



MA in Construction and Representation of Cultural Identities

**Theatre as a Tool in Education and in Social and Political Activism:
David Greig's *Dr. Korczak's Example* (2001) and
Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza* (2009)**

Daria Lavrinienko

Faculty of Philology
University of Barcelona
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Supervisor: Dr. Mireia Aragay



Universitat de Barcelona

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgements..... | 3 |
| Abstract..... | 4 |
| Introduction..... | 5 |
| 1. Theatre as a Tool for Social Change..... | 7 |
| 2. Theatre and Education..... | 9 |
| 3. Theatre and Political and Social Activism..... | 13 |
| 4. Emancipated Spectatorship..... | 17 |
| 5. David Greig, Caryl Churchill and the Middle East: Some Thoughts on Orientalism and anti-Orientalism..... | 19 |
| 5.1. Introduction..... | 19 |
| 5.2. Orientalism and anti-Orientalism..... | 20 |
| 5.3. Voice and Silence..... | 21 |
| 5.4. Theatre and Orientalism/anti-Orientalism..... | 21 |
| 5.5. A Non-homogeneous Orient..... | 22 |
| 5.6. David Greig and the Palestinian Issue..... | 23 |
| 5.7. Caryl Churchill's <i>Seven Jewish Children: a Play for Gaza</i> and MAP..... | 24 |
| 5.8. What has Palestine done for British Theatre?..... | 25 |
| 5.9. Conclusion..... | 26 |
| 6. David Greig's <i>Dr. Korczak's Example</i> (2001)..... | 27 |
| 6.1. Introduction..... | 27 |
| 6.2. The 'Making the Nation' Project..... | 27 |
| 6.3. Janusz Korczak and Children's Rights..... | 29 |
| 6.4. Teachers' Resource Packs..... | 30 |
| 6.5. <i>Dr. Korczak's Example</i> and Ethical Debate..... | 35 |
| 6.6. Conclusion..... | 37 |
| 7. Caryl Churchill's <i>Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza</i> (2009)..... | 39 |
| 7.1. Introduction..... | 39 |
| 7.2. Churchill's Political Concern and Activism..... | 39 |
| 7.3. <i>Seven Jewish Children</i> 'in Action'..... | 41 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 7.4. For and Against..... | 45 |
| 7.5. How the Play ‘Works’..... | 46 |
| 7.6. Conclusion..... | 48 |
| 8. Empathy and the Other in <i>Dr. Korczak’s Example</i> and <i>Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza</i> | 49 |
| 8.1. Introduction..... | 49 |
| 8.2. Empathy..... | 49 |
| 8.3. The Other..... | 50 |
| 8.4. Empathy towards the Other..... | 51 |
| 8.5. Theatre as a ‘Moral Institution’..... | 52 |
| 8.6. <i>Seven Jewish Children</i> and <i>Dr. Korczak’s Example</i> : Evoking Empathy..... | 53 |
| 8.7. Conclusion..... | 57 |
| Conclusions..... | 58 |
| Works Cited..... | 60 |

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Abstract

This Master's Final Dissertation explores theatre as a tool in education and in political and social activism, demonstrating its potential to enable social change. The core focus of the arguments is based on two plays: David Greig's *Dr. Korczak's Example* (2001) and Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza* (2009). The theoretical part of the research attempts to throw some light on the history and development of Theatre in Education (TiE) and theatre used in political and social activism. It also introduces Jacques Rancière's concept of emancipated spectatorship with a view to establishing links between theatre as a tool and the spectators' perception of performances as actively engaged recipients and interpreters. This is complemented by some thoughts on Orientalism and anti-Orientalism in relation to the analysis of collaborations between British and Palestinian playwrights and companies, ultimately suggesting that Greig's and Churchill's cultural and political activism are examples of anti-Orientalist work within the context of international or global theatre. A detailed examination of *Dr. Korczak's Example* and its use by children's companies reveals its educational potential, while the discussion of *Seven Jewish Children* proves its power as a political event. Finally, a section on empathy brings *Dr. Korczak's Example* and *Seven Jewish Children* onto the arena of ethical discussion about 'response-ability' towards the Other that can be evoked for emancipated spectators through artistic practice – theatre in particular.

Introduction

The aim of my Master's Dissertation is to analyze theatre as a tool in education and in social and political activism. Both areas of study are vast in terms of their potential; they are also different from one another and yet at the same time very closely connected in terms of their purpose to contribute to social change. The dissertation focuses on two plays, *Dr. Korczak's Example* (2001) by David Greig and *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza* (2009) by Caryl Churchill.

Greig's *Dr. Korczak's Example* was written as part of a Scottish governmental programme on the use of theatre in secondary schools and is an illustration of theatre being used as a tool in educational and developmental processes. Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza* was a response to Israeli attacks on Gaza in 2009. The play has been performed internationally, raising awareness of the events in Gaza, and Churchill's activism around it has made it a centre of attention both in the political arena and in the theatrical and academic world.

As a theoretical framework, the dissertation first considers the potential and the practice of theatre in education and in social and political activism. This includes a reflection on political theatre and on social theatre projects, and is followed by a presentation of Jacques Rancière's concept of emancipated spectatorship, which will hopefully make it possible to build a connection between the notion of theatre as an educational and social tool and the plays themselves. Finally, some thoughts on Orientalism and anti-Orientalism and on empathy will be deployed in the analysis of the two plays.

The goal of this dissertation is to illustrate theatre's 'power', the importance of its 'use' in different spheres of social life. It aims to explore the transformative potential of theatre when used in social projects and theatre education programmes. It is hoped that

the analysis of Greig's and Churchill's plays and the exploration of the theoretical backgrounds will shed light on this.

1. Theatre as a Tool for Social Change

Applied theatre encompasses a range of practices, from digital storytelling projects – where young people become ‘prosumers’ who both create and consume art (Altrutz 2013: 45) – to social and political theatre – aimed to address critical situations in the society – and theatre in education as a method for creative learning processes. As an artistic practice, theatre has a potential for disruption and dissident discourse “[that] are a prelude to innovation and change” (Campbell 2014: 13).

Digital storytelling is usually a part of a single project including also drama-based pedagogy, theatre and performance techniques (Altrutz 2013: 47), aiming to stimulate creativity and initiative among youth. Social theatre, which often takes the form of participatory theatre, has a non-commercial nature and does not always have aesthetics as its foremost concern. It takes place “in diverse locations – from prisons, refugee camps, and hospitals to schools, orphanages, and homes for the elderly” (Thompson and Schechner 2004: 12). It invites individuals to participate in the performance by creating discussions based on the issues raised by the play, by letting spectators create alternative versions of the play, or encouraging them to step into some role.

Political theatre does not necessarily involve audience participation. A play can speculate on political issues and provoke the spectator towards new ways of thinking, but not be produced with the specific purpose of participation. However, political activism and theatre may be yoked together around the common aim of contributing to bring about social change. In such cases, theatre will often invite participation not (necessarily) in the performance itself, but in the controversies and forms of action emerging in the wake of the play. This specific issue is illustrated and discussed in this dissertation by reference to Caryl Churchill’s *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza* (2009).

Theatre in education (TiE) displays characteristics of all previous examples of applied theatre, as it can stimulate the spectator's creativity and encourage discussion of a given topic, as well as be an active tool in social and political change. Inseparable from a political agenda, TiE emerged after the Second World War, "became particularly influential in the era of optimism in the 1960s" (Nicholson 2009: 13), but from 1979 until well into the 1990s experienced serious difficulties in the UK as a consequence of the withdrawal of financial support for it on the part of the successive Conservative governments. The weak point of TiE is its dependence on subsidies, as the majority of TiE work is carried out at schools (Sextou 2003: 184). Notwithstanding this fact, TiE is a powerful tool for creative learning processes, as this dissertation hopes to demonstrate by reference to David Greig's *Dr. Korczak's Example* (2001).

2. Theatre in Education

Any good theatre will of itself be educational – that is, when it initiates or extends a questioning process in its audience, when it makes us look afresh at the world, its institutions and conventions and at our own place in that world, when it expands our notion of who we are, of the feelings and thoughts of which we are capable of, and of our connection with the lives of others.
(Jackson 2001: 35)

It is possible to learn from all theatre, of course, but that does not mean that all theatre is explicitly designed to be educational.
(Nicholson 2009: 5)

Theatre in education (TiE) is a relatively new phenomenon that dates from the beginning of the twentieth century, with roots in the Creative Dramatics movement of the 1930s that aimed to promote “children’s artistic and personal development” (Nicholson 2009: 16). It is now a branch of theatre in its own right, having developed into a specific approach to applied theatre work linked to the emergence of specialized programmes and companies. TiE aims to “engage and educate students, by presenting dramatic material that directly relates to their concerns and needs” (Mirrione 2011: 76). TiE was inspired by Bertolt Brecht, whose “epic theatre was designed to transform spectators from passive recipients of a consumer culture to critical thinkers who were aware of their own oppressions” (Nicholson 2009: 28). Its structure and form hinge on the belief that spectators can think dialectically.¹

¹The notion of theatre’s ability to teach is not universally commonly accepted, though – some, such as Edward Bond, for instance, believe in the potential of theatre in education, while others, such as Howard Barker, argue that “[a]rtistic creation is so unstable that a theatre seems to me the last place you would go to ‘learn’ something” (qtd. in Nicholson 2009: 7).

As the term TiE is quite often confused with other (related) forms of theatre, it is important to distinguish it from young people's theatre, children's theatre, youth Theatre, education in theatre, which "raises awareness of what theatre is and how it works", 'workshops' or 'play days' (Jackson 2001: 7) – all of which primarily stage plays for entertainment or introduce theatre as a subject to be learnt, rather than as a tool for a learning, albeit they may certainly play a role within an educational process. In relation to these distinctions, Albert Hunt argues that education through theatre means "not theatre in the sense of putting on plays, although this later became a part of it, but theatre in the sense of setting up concrete situations through which people could learn, directly and by experience" (1976: 41).

As many writers and academics use the term 'drama' in the context of TiE, it seems crucial to raise the question of the distinction between drama – referring basically to the written text – and theatre – a performance that may or may not be text-based. In his introduction to Helen Nicholson's *Theatre & Education*, playwright Edward Bond argues that "[w]e must distinguish between drama and theatre. [...] Theatre can teach, drama teaches nothing – drama creates [...]. Theatre may help you find yourself in society, drama requires you to find society in you" (2009: 11, 12). Curiously, although Nicholson herself does mention "two parallel and inter-related educational movements, drama-in-education and Theatre-in-Education" (2009: 13), she does not dive into an exploration of the differences between education through drama and theatre, but simply builds her argument about TiE around the latter. At the same time, many theatre researchers use the term 'drama' – actually meaning 'theatre' as defined above – when analyzing its applicability in education, as "a very powerful tool [...] that can help the building up of a child's own self-esteem, confidence, and ability to deal with difficult

personal and social questions” (Scullion 2008: 382). Researchers into theatre in education in Finland similarly use the words ‘drama’:

[d]rama offers an active dimension for learning about ‘as if’ real life situations in teacher education. By taking the roles of characters in situations and stories, teacher students are able to behave as if they were inside the situation, facing the same experiences and problems as the characters. (Toivanen, Komulainen and Ruismäki 2011: 63)

Notwithstanding these difficulties, this dissertation uses the terms ‘theatre’ and TiE because of their emphasis on the possibilities of performance used in education as an instrument for learning.

TiE’s main objective is to “use theatre as a tool to explore ideas, feelings and values rather than to teach children how to put on plays” (Nicholson 2009: 24). It engages young people into representing situations so as to invite debate and empower critical thinking. TiE companies have their specific methods and approaches, and their actors and teachers require certain skills: ideally, they need to be researchers, performers, and be able to work with children and youth. As an example, Unicorn Theatre in London, a specialist theatre for children, “offers in-service training for teachers, post-show discussions, workshops about current productions and an opportunity for local children to perform their own work in the theatre at annual festival” (Nicholson 2009: 57).

Even after more than half a century since its appearance, TiE continues to be innovative and alternative in relation to standard educational systems in the UK, the US, Canada, Australia and other countries, and it has always depended on “the social, cultural and political climates in which it takes place” (Nicholson 2009: 35). According to Joe Winston, “key contributions theatre has to offer the field of moral education is its ability to problematize moral positions, to raise questions rather than offer answers, to provoke rather than resolve debate” (2005: 321). TiE’s *participatory practices* engage

young people and children effectively “in ethical reflection and debate” (Winston 2005: 321), thus broadening the boundaries of their learning process. As will be seen, *Dr. Korczak’s Example* illustrates the point made by Winston, as it does not offer children pre-determined ideas, but invites them to make their own interpretations and reach their own conclusions.

3. Theatre and Political and Social Activism

Theatre can serve as a tool for envisioning,
negotiating, rehearsing, and enacting change. [...]
Maybe theatre in itself is not
revolutionary, but it is surely a rehearsal
for the revolution (Boal 2008: 122).

Political and social activism through theatre play a significant role in the society, as they bring theatre beyond its 'walls', allowing a larger audience to become involved in the issue(s) presented by a specific play. Peter Caster claims activist performance to be “a production explicitly acknowledging itself as theatre and framed by dramatic convention that associates itself with a particular social project” (2004: 114). Such social projects often involve some form or other of participation. However, participation understood in the broadest sense possible may actually also be present in conventional theatre.

While participatory theatre “is aimed to break down conventional theatre and art, change the relationship between audiences and art and support social change”, conventional theatre “tends to have a non-participatory focus, with professional actors showing a piece of theatre that is generally one-way directed to an audience” (Sloman 2011: 43). However, as Annie Sloman notices, conventional theatre also can “potentially encourage change” (2011: 44). Both conventional and participatory theatre can stimulate action by “engag[ing] people to identify issues of concern, analyse and then together think about how change can happen, and particularly how relationships of power and oppression can be transformed” (Sloman 2011: 44). Greig, whose work includes both conventional and participatory plays, such as plays written for children, believes, that “political theatre has at its very heart the possibility of change” (Nichols 2013: 48).

Not all academics or playwrights agree, though, that theatre has the potential to contribute to social change in general. For instance, and as noted by Joe Kelleher, Peter Handke, Austrian playwright and political activist, argues that “theatre’s instrumentalism, its use as a means of guiding our actions and changing the world, does not work – never did, never will” (2009: 57). The political and social functions of theatre depend a great deal on the circumstances in which it is produced, as well as on the audience it targets – a specific production might ‘work’ with one group of people, and not work with another. Joe Kelleher argues that this characteristic of political theatre actually constitutes its value, which hinges precisely on its “instability and unpredictability” (2009: 24). Unpredictability is also central to Jacques Rancière’s understanding of both spectatorial activity and of the ethico-political effects of aesthetic work in general. For Rancière, the ethico-political potential of any artistic practice depends on its ability to “interrupt the distribution of the sensible” or “reconfigure the sensible delimitation of what is common to the community, the forms of its visibility and its organization” (2004: 18), but the actual *realization* of such potential is ultimately the unpredictable outcome of the intersection between (emancipated) spectators’ active engagement and the complexity of countless contextual factors.²

As mentioned previously, applied theatre projects vary within a shared orientation towards promoting social change. Two examples of such projects include the research-based play *I am Still Here* (2004) authored by doctors Gail J. Mitchell and Christine Jonas-Simpson and playwright Vrenia Ivonoffski (Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program n.d), depicting people diagnosed with dementia so as to encourage tolerance and humaneness towards this disease (Mitchell, Dupuis, and Jonas-Simpson

²For more on Rancière’s ‘emancipated’ spectator, please see section 4 below.

2011: 22), and the dance theatre project *Speak Out. Act Up. Move Forward.*, devised by Urbano and involving “immigrant students or children of immigrants, many of whom grapple with questions of identity, assimilation, and communication” (Kotin et al. 2013: 191).

I am Still Here premiered in 2004 in the Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program (MAREP) at the University of Waterloo (Canada), and over the following three years it toured Canada and the US, playing more than hundred times in an attempt to spread understanding of the disorder. As a result, “many professionals spoke of being more patient and understanding with people and more willing to learn about their likes and wishes, instead of just giving care without considering the person. They were able to link these new understandings and actions to specific scenes in the play” (Mitchell, Dupuis, and Jonas-Simpson 2011: 25). Ultimately, Mitchell, Dupuis and Jonas-Simpson report, “audience members constructed new ways of seeing through the drama, they felt – felt it deeply – the ethical call – and they responded with passionate expressions to act” (2011: 26). This project, focused on social transformation, illustrates how theatre can ‘activate’ spectators and inspire change.

The second example of applied theatre concerns the politically inspired dance theatre show *Speak Out. Act Up. Move Forward.* conducted by the Urbano Project partly in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Department of Arts, Culture, and Technology. Urbano “seek[s] parallels between the processes of studio experimentation and political engagement” (Kotin et al. 2013: 191). In the case of *Speak Out. Act Up. Move Forward.*, “Urbano’s staff and instructors wondered how young people could use art as a tool to enter public conversations about authority, social control, and personal freedom” (2013: 191) by exploring “historic and contemporary acts of civil disobedience from Occupy Boston to the Tiananmen Square protests”

(Urbano n.d). The idea developed into this project for young people, which encouraged them to ‘speak up’ about “struggles to stand up for their beliefs, express themselves, and defy social and family expectations in the face of bullying and peer pressure” (Kotin et al. 2013: 192). The project resulted in a dance performance “that invited audience members to propose their own interpretations and see themselves as actors in the struggles Urbano dancers portrayed” (2013: 199).

While *I am Still Here* might be described as a ‘conventional’ play, as it does not have audience participation as its main purpose, *Speak Out. Act Up. Move Forward.* explicitly invited audience participation. In both cases, however, the audience participated as active, emancipated spectators, responding to the ethical calls for tolerance by – demonstrably in the first case, most probably in the second – taking further social and political action.

4. Emancipated Spectatorship

Jacques Rancière's concept of emancipated spectatorship is highly relevant when delving into TiE – represented here by Greig's *Dr. Korczak's Example* – and theatre and social and political activism – exemplified in this dissertation by Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children*. As is well known, Rancière's main argument is based on his rejection of the misguided tendency to “link seeing and passivity, as he asserts that the act of watching should not be equated with intellectual passivity” (Freshwater 2009: 16). On the contrary, he argues that “[b]eing spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into activity. It is our normal situation” (Rancière 2009: 17). In other words, Rancière's active, emancipated spectators do not have to make an effort in order to become such – it is their ontological condition. Such a view of spectatorial activity ties in with the activism that (often) surrounds political and social theatre, where the spectator is always invited to be an active figure involved in the performance. The same happens with TiE, where the spectator clearly “acts, [...] she observes, selects, compares, interprets. [...] She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way” (Rancière 2009: 13).

It is important to stress that Rancière understands spectatorial emancipation as a unique individual experience:

The collective power shared by spectators does not stem from the fact that they are members of a collective body [...] It is the power each of them has to translate what she perceives in her own way, to link it to the unique intellectual adventure that makes her similar to all the rest in as much as this adventure is not like any other. (2009: 16-17)

Emancipated spectatorship has some resonance with Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of Oppressed', whose main objective is “to change the people – ‘spectators’ – passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action” (2008: 122), that is to say, in Boal's own terms, ‘spect-actors’.

However, Rancière goes beyond Boal, as he argues that spectators have never been/are never passive, and therefore do not need to be ‘transformed’ into active participants.

As will hopefully become clear subsequently, *Dr. Korczak’s Example* and *Seven Jewish Children* are plays that presume emancipated spectatorship as their core principle, inviting each individual spectator to debate, act, respond and learn.

5. David Greig, Caryl Churchill and the Middle East: Some Thoughts on Orientalism and anti-Orientalism

5.1. Introduction

Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*, first published in 1978, put forward a systematized approach to a phenomenon that may be said to have emerged in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries and still continues to play a role in the Western frame of mind. The book thus established Orientalism as a specific field of study or discipline, one whose continuing relevance is demonstrated by its having been reissued in 1995 and 2003, with a new preface. In an interview, Said mentions that, much to his surprise, writing the preface after 25 years made him realize that things had changed for the worse (Said n.d).

The aim of this part of the dissertation is to identify and analyze anti-Orientalist phenomena occurring in the context of theatre collaborations between British theatre companies and playwrights Caryl Churchill and David Greig and Middle-Eastern playwrights and companies – Palestinian in particular– on the basis of Said's approach to Orientalism, and to suggest that such collaborations are examples of active anti-Orientalist work.

In his book, Said gives examples from literature and the arts, the media and political propaganda, all of which contributed to shaping the Western image of the Orient, its culture and its people. *Orientalism* is basically a historical analysis, and it has been severely criticized. Some scholars praise it as a “masterpiece” (Samiei 2010: 145), while some object to Said's approach as “manifestly idealist” (Richardson 1990: 16) and claim that merely pointing to the false representation of the Orient is not enough – ‘truthful’ examples of representation are required, which Said himself recognizes. One

of the other problems with *Orientalism* is the lack of references and the repetitiveness of the writing. The book gives many names and even quotations that are seldom connected to their original background, thus raising the question of the authority of Said's writing, no matter how influential it may have been.

5.2. Orientalism and anti-Orientalism

Notwithstanding these difficulties, Said's conceptual framework does provide a basis for a more practical use of his ideas. The first question is, what is Orientalism itself? In a nutshell, Orientalism is 'the Western approach to the Orient' (Said 2003: 73). In other words,

[Orientalism is] the hegemonic view in the 'West' of the inferiority of the 'East', a view both anticipating and justifying a colonial relation between dominant and subordinate, manifest in culture, language, ideology, social science, media, and political discourse. [Orientalism illustrates this 'Western view'] not as an intentionally malicious racism but rather as an often unconscious and sometimes benevolently intended set of attitudes and preconceptions arising out of relations of power. (Marcuse 2004: 809)

Said's arguments, supported by examples of close readings of Orientalist texts, show the constant discourse of Western superiority and misleading representation of the Orient, based on the following binary distinctions: "The Orient is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (Said 2003: 40). In the wake of so-called 'Islam trauma' (Said 2003: 59), the Orient is still being represented as a 'dangerous Other', as a threat to the Western world, a view that underpins Western hostility towards the Orient.

On the basis of this definition of Orientalism, it can be suggested that anti-Orientalism is what is contrary to Orientalism as a form of knowledge and power. Said's *Orientalism* allows subsequent researchers to go beyond its specific discourse and explore the reverse pattern of representation, namely anti-Orientalism.

5.3. Voice and Silence

Said calls Orientalism a “kind of intellectual power” (2003: 41) as well as an “academic discipline” (2003: 50), as it was 18th- and 19th-century Western scholars and scientists, writers and artists, who established Orientalist patterns and inscribed them onto the daily life of Arab people, who therefore were represented by others. Both in Orientalist and in anti-Orientalist discourse, a key question concerns voice and silence in representation. Said writes that the cultural strength of the West is inextricably linked to the fact that historically the West has written while the Orient has remained silent (2003: 94), thus raising the notion that “if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, [...] and for the poor Orient. ‘Sie können sich nicht vertreten, sie müssen vertreten werden’” (2003: 24), as Marx wrote.

Current collaborations between British and Middle-Eastern playwrights and companies involve attempts to break through those silences and thus put an anti-Orientalist discourse in practice. The social and political activism of two prominent British playwrights, Greig and Churchill, on behalf of Palestine, and the presence on contemporary British stages of ‘Orient-born’ plays, such as *Fireworks* (*Al’Ab Nariya*; published in 2015) by Palestinian author Dalia Taha, performed at the Royal Court Theatre in March 2013, illustrates this anti-Orientalist discourse.

5.4. Theatre and Orientalism/anti-Orientalism

Theatre studies play an important role in the discourse of Orientalism and anti-Orientalism, as is attested by the numerous publications analyzing the dichotomy between ‘East’ and ‘West’ and the respective theatre worlds. Such is the research

conducted by Leonard C. Pronko, which, according to Steve Tillis, laid the foundations for an anti-Orientalist approach to Eastern theatre:

[Other scholars, such as Kenneth Macgowan and William Melnitz] capped off their extremely brief remarks on Chinese theatre with the frank, if appalling, comment that ‘obviously, this is all very odd, outlandish, and absurd.’ They continued: ‘It seems far too remote from our own theatre for any Westerner to accept and enjoy’ (cited in Sorgenfrei 1997, 256). And so it fell to Professor Pronko to insist that theatre beyond Europe and America was not odd, outlandish, and absurd, but understandable and valuable. (2003: 72)

Subsequently Tillis claims that it is important to consider Western and Eastern theatres together, not only so as to learn more about Eastern theatre in this way, but also in terms of “what it can teach us about Western theatre” (2003: 72).

5.5. A Non-homogeneous Orient

One of the common problems of Orientalist discourse is its generalization about the Orient, placing discussion of Syria and Egypt within the same frame as Morocco or Algeria, notwithstanding the differences from one another. In terms of the present argument, the theatre background of Lebanon is greatly different from Egypt’s, and Palestinian collaboration with British theatre cannot be equated with Syrian collaboration.

Brazilian exiled theatre practitioner Augusto Boal, founder of Theatre of Oppressed, pointed out that “The Aristotelian theatre is not the only form of theatre” (Amine 2006: 146), thus drawing attention to the interest and relevance of other, non-Western forms of theatre. However, according to Khalid Amine, “Western theatre was represented to the nineteenth-century Arabs with a strong aura of authority” (2006: 145), not leaving space for its ‘alternative’ development. Nowadays, it is hoped that such collaboration as there is between British playwrights and Palestinian theatre companies: INAD Theatre, The Freedom Theatre, Al Kasabah Theatre and Ashtar

Theatre to name but a few, as well as with playwrights Amir Reza Koohestani (Iran) and Dalia Taha (Palestine), demonstrates a new era of relations between Middle-Eastern and Western theatre, one based on a more egalitarian footing.

5.6. David Greig and the Palestinian Issue

Greig has been working in Palestine since 2000, teaching theatre, conducting workshops with Palestinian writers and working on his own plays. In the introduction to *Dr. Korczak's Example: A Play for Children*, he writes about his experience with INAD, a children's theatre company that "seeks to provide access to theatre and the arts to over 200,000 Palestinians living in the southern West Bank" (INAD Theatre n.d), which "had been hit by a tank shell and its walls pockmarked by bullets from the settlement across the valley. Throughout this violence INAD continued their work" (Greig 2001: 4).

Greig mentions his conversation with Raeda Ghazaleh, the company's director, about the figure of Janusz Korczak (1878-1942), whose work in Warsaw's Jewish ghetto, of course, is praised by many in Israel. Greig asks Ghazaleh whether she feels ambivalent towards Korczak's legacy, and adds that the answer to this was a video showing INAD actors and local children marching along the valley after the bombing of their theatre, bearing a banner where the children had painted the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (2001: 4, 70) – a declaration based on the World Child Welfare Charter endorsed by the League of Nations in 1924 and signed by Korczak among other international delegates (Wikipedia n.d.).

One of Greig's recent actions was the 2014 'kickstarter' project 'Welcome to the Fringe', aimed to "support Palestinian artists, and Israeli artists who reject state funds, to come to Edinburgh Fringe art festival" (Kickstarter 2014). In addition, among

a long list of writers, academics and artists, Greig protested against inclusion of Incubator Theatre (Israel) in the 2014 Fringe programme. The petition explained the situation in the following way: “The current, brutal assault by Israel upon the people of Gaza, which is an appalling collective punishment, underlines the seriousness of this error in co-operating with a company which is funded by the Ministry of Culture of the State of Israel” (Lochhead et al. 2014).

5.7. Caryl Churchill’s *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza and MAP*

As a comment to her work in Palestine, Churchill wrote:

I’m just back from a week’s work in Ramallah at the Ashtar theatre. Visiting Palestine brought home to me more vividly than before the crazily oppressive conditions there. Things in Gaza are far worse of course and when bombs fall it’s in the news but meanwhile the everyday enraging pettiness of occupation backed by violence goes on and on – the fast road you can’t drive on unless you are an Israeli or have special ID, the town you can’t live in with your wife – and the illegal Israeli settlements expand. Israel wants to use theatre, dance, music, to show a different side of itself in the hope the world will overlook its crimes. (Artists for Palestine UK n.d.)

Written as a response to Israeli attacks on Gaza in 2009, which led to 1,417 Palestinian and 13 Israeli deaths, Churchill’s *Seven Jewish Children* has triggered numerous reactions, many of them contradictory, and some in the form of plays. A month after the premiere of the play at the Royal Court Theatre, Theatre J in Washington produced *Seven Palestinian Children*, written by Deborah S. Margolin. Curiously, Theater J define their mission around the presentation of works that “celebrate the distinctive urban voice and social vision that are part of the Jewish cultural legacy” (Monica Hesse 2009). At the New End Theatre in Hampstead, London, in May 2009, Richard Stirling’s *Seven Other Children* was produced, and in New York,

What Strong Fences Make was written by Israel Horovitz – all of them critical responses to Churchill’s play.³

Being a political event, not only a theatre event, and in accordance with Churchill’s express instructions, performances of *Seven Jewish Children* help to raise money all over the world for MAP (Medical Aid for Palestinians n.d.), not having any other commercial benefit. Churchill has visited the West Bank in Palestine and has personally presented some performances of her play (Caryl Churchill in Palestine n.d.). Numerous critics have accused Churchill of not having a right to talk about the events in the Middle East as she is not a Jew or an Arab. However, does such an argument not lead directly to Orientalism? Orientalism is built on preconceived frames and prejudices that do not leave space for critical thinking. I suggest both Churchill’s play and her political activism around it are deeply anti-Orientalist, as they focus on representations of the Other(s) that are free of stereotypes and ‘framed thinking’.

5.8. What has Palestine done for British Theatre?

Proof of the need and possibility to elude the Orientalist paradigm, the cooperation between British and Palestinian playwrights is an example of mutual interest and enrichment. The Royal Court has been working with Palestinian playwrights and theatre companies since 1998, organizing study visits in collaboration with the British Council and the Genesis Foundation, as well as panel discussions with the participation of Arab playwrights. In the video “Royal Court in Palestine” (Arabic Literature (in English) 2015), playwright Stephen Jeffreys says: “In terms of the Royal Court, it’s the exchange of ideas. It’s not a one-way process. I can’t think of a [British] writer who hasn’t been

³ The full text for Horovitz’s play is available on Theater J’s website, at http://thejdc.convio.net/site/DocServer/What_Strong_Fences_Make-Final_Draft.pdf?docID=2701

changed by going to one of the places that we tend to go on visits. Whether it's a political or a stylistic idea or a general feeling of the country, it changes the writers". A similar viewpoint is shared by Elyse Dodgson, Associate Director and Head of the International Department of the Royal Court Theatre, who states that "Palestine has done a lot more for British theatre practitioners, than we could ever do for them" (Arabic Literature (in English) 2015). I suggest, Dodgson refers to the deep enrichment British playwrights have experienced as a result of their close encounter with other approaches to writing and cultural representations through their shared work with Palestinian authors.

5.9. Conclusion

Each in their own way, Greig and Churchill are actively involved in the political situation in Palestine, cooperating on the social and artistic level with its people, managing support projects and trying to work on realistic representations of those in Israel who are critical of their government and those who are not. Their activism is an example of the potential of theatre to be a powerful tool towards social change and an illustration of the anti-Orientalist approach in representations of the Other.

6. David Greig's *Dr. Korczak's Example* (2001)

6.1. Introduction

The aim of this section is to reflect on *Dr. Korczak's Example*, a play for children written by Scottish playwright David Greig in 2001 and first produced at the Royal Exchange Theatre (Manchester) by Tangram Theatre Company within the framework of the 'Making the Nation' project. The core focus is on examining the potential of theatre as an educational tool based on a view of the arts as active instruments that can trigger change in society. The play is explored from the point of view of emancipated spectatorship and active participation. The teacher resource packs from three different productions, each suggesting a special form of play 'delivery' to a young audience, are analyzed. Attention is also paid to ethical issues of 'response-ability' towards others raised in the play, as well as to characters and their representation.

6.2. The 'Making the Nation' Project

The insights into the history of theatre in education (TiE) provided in a previous section of this dissertation throw light on any play produced within an educational programme, such as *Dr. Korczak's Example*, written for the 'Making the Nation' project in Scottish secondary schools. "Used for exploring ethical issues relating to moral and health education" (Winston 2005: 309), TiE "[...] raises questions rather than offers answers, provokes, rather than resolves debates" (Winston 2005: 321). As Clare Wallace mentions in *The Theatre of David Greig*, "the purpose [of theatre for young people] is not to tell audiences what to think but to invite them to engage" (2013: 57).

"Beginning in 1999 and culminating in summer 2002, TAG Theatre Company's 'Making the Nation' project sought to engage children and young people throughout

Scotland in ideas relating to democracy, politics, and government” (Scullion 2005: 318). Within this frame, Greig, among other writers participating in the project, wrote a play that would incite children to engage in ethical debates around “moral certainties and political assumptions” (Scullion 2005: 318). *Dr. Korczak’s Example* was written as a companion piece for a stage version of Janusz Korczak’s children story, *King Matt* (2005: 317), written by Stephen Greenhorn.

Produced for children of “twelve and above” – an older audience than in the case of other ‘Making the Nation’ productions – and first “directed by TAG’s then artistic director, James Brining”, *Dr. Korczak’s Example* has as its principal theme “active citizenship and the particular example of the children’s court and parliament” (Scullion 2005: 319). The play has been mainly presented in schools, supported by workshops and study packs exploring the horrors of the Holocaust and its political context.

Describing his plays to be “dealing overtly with contemporary issues of power” (2011: 3), Greig adds that he tends to be “on the side of” the weaker party in any relationship” (2011: 4). Peter Zenzinger describes Greig’s theatre as one that “impresses on his audience the intricate links that exist between nationalism and cultural identity and their controversial consequences, both political, and personal” (1996: 125).

Greig’s interest in theatre for children started with his telling stories to his own children when they were little (Greig 2015). Depending on their interest, he would make some characters disappear or develop them further, paying attention to “the work’s theatricality” (2011: 11). Greig finds that honesty is a mandatory requirement placed by children on an adult that tells them stories or writes for them:

If they sense they are getting something which is *for children* and which aims to improve them, they will be distrustful. If, however, they sense an adult who *genuinely* is exploring his own world and emotions, they will go along on the journey with fierce loyalty. Therefore one has to be honest, playful, clear, mischievous, and unpretentious. (2011: 11; emphasis original)

As is shown below, *Dr. Korczak's Example* is a non-didactic play that provides space for independent thinking and their own exploration of the topic on the part of a young (emancipated) audience.

6.3. Janusz Korczak and Children's Rights

Korczak was born in 1878 (or 1879, sources vary) in Warsaw in a wealthy Jewish family. He was a pediatrician and after working for the Orphan's Society in Berlin, he became the director of an orphanage in Warsaw designed by him personally for Jewish children (Janusz Korczak Communication Center n.d.) Eventually,

Janusz Korczak died in August 1942, in the Nazis' extermination camp Treblinka. He died together with the children from his Jewish orphanage in Warsaw and he died for them, giving them hope in a situation of despair. Korczak wanted to be with them in their darkest hour, when they needed him most, and had declined various offers to arrange his escape from the gas chambers. (Eichsteller 2009: 378)

Such is the real story that inspired the play *Dr. Korczak's Example*, which also gives voice to a series of fictional characters that could, however, have existed. It leaves out, though, the important figure of Stefa Wilczyńska(1886-1942), the teacher and educator with whom Korczak opened the Orphan's Home (*Dom Sierot*) in 1911, and who also "led the children on their last march" (Eichsteller 2009: 380).

Korczak's principal views on children are depicted in the words, "love the child, not only your own" (qtd. in Eichsteller 2009: 381) and "children don't become human beings, they already are" (qtd. in Eichsteller 2009: 384). For Korczak, children's rights were paramount, and such an outlook found its application in the Children's Court, which functioned as a system of justice in the orphanage and where children were judges themselves, being selected each week. Children also wrote and printed their own newspaper, where Korczak also, occasionally, published some of his essays. *Dr.*

Korczak's Example takes the topic of the Children's Court as the basis of the plot, thus raising issues of justice, rights, power and active citizenship. These issues were also at the heart of the practical work on the play conducted by the theatre companies that produced it.

6.4. Teachers' Resource Packs

Dr. Korczak's Example creates a representation of real historical events and encourages its young audiences to discover and further explore them through workshops and games. In general, the play may be described as biographic; however, as will be seen, it includes some elements which bring it beyond realism – to a level where the spectator's imagination plays a crucial role.

As adult audience members, we may be positioned before a historical/biographical play such as *Dr. Korczak's Example* either as 'knowing' or 'unknowing' spectators (see Hutcheon 2012: 121).⁴ We may be well informed of what the play is about – we might even have read it before seeing it in the theatre – or on the contrary, we might know nothing about it, in which case we can receive new images, unexpected 'messages', and feel 'unprepared' emotions. Children are more vulnerable in this respect: they may be left to their own devices under the fire of performance, in which case it might shock them and never be understood, or they may be familiarized with the context and the play itself previously, thus preparing the ground for their relatedness to or even interpretation of the play in question

The 'pre-performance' activities conducted by the Royal Exchange Theatre (Manchester), Tangram Theatre Company, the Unicorn Theatre (London) and TAG

⁴ This distinction is borrowed from Linda Hutcheon, who applies it to audiences vis-à-vis film adaptations.

Theatre Company (Glasgow), all of which have staged *Dr Korczak's Example*, exemplifies the work being done by children's and youth theatre companies in order to facilitate their audience's processes of perception and understanding of plays. These theatres/companies have produced 'info packs' for teachers and other individuals and organizations that work with children, where they can find a great deal of information and research into the topics of the Holocaust, children's rights and relations of power, adapted for children and teenagers.

Tangram was the first theatre company that produced *Dr. Korczak's Example* (Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, 2008). The production's activity pack includes bright visual illustrations that create a feeling of entertainment rather than formal study, information about Janusz Korczak as a historical figure and his important work, and notes from the rehearsals meant to involve the audience in the process of creation of the production.



Figs. 1, 2, 3. Illustrations made by Miriam Nabarro, Royal Exchange Theatre's production designer.

The notes are crucial, in that they bring the spectator into close contact with the play and its preparation, construction and ultimate stage form. Here is an example of the examples made by director Amy Leach:

We went on a research trip to the Manchester Jewish Museum (www.mjm.org.uk) where the wonderful staff told us lots about the Jewish faith and the Warsaw Ghetto. We also watched DVDs of the opening to 'The Pianist' and an old Polish film called 'Kanal'. And Miriam, our Designer, covered a wall of the rehearsal room with images which we had collected relating to the play. Some of the time we sat round a table in the rehearsal room talking about the play. The actors would read the play out loud, one scene at a time, and then we discussed that scene. This was a good opportunity for me to share some of the background research I had done and for us to start to raise questions which we could explore in future rehearsals. (Royal Exchange Theatre 2008: 6)

Another interesting part of the info pack are the game activities, involving the recreation of costume design sketches or the orphanage newspaper, or children imagining themselves in the place of certain characters. Some of the questions on the game activities examine possible solutions to real events represented in the play, asking children to take their 'chance' on an alternative history turn. This is well illustrated by what follows:

Imagine that you were suddenly thrust into the role of Prime Minister or King/Queen. What reforms would you make? You can be as radical as you wish. What would you want to do to make a better world? If you work on this idea in a group, feedback your proposals to the others and take a vote on who should become a new leader. (Royal Exchange Theatre 2008: 9)

Aimed at older children than the Royal Exchange "Programme and Activity Pack", the "Teacher Resource Pack" linked to the production of *Dr. Korczak's Example* by Unicorn Theatre (September 23-November 11, 2012) presents a broader historical context, including detailed information about a Warsaw ghetto, Korczak's biography and legacy, and more complex activities content. As an example, the activity entitled "Leaving home for the last time" asks children to imagine themselves in such circumstances and explore the moment through "improvisation and thought tracking"

(Unicorn Theatre 2012: 19). Such a task might be inappropriate for younger children. Like the Royal Exchange’s “Programme and Activity Pack”, the Unicorn’s resource pack also includes information on play production, “Making the Play”, with interviews with Greig on the process of writing, director Ria Parry on the choice of the play, the designer and actors, and a YouTube link to a video from the rehearsal process – all aiming to involve the audience in the production process.

Instead of the drawings that serve as illustrations in the Royal Exchange’s information pack, the Unicorn’s resource pack has real historical photographs of Korczak and of children from the Warsaw ghetto being deported, as well as a map of the ghetto:

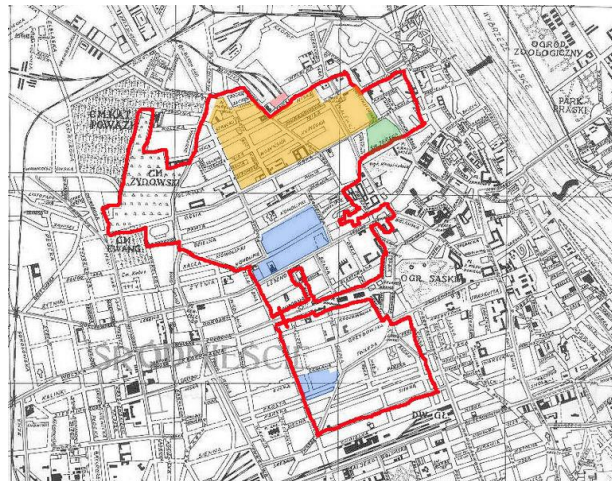


Fig 4. Warsaw ghetto 1940 (Unicorn Theatre 2012: 5)





Figs.5, 6. Adults and children being deported from the Warsaw ghetto (Unicorn Theatre 2012: 8).

On its part, TAG, the company that commissioned *Dr. Korczak's Example*, explores three main themes from the play in its "Teachers' Resource Pack": "resistance to oppression, community and the individual, and children's rights" (2001: 1). It includes a detailed account of how role-play games or drama exercises, such as "interviewing the past" (2001: 2) or "blue eyes brown eyes" (2001: 7), a game on power relations, can be used in class, using image cards and other techniques. Text analysis plays an important role in the pack, creating a space for reflection on and interpretation of the play by children, asking questions: "How would you feel about having a court in your school?", or "In the light of the historical period, how realistic were Dr. Korczak's beliefs in the rights his children should have?" (2001: 9). Each of the information and resource packs is based on in-depth research into the topic and explores theatre as a tool for social transformation through the education of children and youth. They thus contribute to modeling emancipated spectators, critical subjects, and active citizens.

6.5. *Dr. Korczak's Example and Ethical Debate*

KORCZAK: I've trained them well.
For a perfect world.
How will they survive this one?
(Greig 2001: 49)

The core of the play is Dr. Korczak's belief in the rights of children. This conviction is viewed with surprise by the new member of the orphanage Adzio, a fictional character embodying those who were rebels, those who did not fit into Dr. Korczak's idealistic world. Adzio is the boy who brings trouble, the one who questions the position they were all in. In a sense, he is Dr. Korczak's second, doubting voice, skeptical about the entire notion of resisting injustice:

ADZIO (to Korczak): Do you think your rules and your courts and your whatever is supposed to impress me? You're either blind or stupid. Out there – in the world. You want something – you take it. You got something – you fight to keep it. You steal. You rob. You cheat. [...] Because if you don't do it to them. They'll do it to you.

KORCZAK: You'll be alive. But... In a world like that. What would be the point? (Greig 2001: 42) [...]

KORCZAK (to the soldier): My children are suffering – [and I am saying] [i]t's fine, it's all fine. [...] You've made us into zombies, Soldier. (Greig 2001: 45)

Therefore, Adzio also questions the Children's Court that he is judged by:

KORCZAK: It isn't my decision. You can take the case to the orphanage court if you like. [...]

ADZIO: You're a judge then.

KORCZAK: No, the judges are children. [...] A child has the right to be judged by people his own age. (2001: 22, 37)

Claiming such ideas in the first half of the 20th century was revolutionary. But have things changed all that much? Do we, in the so-called 'West', live in societies that have been so profoundly transformed that the Holocaust is no more than a ghost from a horrific past? Are children's rights respected now all over the world equally? Unfortunately not; on the contrary, we are witnesses to recurrent massacres and

examples of nations trying to dominate and enslave others, children being murdered because of their ethnicity in Syria, South Sudan, Rwanda and Palestine. In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman labels the Holocaust not unique but ‘normal’, a product of modernity, not unlike other contemporary historical horrors (1989: 2). Thus, *Dr. Korczak’s Example* is relevant and valuable especially nowadays, so many years after the Holocaust, as a reminder of its ominous ‘normality’.

Resistance to oppression is a key theme in play, and it is connected to the main principles of justice and the philosophy of the orphanage. The methods of resistance are illustrated in the dialogue between Korczak and the leader of the Jews, Cherniakov, where the latter tries to persuade Korczak to change his beliefs on the grounds that nothing can be done in order to save the children:

CERNIAKOV: [...] How can we resist them?

KORCZAK: By example. We could show them how to live.

We fight too, by proving that justice, and honesty, and tolerance still exist. We will resist the Nazis. (Greig 2001: 46-7)

One of Dr. Korczak’s convictions was the priority of community over the individual. In conversation with Adzio, newly-arrived at the orphanage, he voices his thoughts: “ADZIO: What if only a few kids get along with me? KORCZAK: A few is fine. [...] But the community is more important than any individual” (2001: 24). Wallace states that “Adzio’s individualism and Korczak’s commitment to community cannot be reconciled”, and quoting Anja Müller, she concludes that “[Korczak’s and Adzio’s] places in history are ironically reversed, Dr. Korczak is remembered for his ‘individual heroism [...whereas] Adzio’s death will be remembered in collective form” (2013: 44). Be that as it may, it is relevant to note that the ethical (and political) debate about individual/community, on whether ‘difference’ is commonly accepted or rejected by communities (see Bauman 2001), was proposed for discussion in the TAG Theatre

Company's "Teachers' Resource Pack", with the following questions: "Does society have the right to include one person and reject another from a community? How does being a member of a community affect the way we behave towards others?" (2001: 12).

The figure of a soldier plays an important role in the play. Spectators 'know' that he is present, but he remains silent and invisible. Dr. Korczak is continuously talking to him, but he never receives an answer. The soldier's lack of response and incorporeal 'existence' may be read as a means of representing the ethical unresponsiveness/irresponsibility of instances of power, deaf and blind to real people's lives and needs. However, "Korczak's pacifism is countered not by the Nazis, who are utterly indifferent to him, but by a child within his own institution" (Wallace 2013: 43)

– Adzio:

The strength of the play lies in how Greig confronts these two conflicting positions *without taking sides*. The play on the one hand illustrates the relevance and importance of conversation across cultures without coercion to consensus. On the other hand, it also asks the question in how far a utopian stance such as Korczak's can or ought to be maintained in the face of extremely inhumane conditions. (Müller qtd. in Wallace 2013: 43; emphasis added)

In short, *Dr. Korczak's Example's* educational potential relies on the involvement of emancipated spectators who will engage with the ethical dilemmas it poses and make up their own mind about them.

6.6. Conclusion

With *Dr. Korczak's Example*, "the approach to performance is governed by the need for the work to speak to audiences in non-theatre spaces in a fresh, effective manner" (Wallace 2013: 58). In other words, the effectiveness of the play depends on its ability to reach out to school-children so as to actively involve and engage them to participate as emancipated spectators. The play has been used as a tool in education for many

years, providing possibilities for youngsters to learn through theatre and related workshops, games and other activities. Taking as a starting point the ethical crisis of the Holocaust and its reverberations, *Dr. Korczak's Example* creates a space for children's reflections on questions of community and individualism, children's rights and non-violent resistance.

7. *Seven Jewish Children* and Its Political and Social Power

7.1. Introduction

The aim of this section is to explore the potential of theatre as a tool in political and social activism in relation to Caryl Churchill's play *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza*, written in 2009 as an immediate response to Israeli attacks on Palestine, "[t]he three-week Israeli military offensive in the Gaza Strip launched on December 27, 2008", where "1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed in the fighting, and tens of thousands of Palestinians were left homeless" (Craps 2014: 179). It is hoped that, by focusing on Churchill's political concern and activism as regards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and how that is framed into a piece of art, the discussion will illustrate the power of theatre when used as an instrument for social and political consciousness-raising. Different critical reactions to the play will be examined, most of which centre on its 'correctness', its structure and references.

7.2. Churchill's Political Concern and Activism

One of the most prominent playwrights currently active in Britain, Churchill has always responded in deeply engaged ways to contemporary social issues regarding gender, class, ecology and politics. To specify what is meant by politics, Stefan Collini defines it as "the important, inescapable, and difficult attempt to determine relations of power in a given space" (qtd. In Joe Kelleher 2009: 3). Critics have praised Churchill's ability to be unfailingly relevant and always ahead of the time: "Hers [Churchill's] is an oppositional, political theatre voice for contemporary times. 'Most plays', Churchill argues 'can be looked at from a political perspective'" (Aston and Diamond 2009: 1). In particular, Churchill demonstrates her concern about the effects and consequences of

globalization in a number of her plays. In *Far Away* (2000), for instance, the depiction of the influence of adults on children's perception of some of the ethical dilemmas regarding agency that are raised by globalization is a prominent issue, one to which she returns in *Seven Jewish Children*, where she complicates the issue even more by keeping children off stage, "which reinforces their utter disempowerment" (Monforte 2012: 99).

Far Away opens on an aunt and her niece, Joan, having a talk about what the niece has witnessed. Joan is woken up during the night by the sound of a human scream, which is explained away by her aunt as the sound of an owl. The blood the child stepped in is said to be from a dog, not from a person. The girl asks questions, insists, she does not at first believe her aunt's answers, claiming she went out of the window at night because "[she] wanted to *see*" (Churchill 2003: 7; emphasis added). "In brief, the child's capacity to reason and to think is undermined by the adult's concealing violent events so that the child will fall in with the adult conspiracy to believe herself 'part of a big movement . . . to make things better'" (Aston 2013: 159). By the end the girl surrenders, as Churchill suggests many of us routinely do – yet we, as spectators witnessing the situation, might be spurred to resist our questions being suppressed and roused to ask more, act more.

Reading *Seven Jewish Children* from a similar perspective underlines the importance of asking questions, witnessing the reality of political conflict in the Middle East and realizing that children's education is a key for prevention of further conflicts. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's concept of 'double-witnesses' (1992: 58) fruitfully illuminates the way in which spectators may be witnesses of both the theatrical performance and "their own process of subjective transformation" (Aragay 2014: 5), especially given that fact that, "for Churchill, an urgent political theatre question has

become how to further our ‘selves’ democratically in the absence of any ideological base from which to challenge the status quo” (Aston and Diamond 2009: 6).

7.3. *Seven Jewish Children* ‘in Action’

Churchill herself has described *Seven Jewish Children* as a “political event, not just a theatre event” (qtd. in Rocamora 2009). As Carol Rocamora points out, “[Churchill] has written a play that has gone from the page to the stage in a matter of weeks, provoking an immediate response and an ensuing worldwide dialogue” (Rocamora 2009). *Seven Jewish Children* was first read at the Royal Court Theatre, London, where it was immediately both highly praised and severely criticized. It is a short, seven-page, ten-minute long play, portraying Israeli history from the late nineteenth-century anti-Jewish pogroms in tsarist Russia through the Second World War and the Holocaust, the founding of the state of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, culminating with the 2008-9 attacks on Gaza. It is important to bear in mind, though, that “[the play] covers many years in 10 minutes and is, of course, an incomplete history” (Churchill 2009b).



Fig. 7. The Royal Court Theatre production directed by Dominic Cooke, and performed by a largely Jewish cast of 9 actors, in February 2009 (Monforte 2012: 99)

The play is shaped as a poem, each of its seven parts containing no indication as to whom each line belongs to. The form of *Seven Jewish Children* and its “lack of stage directions, identified speakers, and even plot forces us to find its dramatic meaning elsewhere: in the interaction between the script (given different shape in each production by actors and directors) and spectators (made to perform, too, as they generate meaning)” (Gobert 2014: 166). By allowing spectators to step inside the performance, the production of *Seven Jewish Children* by Rooms Productions in Chicago in March 2009 stressed the spectators’ active, emancipated involvement with the play (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Rooms Productions’ *Seven Jewish Children* in Chicago in March 2009, directed by Andrew Manley; the scenes were performed simultaneously, allowing the audience to circulate among the actors.

Churchill leaves a lot of freedom to the producers, as in her note to the play she states that it can be performed by any number of actors, distributing the lines in any way; no setting or time is mentioned. However, by stating, in the play’s subtitle, that *Seven Jewish Children* is *A Play for Gaza*, Churchill orients the spectator’s imagination already towards this specific context. And yet, interestingly, Rocamora mentions that her students at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts suggested alternative readings of the play, such as “It could be about any struggle”, “It could be about

colonization in India”, “I think it’s a tirade of an authority figure trying to calm down his people, but really trying to calm himself” (Rocamora 2009). This proves the play’s power to reflect and invite reflection on a specific political conflict of its time, while at the same time metaphorically encompassing any analogous political struggle against oppression.

Churchill’s activism as regards the situation in Gaza manifests itself in her having renounced any royalties for *Seven Jewish Children* and having stated that the play can be used and staged by anyone free of charge, and downloaded directly from the Royal Court Theatre’s webpage (Royal Court Theatre 2009). The only condition for this is that a collection for Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) be made after each performance (Medical Aid for Palestinians n.d.).



Figs. 9. Performance by Friends of Palestine Western Australia Community in 2010, directed by Vivienne Glance, which raised more than \$211.70 for MAP

Since 2009 the play has been performed all around the world, raising awareness about events in Gaza. On 26 February 2000, the *Guardian* website posted a performance of the play as a monologue, delivered by Jennie Stoller, thus offering a wider audience the possibility of watching the play (Shifrin 2014; Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. The Guardian's production of *Seven Jewish Children* as a monologue delivered by Jennie Stoller.

It has also been staged in Tel-Aviv in Hebrew several times (e.g. Fig. 11). The play's accessibility, enabled in the first instance by Churchill herself, has encouraged its circulation, thus enhancing its potential as a political tool inviting audiences to witness a piece of art representing a real war.



Fig. 11. Street performance of *Seven Jewish Children* in Tel-Aviv in 2009, directed by the Palestinian political prisoner Samieh Jabbarin and performed by Israeli actresses as a part of 10 days of action against the siege on Gaza. Received with ovations, a play was performed three times in front of 200 people in a busy public space – Rabin Square – without a permit from the Israeli authorities (Coalition of Women for Peace 2009)

7.4. For and Against

The play's aim of articulating a critique of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, raising money for humanitarian aid for Palestine and even possibly, ideally, contributing to stopping the war did not prevent critics from becoming split into three 'camps' – those, like the BBC, who found the play a "brilliant piece" but decided not to broadcast it "on the grounds of impartiality", according to Radio 4's drama commissioning editor Jeremy Howe (qtd. in Dowell 2009); those who "think Churchill's play should be seen and discussed as widely as possible" (Kushner and Solomon 2009); and those who saw it as an "open vilification of the Jewish people, not merely repeatedly perpetrating incendiary lies about Israel but demonstrably and openly drawing upon an atavistic hatred of the Jews" (Symons 2009).

One such criticism was addressed to the specific vocabulary and particular lines used by Churchill when talking about Jews. Thus, Howard Jacobson accused her of anti-Semitism in relation to her use of the phrase 'chosen people', arguing that it feeds an "ancient prejudice against that miscomprehended phrase, and claimed she had 'crossed over' in depicting "Jews rejoicing in the murder of little children" (Jacobson 2009). In her response, Churchill explains that her anti-Israeli political views do not have anything to do with anti-Semitism:

Then we have 'chosen people'. Some people are now uncomfortable with a phrase that can seem to suggest racial superiority. But George W. Bush, speaking to the Knesset on the 60th anniversary of the founding of Israel, talked about 'the homeland of the chosen people' without anyone suggesting he was accusing Israelis of racism or was anti-Semitic. (Churchill 2009b)

Whether the play is criticized or praised, it has been widely circulated and acknowledged around the world, which suggests its potential as a tool in social and political activism, in the sense of inducing people to ask questions and perhaps even

take action in the real world. As Joe Kelleher mentions, “the scenes that appear only to play before us in an external world ‘out there’ also involve ourselves” (2009: 13).

7.5. How the Play ‘Works’

Seven Jewish Children opens with the lines “Tell her it’s a game”, “Tell her it’s serious”, “But don’t frighten her” (Churchill 2009a: 2). This first set of lines, as mentioned above, evokes the Nazi Holocaust. “Tell her”/“Don’t tell her” is repeated at the start of most of the subsequent sections of the play, pointing to the difficulties parents experience when trying to explain the horrors of reality to their children. Many of the lines are contradictory, which emphasizes the hazards that attend such explanations – “Tell her there were people who hated Jews”, “Don’t tell her that” (Churchill 2009a: 3).

The period of the death camps survivors, represented in the second section or set of lines, and constant “instructions about how to tell the story and what should be represented as the truth of each historical moment” are highlighted in the words: “Tell her there are still people who hate Jews”, “Tell her there are people who love Jews”, “Don’t tell her to think Jews or not Jews” (Wallace 2014: 127). This section is followed by a third set alluding to the choice made by Jews to go to Israel, framed by the lines “Tell her we’re going home”, “Tell her it’s the land God gave us” (Churchill 2009a: 4). Section four evokes the moment of arrival in Israel and the beginning of the conflict with Palestinians, “raising questions of property, ethnicity and dispossessions” (Kritzer2010: 613): “Tell her this wasn’t their home”, “Tell her to be careful”, “Don’t tell her who used to live in this house”, “Tell her maybe we can share”, “Don’t tell her that” (Churchill 2009a: 5).

A turning point takes place in the fifth and the sixth sections, where the dominance of Jews is clear and is portrayed by the words “Tell her we won”, “Tell her we’ve got new land”, “Don’t tell her anything she doesn’t ask” (2009a: 6). Churchill emphasizes details that evoke a powerful picture of violent realities: “Tell her it’s our water, we have the right”, “Don’t tell her about the queues at the checkpoint”, “Don’t tell her they throw stones”, “Tell her they’re not much good against tanks”, “Don’t tell her that” (2009a: 7).

The longest set of lines as well as the most powerful part of the play is to be found in the seventh section, the bombing of Gaza in 2009, where adults gauge whether to tell or not to tell their children what was going on in the streets. Before the culminating speech in the play, the line “Don’t tell her her cousin refused to serve in the army” underlines the duality of what has to be or can be said to a child. “[F]inally, a single speaker is afforded a monologue in which a hatred of those seen to threaten his/her world is vented” (Wallace 2014: 127):

Tell her, tell her about the army, tell her to be proud of the army. Tell her about the family of dead girls, tell her their names why not, tell her the whole world knows why shouldn’t she know? tell her there’s dead babies, did she see babies? tell her she’s got nothing to be ashamed of. Tell her they did it to themselves. Tell her they want their children killed to make people sorry for them, tell her I’m not sorry for them, tell her not to be sorry for them, tell her we’re the ones to be sorry for, tell her they can’t talk suffering to us. Tell her we’re the iron fist now, tell her it’s the fog of war, tell her we won’t stop killing them till we’re safe, tell her I laughed when I saw the dead policemen, tell her they’re animals living in rubble now, tell her I wouldn’t care if we wiped them out, the world would hate us is the only thing, tell her I don’t care if the world hates us, tell her we’re better haters, tell her we’re chosen people, tell her I look at one of their children covered in blood and what do I feel? tell her all I feel is happy it’s not her. (Churchill 2009a: 8)

However, the whole speech is undermined by the lines that follow, “Don’t tell her that”, “Tell her we love her”, “Don’t frighten her” (2009a: 8), which are “vital in their refusal of this provocative bid for violence” (Wallace 2014: 217).

In relation to Adrienne Kennedy's plays, Jenny Spencer's persuasively claims that they "model [the] interpretive activity [of emancipated spectators] by placing reading, writing, watching, and responding 'center' stage" (2012: 27). Similarly, *Seven Jewish Children* does not convey a ready-made 'message', but invites the emancipated spectator to access the play on his/her own terms, placing centre stage opposing interpretations of Jewish/Israeli history.

7.6. Conclusions

As already noted, Churchill has been repeatedly accused of espousing radical anti-Semitic views in *Seven Jewish Children*. However, her continuing active participation in the MAP campaign, her involvement with presenting some of the performances personally and her active facilitation of the play text's global circulation bespeak, rather, a concern with enabling and empowering agency in relation to injustice in Gaza. The play has increased awareness of events in Palestine around the world and led to reactions of political activism, solidarity and support. In fact, the play's contradictory, even dialectical, texture reaches out to actively emancipated spectators, who are summoned to become 'double witnesses' – both to the painful struggle about how to represent violence to children that takes place in and between the lines of the text, and to their own (potential) acts of resubjectivization. Seen in this light, *Seven Jewish Children* may be described as an example of participatory socially- and politically-engaged theatre, which aims to "transform relations of power and oppression through its text and its performance" (Sloman 2011: 44).

8. Empathy and the Other in *Dr. Korczak's Example* and *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza*

To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling – this is the activity of art. (Tolstoy 1904: 50)

[E]mpathy is at once a panacea for theatrical ills and an expression of all that is valuable to an audience in the theatre experience. (Gunkle 1963: 21)

8.1. Introduction

The aim of this section is to delve into the connection between art and empathy, focusing on theatre as an artistic practice and empathy as a form of interaction with the Other. Having explored *Dr. Korczak's Example* and *Seven Jewish Children* from the perspectives of their engagement with education and political and social activism respectively, it seems significant to go on to explore emancipated spectatorship, mentioned previously, as a disposition of openness to empathy. With a view to underlining the connectedness between theatre, empathy and the Other, these three fundamental concepts will be discussed and will be subsequently linked to *Seven Jewish Children* and *Dr. Korczak's Example*.

8.2. Empathy

When trying to define empathy, most philosophers come to the agreement that it is, in George Gunkle's words, "the ability to put yourself in the other person's place" (1963: 19). This understanding of empathy is the most widely accepted one among theorists, as it reveals the particular activity of empathy. As Gunkle notes, "other concepts such as

sympathy, projection, identification, and insight also give a dangerously similar impression” (1963: 18), but are not to be confused with empathy.

In particular, empathy and sympathy are quite distinct. Whereas “the former demonstrates the ability to “participate in another’s ideas and feelings,’ the latter runs the risk of lapsing into a form of pity” (Molloy 1999: 216; the inset quote is by Christine Sylvester). In particular, one of the key dimensions of empathy is imagination.

Diana Tietjens Meyers proposes understanding empathy as the

[I]maginative reconstruction of another person’s feelings: ‘To empathize with another in this sense is to construct in imagination an experience resembling that of the other person. [...] Though the vividness of empathetic imaginings is often moving, empathizers do not share the subjective states [of those] with whom they empathize. One can imagine another’s grief without grieving oneself’. (Meyers qtd. in Molloy 1999: 216)

The understanding of ‘feeling’ comes through cognitive or affective empathy, which differ in the following way: “Cognitively, we at least have to believe that the other is genuinely experiencing emotion. Affectively, it seems that we have to be disposed to care about, or to have an interest in the other’s experience” (Snow 2000:71). Although Snow makes this distinction in connection with the analysis of fictional characters, I suggest it also applies to the world outside of fiction.

8.3. The Other

Understanding, feeling and empathizing do not require knowing. In fact, according to Emmanuel Levinas, “[k]nowledge suppresses the otherness and a described Other has lost its otherness” – “The Other is simply a ‘complete being-outside or otherness’” (qtd. in Woo 2013:83), an absolute, irreducible alterity.

William Large argues that Levinas’s ‘Other’ is not only defined by “transcendence and exteriority”, as “the first and primary encounter with the Other is

imminent and interior” (2011: 243). Such interiority is literally an interior, or ‘home’, which one ‘opens’ for the Other, thus responding to and assuming responsibility for them. From the perspective of Levinasian ethics, “[m]y place in the world is already usurped, is already for the Other, before I decide whether I owe these others anything or not” (Large 2011: 249). Such unconditional encounter with and responsibility for the Other is framed within Levinas’s notion of the ‘face’: “the face of the Other”, which refers to the “nakedness and destitution [...] extreme exposure, defenselessness, vulnerability itself [...] exposure to invisible death” (Levinas 1989: 83) of any and all human beings.

8.4. Empathy towards the Other

The other man’s death calls me into question, as if, by my possible future indifference, I had become the accomplice of the death to which the other, who cannot see it, is exposed; and as if, even before vowing myself to him, I had to answer for this death of the other, and to accompany the Other in his mortal solitude. The Other becomes my neighbour precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question. (Levinas 1989: 83)

‘Response-ability’, a term first introduced by Hans-Thies Lehmann in relation to spectatorship (2006: 185), is actually a crucial pre-condition for empathy, as it highlights the obligation to respond to the Other – “this ethical relation is not a virtue that I have or exercise; it is prior to any individual sense of self” (Butler 2012: 141) – which is in turn grounded in “the precarity of life” (Butler 2009: 2). For John Caputo, “obligation means the obligation to the other, to one who has been laid low, to victims and outcasts. Obligation means the obligation to reduce and alleviate suffering” (qtd. in Connolly 1999: 127).

As Luc Boltanski notes, distance may operate as an obstacle to empathy towards those who suffer, preventing the viewer from feeling “involved in the scene of suffering

he observes” (1999: 38). I suggest imaginative ‘response-ability’ can engage the viewer – in the case of theatre, the spectator –and trigger their empathy towards the suffering Other. Thus, as mentioned previously, responsibility, obligation and empathy do not require knowing or any physical encounter with the Other: it is the capacity to *imagine* the Other that helps to overcome the distance between Self and Other. Leo Tolstoy’s understanding of art, quoted at the start of this section, highlights its capacity to activate the recipient’s imaginative ‘response-ability’ and hence, their empathy. In particular, theatre has a great potential “to intervene at the level of ‘perception’, by activating a capacity to respond (response-ability)” (Ridout 2009: 57).

8.5. Theatre as a ‘Moral Institution’

[Theatre] enables audiences and theatre-makers
to empathize and reflect, to question and unfix
packaged, second-hand and commodified
images of the world.
(Greig qtd. in Nicholson 2009: 49)

In *Theatre & Ethics*, Ridout provides a profound insight into the relevance of Levinas’s ethical philosophy to theatre and theatre studies. Given that, for Levinas, “[t]he ground for human existence lies in our encounter with the fact that the ‘other’ exists, an encounter in which we ought to recognize an infinite obligation towards that ‘other’” (Ridout 2009: 52), the fundamental ethical concept of the ‘face-to-face’ encounter with the Other—even if it does not imply a literal ‘facing of’ the Other – does make it possible to position theatre squarely in the field of ethics, encouraging as it does “a consideration of the relationship between spectator and actor, audience and performance” (Ridout 2009: 54). Ridout states that “[i]n this way theatre can recover its cultural value as a ‘moral institution’” (2009: 54).

8.6. *Seven Jewish Children* and Dr. Korczak's Example: Evoking Empathy

Preserving the life of the other is paramount.
If only the Israeli army felt this way!
(Butler 2012: 141)

In her essay "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation", Butler writes about mediated images of war and suffering that pose ethical quandaries of responsibility, distance and proximity. She asks, "Is what is happening so far from me that I can bear no responsibility for it? Is what is happening so close to me that I cannot bear having to take responsibility for it? If I myself did not make this suffering, am I still in some other sense responsible for it?" (2012: 135). These are questions that resonate in Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children*, which may be read as an attempt to arouse the spectators' 'response-ability' in a theatrical form.

Later on in her essay, Butler suggests that,

[...] if I am only bound to those who are close to me, already familiar, then my ethics are invariably parochial, communitarian, and exclusionary. If I am only bound to those who are 'human' in the abstract, then I avert every effort to translate culturally between my own situation and that of others. If I am only bound to those who suffer at a distance, but never those who are close to me, then I evacuate my situation in an effort to secure the distance that allows me to entertain ethical feeling and even feel myself to be ethical. But [in the globalized, digital age] ethical relations are mediated [...]. And this means that questions of location are confounded such that what is happening 'there' also happens in some sense 'here' [...] (2012: 138).

Seen in this light, I suggest that *Seven Jewish Children* erases notions of distance, encouraging spectators to imaginatively respond to those who suffer, and thus experience empathy towards Others. In his discussion of the play, Enric Monforte claims that its aesthetics "offers the most effective instances of our ethical responsibility towards the Other, of 'encountering' the face and, in doing so, recognizing ourselves in

Otherness [...]” (2012: 102). However, in this ten-minute long play, victims and victimizers exchange roles and, thus, empathy also changes its ‘settings’. In the first section of the play Jews suffer the Holocaust: “Tell her not to come out even if she hears shooting”, “Tell her they were killed”; while in the second Israel is dropping bombs on Gaza – “Tell her there are people who still hate Jews”; “Tell her there are people who love Jews” (2009: 2, 3). Empathy is present not only towards Jews and Palestinians as victims, notwithstanding the shift of aggressors, but also among speakers, creating multiple layers for spectatorial ‘response-ability’.

The play leaves space for the emancipated spectator to empathize or not by underscoring the different, indeed often contradictory injunctions– “Tell her”, “Don’t tell her” – regarding what a little girl should be told about the violence, past and present, that underpins her society. Empathy towards the Other is also present in the lines of the play, between its characters, even when it is performed as a monologue, such as in the seventh scene, which, as noted above, ends with words that totally undercut the preceding speech, the most emotionally-charged one in the play, bringing its spectators as it does images of the real events in Gaza in 2009, when 1,300 Palestinians were killed, in contrast to 13 Israelis.

Dr. Korczak’s Example tells a story that is ‘situated’ in the first part of Churchill’s play – specifically, in Warsaw’s Jewish ghetto during World War II. Empathy among characters and between spectators and characters is an inseparable part of a play that is explicitly about children and their experiences of the war, life and death, and devotion to and responsibility for others.

All the children at the orphanage were killed by the Nazis, as well as Korczak himself, who rejected the freedom that was offered to him by the Nazis. A sense of responsibility and obligation led Korczak throughout his life, which ultimately

determined his change from medical practice to social work. Gabriel Eichsteller comments on this by reference to Korczak's impassioned question, "When the devil will we stop prescribing aspirin for poverty, exploitation, lawlessness, and crime?" (2009: 380).

The ground base for empathy in Greig's play is the Children's Court, a system of justice in the orphanage run by Korczak. There, Korczak "observed the empathy, understanding and cleverness the children demonstrated in their verdicts" (Eichsteller 2009: 382). Empathy from children towards their peers was encouraged through giving them 'power' to judge their own deeds: "KORCZAK: [...] [a] child has the right to be judged by people his own age" (Greig 2001: 37). Each week new heads of the Court were chosen, following the rules established by Dr. Korczak. Curiously, Korczak was himself judged by his children several times, which reveals a deeply non-hierarchical way of running the orphanage. The Court underlined the responsibility of each member of the orphanage for his/her actions, as well as their 'response-ability' towards others, as each child could experienced both roles, judging and being judged, at any given time. Empathy towards the Other in the Children's Court can be perceived in the following lines:

STEPHANIE: Bruno says Adzio stole his bread in the night. Bruno's furious. He was saving the bread for his kid brother. [...]

KORCZAK: [...] Does anybody have anything to say on Adzio's behalf? Nobody will speak for him? Stephanie? A hungry child, comes straight in from the street, he hardly knows the rules of the orphanage – the only rules he knows are the ones that mean you survive out there – and nobody will speak for him? STEPHANIE: He caught flies for me this morning.

KORCZAK: An act of kindness. So – anyone else? (2001: 37-9)

A key step taken by Greig towards awakening empathy instead of pity is the use of dolls instead of children actors so as to stimulate the imagination of young audiences (Figs. 12, 13).



Fig. 12. Unicorn Theatre production of *Dr. Korczak's Example*.
Designer: James Button (Teacher Resource Pack 2012: 14)



Fig. 13. *Dr Korczak's Example*. Callum Cuthbertson as Korczak and Helen MacAlpine as Stephanie. Photo: Tim Morozzo (Scullion 2005: 326)

The use of dolls solved the challenge faced by the playwright regarding the representation of the horror of the real events that happened at the orphanage. It preserved the educational purpose of the play while simultaneously safeguarding its aesthetic/imaginative dimension, crucial to the emergence of empathy:

I decided to use dolls to represent the children because I felt that their final march to death was too raw, too powerful an image to try and represent with grown up actors in rags and made up grubby faces. I felt we need to imagine it. So I thought that if I wrote it so that the dolls were arranged on the stage to represent the children it would be possible to stage something horrible, to imagine it, but also to respect it and not to exploit it. That decision led to other staging possibilities and –

in the end – gave the play its particular unique tone. I adore this play. I think it's the possibly the piece I've written I'm most proud of. (Greig n.d)

8.7. Conclusion

Seven Jewish Children and *Dr. Korczak's Example* explore the topics of children's rights and choices in conditions of horror. In both plays, I suggest, empathy emerges from portraying the responsibility and infinite obligation towards the Other in circumstances of war and suffering.

As Tolstoy claims, art has the potential to bring about a shared feeling among people by means of the imagination and participation. *Seven Jewish Children* and *Dr. Korczak's Example* seek to trigger in spectators the realization of their 'responsibility' and obligation towards others, notwithstanding distance or the shifts between victims. Seen from such a perspective, theatre claims its power as a 'moral institution' to evoke empathy.

Conclusion

The power of theatre as a tool for social change when applied in education and political and social activism has hopefully been demonstrated in the first three parts of this dissertation, which attempt to throw some light on the development of theatre as an applied tool – its history and current situation within specific projects. The examples mentioned in this section of the dissertation suggest the broad usage of theatre, ranging from dance projects and performance-researches, to projects directly developed as governmental programmes at schools. The link between theatre in its conventional form and participatory theatre has been addressed by reference to Rancière’s theory of emancipated spectatorship, which locates the audience always-already in the area of the ‘stage’, involved in the performance through active ‘spect-acting’. Spectatorial emancipation is a crucial point in relation to the potential of theatre both in education and activism, as it is a salutary reminder that there is always space for personal interpretations and actions, which enriches the learning process.

Subsequently, some thoughts on Orientalism and anti-Orientalism have focused the research conducted in this dissertation on the ‘fieldwork’ carried out by David Greig and Caryl Churchill, who have made important contributions to the collaboration between contemporary British theatre companies and playwrights and Palestinian ones, have conducted cultural projects for youth (Greig) and have promoted the MAP campaign (Churchill), and are generally actively involved in the political situation in Palestine.

The argument on the potentiality of TiE has been empowered by the exploration of *Dr. Korczak’s Example* and its usage by TiE companies. This section of my dissertation demonstrates how plays can be used as a part of the educational project– in this case, the ‘Making the Nation’ project – and what devices and activities have been

applied to this particular play, by reference to the ‘resource and information packs’ produced by TAG, Unicorn Theatre in London and Manchester’s Royal Exchange Theatre. *Dr. Korczak’s Example* is a play that has been used as an educational tool for many years now; it invites young people to participate through their own exploration of the topics the play proposes, including issues of community and individualism, politics and children’s rights.

As mentioned previously, Churchill describes *Seven Jewish Children*, as a political event, not merely a theatre event. The section devoted to Churchill’s piece has deepened the discussion on theatre and social and political activism so as to underline the potential of theatre to contribute to social change. The play has been performed worldwide, and has also been turned into video productions, thus facilitating its circulation. It has effectively raised awareness about the political situation in Palestine, inviting action and provoking for critical thinking. It has contributed greatly to the MAP campaign and has inspired new plays on the topic. *Seven Jewish Children* has led to reactions of political activism, solidarity and support – as well as, in true Rancièrian spirit, severe criticism.

Both *Dr. Korczak’s Example* and *Seven Jewish Children* have finally been explored through the notion of empathy and responsibility towards the Other as refracted through, once again, the notion of the emancipated spectator. Both plays are powerful triggers of empathy, which emerges through spectatorial participation and imagination. Through stimulating the spectator’s empathy and ‘response-ability’, *Dr. Korczak’s Example* and *Seven Jewish Children* locate theatre as a ‘moral institution’ able to invite debate, provoke empathy and, hopefully, empower social change.

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