

TALKING ABOUT THEATRE AND THERAPY

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ABSTRACT *This piece is an attempt to encourage talk about theatre and therapy in the context of the Az Theatre 'War Stories' project, an international exploration of war and theatre, of destruction and creativity, the latest phase of which is focused on stories of recovery. It is a development of notes written for a meeting with a group of therapists of different kinds, and associates of the company. The project and its background are described and the perspectives that have informed the work are laid out. Some ideas about trauma and the impact of war and violence are related to myth and stories and particularly to Euripides' play Alceste. The working methods of the project and the relationship to the therapeutic community are described. Copyright © John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Key words: theatre; trauma; recovery; war

INTRODUCTION AND PERSPECTIVES

In July and August 2006 the Az Theatre will be running a series of workshops in Algeria, Palestine, Italy, Kosovo, and here in the UK. We will be working with three groups of people in each place: with theatre artists; with young people; and with people who are activists, who work for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who are doctors, psychiatrists, or therapists – in other words people who are concerned with the impact of trauma, war, and violence, and who deal with victims. The overall aim of the workshops is to collect contemporary stories of how people have survived, resisted, recovered, and repaired their lives in situations of violent conflict. We are linking this work to a play by Euripides, *Alceste*, using four

translations of Euripides' text: Kovacs, 1994; Vellacott, 1974; Arrowsmith, 1974; and Hughes, 1999.

In each location we are working with a partner theatre company: Masrah El Tedj in Algeria; Theatre For Everybody in Palestine; CCTD in Kosovo; and Il Torchio in Italy. In the UK we are collaborating with Riverside Studios, National Association of Youth Theatres and the University of Manchester Drama Department's 'In Place of War' project (www.inplaceofwar.net).

With the groups of artists and young people we can work using exercises, games, and theatre workshop techniques in order to find ways of exploring stories. With our 'third' constituency, which we are now used to calling 'therapists and activists', we have to find a clear language with which to address their work. It is of crucial importance to our

project that we find a bridge between our work and theirs.

The origin of this phase of the 'War Stories' project was developed through conversations and correspondence with therapists of one kind or another, and it was in this context that *Alcestis* was chosen as a key text. So many images and themes from the play resonated during the course of these exchanges.

This movement in our work was then confirmed and deepened by the work we did in Kosovo in collaboration with the United Nations Office of Missing Persons and Forensics (OMPF) (www.unmikonline.org/justice/ompf/reports/OMPF_Stat2005_Eng.pdf) and the Centre for Children's Theatre Development (www.cctdkosova.com). Six years after the ending of armed conflict OMPF was attempting to find a creative conclusion to its work. There was a growing consciousness that its work was as much to do with the living as with the dead. Although mortal remains were still being discovered and processed, and though there were still approximately 3000 cases that remained unsolved, the work with the families' associations and the communities of the missing warranted a cultural or social response by OMPF. The plight of the missing was used by political leaders as an element in the ongoing political conflict over the fate of the province. It was clear that the undischarged grief was a pretext for future violence in both communities. OMPF set up a Memory Project, the key stated aim of which was to 'devictimize the victim'. We worked on two phases of this project. *The Longest Winter* was a play that was presented in both Serbian and Albanian by two separate acting companies. In the second phase of the project, *Voices*, we worked more directly with the family associations and communities of the missing, once again working with two separate companies that included writers and

performers. This second-phase work was more participatory and we presented the scenes as a part of a series of forums, the videos and a book of which are published by OMPF. This work occurred as a result of OMPF's encounter with the work of the Az Theatre through its website where there are full reports on this work (www.aztheatre.org.uk).

The partnership between companies in Algeria, Palestine, Serbia and the UK at the centre of the 'War Stories' project was confirmed and developed through workshops held at the Sibiu International Theatre Festival in Romania in 2002. The origins lay in a series of workshops held from 1999 onwards in London and Sibiu. Designed to create the context for exchanges and co-productions that would explore war and theatre, destruction and creativity, the project was based on certain principles or perspectives.

One of the perspectives of the 'War Stories' project has always been that war, the organization and perpetration of mass armed violence by contesting groups whether or not they are tied to a particular ethnic group or national territory, is capable of being abolished. We are a theatre company and not a campaigning group, so our sense that war is historically circumscribed is no more or less than the optic through which we view war as a human activity.

In accord with this we are exploring a link between those movements in our society and throughout the world that advocate the end of war and those therapeutic practices that attempt to deal with and solve, at an individual or small group level, the consequences of war. It was clear at an early stage that our project would be touching on work that focused on trauma and recovery.

If it is true that violence breeds violence and that there is a clear connection at a psychological and historical level between victimhood and future perpetration, then we

are preoccupied by how this 'breeding' works and how this movement from abused to abuser functions.

Our international perspective immediately presented the issue of how war, because of the development of technology, could be carried out 'at a distance'. The violence which was equipped and validated in one location and perpetrated in another was capable of appearing as a distant, consumable spectacle.

For example, it may seem impertinent for us to be basing the most recent phase of our project on recovery. It is clear that the West is providing, with one hand, the equipment and political instruments to develop wars and at the same time the other hand is selling all kinds of means of reconstruction and recovery. This latter includes therapeutic services. People all over the world in conflict situations are suffering the impact of war and violence and having to face the ongoing question of recovery on a daily basis. This issue is connected to survival and resistance. In this phase we will be working in different contexts where the question of recovery has different meanings. In Algeria the armed conflict has subsided but the scars of the civil war are as yet unhealed; in Palestine the armed conflict continues and through this sporadic attritional violence people are constantly attempting to regain a sense of their humanity; in Kosovo the underlying conflict between the two communities is ongoing but suppressed; in Italy and the UK the immediate experience of war and conflict (except for citizens of Northern Ireland and those in Italy who have been affected by the conflict with the Mafia) for the majority of the population is historically or geographically distant.

A fundamental question raised by the differences in experience of our 'partner' countries is: How close do you have to be to the violence for it to be traumatic, for it to radi-

cally alter the relationship between your inner and outer life? This distance is real. It can be measured in physical terms but also in emotional and human terms. The impact of torture or injury or the experience of intense fear and violence in a combat zone or seeing members of your family or your neighbours suffer violence is obviously different from witnessing violent events through the media, newspapers, or television. In the West we have become accommodated to the situation in which there are 'war-producing' countries and 'war-receiving' countries. Thus the distance which we in the UK or people in Italy may have from current wars may obscure the deep violence that lies at the core of our society. This violence may be experienced as protracted fear, as 'numbness', apathy, and powerlessness. This may constitute a prolonged mesmeric trauma which is like a disembodiment, a spiritual decay of responsibility and integrity. Recovery from this condition may appear to be quite different to recovery from the trauma of conflict, torture and war. Real distinctions must be made. However, there may be certain principles of integrity, authenticity, and empowerment that are common. The globalization of human relationships has transformed the relationship between perpetrators, victims, and witnesses.

Another key perspective in our work has been an attempt to explore this human activity through people's stories. Giving form to people's experience of war is at once a way of admitting responsibility and suggesting a connection. We have been engaged by how to relate a war story from England with one from, say, Algeria. We have used exercises that have created maps of stories in order to explore connectedness across historical and geographical time and space. The media and the film industry, especially through 'realistic' but anaesthetized dramatizations of violence, have diminished people's capacity

to authenticate their own stories and experiences. Within the human space of the theatre one story is as good as another. We have seen that the question of proximity to the centre of the war can be placed against the intensity with which people hold their stories and this can bring this hierarchy of pain into perspective. Everybody's story is valuable and within our work everybody's story is capable of being embodied and given a form. The aspect of our work that suggests that as soon as somebody begins to embody their story in the dramatic space of the workshop they become actors and therefore potentially active in respect of their own fate, will be familiar to people who know about the work of Augusto Boal (1995, 2000).

The development workshops this summer (2006) are preparatory to the production of what we are calling a participatory theatre spectacle that we will tour in the early summer of 2007. We are using an interactive website as a way of communicating across frontiers, linking up similar groups in different countries (www.warstories theatre.org). The website will contain extracts of our video record and accounts of the sessions we hold, comments, images, and stories contributed by participants. It will act as a common research resource out of which the elements of the show will be derived. This is an original and exciting way of putting a theatre piece together.

As well as accumulating stories and images we also imagine the creation of a source of wisdom and knowledge about how people survive and recover. We want to contribute to a culture of peace and human understanding, and connect this up to developing a culture around the project. This is a way of building active participation in the project and feeds our efforts to build an audience. The values, beliefs, and ideas which make up this culture will, to a large extent, be generated by the interaction with

our 'third' constituency and it is in this context that we are encouraging talk about theatre and therapy. Later I will describe in more detail how we are working in the development workshops. First I want to describe some ideas about trauma that relate to the work.

IMAGES OF TRAUMA

Our conversations with therapists and community activists have been focused on whether there is a typical story of recovery. Is there common recognizable shape to this story? Furthermore, what images of this process are there? Is there any point in trying to generalize from what are after all often intimate and individual stories? Do these generalizations help us understand the relationship between the story of an individual and the story of a social group?

In the event of physical injury there are certain identifiable processes of repair which come into operation. Recovery can be complete or partial. There may be scars, long-term disabilities, partial or complete loss of faculties or limbs. There may be a critical situation in the process of recovery when the survival of the individual is in question, the relationship between life and death is intensive, and a battle is fought out which involves the individual's vital resources. Recovery from psychological injury is perhaps not so easy to be clear about. Also the distinction between physical and psychological injury is not clear. One accompanies the other and when a person undergoes a traumatic event it is the whole person that is involved. The same event, whether it is suffering physically or psychologically, may have a radically different impact on different individuals. The stability and vulnerability of people differ, though it is the torturer's logic that there are certain experiences which are bound over time to break anybody and this

must also be true of psychologically traumatic situations as well.

It is impossible to say with any certainty in general what happens to a human being when they experience trauma. There is a clue in the meaning of this word as to the nature of the experience it describes. The experience is like a dream in that there is a rupture with ordinary reality. It is a situation in which you are both present and absent, in which you fail to be able to recognize yourself. This failure or rupture can be connected to physical pain or humiliation, or to violence, death, injury or humiliation inflicted on someone close to you. This inability to recognize yourself is like a splitting of the individual. Two elements appear: the 'me' and the 'not me'. As a consequence of this internal division certain processes are set in train. Donald Kalsched, in his book *The Inner World of Trauma: Archetypal Defenses of the Personal Spirit* (1998), describes this response as being the psyche's 'self-care system', a defensive strategy that he compares with the body's immune system.

Human beings adapt and survive. Self-preservation and self-defence are served by the kind of splitting and dissociation described. One part of the human being's psychological life is dissociated and cut off while the other part goes on living a 'normal' life. The momentum to continue is also a factor in physical injury. The balance between survival, perseverance, and denial is complicated. How a world or a person – these words may be describing the same entity – is 'unmade' by an event or process and what the structures of this 'unmaking' might be, is brilliantly articulated in Elaine Scarry's work (Scarry, 1985).

There may be a divorce or rupture whereby the imaginative function becomes cut off from realizable goals. This may appear as a regression to an infantile state. The imagination is taken over by fantasizing. The outside

world becomes unbearable. The magical relationship between the world of the child and the world of the adult is broken. The inner space of the individual collapses so there is no enriching internal life. The individual is no longer at home in him or herself and suffers a kind of internal homelessness. (These last two images were suggested to me by Alejandro and Paulina Reyes. Paulina Ceppi di Lecco Reyes and Alejandro Reyes' forthcoming book includes a chapter, which I was privileged to see in manuscript, called 'Internal Homelessness' in which they elaborate their ideas about trauma and recovery. It will be published by the European Federation of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapists. Alejandro Reyes, a former paediatrician, is a full member of the Lincoln Centre of Psychotherapy and has supervised counsellors for the Refugee Support Centre and the Refugee Support Service. Paulina Reyes is a consultant child psychotherapist for the Kingston Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, South West London and St George's Hospital NHS Trust. They have taken part in conversations and meetings about our project.). The traumatic event can represent a savage division between the body and the spirit. The more or less prolonged impact of the event (which of course may have taken place over a protracted period of time) will remind the individual of the frailty of their body. They encounter the temporary or transitory sense of their own mortality.

The division between the world 'before' and the world 'after' is strong enough to make the event's impact like a kind of death, which the individual can find no way to mourn. The death of the 'old' self cannot be mourned and therefore the birth of the 'new self' cannot take place.

Fundamental ruptures in people's inner lives produce intense feelings of splitting between 'self' and 'others' which are a

breeding ground for fantasies of violent revenge. The division of the world into 'them' and 'us' which reaches its pathological actualization at the centre of the combat zone (or theatre of war) is clearly a deep primordial splitting which activates primitive taboos surrounding the 'clean' and the 'unclean', the 'edible' and 'non-edible', and other formative definitions of selfhood.

It is not difficult to see how, in this instance, violence breeds violence, and abuse breeds abuse. The effects of post-traumatic stress disorder and the impact of trauma and violence on groups of people have been well documented – see Jonathan Shay (1995, 2003) on Vietnam veterans and, for example, the emerging work of groups like the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Programme in Iraq (this recently established organization working mainly with children and young people is contactable through the following email address: Dr Said Al-Hashimi, saidalhashimi@yahoo.com).

Treatment is carried out at an individual and small-group level. When a whole population has suffered it is not easy to see how the same kinds of processes of recovery can effectively take place. How the surrounding culture and political structures relate to collective recovery and what the implications might be of the insights gained through therapeutic work for the social macrocosm are matters of investigation.

The sense of victimhood and its accompanying militancy that reflects the dance between impotence and omnipotence becomes a key springboard for drives towards violence that are then validated by political and military structures and forms of organization.

A movement for an individual can often be set off by some kind of public judicial proceedings. How individual and social processes interconnect is a primary concern of transitional justice (see the work of the

International Centre for Transitional Justice, www.ictj.org).

If the destruction of the world or person is described as 'unmaking' then the recuperation may be described as 'making'. If the impact of trauma and violence can be described as disintegration the recovery is integration. If it is described as an internal homelessness then the recovery will be a process of coming home to the self: Winnicott (1989) talks about 'indwelling'. If the impact is described as collapse of the internal space then recovery appears as an internal construction operation.

Images of these processes are important from the point of view of culture and these images hold within them stories.

In a therapeutic process the therapist may play the role of a guide, a figure that is capable of inhabiting and accepting the broken inner world of the traumatized person at the same time as being rooted in the real world. This guide figure can then aid the reconnection of the fragmented aspects of the individual. Since this relationship of negotiation and connecting up is similar to that of the mother in relation to the very young infant it reminds us of how this sense of movement is like a rebirth or like relearning how to live. (There is a beautiful description by Winnicott (1989) of the mother 'introducing and reintroducing the baby's mind and psyche to one another').

This stage in the psychoanalytic process is associated with the dynamics of transference and countertransference. In mythological terms the figure of the guide is Hermes or Mercury and at the level of archetypes in Jungian analytical psychology it is the trickster. The creation of the therapeutic space and the activity of significant figures within it is also an image of theatre. In this other aesthetic space the actor is both the guide and the sufferer.

ALCESTIS

We are looking for a common thread in the stories of spiritual and psychological recovery and repair. We want to enable people from very different cultures and personal experiences to recognize each other's stories. This is crucial to the culture we are trying to develop. We do not want to equalize people's experiences and flatten out differences. The common and recognizable elements of people's stories are inscribed in mythology. We have imagined that if you pile up stories, as it were, layer upon layer, then eventually a shape will emerge. This general shape we believe to be the structure of a myth. We are using *Alcestis* as a kind of model or template for other stories so its dynamic and movements will act as a kind of magnet. We are not proposing to subsume all contemporary stories into *Alcestis*. We are using this play as a way of giving a perspective from which to view contemporary stories. We envisage the relationship will be one of mutual illumination.

Euripides' *Alcestis*, his dramatic adaptation and rendition of the mythic story of the woman who sacrificed herself for her husband and was brought back from death by Heracles, is unusual. One form of presentation at the Dionysiac festival in Athens during the classic period consisted of a three tragedies and a satyr play all thematically related. There are only two extant examples of this latter genre, of which *Alcestis* is one, and the evidence is that it is untypical and referred to as a 'proto-satyr' play. The form of the play is close to a magical romantic comedy but its choreographic structure is like a tragedy.

Jonathan Shay, a medical doctor who has become well-known for his work on Homer and traumatized war veterans (Shay 1995, 2003), in which he relates the underlying experiences of combat and homecoming in

Homer's two epics to the contemporary experiences of survivors of the Vietnam war, points out that Greek classic theatre had a primary function in relation to the audience's experience of war.

Is there any conformity between how people might tell their stories of recovery and how psychotherapeutic culture views the process? Furthermore, does this conform at all to the story of Euripides' *Alcestis*? Do these narratives have a common shape or pattern? Can they illuminate each other? Can this help people to share stories of recovery and help develop the culture of our project?

I will now look at the story of the play and relate it to some of the observations made about trauma and recovery.

At the beginning of *Alcestis*, Apollo, the Sun God, gives way to Thanatos, Death, and leaves the house of Admetos, warning his opponent that somebody will arrive who will defeat him. Death arrives to claim the life of Alcestis, who has volunteered to die in Admetos' place. Her sacrifice comes at the end of a struggle between the gods over Asclepios, whose work as a healer has, through Hades' complaints, led to a struggle between Zeus and Apollo during which Asclepios and the Cyclops have been killed and Apollo has been punished by having to spend a year as a human being. He spends it in Admetos' house and it is by his connivance that Admetos is able to have someone to replace him in death. Asclepios, as well as being the god of healing, is also the god to whom the Greeks dedicated their main amphitheatres. It is clear from Aristotle that the arts of healing and the performing arts were very close. Catharsis is a medical term.

Alcestis, Admetos' wife and the mother of his young children, is the only person who is willing to make the sacrifice of life for Admetos. The play opens in the depth of a

'trauma'. The figures of the male and the female are being divorced by death. The image is of Alcestis moving around her house saying goodbye to her life. The climax of this movement is her death which she 'performs' in front of her family after exacting a promise from Admetos that he will never replace her. What seems surprising even shocking is that Admetos almost passively goes along with this. Though he expresses regret and sorrow, it is as if Alcestis' death is unconnected to his continued life.

There are two aspects of this phase of the story to which I want to draw attention. One is the trauma of the survivor, the sense, very often expressed by people whose loved ones have died or suffered, that they should have suffered or died in their place. The other is Admetos' state of denial. Within this denial, one part of him goes on living (or 'partly living') while the other part of him (Alcestis) dies.

At the moment Alcestis dies Heracles appears. He is, typically, on a death-defying journey. This time it is to retrieve the man-eating mares, offspring of Ares, the God of War, from the Thracian King, Diomedes. He is calling in on his friend, Admetos, on his way, but he is also fulfilling the prediction made to Death during the first encounter of the play. In other words he is a manifestation of the forces in the play opposed to Death.

Admetos continues his denial, lies to Heracles about the death of his wife, and insists that Heracles stays in his house. This lying can be interpreted in two ways: either Admetos is so ashamed of Alcestis' death that he continues to be in denial about it or he is so intent on offering his friendship and hospitality that he chooses not to let his wife's death be an obstacle. The 'doubleness' which here is expressed as duplicity or ambiguity is continued in the next sequence. The house of Admetos is divided. In one part of it Heracles indulges in his customary orgi-

astic revels while in the other part Admetos mourns his wife.

The next stage of the story is Alcestis' funeral, which is the setting for a major angry confrontation between Admetos and his father. When Admetos attacks his father for refusing to give up his life, and thus blames him for Alcestis' death, his father roundly tells him that he should learn to live his own life and die his own death.

As Admetos moves from denial to anger and blame, Heracles moves from drunkenness to awareness. The former then moves on to grief while the latter takes up heroic action.

The masculine figure in the play is divided in two. Alcestis' death creates the split between the suffering Admetos and the heroic Heracles. At the moment that Admetos is able to mourn and attain the spiritual wisdom of Alcestis, she is being rescued from death by Heracles. The truth 'hits' Admetos that your life cannot really be worth living without the person who loves you enough to die for you. This echoes Alcestis' decision, the only motive for which must be her recognition of this same truth: she would not be able to live with herself knowing she had refused to sacrifice her life for the person she loves.

This movement in the character of Admetos from denial to blame and anger and through to grief and mourning is reminiscent of the observations made by Elizabeth Kubler Ross in her work on bereavement (Kubler Ross, 1997).

The closing movement of the play is a scene between Heracles, Admetos, and the veiled Alcestis. Heracles taunts Admetos back to life just as he has brought Alcestis back from death. Alcestis is permitted, through the device of the veil, to witness the response of her husband to Heracles' insistence that he take the veiled 'replacement' girl into his house.

If the story was not a fairy story such an outcome could never happen. Heracles is a magical figure in whose vitality there is no fear of death and whose magic is connected to Apollo and the potential of theatre. He is the expression of wish and desire.

The play is like a dance in which the magical third character brings together the other two who appear to have been irreconcilably parted.

It is a commonplace that in a dream all the figures are aspects of the dreamer. The dream is like a conduit or channel between the conscious and the unconscious. The door between them is left open and figures move between the two realms having effectively become one space, the dream landscape. This space can become a place of reparation. Within the transformations and exchanges made in this space resolution can be found to what have appeared to be irremediable conflicts. The question is how these resolutions are transported back into the space of everyday life. This is a fundamental and rudimentary question for theatre. How does the world of the play join to the world of reality? It is in the spirit of this question that Prospero addresses the audience at the end of what is generally accepted to be Shakespeare's last play. Prospero makes a plea for the audience to release him from 'this bare island' so the resolutions of the play can be reincorporated into life.

Is the space of the play a therapeutic space? How might the themes, narrative, and situations of the play provoke or resonate with contemporary stories of recovery? Will the play help to guide us towards those aspects of contemporary stories which will make them capable of being acted out?

STORIES AND THEATRE

All stories have the capability of being dramatized or acted out but in this transformation their substance changes in line with

certain principles. The emphasis here is on form.

All representations involve distortion and it is in this quality of distortion that fruitful untruths, sensory apprehension, beauty, distance, and usefulness lie. For us the work of art is a centre of gravity as well as a series of objects and experiences. We want to work for the maximum participation in the making of the work, to open up the process of production to as much public activity as possible. We recognize that by moving our work across boundaries whether they are national, generational, or professional we can create energy. This has led us to formulate our programme of development work involving six countries, with three differentiated groups in each, linked by a comprehensive video record and an interactive website.

In our project we are concerned with gathering stories of recovery. This, at first sight, might seem like a relatively simple operation. We collect as many stories as we can and we keep them for a while storing them by date, title, location, and name. We might group the stories in various categories according to themes (stories of sacrifice, stories of friendship, etc.). If we were gathering apples we might initially put them in a basket then wrap them in paper and put them in a dark cool shed, ready for when we wanted to eat them. Apples are simple; they grow on trees. Stories are not; they are held inside people.

As I mentioned above, one of the principles of the 'War Stories' project is that everybody has a war story. This human activity is bound to have had an impact on us, to have touched and changed us. If we can locate the moment of impact and change, and if we can embody it in some way we can act out the story. We become an actor in our own story. Possibly, freedom and responsibility can be found in this structure and we can see how our story may have worked out

differently. This moment of acting out has been an important element in our work and the key to it has been that people carry stories inside them and when they embody their story they become actors.

We are interested in how stories are carried from one place to another. When we encounter a story and when we are conscious of the inner event, we relate the 'storyness' to all other stories that we have encountered, remembered or forgotten. In this sense stories may seem to have a common shape, structure, or form. We remember them because the incidents they portray conform to this shape.

When we hear another's story we listen with our own. Comprehending our own story enables us to listen and discern the meaning of someone else's story. This is why so often at a daily level we will answer one story with another often tangentially related or only related at the level of form.

This is a well-rehearsed observation and the work that Joseph Campbell and others (e.g. Campbell, 1959; Rebillot, 1993) have done on myth only needs to be mentioned for us to be reminded of the idea that all stories and all myths can be reduced to one overarching 'human story' whose shape is determined by a biological need for self-recognition. This work depicts certain fundamental quasi biological or psychological elements being replayed in local variations throughout human history.

So what is the relationship between physical memory, acting, and the form of stories? Our gathering and storing of stories has to do with the form of these stories, and the form of them is determined by how they relate to physical memory. In our development workshops we will be encouraging people to look at their own or others' stories by making them capable of being acted out or performed or embodied in the theatre space. In other words we will be discovering

stories by giving them expressive form. The forms of expression that arise in this work will also be the means of carrying them around. They will be physical dramatic entities that will be like acts recorded in the physical memories of participants and relayed through video.

The reason why *Alcestis* is useful is not only thematic (life and death, healing, friendship, sacrifice, redemption, forgiveness, hospitality, love, and so on) but also because of its form. It will focus our work on the internal movements of the human individual, and since these movements are the very source of dramatic action and indeed of spiritual recovery this will help us connect the stories to the 'form' in which they can be carried around. The theatre makes the invisible visible and these stories we are gathering will take the form of 'scenes', 'images'. This is why we are preoccupied by voice and movement, by song and dance, and why we are using video as a means of recording and an interactive website as a means of storing, exchanging, and connecting up stories.

These fragments or elements will become components in the next stage of our project that will involve the presentation of a theatre show. This will be another kind of theatrical realization of our work. Each space that we create in our work is theatre. The moment someone undertakes to embody a story, theatre is created. It is as if we are collecting fragments of a broken pot whose pieces have been dispersed and even become confused with other broken shards. Piecing together these fragments of human experience we will discover the shape implied by the pieces we have found. This work, which takes the form of basic movement and voice as the stories are embodied, is similar to primitive symbol formation. Testing the capacity of theatre to communicate we are working for the convergence of matter with meaning.

If the symbolic nature of theatre language, the impossible dream landscape of *Alcestis*, which starts with a dialogue between the Sun God and Death and which finishes with the magical reappearance of a woman brought back from the dead, is related to the focus on the inner spiritual and psychological movement then the work can have a multiple benefit. In building a culture around the project the idea of influence is important. The act of putting Euripides' *Alcestis* in the same field – the paradigm here is magnetic or electrical rather than agricultural – as contemporary stories is to do with encouraging influence.

We are intent on building a culture around the project. This consists of interconnecting communities, human relations, artistic procedures, exercises, games, stories, ideas, songs, dances, values, and attitudes.

At this early stage of our project (end of May 2006), when it even seems dangerous to describe too clearly what we might expect, we have started to test out our ideas, exploring stories of recovery in a theatre workshop situation. At recent sessions at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, participants were asked to work on their own stories and created embodiments in the form of tableaux depicting the scene 'before' recovery and the scene 'after' recovery. At another stage of the workshop they were asked to divide their story of recovery into three 'scenes'. They were asked to include in these scenes a portrayal of an encounter with death, to divide the role of the protagonist into two roles, and explore the role of the guide. The work of exploring the connection between voice and movement is being pursued. By the time this is published we will have completed a substantial part of our development programme.

Already we will have involved artists, young people, therapists, and activists in a network of exchange and exploration. There

is a series of questions about the nature of theatre that arise freely from our work. It is clear to us that we are involved in theatre and not therapy but at more fruitful moments the distinctions between these are less clear. There is a whole area of work in drama therapy which is already rich in its connecting these two continents of knowledge and practice.

In talking about theatre and therapy I am looking for ideas and articulations of what the connection is between the mythic content of theatre (the way in which theatre in embodying stories resonates archetypal and mythical structures) and the variety of figures and structures that arise in the therapeutic 'story'. If, as Freud (1904) points out, 'a great part of the mythological view of the world, reaches far into most modern religions is nothing other than psychological processes projected into the outside world' does it mean that there is some dynamic link between myths and psychology that can, as it were, work the other way round? Can psychological processes be conjured by the enactment of myths? If the hermetic figure of the trickster which Jung (1970) considered so central to illuminating the role of the therapeutic agent (sometimes the therapist, sometimes the emanation from the Self connected to the personal spirit) in the process of psychological integration is a key dramatic character then can actors carry out this role in the circumstances of a theatre performance? When therapists befriend the illusory phantom figures of the individual's imagination and thus try to lead the aspects of the disintegrated personality back to connectedness or integration, are there identifiable stages in this process? What is the story of transference and countertransference? If it is always a different specific story is there an underlying structure?

I would like to use the publication of this article to encourage minds and practitioners

more knowledgeable than I could possibly be to communicate their insights.

Is it possible that theatre work can be used as a way of drawing out and illuminating stories of recovery, and be a repository and source of wisdom, connecting up the explorations and the practice of therapists and activists from different backgrounds and cultures, and be celebratory, fun, joyful, and exhilarating?

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