Sue Lovell and Teone Reinthal

"I Saw a Woman": Performance, Performativity and Affect

Introducing Teone[1]

Child   Tell me how it began, like a tiger's tale, in rhyme … a song of waves and rainbows.

Moon   A small girl, a dearly beloved child, once dropped from a very great height and fell to earth where she shattered into so many pieces that the pieces formed a rescue team to carry her through her journey of days alive.

Child   … and the frightened, broken girl clutched at all her pieces and gave them secret names, ... of champions, of kings and queens of power, each piece gifted with its own wonderful voice?

Moon   Yes, and all of her pieces loved her, for she was their deep mother, and as she grew, she watched life from behind the walls of all her selves and never knew that her heroines were simply the glittering shards of all her old injuries, so long forgotten … .

Whenever I enter new communities, I begin with revealing my own story. In so doing, I offer my collaborators some brief, narrative exposure to my own emotional scars, to stories of my survival, to my peculiarities and vulnerabilities. I gather torn, drifting pieces from the past and I scatter the pieces around in order to show my fragmented self. I declare that I am organically whole within my own form of cultural dislocations, I share that I am singularly pieced together; a patchwork quilt of terrible mistakes and wonderful learnings. I signal that I am a *bitza*: a multitude of strengths and fearful, contracted frailties, and that I always find freedom in the fluidity of creative expression. I whisper that I am a dark horse, terribly unnerved by the clamour of the shimmering, greater herd; I seek only to run at my own pace.[2]

Sue's Comment:

I've come to love the dark horse in Teone; it is writ as large, and yet as invisible, as another horse, its alter ego, the white horse of Uffington. That white shape can only be seen fully from above, and it disappears the closer a body approaches the earth. The other, the dark horse, can only be seen fully when Teone is outside her selves, in the trance work of creative expression, speaking with the moon. In the context of this paper, the dark horse introduces the power of words and images to bring into being alternative narratives to those that are the stuff of daylight. It speaks to affect, and to the powerful role of community in constituting performativity and agency.

Introducing Sue

I was walking to the corner store alone; six years old; one hand clutching the money inside my pocket, the other swiping the spiky tip of the folded umbrella at the dandelion heads so the little parachutes drifted into space. Although it was bleak it was not yet raining and I was meant to go 'there and back, no detours, no delays'. I scooted past 'the big house' surrounded by five foot walls stopping at the six foot pillars each side of the driveway that supported the gate. I tried to be good.

On the way home, though, the temptation was too much. I left the string bag at the base of the left pillar, peered around, up and down the road, up the curved driveway. I tucked the brolly down the back of my pants and jumped up and tried to get a toehold on the old bricks of the wall as my feet scrabbled against the hinged gate. Not quite. I took a little run and jumped again, scrambling to get one arm across the width of the wall. Yes! Hauling myself onto the pillar I looked down. It seemed a lot higher, suddenly. I wobbled a little retrieving the umbrella, but pushed it open confidently – how hard could it be? Mary Poppins had gone a lot higher, and she was carrying that big old bag. Up and up she went. I wondered where she had gone and wished she would come to my room and click her fingers to tidy away *my* toys. I launched myself into the air shouting, 'supercalifragilisticexpiali…' before I could say '…docious', I had crash-landed.

I cried all the way home with blood dribbling from the deep cuts on my knees. When I explained that I'd wanted to 'fly like Mary Poppins', and mum laughed, I felt ashamed of being so silly – as though I should have known already what the world made possible. I tucked the feelings away and went to play with my marbles, before I lost those, too.

Teone's Comment:

Sue's encounter with the cruelty of gravity reveals an assumption of performativity – the belief that uttering the magic word would enable her to fly like Mary Poppins. Her failure, coupled with the laughter of a significant other, constituted shame. Magic lived at the apex of the flying leap, but was grounded suddenly and painfully by the physical consequence of her inevitable fall. There is affective tension embodied here, a quivering intensity in her young body: her imagination was full of curious wonder – the image of a desired, dreamed-of self was pitted against the painful fallibility of a flying self. Sue cannot fly like Mary Poppins; she is unable to embody supernatural power. This moment encapsulated the difference between performance and performativity.

We've chosen this way to introduce our 'selves' (within selves) alongside the key concepts with which this paper is engaged: performance, performativity, affect and agency. Without these concepts, selves remain static formulations of the social domain, mere bodies inscribed and positioned by culture. This paper is interested in how identities, particularly liminal identities, are experienced and shaped by the consciousness of self that is accessed through performance. Two scenes of performance are offered as sites for an analysis of the relationship between affect, performance and performativity as a means of better understanding the constitution of agency.

First, we are interested in defining affect and understanding what is happening when it enters the scene of performance, as well as better understanding the term

performance. The paper then turns to the issue of individual agency and Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* in order to link performativity and agency. Again, we ask, what role does affect play in the scene? Finally, we compare Boal's engagement with the 'woman', after which this piece is named, with our introductions. We do this in order to argue that guided, improvised performance has a higher potential to change people because it offers "spect-actors"[3] creative opportunities to performatively 'utter' identity shifts. We further suggest this because affect is central to both performativity and agency. In line with Austin's initial engagement with performativity, we also argue that this is 'only' made possible at all by the development of an appropriately receptive social context as much as through the actors.

Teone describes two distinct performance methods being presented in a typical theatre setting. Two actors perform upon a stage; revealing or concealing an object in order to create rapport and tension in the audience. These performance devices help to establish our understandings of affect and performance, as follows:

> Imagine an audience-filled theatre. House lights dim, and all noise recedes to an anticipated, whispered rustling of clothing, handbags and programs. A deeper quiet descends.
>
> Spotlight.
>
> An actress enters, commanding centre-stage. Resting on the fingers of both hands she proudly bears a jewelled, silver box. Eloquently introducing us to the box, the actress describes its textures, its dimensions, until we are guided now, to see it there, so well-lit, so shiny and distinct. Her playfully insightful descriptions of the box are witty, scintillating, and, within the talented scope of her performance, she reveals the very depths of this box's soul to us.
>
> Effortlessly now, we recognise the box and we find congruence in both the performed presentation of a prized object, and in our own ability to comprehend exciting new concepts surrounding the box. We can only imagine how it would feel in our own fingers.
>
> As we carefully process our impressions, positioning the memories of the dynamic new-box-performance deep within our minds, a new and different actor emerges from a shadowy zone upstage, shuffling out of an area we hadn't noticed until now. Surprisingly, and gradually, we become aware that this actor has not only arrived from somewhere previously hidden (from some disquieting depth of darkness upon that mysterious stage), but by his very posture and his slow motion of progress, his arrival and especially his purpose is made more obscure, and we are confused now, confronted, even bothered by the muted stage-lighting in which he is attempting to perform his part. He must be less important than the first performer.
>
> Muttering and ambling around the stage upon his restless limbs, words and gestures fluttering, his hands are hidden from our eyes, until suddenly we know, inexplicably, that he is surely concealing from us the very item that we are now quite ready to see. Isn't he obligated to show it to us?
>
> His monologue is vague, and somewhat disconcerting as he rambles in abstracted, distant and distracting ideas, all the while furtively moving some shadowy object around inside his coat-pocket, only to palm it rapidly into the other hand; the hand that now lingers, drifting behind his back and well out of sight. If you look around now, you will see that

all our necks are straining as we awkwardly stretch our bodies to be higher up in our seats. What is that thing?

You sense it now, our slow-dawning annoyance at our sudden realisation we have become his captive toys. Instinctively charged, we are utterly entranced, determined trackers on the scent. Enthralled by even the slightest shift in his pace and his posture, we lean forward, engaged, driven by a strangely physical hunger to discover the identity of this dark horse, and the very nature of the valuable object that he has not yet, even once, alluded to holding.[4]

This reflective piece is set in theatre space intentionally separated from the pragmatism of the world. The drama is captivating; the audience occupies its own cocoon of darkness as an invisible, aggregated, disembodied viewer, suspending disbelief to enter a world of possibilities for which it is prepared, indeed which it anticipates through a pleasurable freedom from responsibility. Conversely, the two individuated performers take a central and distant position; the first is envoiced, visibly embodied and empowered to present what is contingently accepted as 'real'. The spotlight ensures that all attention is directed appropriately as the object of the communal gaze appears. She speaks, leading the audience toward new understandings. The audience wants what she has, and it is safe to want; again, it is expected – she has delivered. All is well.

This is an environment purpose built for the production of affect in the sense that Brian Massumi understands it to operate in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* as, "a pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act".[5] Later in the article, the issue of action as agency will emerge, but for now it is the understanding of affect that is important and that can be best understood through the above passage.

It is the convention of the fourth wall, an imagined barrier across the front of a stage between an audience and performers, which creates for an audience a 'safe' sense of the action as viewable object, as artistic product rather than ontological reality. But for any drama to have an impact, the action is also a 'process' that, in closing the gap between observer and observed, draws viewers into its own logic thereby allowing the necessary suspension of disbelief. In the above passage, the closure of this 'gap' only becomes apparent when it starts to widen again, to reshape the audience's experience of the drama, unsettle their expectations. 'The' central place of performance is re-constituted as 'a' place when a "disquieting depth of darkness" forms. This is the upstage or back-stage, where the second performer has appeared, and remains in the "shadowy zone" of non-identification – the "pre-personal".

The second performer, continuous with the unknown, signifies the shift. Losing the specificity of 'he', a slippery metonymic 'it' appears at the periphery of staged subjectivity, hiding the nature of its being.[6] Beyond the thinning fourth wall the interpretive demands upon the audience increase because the rules are not being followed; there is a violation of the functionality of the space. Affect as "pre-personal intensity" starts to flow, an echo of what the second performer

[4] Teone Reinthal, *Rousing the Dark Horse: Enacting Social Action*, Ph.D. Thesis (Brisbane: Griffith University, 2014), 18.

[5] Brian Massumi, "Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements", in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 1987), xvi. See also Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect", *M/C Journal*, 8.6 (2005), <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>, 1 April 2014.

[6] Teone Reinthal, "Introducing Adaptivism – a Kinaesthetic Ecology for Social Reconciliation", in Joëlle Bonnevin, Sue Ryan-Fazilleau and David Waterman, eds., *Aboriginal Australians and Other Others* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2014), 53.

has become spreads throughout the space of the theatre. There are judgements. The audience starts to rationalise, tries to personalise, seeks ontological security through interpretation: *"He must be less important than the first performer"*. Conventions are recalled that should make the action an object available to their communal gaze: *"isn't he obligated to show it to us?"*.

Something has slipped the noose and infectiously ranges across all spaces. The audience continues to consume the staging of the conscious and unconscious intensity of un-named affect, of personal and pre-personal: individuals also 'ontologically' experience affect as intensity as they shift, recalling Massumi, from "one experiential state of the body to another". Intensity is the flowering of affect: then comes a naming of the bloom: "*what is that thing*?" For each, that pre-personal affect emerges into the personal, then becomes a socially recognisable emotion:

> Instinctively charged, we are utterly entranced, determined trackers on the scent. Enthralled by even the slightest shift in his pace and his posture, we lean forward, engaged, driven by a strangely physical hunger to discover the identity of this dark horse, and the very nature of the valuable object that he has not yet, even once, alluded to holding.[7]

[7] Reinthal, *Rousing the Dark Horse*, 18.

Curiosity. Frustration. Confusion. Beneath it all, there is the shuddering constitution of the desire to know and articulate.

But when the lights come on, the performers take a bow, the audience fragments, people shake their heads and clear their throats. At various levels of garrulous dispute, with no audience of their own, no direction in which to channel their new experience, they stream outside and scatter in all directions like mercury. The performers go backstage, put away their costumes for the next show, wipe away their make-up, turn out the lights, and lock the doors. The hollow space of the performance remains, waiting passively to be reanimated. When the performance is iterated, and re-iterated, the mimesis not quite perfect, but still sufficiently contained by the functioning habitus of the space, the costumes are still costumes, the make-up still temporary, the lights still turned off and the door still locked against a world with conventions other than those of the theatre. Without further development, this is theatre as thought-provoking entertainment: the bodily thrill of experiencing affect without a need to pursue it or deploy it. It is performance by all involved, on and off the stage.

This is why, in his William James Lectures, *How to do Things with Words*, delivered at Harvard University in 1955, J. L. Austin insisted that theatre was not performative. "[A] performative utterance will" he said, "be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in a soliloquy". He goes on to call such language, "*parasitic* upon its normal use" and to categorise performative utterances as only those made in "ordinary circumstances".[8] For an utterance to be performative, ordinary circumstances demand conventions other than those operating in the carved out space of the theatre.

So, for example, gay marriage cannot exist until the discursive preconditions for its legal recognition condone it. The convention is that marriage is between a man and a woman. The words "I do" (or "I will") are not performative in this context.

[8] John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955, ed. by James Opie Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 22.

If one of our daughters and her partner decide to marry and find a ship's captain in a local pub, and he uses the words of the marriage ceremony and they make the appropriate responses, no real marriage has occurred. The Captain may be the right person, but he is in the wrong place to have the authority to declare them married (i.e. at sea, then only 'if' he has the appropriate additional qualifications). Saying does not make it 'so' unless everything else is in position to secure words as action.

Unlike Austin, Schechner argues that the performative enacts and also describes, "performance-like qualities". For Schechner, the words performative and performativity are often used to capture this slippery, doubled function, "to indicate that something is like a performance without actually being a performance in the orthodox or formal sense".[9] To do this, however, a description has to be made and Austin is clear that descriptions are also to be held apart from performative utterances. He gives an excellent example of the difference:

[9] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 110.

> If I utter the words 'I bet...' I do not state that I utter the words 'I bet…', or any other words, but I perform the act of betting; and, similarly, if he says he bets, i.e. says the words 'I bet…', he *bets*. But if I utter the words 'he bets', I only state that he utters (or rather has uttered) the words 'I bet…': I do not perform his act of betting, which only he can perform: I describe his performances of the act of betting, but I do my own betting and he must do his own.[10]

[10] Austin, *How To Do*, 6.

The performance of a performative on stage is void: or in Austin's word "unhappy". No one is 'really' married, no ship is 'really' named, no bet is 'really' wagered. Austin's performativity is not dependent on its individual iterability, as is Butler's development of it in its role as constituting gender;[11] nor does it dismiss the ontological status of 'reality' to contain performativity entirely within language or a world to which theatricality has been extended, as Derrida's development of it manages to do.[12] Austin's performativity requires a stable ontological realm within which people exist as utterers of the performative. Peggy Phelan insists that "performance implicates the real *through the presence of living bodies*" and the same must be said of the performative if it is to have any use at all.[13] In this paper, then, theatre experienced as entertainment is not the space required for the 'happy' utterance of Austin's performative; rather it is the home of performances that have their own set of conventions for audience and performers – conventions that enable not agency but entertainment.

[11] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[12] Jacques Derrida, *Signature Event Context* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 1-23.

[13] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 148. Italics added.

As we have seen in our example, however, theatre can produce that intensity Massumi (via Deleuze and Guattari) calls "affect", the "pre-personal" experience of a bodily shift as a response to a performance. Theatre, however, does not have the social authority to follow up the shifts that occur either within or beyond the walls of the theatre. To develop affect a little further, Boal suggests that the affect "fills the aesthetic space with new significations and awakens in each observer, in diverse forms and intensities, emotions, sensations and thoughts".[14] This is exactly what is visible in the example above as observers strain their bodies forward to peer at that which is hidden, either on stage or in their own subconscious realms now registered as an embodied disturbance.

[14] Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 21.

Performer training is partly aimed at developing the capacity as a performer to access, deploy and direct affect without disappearing pathologically into its performance or maintaining it beyond the curtain call. The late, 'untrained' Heath Ledger, for example, has been described as having "no apparent difficulty getting *into* characters … [but] a great deal of difficulty getting *out* of them".[15] His prescription drug overdose was popularly attributed to his role as the Joker in *The Dark Knight*. Ledger himself is reported as once describing "his" character as a "psychopathic, mass-murdering, schizophrenic clown with absolutely no empathy".[16] Performers need to be taught, in other words, how to cope with affect generated by performance. This is a reminder that the function of the audience is to feed back to playwright and performers the meaning that has been taken up. This aligns well with Gusdorf's suggestion that, once a "work of art" becomes available, a "second critique" is needed:

> … every work of art is a projection from the interior realm into exterior space where in becoming incarnated it achieves consciousness of itself. Consequently there is need of a second critique that instead of verifying the literal accuracy of the narrative or demonstrating its artistic value would attempt to draw out its innermost, private significance by viewing it as a symbol, as it were, or the parable of a consciousness in quest of its own truth.[17]

This is very much what we see in our example of theatre: the staging of consciousness, the peripheral appearance of that which remains unconscious and its opening up to the audience the opportunity to 'critique' either performance and/or self. Originally circulated in a moral economy, to save souls, this second critique encouraged deeper reflection than that occurring in some contemporary audiences. As the 'second' critique strengthens, the dramatic intensity or affect becomes personalised, light-hearted entertainment fades. Theatre works with affect and then critique and reflection through the audience, but all that 'action' remains (apart from the theatre critic) in a private relation to its own 'truth'.

We have so far defined affect as a form of embodied but pre-personal, unconscious intensity, separated theatre from the performative by returning to Austin's original explanation of it, and now asserted that in theatre affect is controlled, exploited perhaps, certainly managed by performers and directed towards generating more affect in the audience for either entertainment or reflection. In establishing why Austin disallows performance on the stage 'as' performativity, we agree with him that the performative utterance relies in the very moment of its utterance upon the existence of 'happy' conditions for its consumption as an 'act'. The 'truth' of it must, therefore, be played out in a public relation, in fact, via legally recognised, state sanctioned rituals rather than newly formulated acts of resistance that are not valued and recognised, nor legitimised (eg gay commitment ceremonies, naming ceremonies instead of baptisms have personal significance and value).

We now want to direct attention to the relationship of performativity and affect in, for want of a better term, 'improvised' drama. Although there are many forms

[15] Colin Carman, "Heath Ledger and the Idolatry of Dying Young", *The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide*, 15.3 (May-June 2008), 28.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Georges Gusdorf, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical,* trans. by James Olney (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980 [1956]), 44.

of theatre that use improvised drama to a greater or lesser extent, we think here of improvised drama as drama that reorients the quest to engage associated with performance. We've shown that in theatre, affect remains in a private relationship to the subject: more for the individual 'I' of the audience than the 'family' of performers. The key element in performative theatre, however, is the intent to bring the performer's affect into consciousness so it can be usefully and intentionally engaged.

Before proceeding, it is important to, again following Massumi and others, explain the difference between affect, feeling and emotion.[18] Just as there are many understandings of performativity, so too is affect a fertile term. One of its most vibrant offspring is the idea that affect is emotion. This idea is compounded by the translation of the Latin *affectus* as emotion or passion. For many, affects and 'feelings' or feelings and emotions tend to go hand in hand as though any combination of the three words is appropriate.

This points to the embodied nature of affects, because the intensity that is affect is registered in the body as something that is 'felt' as visceral sensation or bodily responses – affect is no longer abstract and pre-personal but experiential, personal and conscious. An engagement with the bodily response, the feeling, then leads to an identification of it 'as a particular emotion'. Which emotion depends on social context: emotion, unlike embodied sensation or feeling, is social. So, for example, anger, fear or excitement may all be experienced as an increased pulse rate, higher skin conductivity, faster breathing and the invisible but experienced release of hormones. It is the context that enables an interpretation of these 'feelings': standing at the top of a cliff will suggest that it is fear; knocking on the door to meet an unfaithful partner's lover suggests that it is anger; turning up at a ceremony to receive lottery winnings suggests excitement. Similarly, describing affect theory as a multi-layered discourse, Marta Figlerowicz acknowledges there is "no single definition of affect theory", but highlights its capacity to provide "therapeutic value" to the acceptance of "shame, sadness, or loneliness" as well as offer perspective on painful human emotions as, "sources not of self-knowledge but of social critique".[19] Affect, then, is abstract, a pre-personal intensity that flows, feelings are embodied and personal, and emotion is socially structured as an interpretation of the feelings which are experienced.

What is important in this thumbnail sketch is that working with and through affect. To identify feelings and articulate emotions can help to 'externalise' the individual burden of difference by (re)placing it in the social realm of discursive power relations rather than in the lap of the individual. These comments harmonise, therefore, with Boal's assertions that improvised performance invites actors and audiences to become "firmly grounded in cultural analysis and self-observation" as a direct means of revealing the "dialectic of the oppressor and oppressed within themselves as well as within society". Boal's creative *raison d'être* was bringing theatre to communities as a tool for increasing social, cultural and political agency.[20] After one such event, he asked a performer:

[18] Massumi, "Notes".

[19] Marta Figlerowicz, "Affect Theory Dossier: An Introduction", *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, 20.2 (2012), 3.

[20] Jan Cohen-Cruz and Mady Schutzman, eds., *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 80.

'Why did you weep?' and then she said something wonderful, she said 'because at the end of everything I went to the dressing room and I looked in the mirror', and then there was silence, 'OK … what happened? You looked in the mirror, what happened?' and she said 'I saw a woman' and I said 'OK, you saw a woman, if I look in the mirror to shave every morning, I see a man. You saw a woman' and she said 'No, it was the first time I saw a woman' and then I asked her, 'But before that, when you looked at the mirror, what did you see?' and she said 'before, I saw a house-maid … but, because I did theatre now (I use theatre as my language, I speak my emotions, my ideas), now I look at the mirror and I see a woman, and I see that I'm beautiful'.[21]

[21] Augusto Boal, *Forum Theater* (Harvard University, 2003), online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaD8t8->, 23 July 2012.

[22] Reinthal, *Rousing the Dark Horse*, 62.

The social action facility of Boal's productions typically sought to confront, question and reveal the struggles borne by the marginalised[22] and disadvantaged such as the 'woman' above. This extract therefore offers an opportunity to trace the progression we have been mapping: from the abstract pre-personal intensity that is the flow of affect, through feeling which anchors and personalises affect through the body, into the articulation of socially constituted emotions that work to either augment or diminish a capacity for agency, understood (as we shall show shortly) as socially constrained self-determination.

Through the gesture and language that is the 'doing' of theatre something intense flowed into the 'house-maid' and her body was moved to tears. Something shifted as she became audience to her maidself-becoming-womanself; she cried. This prompts Boal to speak to her and her to respond in a way he 'appeared' not to understand. Projecting the woman's feelings onto his body, he embodies and re-iterates her action. The meaning she attributes to seeing her woman-self, is very different from Boal's embodied understandings when he sees his embodied (about to have) man-self — he does not cry — he experiences no flow of affect through his mimesis. He is used to identifying as a man and his inner and outer worlds are congruent — he is not a dust-man never seen as a man by the world in the way that she was only and ever a house-maid because she has internalised a role 'as' an entire identity. His repetition to her is just a hollow (but useful) performance.

Her affect-rush through the body is experienced as a feeling of — what — being overwhelmed by a self-recognition that she exceeds her previous maid-self. The end bodily response is tears. At this point there are two potential interpretations that move this into the performative realm. First, the utterance occurred in the moment that she actually used "theatre as my language" and therefore identified to her maid-self, something already socially sanctioned but not previously recognised by her: that she is a woman, a 'beautiful' woman. Second, the performative moment may come through her verbal engagement with Boal; that is at the moment when he describes his identity via his face in the mirror and she is forced thereby to articulate her shift, to name and claim in language rather than the 'doing' of theatre, her embodied experience as it was generated by the flow of affect. Boal's witnessing is important because it 'stands in' for the discursive approval of the state. As the leading practitioner of this affect driven, transformative theatre, he provides an authoritative other. Anyone else in the room is part of the sanctioning, witnessing ritual and this

is effective only because the subject position 'beautiful woman' is already discursively sanctioned. Were she, for example, to claim to recognise herself as a being from Jupiter, or even as another person in the room, the unavailability of that subject position due to a lack of discursive sanction, would generate an 'unhappy' rather than 'happy' Austinian event. Nor is there any reason, of course, that both of these options may not be instantiated. She can now repeat her discovery, performatively, through language and social practices wherever she pleases *a lá* Butler's application of performativity. Though some may quibble about the 'beautiful', since it rests in the eye of the beholder, none would quibble with the expansion from maid to woman since the latter is already linguistically imbricated in the former.

'Doing' theatre (rather than just watching it) has generated affect, which remains abstract and indefinable, but that intensity has led to a bodily response which personalises the affect, it is now linked to a subjectivity ("my emotions", "my ideas"). This embodiment enables an utterance, and in this case, it is performative: saying is doing 'beautiful woman'. Becoming woman, in this way, is the conscious taking up of the subject position: it is, therefore, an act of agency. Affect, then, is at the root of the woman's agency, though neither are automatically sustained. This is because agency is not a personal attribute but is discursively constituted.

Through theatre, Boal has offered what poststructuralist Susan Hekman would call a "tool" of agency.[23] Hekman argues that the "subject who has agency, who constitutes a personal subjectivity, is precisely the autonomous, abstract, individualised subject that is the basis of the Cartesian subject".[24] Notorious for the separation of mind and body, Descartes' philosophy makes the body and affect inaccessible to the mind which knows only itself. This prioritises the rational, disembodied subject capable, as Althusser pointed out in the process of deconstructing it, of functioning "all by himself"[25] or at least believing that such is the case. Marxists, and those 'naturally' denied rational agency by such a formulation (the indigenous, the criminal, the infantile, the childish, all women, the poverty stricken, the feeble, disabled, drunk or insane) would suggest a false state of consciousness. They would claim to know it for what it is: the ideological and discursive operations that construct the privilege of those who govern and claim to do so through personal agency.

Hekman takes up the issue of agency as discursively constituted. She argues that "agency is defined and circumscribed by the discursive formation; *it is not a given condition* but a constituted element of subjectivity".[26] Agents continue to exist but not autonomously of social contexts and discursive formations. They have restrictions placed upon them by context. Thus, for example, an actor who marries people on stage, cannot be said to have officially married them. He does not have the agency to do so. "Choices" made and actions taken are, therefore, "produced by agents who utilize the discursive 'tools' available to them".[27] Via gesture and other body consciousness drama, Boal's theatre is one such tool for "kick starting" agency. This is achieved through the revelation, stimulation or production of affect, consciousness raising and education about feelings as embodied responses to the social contexts that shape and direct the very emotions that constrain (or

[23] Susan Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press,1990), 81.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards Investigation"*,* in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 169.

[26] Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge*, 90. Italics added.

[27] Ibid., 110.

enable) people by diminishing (or exaggerating) their ability to resist through self-determination.

What is at stake in this now familiar understanding of agency and the lack of so called personal autonomy of the human agent is the capacity of that agent to exist as an independent, self-constituting 'I' 'outside' discursively produced subject positions. Butler probably puts this best:

> Where there is an 'I' who utters or speaks and thereby produces an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes and enables that 'I' and forms in language the constraining trajectory of its will. Thus there is no 'I' who stands behind discourse and executes its volition or will through discourse.[28]

[28] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 225.

There are some interesting tensions at work in this quotation. Firstly, there is the primacy of utterance as something capable of producing an "effect in discourse" – therefore there 'is' agency. This agency, however, is contextual in much the same way as Austin's performative is "happy" within its discursive setting – though he calls it the "debate" surrounding whether there is a "social contract" bestowing authority.[29] So, for agency to occur for Butler, for the performative to occur for Austin, an 'I' already within discourse is enabled and does, indeed, possess, through various degrees of constraint depending on the circumstances, a will that it can deploy within a "trajectory" or perhaps a number of trajectories depending on social location. The "doer of the deed" therefore stands within a discourse it may modify or have an "effect" upon. The extent of that effect depends first on motivation (we can call this consciousness of a contextualised and constrained self with a desire for change) and, second, on the possibility of proceeding to recognise, argue for and access various tools of agency (capacities for reflection, articulation, access to education, legal process, democratic systems, self representation in culture).

[29] Austin, *How To Do*, 29.

Whilst it therefore becomes true, as Lawrence Grossberg said, that "we can no longer equate agency with subjectivity",[30] we 'must' still equate an embodied subjectivity in an ontologically secure domain with the taking up of the tools of agency: such is the only way that agency can be discursively and ontologically constituted. So to quote Grossberg again, the separation of agency from the individual is "*not to be taken to deny* that people make history nor that they are engaged in real practices. Of course, they do it in conditions not of their own making ... history is often made 'behind their backs'".[31]

[30] Lawrence Grossberg, "The Context of Audiences and the Politics of Difference", *Australian Journal of Communication*, 16 (December 1989), 16.

[31] Ibid., 16. Italics added.

Returning to Boal and the house-maid become 'woman', we can now see that what his *Theatre of the Oppressed* has done is successfully use improvised, embodied theatre, to 'get at' and express, in language and gesture, the affect-feeling-emotion chain related to an embodied identity shift. In the process of engaging with creative practices the house-maid makes a discovery about herself and weeps because, not only is she now a 'woman', but she is 'beautiful': she is not pretending to be beautiful, she is not dependent on an audience to be beautiful; she 'is' beautiful because the 'I' of the house-maid has seen the 'I' that is the woman and there is a

space between the two that enables recognition and then description to Boal. The performative practice (saying is doing) is completed, however, because these interior selves are projected and then linked to, and acknowledged by, Boal where he stands in the exterior environment. How much further this shift is taken depends on how many of Hekman's "discursive tools"[32] of agency are available to the woman who now recognises that she exceeds the subjugated, apparently shameful, identity of house-maid.

[32] Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge*, 110.

We believe, then, that the key to the success of this performativity is the experience of affect. In a non-politicised audience affect remains relatively abstract and only fleetingly embodied. For an 'actor' in experimental, improvised or politicised drama a focus on 'the intensity which is affect' means it is better understood, tracked as feeling in a body that claims it as a resource, and then recognised and articulated as socially inflected emotion. Affect, in other words, drives the shift from performance to performativity. "The affect system", as Silvan Tomkins puts it, "provides the primary motives of human beings".[33] The woman is crying, not because she is sad, but because, in Tomkin's terms, a barrier to joy, that is shame, has been removed. Specifically, Tomkins explains that shame:

[33] Cit. in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds., *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 36.

> operates only after interest or enjoyment has been activated, and inhibits one or the other or both. The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy. Hence any barrier to further exploration which partially reduces interest ... will activate the lowering of the head and eyes in shame and reduce further exploration or self-exposure ... .[34]

[34] Cit. in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 39.

The posture of shame described here is familiar to most people, though in widely varying degrees. Clearly, for example, Sue's experience as a six year old, realising that she could not fly, being laughed at by her mother (who was probably only thinking how cute it all was) may have made her slower to share anything. Sue's tears are the tears of a child who does not understand why, as Teone said, the "magic" did not work and her "dreamed-of self was pitted against the painful fallibility of a flying self". In Austin's terms, the utterance of the word "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious", whilst quite remarkable as a word in and of itself, does not contain the "magical" authority to simultaneously be an "act" uttered in "ordinary circumstances". In ending her comment with the neutral observation that the "moment encapsulated the difference between performance and performativity", Teone was really pointing out that "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" is merely the repetition of the performance given by Julie Andrews, not by the fictitious Mary Poppins misunderstood as ontologically real.

Where Sue's tears are the tears of negative internalised emotion of shame effectively defined in the social relation to her mother, the tears of Boal's 'woman' are the result of positive projected emotion of joy from someone who 'does' understand. For the house-maid, the release of this positive emotion may well be the first, and perhaps most vital, step towards a more complex and rewarding identity, if she can follow through. How much further than Boal and the context

of improvised theatre can she consolidate this newly discovered complexity? What structures exist, *or can be brought into being*, to support and enact this identity by ensuring the circumstances for future successful agency and performativity? From this newly articulated utterance "beautiful woman", how can the tools of agency develop forwards to gain access to education, legal process, democratic systems, self-representation in culture over the long term?

It is no surprise, really, that Boal's original *Theatre of the Oppressed* functioned in settler cultures where cultural and land-based dispossession, attempted genocide, individual and systemic racism, corruption and military rule have all entrenched the unearned privileges of colonisers. Nor is it a surprise Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, a discourse for the subject position "spect-actor", shifted affect from the relatively passive audience of theatre, to the "spect-actor": the self reflexive actor who is also his or her own spectator and affective subject. Along with the discipline of Performance Studies and Boal's Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, Invisible Theatre or Legislative Theatre, there is now a discourse that creates the primary subject position "activist" where actors feed into real social change.[35] If all this politics and social change, oppression and drama is too much to manage, somehow irrelevant, or simply 'unreal', simpler performative processes which use affect to initiate agency can be put in place. In Teone's self-introduction, for example, her child-self is there, listening, dreaming of stories, "tiger's tales, in rhyme … a song of waves and rainbows". When the Moon responds with all the maternal authority of her age-old symbolism, she utters the secret to Teone's success: she was a "*dearly beloved child",* one who therefore felt worthy of "rescue" and so was able to gather together her pieces despite her fear. The very act of speaking her fear weakens it, allows her to rename each fragment for powerful figures. So transformative was the effect, that "*love was multiplied*", projected throughout her "old injuries" which were fading behind the "glittering shards" which protected her until she could move forward. With a never complete knowledge of her selves, she shares them, is never shamed by them, but instead acknowledges her differences. As an act of self-sanctioning, of creating and adopting a subject position in a discourse of (self)acceptance, such writing is 'potentially' performative. There is an intensity of affect, a coming to recognise and possess difficult embodied sensations as personal feelings. There is a determination to articulate the contradictory emotions that accompany and 'speak' a fragmented but still beautiful subjectivity.

[35] Arvind Singhal, "Empowering the Oppressed Through Participatory Theatre", *Investigacion y Desarrollo*, 2.1 (2004), 138-163.