop, and was also agreed that the structure of the daily sessions would proceed as follows:

Contract
Warming Up
Main Activities
Cooling down
Feedback

It was also agreed that based upon the feedback, the contract could be re-discussed on a daily basis.

I proposed that for the first four days we should not discuss theories, but rather should just go through the games and the process, keeping the theoretical explanations and the questions for the last day. They agreed, but this condition was also subject to daily evaluation.

The workshop used the methodology and the games of the Theatre of the Oppressed.¹⁶

The first day, the goal of the work was team building. The games proposed were chosen from among those which would allow everyone to feel free to work alone within the activity, but would also facilitate interaction with others. At the end we played a final game, called the Rio Samba Parade, based on the encounter of individual and group rhythms, until the creation of a melody of sounds and movements emerged.

The second and third days, following a similar methodology, we arrived at the creation of a circle, where the work was based upon the use of bodily expression.

First we worked on the creation of relationship through only body perception, with a series of exercises with closed eyes. Later on we worked on body images and the capacity of everyone to express themselves, as well as some concepts with only use of the body. Then, in the circle, we worked on pluralization and solidarity. The images that everyone was performing on certain subjects were confronted. So everyone had the opportunity to discover the extent to which their body images related to the images of the others and how much the images of certain subjects related to those of the others (pluralization), at least from an aesthetic perspective, even if their interpretations were different. This process brought to the group a series of similar or connected body images, and encouraged the improvisation of groups of images. In a later stage we achieved the creation of collective images on different subjects, developed by the extemporaneous composition of all of the representations performed by the participants. The differences among the interpretations turned out to be an element of interest and beauty rather than a negative aspect. In other cases, when the image of someone conveyed a problem or a state of discomfort, we worked on solidarity, and everyone tried to perform through use of the body, or directing other members of the group, images of transition between the representations created and the ideal. The original interpreter of the image could accept or reject these interpretations of transition, and improvisations were created using the accepted images. This second process resulted in the creation of some Forum Theatre pieces, as described below.¹⁷

The fourth day we formed collective images on certain subjects chosen by the group, resulting from individual images or groups of similar or related images. Then we developed them with collective improvisations.

Finally, developing this process of self-representation/pluralization/discussion through theatre and the body, the work was centred on the relationship between creative communication and social communication

with the preparation of two Forum theatre pieces on two subjects selected by the group. The first was a humorous one about a not very faithful boyfriend. The second, more complex was the story of Emine and her sister, both of whom were students in the training, who came from a rural village but, like many other young people, live in Pristina. They both graduated in pedagogy and humanities and one worked as an editor while the other works as a teacher. For the last Bajram, the most important Muslim ritual, comparable in importance to Christmas for Christians, Emine couldn't go home to visit her parents because her sister was sick. The parents reacted in a way that made her feel very badly. Obviously the story is complex and has a great deal to do with Emine's feelings and her relationship with her sister.

These are very personal issues, but this archetype is common to most of the students, who live in Pristina in a modern, western environment but came from villages where the traditional values are still very strong. On the other hand, the story has much to do with the role of the young in relation to the elderly and with the changes in the role of women and power within families in rural Kosovo after the war. This was why the Forum, presenting the crucial phone call between Emine and her parents, went on for more than an hour and touched a lot of aspects of Emine's experience. The intervention of the others went from their solidarity with the most personal aspects of it, to their pluralization and creation of a collective experience from it, with the simple use of the body and very few words.¹⁸

The last day there was a discussion on the model used (the complex circle), which was linked with the structure of the workshops, the games played and the students' total experience. We also had another brainstorming session on the same keywords which had been discussed the first day. In this session, new meanings were attributed to the words and concepts – *role, relation, communication, creativity, game, free expression* – redefining these terms and linking their pre-conceived ideas and cultural backgrounds and orientations with the experience lived during the week.

The second week: archives of memory

During the second week Silvia Salvatici, a historian and scholar working with IOM, held a workshop on the Archives of Memory (Losi, Passerini and Salvatici, 2001).¹⁹ The timing was an attempt to link the experience of the group to the wider context of history, to link the experience the students were having with the social context and the reality outside the laboratory, and also to give them specific tools for understanding the background of certain problems to which they might need to respond in their future

professions. The crucial and exhaustive report of the lectures written by Silvia Salvatici follows:

The first lectures focussed on the description of the research implemented for the Archives of the Memory the previous year, and of the methodologies adopted and the materials collected. The students were also introduced to the role played by memory in the construction of individual and collective identities, as well as to the concept of selective memory and oblivion. Together with the students, the group also explored limitations and potentialities offered by the analysis of the Archives of Memory documentation through a dual perspective: the “internal” (Kosovar) and the “external” (international) points of view. Limitations were identified by the students in terms of the difficulties in communication between different languages, cultures and experiences; potentialities were identified in the fruitful confrontation between different interpretations, which can enrich each other and therefore widen the perspective of analysis.

The following two lessons were mainly aimed at exploring the multiplicity of the different war experiences, which cannot be represented by a rigid and monolithic collective memory. Departing from the examples provided by the interviews collected in the Archives of Memory, it was pointed out that:

- a) During the war people experienced losses and pain but also brought their resources to bear (e. g., the construction of solidarity networks). Peoples’ accounts are usually focussed on the suffering, and therefore they don’t highlight their abilities to face and overcome hardship. However, bringing such capacities to bear is necessary in order to balance the recollection of suffering with positive memories;
- b) Experiences of the war were different according to different individual paths, and were influenced by age, gender and socio-cultural context of provenance. For example, in an interview undertaken with a group of adolescents, it emerged that some children had terrible experiences, while others were evacuated abroad and found their “refugee life” exciting (they met new friends, learned different languages etc.). The “memory of suffering” coexists, in some cases, with the “memory of enjoyment”, and quite often the two memories can barely communicate;
- c) War suffering can have different roots (e.g., refugee women who were oppressed by the patriarchal customs of the Macedonia-Albanian host community). Usually in the accounts there is a dominant story and a subjugated story: it is very important to let the second, as well as the first, emerge.

Through analysis of the specific issues – supported by the continuous dialogue and debate with the students – it was pointed out that the differences between the multiple experiences can turn into resources, if the group is able to recognize and accept them, otherwise they can cause conflict within the group itself. Another issue highlighted was the need to place the different experiences in the context in which they have been lived.

In the next session the students were requested to work in groups, in order to discuss the issues raised in the morning; they were also invited

to present the results of their discussions through use of concrete examples (see the following paragraph).

The following lectures focused on the changes produced by the consequences of the war, with regard to the social and cultural contexts. The students were asked to give one example each; the examples given by the students were systematized in several “groups”, bearing in mind also the issues raised in the interviews collected for the Archives of Memory. The Examples included:

- a) The changing roles within families, according to gender and generational divides. Most significant examples: the younger generation now has greater prospects for employment, due to the presence of the international community and international cooperation programmes, therefore they have a more relevant role within the family and are also more independent. During the war women experienced new responsibilities, also in many cases they became the head of the family because of the loss of the men. Thus the patriarchal structure of the family has also come under discussion: this can sometimes be experienced with unease and discomfort by all of the members;
- b) The changing gender relations within the community. Most significant example: increase of the presence of women in the public sphere. This was summed up by one of the students, who said: “now also women talk about politics”;
- c) New opportunities for education and employment. Through discussion of the examples, it was nevertheless pointed out that in many cases such new opportunities are accessible only to selected people (e. g., the English speakers);
- d) New cultural life, which coexists with a change of the tradition. Traditional customs do not have the same place as before in family and community life, while “external” cultural influences now play a more relevant role (e. g., media, internet). A sort of change in the collective identity was noted;
- e) More security, provided by the new military and police forces, which also include Albanians. The new security is nevertheless weakened by unknown forms of criminality (drugs, trafficking in women), which produce new insecurities and concerns. However the danger, in these cases, is no longer due to an external enemy;
- f) The fast, chaotic and uncontrolled growth of the regional capital city, Pristina. Particularly relevant is the intensive migration from the countryside, which is perceived as difficult to contain.

All of these issues were discussed in groups and in plenary session; the consequences of the above-mentioned changes on the transformation (potentially traumatic) of the individual and collective identity were particularly explored.

A fruitful combination

The students were asked to discuss in groups the issues raised during analysis of the different war experiences. They could then give their feedback by oral report or theatrical Forum, with each group, choosing the form with which it felt most comfortable. Silvia Salvatici facilitated the process from an historical perspective and I did so from the perspective of theatre methodology. Two groups chose the oral report and three the theatrical improvisation.

As Silvia Salvatici writes, “the reports sounded quite dependent on the main narrative of the war: the students’ critical elaboration was quite weak. The Forum theatre pieces had impressive results.”

All of the groups created improvisations on the difficult coexistence within the community of the different experiences lived during the war, according to another variant of the Forum, presenting a situation or a discussion with an unresolved ending and inviting their colleagues to intervene in the scene to substitute the actors or to give other points of view, improvising new characters. One forum was particularly significant, as per Silvia Salvatici’s description:

The students acted like a group of friends and relatives, who were talking about their recent past, sitting in a circle, according to the Kosovar-Albanian tradition. Each person had experienced a different story: a woman had fled abroad together with the children; a young boy had fought in the KLA; a mother had lost her son; a man had stayed in Kosovo during the bombing; a young girl had been raped. Each tried to persuade the group that his/her experience had been more traumatic and had produced more suffering than the others.

After the first representation the scene was opened, as per the Forum methodology described above, to the entire group. Many of the students intervened, giving more and more points of view with theatre images and little improvisations, and playing out images to support and show solidarity to characters who seemed to suffer during the discussion.

The tension within the group grew increasingly, particularly when the girl who had been raped said to the former KLA combatant: “You have suffered, but now you are a hero, while I still suffer, since people of my village leave me at the margin because I was abused. I’ve experienced and I still experience a double violence. My suffering is never ending, I’m still fighting my war.”

This was followed by conflictual and very strong tensions in the room, “which were finally resolved by a student who entered into the scene to act as a mother whose son was among the disappeared. At that point many stu-

dents (both in the group acting at that moment and within the audience) started crying.” The Forum continued until the end, and two cooling down de-energizer games, were played in a circle. During the break the students began to sing together. During the following lesson we discussed the experience in a plenary session. I facilitated a feedback session on the experience with the students, which was quite tense, while Silvia Salvatici reframed the experience from an historical point of view:

It was pointed out that the theatrical Forum had showed itself to be extremely powerful in the expression of very sensitive and painful issues; it had also allowed us to raise the theme – usually kept in silence – of the conflicts within the Albanian community. On the basis of these general considerations, the analysis of the issues, which emerged highlighted that:

- a) The different war experiences can foster within the community not only new divides, but also various types of conflictual tensions;
- b) The recognition of such a phenomenon represents the first step towards acceptance of the multiplicity of the experiences, in order to turn them into a positive collective resource;
- c) The different war experiences are also at the origins of the different social roles recognized by the community (e.g. the celebrated former combatant; the marginalized raped girl);
- d) The memory of suffering can replace differences with cohesion and therefore can unify the group; however it can also result in victimization and self-pity.

The fieldwork

The three fieldwork components attempted to give the students the idea of a complete process of social theatre, from the formation of the group to social communication to the provision of laboratories to institutions. Unfortunately, time being short, it was impossible to include each and every student in all three sessions, thus they were divided into three groups, each of them pursuing a single component. Every group experienced the entire process but focused most on a specific step of the process. The first focused on the building up of a group made of differences, the second on a creative approach to social communication, and the third on working within institutions. All of the sessions ran simultaneously for three weeks, full time.

Creative communication

Soledad Nicolazzi and Andrea Bertoni led an expressive theatre workshop for a mixed group made up of deaf children, non-deaf children and counsellors.

The specific objectives of the workshop included creative communication, empowerment of differences, group making, role building in the group and body language, in a context in which the differences within the group and the limitations of the community were explicit. The students from the training and the students of the Elena Gjka School went through a process that can be divided into three parts:

During the first week there were three areas of focus: 1) the use of the body perceived as individual strength; 2) the self-perception of the participants and its transformation in images, and 3) communications, since the group was composed of persons speaking Italian, Albanian and sign language, thus the necessity to create a new code of communication based on gestures and body language.

The second week the work aimed at passage from the individual image to the creative objectification of the image. Therefore it was decided to work on the making and handling of masks, beginning with everyone's perception of himself and of his own monster.

The third week the work within the group moved to communication of the process to the external world: from handling the mask to the parade of the masks.

Social communication

This workshop, led by Renata Ciaravino and Michele Losi, aimed to teach the students how to analyze the materials of historical research, of a creative community-based workshop, of a debate group, and so on, in order 1) to transform these materials into a creative product (in this case through a dramaturgic work) which could introduce those topics in the social arena, with particular attention to the target audiences; 2) to organize an event which would follow an ethical process of communication, related with respect to the group work, the memory of the individuals, and the entire process of a creative workshop and, at the same time, one which would be visible and successful in terms of dissemination of the message and social marketing.

As the directors of the second fieldwork group emphasize in their reports:

We thought of working on the group formation during the first week and of being the audience of a social communication event that would use art as its main vehicle. We worked on the formation of a primary group, on the creation of an atmosphere of cooperation and trust using both body training exercises and methods of social artistic communication led by the trainers.²⁰

During the second week the group chose a problem, taken from analysis of the Archives of Memory, to be the focus of a social communication event. The problem selected was that of street children. The groups divided into two sub-groups and one began to work dramaturgically on this subject. The second “worked on mapping out both the community and the resources that each participant could bring into the working process of the same group. We worked on the empowerment of critical cooperation within group processes, and on the definition of tasks, roles, and responsibilities within the working group.”

During the third week the work focused on simulation of a social communication event. A sub-group worked on identification of the targets, the organization, the advertizing and the network building; the other prepared a booklet with stories and monologues on the theme of street children.

Creative workshops within institutions: an autobiography workshop for the schools

The training taught the counselors how to organize a creative workshop intervention within educational institutions, from the planning to the implementation and evaluation. It was also decided to run an autobiography workshop, to strengthen relations with the Archives of Memory.

Sara Luccarelli and Martino Ferro provide clear descriptions of their work with the group:

The autobiographical fieldwork aimed at making known and experimenting with the “autobiographical method”,²¹ which is based on narrating ourselves, and our own background. This is not only helpful to self-consciousness and the redefining of ourselves, but also – and within this specific direction – to the establishment of a group by sharing personal experiences, resources, and limits. The general layout of the laboratory was structured as follows: a first “experimental” week during which those attending the course would only play the role of a mere “audience” of the autobiographical laboratory by experimenting on themselves using the techniques and the goals of the method; a second week during which those attending the course experimented with the directing of a short autobiographic laboratory with two middle-school classes; a third week targeted to the work of assessment, the value offered, and reworking (reframing) even from a theoretical and methodological point of view, the work carried out over the preceding weeks.

Notes on the fieldwork

The three fieldwork sessions, using different methodologies and having different specific goals, had some elements in common. First of all, the workshops were organized according to the structure of the first week, so there was a contract, a warming up, a main activity with different inputs and a general goal, cooling down activities and feedback for each session.

All three fieldwork sessions found a good balance between the experience and the pedagogical goals. While the first week was based on experience and group building for the three modules, during the second and third weeks there was a deeper attention to the pedagogic aspects and to “training on the job”. The students involved in the “creative communication” session were, during the second week, participating in the planning and evaluation of the trainers before and after each workshop, and during the third week they were also part of the decisional process, facilitating the work in small groups during the workshops, with some of them leading the warming up exercises. The students participating in the “social communication” session, during the second and third weeks, went deeper into the theoretical and “on the job” component of the training. Finally the students of the Autobiography module, during the second and third week, were able, under the trainers’ supervision, to prepare the schedule for two two-day workshops for the students of the secondary schools of Pristina and Ferizaj, to actually implement them with incredible success, and to evaluate the results, while also leaving some time to close the experience from an emotional point of view.

Two fieldwork sessions, on creative communication and on autobiography, which worked not only with the students of the training but also directly with other groups, had as tutors two counselors of the “first generation” (graduated from the same training the previous year), to help the trainers better understand the cultural implications of working with certain communities. The first was a teacher for children with special needs and the second a teacher and sociologist.

All three fieldwork sessions, ultimately, had external outcomes. The first workshop led to a street parade, based on masks and rhythm, involving the entire group. The second led to a booklet with the result of the dramaturgical work on the theme of street children presented and distributed during the simulation of a social communication event on the same theme, which involved cultural and artistic groups of Pristina (the Shota dance ensemble, the alternative Dodona Theatre and others) plus the parade of the group of the creative communication workshop. The third fieldwork session had two external outcomes, the workshops held in the schools and an autobiography

supper, during which the students prepared some dishes for their colleagues and narrated their personal history in regard to those dishes.

The presence of the ten tutors in the workshops allowed the students to confront the experience from different points of view and to reframe it accordingly. The interdisciplinary and varied approaches were extremely instructive. On the other hand, their roles were not always clear and this sometimes created confusion.

The working context

After one week of break, intended to allow the students to reflect on the experiences thus far and to study the relevant literature (translated for them in the meantime), a short module was designed to help them understand the professional context in which they would be involved and how they could practically apply the approaches learned during the training in their professional practice. Dr. Ferid Agani, Mental Health Officer of the Department of Health, presented the plan for reform of the mental health sector in Kosovo, which aims at the de-institutionalization of psychiatric cases and at a less medically-oriented and more socially-oriented approach to mental health. In particular, this plan involves the implementation of seven regional mental health centres, whose structure and organigram was explained to the students. There followed a visit to one of these centres in the region of Gjakova. The following day, Sandy Hudd and Marsha Lake, of the Social Welfare Department, gave a presentation on the organization of the centres for social work and of other activities, such as foster family programmes and the community house for orphans and disabled and mentally disabled children. Then followed a long discussion on the role of the psychosocial counsellors in these programs, with particular emphasis on the achievements of this module.

The last three weeks: experience exchange and evaluation

After another week of preparation, each group of fieldwork students prepared a one-week presentation-workshop to show the others the experience lived and to explain to the others the model learned during every workshop. The students of the creative communication workshop were the first to begin. They decided to lead the five-day session as a group, and their presentations had a workshop component (where they proposed games to their colleagues) and an explanatory segment. They demonstrated a good understanding of the games to propose in order to achieve particular goals,

although there were some problems in applying the model and in sustaining the rhythm of the presentation. From an experiential point of view, they stressed that they understood that the problem of handicap was more a problem of relationship of both sides of the communication-relationship rather than a problem of the single individual with a difficulty. This led to a major discussion among the students, and some of their tutors disagreed with this concept.

The social communication group decided to lead on a rotating basis and their presentation took more the form of a lecture than a workshop. The model of social communication applied was well understood by them and well explained to their colleagues, and the presentation of the dramaturgical work was clear and was very similar to the lectures given by the trainer. No training or games were proposed during this module.

As for the autobiography group, different groups of two or three trainers conducted the different days or segments of the workshop. The presentation mixed the narration of the work undertaken and the experience provided with two days of proper workshop, where the group proposed an autobiography process to their colleagues which was quite well organized, using some of the games played during the classes.

The exchange of experience was a way to put the experiences together, since the three fieldwork components were thought to be part of an experience, which should be considered unitary, but also was intended to rebuild the entire group after three weeks of separate work. It wanted also to encourage the students evaluate whether the goals of every workshop were reached and to let the supervisor know how the contents of each fieldwork segment were interpreted or misinterpreted by the group. As for the first two goals, the exchange of experience was successful. In the third, the evaluation, was also quite successful, but a complete evaluation of these materials was unable to be undertaken because of the absence of the field trainers. Therefore my presence alone there, while limited, was useful in resolving misunderstandings and protecting the achievements of the group from misinterpretation, in some cases, but was not enough to develop a proper evaluation. However, the videotapes of the last three weeks of activities exist and there is still hope that a more complete evaluation can be undertaken, in the future, by the training group, at least for research purposes. In addition, an evaluation exists based upon the responses of the students to a questionnaire, which was generally very positive in terms of the organization of the module, on its implementation, on the experiential level and on the pedagogic results. According to the responses to this questionnaire, the training appears to have met the expectations of the students and gave them valid tools for their work in the field and for their professional futures. It particularly provided them

with an extraordinary experience and they became a group with strong links. In the case of some of the fieldwork, while the experience was judged as very positive, the relationship between this experience and its possible application in their future profession was not always clear to them.

After the module: a return to ritual

A module on anthropology, designed together with and led by Prof. Zekerija Cana, Ph.D., followed the one described in this article. This anthropology module aimed to investigate the traditional codes of conduct and the rituals, which inform the relationships within and between Kosovar-Albanian families, especially in the rural regions, in order to give the students more tools for their work with the families, to assist in understanding and addressing the problems and their backgrounds. Emphasis was also given to the traditional way of healing in Kosovo, with regard to the psychological sphere. The traditional healers in Kosovo have an incredible number of patients; in some regions they have more patients than the public mental health facilities. Therefore, it was considered important for the students to be familiar with the methodologies traditionally utilized, particularly if they are working with some of the same populations.

In order to create a link between the Theatre Module and the Kosovar-Albanian cultural and ritualistic roots, an analysis was also conducted on the coded and compulsory rituals which are still present in the Kosovar-Albanian culture, especially in the rural regions, and which have or had in the recent past a strong impact on social interaction of the community. These rituals, most of which have “performative” characteristics, include four primary aspects of social interaction:

- *The juridical*: The norms of the most widely known Albanian code of customary law (the *Kanun*), ascribed to the Albanian leader Leke Dugagijni (1410-1481),²² include many performative rituals to cleanse offences and murders and to arrive at reconciliation between the family of the offender and that of the victim. The *Kanun*, developed over the centuries, (and based upon the principle of revenge) was finally compiled in written form by a Kosovar-Albanian Franciscan priest in 1874. This code has regulated, and in some regions still regulates, the juridical relations between Albanian families, in spite of the different religious, governmental, juridical, and customary systems, which officially regulate the regions where Albanians live. Zekerija Cana explained these rituals to the students and collectively they undertook some simulations.

- *The political:* During the 1990s until the war, a ritual reconciliation movement took place on a Kosovo-wide basis. Some community leaders, including Prof. Zekerija Cana, organized ritual events to help the Kosovar-Albanian families, who were acting according to the *Kanun*'s principles of revenge, to reconcile. This was carried out through public rituals based upon the principles outlined in Leke Dugagijni's code. During plenary sessions, as many as 150,000 persons participated. The students watched and reviewed the video records of these events with Prof. Cana.²³
- *The medical:* The students investigated some traditional healing methodologies and visited and interviewed two traditional healers.²⁴
- *The religious:* Lectures were also given to explain the community rituals of some of the dervish families operating in the south of Kosovo (Duijzings, 2000: 107-131 and 157-175; Elsie, 2000). In particular, the students met the Baba Sheh of the Rufai's Dervish Theological School (*Teqe*) of Rahovac, and together they watched and commented upon the video of the last dervish spring ritual of the rubbing in, which is celebrated in that *Teqe* every March, on the occasion of the celebration for the Sulltan Nevruz. During the ceremony, which hosts up to 400 males, while the women can only watch, following precise prayers and movements, the participants follow in a state of trance and begin to dance and sing and rub themselves with some instruments and holy swords from cheek to cheek, and on their necks and on their stomachs. The children are also initiated and the Baba Sheh rubs them on their cheeks.²⁵

It was thought that the interaction between the theatre module and the module on anthropology, would help give the students a wider and more culturally-oriented perspective to the ritual "experience" lived during the theatre module. But the main aim was to help them in clearly defining the differences between the modern and optional ritual aspects of social theatre and the compulsory and archeo-liminal perspective of some of the rituals studied during the anthropology module and still present in Kosovo society. During the Theatre Module they had the opportunity to experiment with the model of the complex circle, a venue for empowerment of differences, while during the Anthropology Module they had the opportunity to study the model of the 'group communion' of exclusionist communities, and the type of unity in exclusionism which prevents all possibilities for acknowledging and empowering differences.

Short-term and long-term results

Almost one year has passed since the completion of this training module. The students graduated in November 2001 and now most of them are working for different institutions and organizations. Approximately 20 of them are working for the Penal Department, the Centres for Social Work, and as psychosocial counsellors in Community Mental Health Centres. Some very practical results can be added to the evaluations noted above. First, it has to be stressed that the students advocated extensively, during the year, for the possibility of a follow-up module on the use of theatre and the arts, which was not possible for organizational reasons. In addition, two of the students went on with the theatre experience in depth, applying for acting training and also trying to write dramaturgies. Four counsellors, working as teachers in different schools, have, since the training, used the methodology and some of the games in their everyday work with their students, and one of them has developed a special extracurricular workshop for the integration of the most problematic children of her school.

The counsellor who participated as a tutor in the creative communication workshop, has been appointed, due in part to the visibility gathered through that project, as officer for the development of curricula and extra-curricular activities for children with special needs within the Department of Education. The theatre group of deaf and non-deaf children still exists and is continuing to develop its theatre experience, thanks to a workshop held by the local trainers of War Child Kosovo. A group of students participated in the implementation of the activities of the First Mental Health Day, especially on the installation of the photo exhibition EXODUS by Sebastiao Salgado, which they have used as part of their training.

Among the negative results, two must be highlighted. First, only four out of the 12 former students, who are now working as psychosocial counsellors within the Community Mental Health Centres, are using techniques and methodologies learned from the training in their everyday jobs while the others are not using them. The reason for this is to be found, according to the counsellors, in the lack of a proper venue to hold the activities, since they are working mostly in small rooms and in the psychiatric wards of hospitals. From an external analysis, the reason has to be found in the fact that they are mostly counselling individuals and families with a therapeutic approach in medically-oriented contexts, which was not an option when the training module was designed. A pedagogic plan more open to drama-therapy and psychodrama could have helped this particular group of students benefit more from the training.

Secondly, what the training did not and should have achieved was network building and the possibility of international exchange for the students. After the module they did not receive any similar training or follow-up. We were not able to include them in an international network of professionals in the field, who could have helped them in receiving feedback, exchanges and updates, and in implementing joint activities. This would have been useful, particularly in Kosovo, where they do not have many opportunities for exchange of content and methodologies and are often supervised by professionals who have different, and sometimes outdated, views on certain issues (see again the example of the discussion on communication between persons with different abilities). In addition, the relationship between the group of counsellors and the Cultural Association Scarlattine ended with the conclusion of the training.

Conclusion

On the last day of the module, to conclude the experience, I read the students some passages from a short article written by Eugenio Barba (2001) a few months before the training took place. I would like to conclude this article with these same words:

Sometimes I'm asked what is the function of theatre in a society where economic, cultural and political reasons force the 'different' to cohabit with the different. The theatre is not a suitable instrument for knocking down walls. What it can do, however, is to carve them, perforate them. It is the craft and art of transforming what one looks at into something that regards us. Its raw material is relationships. In an age when other forms of entertainment have taken over, the vocation of the theatre to build up spiritual bridges between what is usually separated, both in social groups and even within individuals, gives it a new special value. "Diversity" is not a limit or a hindrance to it. The fact that today cohabitation with the different is often felt like a dramatic historical situation must not make us forget that it is the matter on which the theatre has always worked. What are my visions? I don't know them until a carved wall, a golden drill, instead of blocking my view, will allow me to capture views that I didn't know were mine. Until something strange stops being strange, and became (becomes) a face or a voice that is mine and isn't mine. That isn't mine and isn't not mine.

Notes

1. A concept, which is Greek as well as strongly present in the Hebraic and Christian cultures. This stresses an important difference between western and eastern theatre history. In the eastern and African cultures the dichotomy between man and god is not so deep and, consequently, for the most part, the

- community events, processes, etc., which can be referred to the area of performance are still strongly linked with religious intra-transformative rites and rituals.
2. Liminal and liminoid are concepts expressed by the anthropologist Victor Turner (1982: 60-92).
 3. Marco De Marinis (1987) has studied the phenomenon extensively.
 4. The *Manifesto* was written in 1968. See Pasolini (1988: 728) and Bernardi (1996: 18).
 5. Schininà, 1998: 7. Indeed that was the period in which Art Therapies and theatre-related methodologies became very popular in the psychological field. Paradigmatic is the therapeutic evolution of the Theatre of the Oppressed, born as a political theatre intervention for the group and the community in the eighties, which became one of the most well established techniques of drama therapy. For the therapeutic evolution of TdO see Boal (1990).
 6. Since this theatre aimed to include all of the members of the community in the experience of the representation possible to all human beings, many people thought that all people had the capacity for facilitating these processes and that the trainer didn't need any specific type of expertise.
 7. One of the towns in Europe funded and designed to be functional for establishment of a large factory.
 8. See the paragraph on the Uses of Theatre in the Mental Health Field.
 9. The list which follows is an elaboration of the ones already contained in Schininà (2001a: 63-68, 2001b: 254-255).
 10. Concepts explained in Barba, 2001.
 11. Paradigmatic is, for instance, the change of the role of women in rural Kosovo after the war. See the paragraph on the Archives of Memory.
 12. The most comprehensive essay on the fests of "fou" in Europe is the one written by Jacques Heers in 1983.
 13. For psychodrama see the fundamental J. L. Moreno (1947) for its more direct evolution Rosati (1985: 12-28) and Cantarelli (1995: 93-109).
 14. For drama therapy Jennings (1990-97; 1996) and Jones (1996).
 15. For a deeper analysis/knowledge of this model see Schininà, 2001: 242.
 16. Theatre of the Oppressed is an "arsenal" of more than 350 theatre games and techniques invented and collected by the Brazilian director Augusto Boal, in the fifties and the seventies, to work on creative political opposition to the South American regimes and in education and democratization processes in South America. During the eighties the model was transformed to work on the internal and relational oppression of individual and small groups and became one of the most well-established techniques of drama therapy all over the world, turning out, in the nineties, to be one of the most popular techniques in the social theatre field. The assumptions of the method are that the theatre is an activity accessible to all human beings, all with their own differences, and that during the representation there are no differences between actors and spectators, but everyone is a "spect-actor". The methodology of the Theatre of the Oppressed is characterized by easy games accessible to everyone and also easy to be learned and reproduced, by a playful approach, by the adaptability to different cultural contexts (since the methodology is very open and offers safe structures and frameworks that every group can fill with its own contents) and the capacity to work on the empowerment of the opposition and of different points of view (for the same reason). Finally the TdO links strictly creative communication and social communication, thanks to the instrument of the Theatre Forums.

- The Forum presents a situation of disease or controversy in a sketch with a protagonist, an antagonist and usually a character who can act on the situation from outside. The sketch has an open end, which leaves the problem unsolved. The sketch is repeated two times. The second time, anyone from the audience (who can be composed of the components of the group who are not acting, as in this case, or by an external audience to the group who prepared the sketch) can interrupt the sketch and substitute the protagonist or the “third” character. They can also substitute the antagonist but only to strengthen his reactions or to make him more similar to some experience they may have faced. This general scheme can be applied with many different variations and actually in this case they were used in two different variants. The Forum is usually the result of a workshop process within the group and comes from the experience of the group who presents it. For the Theatre of the Oppressed, see Boal (1992) and Schininà (1998).
17. Sometimes the description of the inputs offered and the work carried out seems to be theoretical and difficult to understand. This is due to the fact that, when I started to work in this field, I describe in articles or reports only the inputs provided and the process undertaken during the workshops, but never their results, examples or anecdotes, which necessarily involve the display of very personal experiences lived by the participants to the workshops, who are in that moment unaware of the potential future use of their experiences. I just describe the improvisations, the Forum and the results which are prepared by the group when it opens to the social communication, when the participants are showing their work to others, external to the group, simulating this process, or debating. In this case, particularly, during the contract process, it was decided not to use the video camera to record the sessions, an indication which I also applied to the written descriptions of the same scenes.
 18. In this case, the second time the sketch was shown I asked the audience not to stop it but, if they felt so inclined, to go forward and make a body image behind the character they wanted to substitute. At the end of the sketch I asked all of these images, one by one, to replace Emine or the other characters in the scene, while Emine was watching. Afterwards, Emine played the scene again, aided by the presence of the body images of her colleagues, who entered into the scene to assist and support her.
 19. All the documentation preserved in the Archives of Memory is accessible on the web site www.kosovomemory.iom.int
 20. The students experimented with being spectators of a social communications event. Indeed the trainers used the Sebastiao Salgado photo exhibition called EXODUS, about migrations and wars, installed in a classroom of the University, to start up the training. The sensations and experience lived by the students while watching the exhibition were the starting point of the module.
 21. The reference for further reading is Demetrio (1996).
 22. The most popular and well-established Albanian Customary Law collection, created in the fifteenth century, and evolving during the following centuries until its last compilation, in 1874 in Kosovo; see Fox (1989).
 23. The political connotation of this ritual movement, in a period when the tensions between the Albanians and the Serbs in Kosovo were very high, is self-explanatory.
 24. IOM produced a documentary of the meeting between the students and the Sheh Baba Sheh of the Sadi'i dervish family, a very well known traditional healer.
 25. A video documentary on this meeting was produced by IOM.

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Supporting Traumatized Communities through Theatre and the Arts

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Edited by M. Losi, S. Reisner, S. Salvatici

