Spect-Actor and Spect-Laughter: The Role of Laughter Within 'Participatory' Theatre for Peace and Development
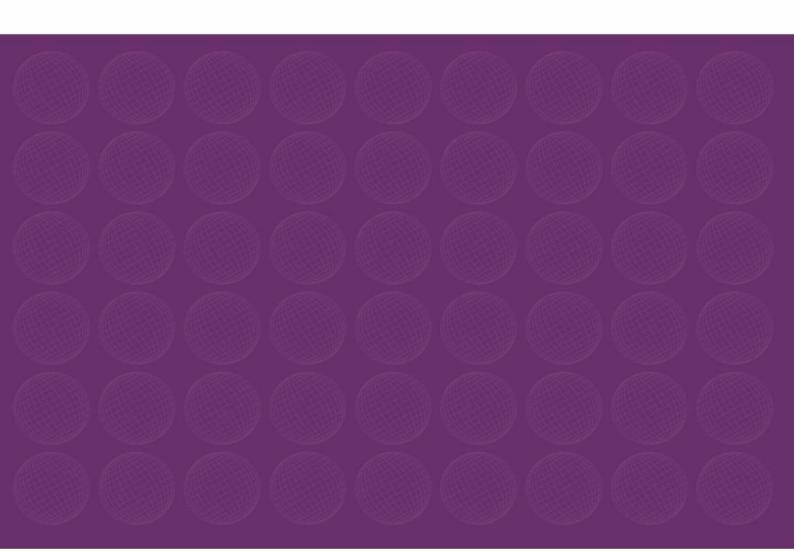
Caitlin McLoughlin

Durham Global Security Institute

The Al-Qasimi Building

Elvet Hill Road

Durham DH1 3TU, UK

Tel: +44 (0)191 334 5656

Fax: +44 (0)191 334 5661

www.dur.ac.uk/dgsi/

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Foreword by Roger Mac Ginty

Laughing in the face of adversity sounds incongruous, indeed out of place when sobriety and respect might be more appropriate responses. Yet, as Caitlin McLoughlin's Working Paper shows, humour and laughter do have a place in dealing with conflict and complex humanitarian emergencies. Her study can be placed in a broadening policy and academic literature that looks at the role of emotion in conflict and attempts to lower the costs of conflict. Importantly, this literature is adding to our understanding of what are "acceptable" emotions and realising that humans are likely to respond to extreme situations in a variety of ways. In the policy and practice worlds there has also been a recognition of the need for participatory approaches that involve individuals and communities rather than simply minister to them. Arts-based programming can play a key role in participatory approaches; showcasing community skills and traditions, distracting people from obvious dislocation, helping to remember, and assisting regeneration.

By examining the role of theatre in development, and specifically the work of two organisations (Colectivo Respiral and Clowns without Borders), Caitlin highlights the positive role that laughter and humour can play in empowering individuals and communities often seen as bystanders and lacking in agency. As she argues, such activity can subvert dominant tropes that dismiss populations in conflict and humanitarian contexts as forlorn and without power. Humour can involve a shift from 'laughing at' to 'laughing with', as well as provide an avenue for catharsis or an escape from a pressing reality. Yet, as she points out, laughter and humour do not necessarily need to be instrumentalised. They can have a value in their own right. As we know, conflict and humanitarian contexts are gendered, with war and peace impacting on men and women in quite different ways. Laughter (and clowning around) offers women, men, and children different avenues escape, investigate, remember, forget or just have a good old laugh. As this work shows, it is a versatile and highly personalised act that is often overlooked by mainstream programming.

This Working Paper is drawn from an excellent Durham Global Security Institute (DGSi) MSc. Dissertation. It showcases student work at its best: original, relevant, rigorous, and based on original fieldwork. It has been edited by Rachael Rhoades and we are grateful to Caitlin for giving permission for the dissertation to be published as a DGSi Working Paper.

Abstract

The role of laughter is often overlooked in processes of peace and development. This paper explores the utility and emancipatory potential of laughter for oppressed groups when orchestrated through participatory theatre. It argues that clowning and laughter are useful tools for addressing difficult topics such as conflict and oppression and highlights how the subversive nature of carnivalesque clowning can serve as an outlet for ridiculing mistakes and shortcomings in humanitarian aid work and of the actors involved with that work. Through case studies on Colectivo Respiral (Respi), and Clowns without Borders (CWB), the paper illustrates the practical application of laughter in contemplating the goals of participatory approaches to humanitarianism. Moreover, noting that subversive element of these approaches, the paper argues for further research on the subversive potential of laughter in addressing gender issues. Additional analysis is needed to understand how laughter can be harnessed as a powerful tool for promoting gender equality and empowerment. Finally, the findings suggest that laughter, within the context of participatory approaches to humanitarianism, not only unifies audiences but also strengthens their agency and capacity for positive change.

Acknowledgements

About the Author

Caitlin McLoughlin currently works as a Social Impact Consultant at I.G. Advisors and Trustee for the charity Speech Bubbles. She graduated from Durham University with an MSc in Defence, Development & Diplomacy and holds a BA in modern languages from the University of Oxford. (Contact: linkedin.com/in/caitlin-mcloughlin)

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List of Abbreviations

TO	Theatre of the Oppressed
CWB	Clowns without Borders
CFT	Clown Forum Theatre
SDGs	Sustainable Development Growth
GPS	Gender, Peace, and Security
TFD	Theatre for Development

Introduction

In her theorising of *l'écriture féminine*, Hélène Cixous associates laughter with emancipation from binary discourses and restrictive conceptions of womanhood (Farmer 2001: 561), thereby indicating laughter's empowering and subversive potential. Zelizer (2010: 6) stresses that the potential of humour and, we can infer, laughter, in the contexts of conflict and peacebuilding is significantly under-researched. Returning to Cixous, then, how may laughter, empowerment, and subversion feed into processes of peace?

Participatory and bottom-up contributions to programming processes of peace and development have garnered increasing popularity recently (Cornwall and Pratt 2010; Paffenholz 2015). This paper is interested in participatory approaches to peace and development, and the tools at their disposal which have proven capable of generating laughter. The paper seeks to shed light on questions surrounding laughter's power here, were it to be deliberately and meaningfully instrumentalized through theatre. Specifically, it analyses laughter's own utility, along with the power of deliberately employing humour and laughter in participatory performance contexts (Bogad, 2010; Sørensen, 2015). This study adds to the very modest body of literature on humanitarian clowning and contemplates more neglected areas of peace and development research, such as the intentional instrumentalization of laughter within the context of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO).

To do this, I analyse the work of two organisations which profess a deliberate aim of generating comedy and laughter through theatre and performances, which are "participatory". The first, Clowns Without Borders (CWB), is a humanitarian organization, founded in Barcelona in 1993 to bring 'humor' and play to traumatised communities (Clowns Without Borders USA c2020). The second organisation, or "Collective" (in English), is Colectivo Respiral (Respi), founded in Costa Rica in 2009 to address 'economic' and 'socio-political' issues, among others, across Latin America through 'Teatro Foro Clown' or 'Clown Forum

Theatre (CFT)' (Corrales G. c2014). Interestingly, Respi have more recently begun to refer to themselves as "Colectiva" in the feminine to underline the Collective's feminist approaches (Burgoa 2018). Both organisations employ clowning techniques within their performances, and both seek to elicit laughter, though the organisations would appear to place a slightly different emphasis on laughter as *tool* versus laughter as *end-product*.

Chapter I concludes with definitions and methodology for the study. Chapter II focuses on context, exploring the history of Theatre for Development and investigating Augusto Boal's TO, key to the work of Respi. Chapter III proceeds to analyse relevant theoretical frameworks to aid our understanding of the potential utility of laughter. Chapter IV explores the work of CWB, discussing the interplay between laughter and performance, on the one hand, and psychosocial aid, unity, and victimhood on the other. Chapter V analyses Respi and considers laughter within the context of Theatre of the Oppressed and the experiences of spect-actors in engaging with performances. Conclusions are presented in Chapter VI, arguing that while the use of laughter does not necessarily erase well-documented problems relating to humanitarianism and participatory approaches, it can complement the goals of such approaches and even add an extra facet to the ways in which participatory theatre for peace and development can unite audiences and prove "empowering". The need for further research relating to the potentially subversive nature of laughter is identified. Specifically in the context of the Gender, Peace, and Security (GPS) agenda, and in a critiquing of traditional understandings of humanitarianism and development and the sphere's key actors.

1.1 Definitions

Before proceeding, it is necessary to provide some brief definitions of a few key terms. First, "peace" here is best understood as concerning "positive peace", or the 'absence of structural violence' or, alternatively, 'social justice' (Galtung, 1969: 183). Key indicators of positive

peace include 'distribution of resources', 'human capital', and '[a]cceptance of the rights of others' (IEP 2015: 2) and should also involve 'holistic views of human security' and the levels of the individual and community (Olowu 2016: 3). Furthermore, peace and development outcomes are increasingly interlinked, with development shortcomings believed to trigger conflict (IPA 2004: 1), and positive peace considered a useful building block upon which to strive for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (IEP 2018: 36). Second, then, "development" relates to a human development lens, and pertains to 'opportunities' and 'choices' to improve 'well-being' (UNDP nd).

It is also worth outlining understandings of humanitarian assistance, since CWB International (2016: 3) claim to provide 'humanitarian help' through their work. The OECD (c2019) explain that '[h]umanitarian action saves lives, alleviates suffering and maintains human dignity following conflict, shocks and natural disasters'. Important for this study is the argument that humanitarian response can provide an environment ripe for peace and reconciliation by contributing to 'stabilisation' (Maurer 2019). Indeed, humanitarian response is often considered one of the more immediate provisions required within peacebuilding processes (Hertog 2017: 279). As such, humanitarian action, peace, and development are not entirely independent processes, rendering all three areas relevant to this analysis.

The final key term is that of "participatory" theatre. Participatory theatre is most often associated with Augusto Boal (Search for Common Ground 2012: 7), who, within his conceptualisation of TO stresses the necessity of "audience" participation and breaking spectator-actor divides within theatre as a 'rehearsal for the revolution' (Boal 1979: 122). Indeed, theatre is considered to hold both political and transformative potential when used to recognize the agency of the oppressed (Boal 1979; Boal 1998). However, all theatre, even that which does not explicitly aim to empower its audience, is arguably participatory, since there is always someone playing the role of audience member (Layton 2016: 99), and audiences are

always in some way responding to the performance (White, cited in Layton 2016: 99). This understanding facilitates an investigation of laughter in contexts far wider than those of Boal's TO. As such, CWB is a relevant case study to address the work of an organisation which does not necessarily associate itself with TO, but whose performances do involve significant 'audience participation' (CWB International 2017: 34), and whose clowns are encouraged to pay close attention to audience response in shaping their performance (CWB International 2017: 35).

1.2 Methodology

This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, particularly drawing on the subjects of literature and the dramatic arts, which proves necessary given the lack of research on laughter in relation to participatory theatre within the fields of peace and conflict studies. The study relies on both primary and secondary sources and mainly reference resources available online due to the pandemic.

The case study research involves analysing articles, video recordings, and information outlined in CWB and Respi's handbooks.[1] It should be noted that the Respi handbook to which I have access is an unpublished version. Key resources relating to the work of Respi, including their handbook, videos and interviews are in Spanish. Translations and paraphrasing of these and other foreign language sources used throughout the dissertation are my own, unless stated otherwise in the bibliography.

Both Respi and CWB were invited to nominate a representative to take part in a research interview. A representative from Respi did volunteer to participate. The interview consisted of an approximately one-hour long, semi-structured talk over video call. Some questions were

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[1] It can be difficult to judge atmosphere and reception of performances through video recordings, and videos can be edited and framed in certain ways. As such, future research may benefit from in-person attendance of shows.

planned in advance to encourage a more focused discussion (Rabionet 2011: 564), leading questions were avoided, and video call provided for an easy means of communication with participants based outside the UK. While the interview was conducted in Spanish, my background with the Spanish language and prior research into Respi's work minimised the risk of misinterpreting the participant's ideas.

This study acknowledges the irony of considering the potential of laughter within participatory approaches and yet failing to provide opportunities for the 'oppressed' communities to give feedback. Indeed, the Respi representative commented on the 'subjective' nature of interpreting the intentions behind other people's laughter (2020, pers. comm., 18 July). Nevertheless, this paper sheds light on an underdeveloped area of research in this context and provides a useful preliminary exposition of some ways in which laughter is currently employed in participatory theatre for promoting peace and development. In addition, it contributes a novel approach to unpacking the complex interactions between laughter, performance, and participation in this context.

2 Theatre for Development

2.1 Overview

Prentki (1998: 419) states, '[a]t its simplest Theatre For Development (TFD) is what it says: theatre used in the service of development aims'. Though this definition is rather broad, Theatre for Development (TFD) is in fact often employed as a 'catchall term' (Plastow 2014: 2) for various types of theatre aimed at empowering the oppressed (Plastow 2014: 3; Prentki 1998: 419). Significantly, Plastow (2014: 3) highlights the questions of *who?* is involved in theatre projects and *how?* as key to theatre's history in the context of development. As Makhumula (2013: 113) explains, 'TfD has been categorised in three different models…These models are:

theatre *for* the people, theatre *with* the people, and theatre by the people'. Understanding laughter within participatory theatre requires an awareness of these nuances in participation and ownership, which could have an impact on the strengths and weaknesses of projects, the functioning of comedic devices, and processes of "laughing at" and "laughing with". Equally, an exploration of context and key debates in relation to TFD is valuable to appreciate laughter's *relative* utility and significance.

2.2 Key Debates

An argument in favour of TFD is that of theatre's amenability to participation (Prentki 2011: 38). Theatre *with* the people, which provides for higher levels of participation, can provide a useful platform for the oppressed to make themselves heard (Makhumula 2013: 116). Indeed, TFD can provide 'liberation' through the opportunities it presents for the oppressed to become involved in the fashioning of purposeful and pertinent performances (Okpadah 2017: 4). TFD boasts similar strengths to that of other participatory approaches in this regard whereby participation is often associated with 'empowerment' (Selim 2017: 1125).

Additionally, theatre lies in a space between reality and fantasy, providing an opportunity for the rehearsal of transgressive and transformational behavioural change (Prentki 1998: 419-420; Prentki 2011: 45). Furthermore, Okpadah (2017: 4) notes how theatre permits engagement with a variety of disciplines, allowing for the employment of culturally appropriate tools which resonate more strongly with target communities (2017: 6). Inclusivity is also perceived as key to TFD's strengths, as the physicality permitted by theatre is believed to constitute an accessible means of communication (Prentki and Lacey c2020). Finally, theatre is considered highly 'democratic' since all humans are performers, adopting a variety of identities in everyday life (Prentki 1998: 420).

Yet, for TFD to truly aid in the emancipation of the oppressed, it is often argued that it must be truly participatory, and community led (Plastow 2014: 9; Prentki 1998: 422). The benefits of "participation" within TFD depend on the extent of engagement and which stages in the process participation occurs. For example, Makhumula (2013: 116-117) cautions against top-down approaches to research processes within TFD for fear of threatening true participant involvement in projects. The false assumption of homogeneity is another issue when attempting to include "locals" (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 264), and participation itself should not be romanticised; Bergold and Thomas (2012: 196) note that even where processes are supposedly "participatory", it should not be taken for granted that participants will feel comfortable sharing their true thoughts and experiences.

2.3 Theatre of the Oppressed

A recurring theme throughout the literature on TFD is theatre's capacity to engage with and encourage the participation of communities in solving societal issues. Augusto Boal is one such advocate of a participatory approach and an avid proponent of theatre's potential for empowering the people. He suggests that the "audience" become protagonist and resolve and enact modifications to stories of oppression on stage (1979: 122). According to Boal, it follows those unlike performances of the dramatic arts traditions whereby theatre releases desires and emotions through catharsis, the fact that TO's "spect-actors" actively rehearse transformation inspires a yearning to re-enact the said transformation in everyday life (1979: 141-142).

Sullivan, Burns and Paterson (2007: 1) commend TO for its 'commitment to oppressed groups' and ability to engage communities in actively thinking and enacting change. It is also supposed that TO can raise awareness of oppression and the possibility of challenging it (Opfermann 2020: 141). Issues which plague other participatory approaches such as power asymmetry between facilitator and participants also threaten to undermine how comfortable

audience members feel to think and act for themselves (2011: 34). Finally, Snyder-Young asks, 'Who gets to decide what 'oppression' means…?' (2011: 42).

The question remains as to how exactly laughter fits in with participatory theatre. The following chapter seeks to explore the occurrence of laughter in traditions pertaining to the dramatic arts and participatory festivities, such as carnival, to provide frameworks to assist in answering questions about laughter's role in power dynamics and how it functions as a language to foster or obstruct discussions of oppression.

3 Theoretical Frameworks

This study focuses on three core frameworks: theories of humour, theories of laughter and comedy within the dramatic arts, and clowning and the carnivalesque. These are selected for their relevance to laughter, performance, and the work of CWB and Respi, as well as for their compatibility. Pre-existing studies on CWB already consider the field of therapeutic and hospital clowning in their analyses. Consequently, this study draws on central arguments of this pre-existing literature but does not explore the therapeutic clowning tradition in depth.

3.1 Theories of Humour

In general, academics cite three main theories of humour: superiority, incongruity, and relief theories. Importantly, these three theories are not necessarily incompatible (Lintott 2016), meaning this study is not required to privilege any one theory over another. Superiority theory is interested in the 'affective response' of superiority elicited in relation to humour (Lintott 2016: 347). Meyer (2000: 315) explains how superiority theory implies the potential for laughter to correct those who depart from the status quo through processes of "laughing at", as well as to unite the laughing agents. Incongruity theory, meanwhile, associates laughter with the 'absurd' and the unanticipated defiance of expectations (Kant 1914: 171). As such, it is suggested that humour drawing on incongruity may prove particularly effective in 'presenting

new perspectives and viewpoints' (Meyer 2000: 316). Finally, relief theory focuses on the 'physiological manifestations' of humour and links humour to the dissolution of tensions and 'release of nervous energy' (Meyer 2000: 311). Proponents of this theory, one of the most famous figures to contribute being Sigmund Freud, argue laughter provides an outlet for 'the energy of repressed desires' (Morreall 2014: 124). For this study, it is necessary to establish a framework to understand laughter in relation to performance, and to ascertain how these theories of humour play out in such contexts.

3.2 Comedy within the Dramatic Arts

"Comedy" is not always synonymous with laughter (Woodruff 1997: 321). One of the most famous Western playwrights to work with the genre of comedy is the French playwright Molière (1622-1673), who defends his more controversial, "satirical" works by claiming the goal of providing moral instruction through entertainment (Molière 1910: 369). Indeed, there is a long-standing notion of *castigat ridendo mores*, or laughter's supposed capacity to correct customs and norms (Burke 1959: 346; Webb 1981) – related to the superiority theory of humour (Palacios, 2019: 67). Despite this link between satire, laughter and moral correction in theatre, other genres, such as farce, are scorned for providing nothing but pure entertainment (McLaughin 1970: 730). Farce was traditionally considered a low genre aimed at a popular audience (Lebègue 1964: 185; McLaughlin 1970: 730), linked to silliness in a way comparable to modern understandings of clowning (Rey-Flaud 1985: 56).

Interestingly, farce traditions also contain darkness and violence (Bentley 1964: 219). Bentley (1964: 228-229) outlines the link between comedy and relief theory, arguing that farce is particularly powerful, since spectators can witness violence and vice on stage and purge themselves of secret desires to engage in such unsavoury behaviour themselves from the comfort and safety of the theatre (1964: 229). However, similar arguments relating to televised and media violence and the purgation of aggressive desires have come under fire more recently

(see Gentile 2013; Kaplan and Singer 1976), and Bentley (1964: 220) alludes to similar critiques in his explanation of thinking about comedy and theatre's potential to foment inappropriate behaviour in everyday life.

Despite the fame and proliferation of farce in France (Lera 2016: para. 7), the tradition is not exclusive to the region. Moreno (2019: 85) outlines the fact that Latin American playwrights tend to resort to the farcical during times of dictatorship, employing the example of José Ignacio Cabrujas' *La soberbia milagrosa del General Pio Fernández* (1974) to draw a link between farce and resistance towards imposed 'quietude' (2019: 85). As such, farce has the potential to become highly political, despite its pretences of care-free frivolity. Moreover, Meléndez (2006: 214) examines four Spanish American plays to explain how the very adoption of the marginalised genre of farce to convey serious 'concerns and passions' can serve to challenge 'hegemony' and 'hierarchy'. Similarly, perhaps the very fact that the potential of laughter and frivolity within participatory theatre is often overlooked among elite, academic circles opens up the potential for laughter to become subversive in its challenging of understandings of the most valuable approaches to humanitarian aid, peace, and development.

Closely related to traditions of farce are those of clowning and carnival, which constitute our third and final key framework. Indeed, clowning shares close ties with the genre (Hayman 1983: 109), with clowns often defined in relation to their enactment of farcical sketches (Le Robert nd), and it is believed that the history of farcical performances is tied into traditions of carnivalesque feasts and celebrations (Davis 1978: 8). This relationship highlights the utility of considering these frameworks alongside one another.

3.3 Clowning and the Carnivalesque

In his work on the carnivalesque, Bakhtin (2004) contrasts the formal carnival celebrations of the Middle Ages, which maintained the hierarchical status quo of Medieval society, with the

informal carnival, which involved 'liberation' (2004: 686), in addition to '…the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions' (2004: 686). This carnivalesque inversion of dominant orders is potentially of interest to participatory theatre for development and its ambition of empowering the otherwise oppressed. Significantly, the fact that participation, rather than mere spectatorship, was key to engaging in carnivalesque revelry (Cresswell 1994: 38).

Bakhtin (2004: 691) stresses that the door to the joyful and frivolous order of carnival is unlocked by laughter, and carnival's participatory, anti-hierarchical nature is embodied by the communal laugh (2004: 690). Moreover, the carnivalesque laugh of the people contravenes and ridicules the higher stratums of society and 'official culture' (Perfetti 1993: 179) while shining light on 'new possibilities' for alternative orders (Charles 2005: 15). Indeed, laughter within the carnivalesque serves both to 'degrade' and 'renew' (Bogad 2010: 541). Clowns are relevant here as they are often associated with laughter (Weitz 2012: 79), and sometimes with mocking the reigning order (Bakhtin cited in Charles 2005: 15). The political potential of this carnivalesque nature of clowning can be identified in the phenomenon of 'tactical carnival' performances, which involve clowning to facilitate a challenging of current orders through playful protest (see Bogad 2010; Sørensen 2015). Roles of clowning and carnival used to trigger political change is already being experimented with, indicating a possible transformative utility within the fields of peace and development. Despite the seemingly "revolutionary" suspension of hierarchy within carnival (Bakhtin, 2004: 687-688), carnivalesque festivities are often considered cathartic, implying that any subversive and transgressive desires encouraged by the celebrations are released for the prevailing order's benefit (Cresswell 1994: 39). Moreover, long-lasting changes may prove elusive, as carnival/ clowning performances are only temporary and finite in nature (Bogad 2010: 555; Weitz 2012: 87).

Clowning shares close ties with humour and laughter; the figure of the clown or fool is often associated with 'incongruity' (Amoore and Hall 2013: 99), and the association between clowns and superiority theory is noted by both Olin (2016: 339) and Weitz (2012: 81). Furthermore, clowns boast a special ability to engage with audiences thanks to their capacity to transgress and 'cross boundaries' (Ylönen and Keisalo 2020: 13). As such, clowning may constitute a particularly well-suited tool for the purposes of generating laughter within participatory theatre. Linked to transgression is the fool's license to 'speak truth with impunity' (Amoore and Hall 2013: 100), which could theoretically serve useful to address difficult topics pertaining to conflict and oppression within the peace and development spheres.

Yet, despite this oft-cited link between clowns and transgression, clowning has often been considered a male domain (Irving 2013: 15, 23). In fact, comedy and laughter more broadly are often attributed to males (Kelly 2017: 47; Willett, Willett and Sherman 2012: 217). However, there have existed many talented female clowns and comedians throughout history (Loeffler-Gladstone 2019), and women can claim the clown and the production of laughter for themselves to render clowning and laughter a powerful act of resistance. As such, clowning and the generation of laughter also hold the potential to be employed in radical, subversive, and feminist ways (Willett, Willett and Sherman 2012: 230). Human security requires that women and feminist ideals are included in determining priorities for peace (Bunch 2003: 8). Indeed, feminism and positive peace are closely intertwined, as both involve challenging problematic dynamics of 'domination' (Warren and Cady 1994: 6). The transgressive and defiant nature of laughter within carnival and clowning may render it a useful tool to carve out a new role for women, or acknowledge more numerous roles within peace and development processes.

3.4 Summary

Research on participatory theatre for peace and development is still developing and is accompanied by challenges from various critiques. Nevertheless, it has been lauded for its potential to empower and encourage reflection on issues of oppression within communities. As previously suggested, this paper offers that: cathartic laughter may be useful to reduce tensions and peacefully satisfy frustrated violent tendencies; that clowning and laughter could facilitate the discussion of difficult truths; and that the subversive potential of laughter within clowning and carnival could constitute a useful tool in the challenging of problematic power dynamics, potentially in the context of the GPS agenda. Part II of this study presents case studies of two organisations which employ clowning as a tool for the generation of laughter but adopt different understandings of 'participation' and the value of laughter in relation to peace and development. The findings reveal that the emphasis placed on laughter as *means* to an end versus the *end-product* varies, and the two groups embrace the political potential of laughter differently. Yet, significant overlap emerges in two areas: laughter's effects on power dynamics, and its role in facilitating liberation from roles of victimhood and oppression.

4 Clowns Without Borders

4.1 Background

Clowns Without Borders (CWB) is a humanitarian organization, founded in Barcelona in 1993 with the aim of bringing laughter to traumatised communities (CWB USA c2020). Now, CWB International is made up of fifteen chapters which, combined, reach over forty countries a year (CWB International c2014b). CWB International predominantly perform for marginalised (2017: 17) or 'crisis'-affected groups (2017: 3), particularly children (2017: 1), and boast a long history of targeting refugee and displaced communities through their work

(2017: 17). This paper places emphasis on the consequences of CWB's work in this refugee/ IDP camp setting.

Alongside the provision of 'laughter, hope and joy' (CWB International 2017: 2), CWB International (2017: 2) stress the contribution of their work to the attainment of Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to access to entertainment and cultural activities. CWB also claim to provide humanitarian assistance and believe that by bringing laughter and entertainment to 'crisis' situations their work can transform atmosphere and attitudes (CWB International 2017: 3). The Canada chapter has even received awards in recognition of their contribution to peace (CSF Canada nd). The question remains as to how exactly laughter supports CWB's performances in doing so.

4.2 Literature Review

There are a handful of relevant studies and theses which consider clowning, play and laughter within the work of CWB. Firstly, some studies explore the risks of humanitarian clowning, encouraging practitioners to think carefully before romanticising the work of CWB and the use of clowning as a tool for the generation of laughter. For instance, Peacock (2016) touches upon questions such as whether it is right that money be spent on clowning over food and medical assistance (2016: 14-15), and who actually benefits from fleeting clowning performances (2016: 16). Whereas King (2013: 483) reports how the clown of CWB can be considered a '"neo-clown"', whereby the clown supports neoliberal humanitarianism and the problematic neo-colonial dynamics this entails (2013: 483).

More often than not, though, studies which investigate CWB's work focus on its strengths, particularly in relation to health and well-being (McMahan 2008; Van Nunen 2019: 6; Wollin 2017: 46; Peacock 2016: 6). The literature attests to a promising relationship between CWB's work and psychosocial support, alluding to its relevance for peace and development

studies by stressing this importance of individual development for that of society. However, while laughter is addressed by the literature, it is not always its primary focus. Therefore, this analysis seeks to provide a more focused discussion on laughter and its relationship with psychosocial aid, bringing key arguments together to draw more explicit links between laughter, performance, well-being, and the field of peace and development.

4.3 Well-Being

CWB themselves stress that their work is associated with psychosocial care (CWB International 2016: 7), with laughter serving useful to help children 'fully develop and heal' (CWB International 2018: 3) and to generate endorphins to 'reduce pain' and foster well-being (CWB International 2018: 3). Psychosocial support can be defined as the healing of 'psychological wounds' and reestablishment of 'social structures' to transform 'passive victims' into 'active survivors' (IFRC c2020). Interviewees in the study by Van Nunen (2019: 29) report how fun and laughter within CWB's work may unite and bring happiness, entertainment, and relaxation to communities. Similarly, Peacock (2016: 6, 17) and Wollin (2017: 38-41, 41-44) note how CWB performances can bring communities together, with laughter and play eliciting joy to distance 'the difficulties of daily life' (Peacock 2016: 6). The benefits of psychosocial support in contributing to peace have received increasing attention of late (see Hertog 2017; Simpson 2018). Indeed, Hertog (2017: 285) highlights how well-being constitutes an essential component of positive peace, as individuals may continue to experience various psychological traumas as a consequence of conflict. Indeed, 'well-being' falls under the SDGs as part of Goal 3 (WHO c2020), and CWB International (2016: 6) express a belief that neglecting psychological welfare may trigger more violence. As such, both CWB themselves, and the literature on their work, suggest that laughter is a valuable product of participatory theatre, with the potential to contribute to psychosocial care and well-being, and,

in turn, peace and development, through the provision of joy, pain-relief, escapism and the bolstering of societal unity.

Furthermore, laughter and performance more specifically may interact to support these ends. Theories of farce within theatre would argue that violent yet comical episodes of CWB's performances, such as pie throwing (see PSF CWB 2018: 00:00:54-00:00:57), and beatings and chasings (see PSF CWB 2016: 00:02:46-00:03:15), contribute to escapism through the vicarious experience of fantasies in a safe, controlled performance environment. This also provides a release for frustrated desires through laughter's cathartic functions. CWB USA (2019: 00:01:37-00:01:56) explicitly mention catharsis as a consequence of laughter, providing 'a release of energy' (Wollin 2017: 35). In addition to contributing to well-being, this catharsis could contribute a valuable non-violent outlet for pent-up tension in the refugee camp or IDP camp where antagonism between warring communities may persist and where new frustrations, such as between displaced and host community, may emerge (Lawson 2012: 1). Interestingly, more direct participation in performances is not necessarily a requirement to draw on this function of laughter. CWB's work is by no means limited to farcical and slapstick mechanisms, yet without access to participants for interview, it remains unclear how exactly CWB perceive any cathartic elements to function, or which emotions in particular their performances may purge.

4.4 Participation, Power, and Unity

Where does participation fit in? McMahan (2008: 19) observes that clowns react to their spectators due to the improvisational nature of their performances. As such, she explains (2008: 19), 'there is no fourth wall'. Consequently, "participation" within CWB's work often takes on more subtle forms and does not always necessarily equate to audience members joining clowns on stage or actively deciding for themselves the course of action. Nevertheless, more overt exchanges between clowns and audience members are also prominent. For example, the

audience are invited to join in with magic tricks and dance (see PSF CWB 2016: 00:01:37-00:01:41; 00:03:36-00:03:44), and there are numerous examples of clowns directly engaging with the audience, for instance by playfully attacking them with water (see CWB USA 2019: 00:03:05-00:03:16). Not all instances of this more overt 'participation' necessarily trigger laughter. Indeed, CWB International (2017: 34) like to use participation as 'Energizers' to enliven the audience. However, laughter is clearly heard in many of this section's referenced video clips, demonstrating how laughter and participatory approaches can indeed go hand in hand.

Peacock (2016: 8) explains how audience participation facilitates identification with the people and events taking place on stage. However, I argue that, in many examples of CWB's work, participation is used to reinforce divides between audience and clown just as often as it breaks down barriers. In one example, a girl is invited to play with the clowns and their makeshift weights (see DIPLO DOCUS nd: 00:00:22-00:00:40). The girl is depicted as strong, as she holds the weight made of cardboard boxes over her head with ease. The clowns, however, are not strong enough to follow suit, and collapse. In another skit, clowns share a bench with an audience member but fall off both ends to elicit laughter (see CWB UK 2019: 00:00:02-00:00:08). Indeed, CWB International (2017: 3) explain that the audience are placed in a position of superiority when faced with the lowly clown, and when a spectator is invited to participate, it is often to celebrate their power (Naomi 2017). Additionally, when clowns fall over or receive a beating, part of the reason the audience laughs may be because they are privileged enough to avoid the same fate (Speier 1998: 1372), reminiscent of the superiority theory of laughter, which also happens to be linked to "empowerment" (Kale 2017: 842). As such, laughter and participatory theatre may complement each other in their facilitation of the fostering and expression of feelings of power, and this celebration of power is important in

settings like the refugee/ IDP camp, where the displaced tend to suffer from feelings of powerlessness (Bjertrup et al. 2018; Sleijpen et al. 2017).

Furthermore, when groups laugh together *at* something, they also laugh *with* the people in the same group (Meyer 2000: 315), supporting observations in relation to the unifying nature and space of laughter within CWB's work (see Van Nunen 2019: 31; Wollin 2017: 41). Once again, this function of laughter as fostering unity is supported by the unity encouraged by the performance and performance space itself. As Jaume Mateu aka Tortell Poltrona observes (Dobbs 2011), 'in 2007, during a mission to the [ethnically divided] town of Mitrovice in Kosovo, Serbian and Kosovar [Albanian] children sat together for the first time to watch our show.' Laughter and theatre, then, also have the potential to be successfully combined to place societal tensions and divisions on hold, with CWB International (2017: 3) asserting that their work serves to generate 'group harmony'. Significantly, participation and its facilitation of laughing *at* clowns, and laughing *with* others, may assist in this.

It is important to note that laughter generated through CWB's work is not always the direct result of humour, as it can be linked to entertainment, play, and contagion, which also relate to unification (Van Nunen 2019: 29; Wollin 2017: 41). What becomes clear, however, is that unification is an important biproduct of laughter. Unfortunately, studies of CWB's work have failed to fully explore the implications of unifying laughter for peacebuilding more specifically, aside from briefly mentioning a potential integrating function for refugees and their host communities (see Wollin 2017: 45).

CWB very explicitly link their work to conflict and peace (2018: 3), indicating a sort of grassroots diplomacy function to their performances through which laughter serves as a common, unifying language, alongside theatre. The grassroots function of laughter in theatre can contribute to peacebuilding (Kappler: 2014) by fostering engagement and conflict

navigation among parties involved (McDonald: 2003), despite not directly addressing conflict resolution (Lamle and Ayuba, 2019: 89). Yet, concerns arise over how long-lasting and truly subversive the effects of these temporally limited performances may be, as CWB note their work brings together people "for the duration of a show" (2018: 3). Peacock (2016: 16), however, highlights both that CWB seek to train and collaborate with locals through workshops and that some chapters employ longer-term projects domestically. As such, clowning, play, and laughter do not have to constitute one-off occurrences.

4.5 The Laugh of the Beneficiary

Linked to power and unification is the interplay between laughter and victimhood. CWB have been known to allude to sensitive issues and experiences undergone by audience members as part of their performances. For instance, particularly in South Africa where lives are lost to HIV and AIDS, CWB employ a "dead or alive" skit whereby one of the clowns pretends to be dead and the other thinks it's their fault (Talks at Google 2014: 00:29:13-00:30:32). Another skit involves encouraging refugees to laugh at their own perilous journeys to safety (RT Documentary 2016: 00:13:50-00:14:50). Laughter in the above scenarios may serve as a coping mechanism. These examples make clear theatre and laughter's tendency to facilitate a carnivalesque subversion, with the traditional "victim", such as the refugee (see Rajaram, 2002) or aid beneficiary (see Barnett 2014: 18), temporarily released from their role. This draws attention both to the notion of all theatre as "participatory" in a certain sense and to the power of theatre in exposing the ways in which 'we construct our realities' (Taussig, Schechner and Boal 1990: 61). This is complemented by laughter's unifying potential which is thought to function through stripping back identities (Willett, Willett and Sherman 2012: 229).

Victimhood implies a powerless individual in need of a Western saviour (Parekh 2020: 31; Ramasubramanian and Miles 2018: 4491, 4501), an object of pity (Harrell-Bond 2002: 52), and an individual taken out of context and denied their right to a political voice (Rajaram 2002:

248). CWB International (2017: 54) recognise the importance of moving away from problematic representations of victimhood in stressing their preference for employing images of children enjoying themselves rather than images of distress. Additionally, a release from the role of "victim" can prove particularly "empowering". For example, a group which the peace and security spheres have traditionally portrayed as helpless victims is that of women and girls (Otto 2009: 7), though UNSCR 1325 (2000) underlines the importance of acknowledging their role as agents for peace. Processes of laughing *at,* laughing *with* as *equals*, and participating on stage can challenge these images of victimhood. Indeed, exposure to women clowns and their freedom to travel the world to perform and play tricks on their male clown counterparts is perceived as relaying an important message to girls in relation to their power (CWB Ireland 2015). While CWB International (2017: 59) insist that their clowns should not seek to educate communities or liberate women, thus playing down the political potential of laughter and clowning, in the very same document they explicitly mention aims of "empowerment" (2017: 12, 37). Though, this "empowerment" is rather different to "empowerment" according to TO whereby spectators ideate and rehearse solutions to their oppression, and which potentially proves longer lasting. These functions of laughter and participation within CWB's work are perhaps better understood as generating fleeting feelings of power, suggesting the audience's potential power, or acts of 'resilience' (Naomi 2017), rather than an explicit call to action.

4.6 Humanitarian Clown or Clowning Humanitarian?

CWB international (2017: 5) are explicit that their role is neutral, careful to avoid political statements during performances (2017: 12, 13, 33 56, 59), yet critics increasingly point to the political nature of humanitarian support. Watts (2017: 1) states that '[h]umanitarian aid *is* a political act'. The Belgium chapter of CWB has supposedly received funding grants from the Ministry of Foreign Relations (Topalidou 2015), and the Canada chapter was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in their mission in Kosovo (CSF Canada nd: 10). This is not to

assert that CWB is highly influenced by donor expectations - indeed, the Canada branch has traditionally funded their work through the sale of red noses (Wickham 2002: 162). It is merely a reminder that organisations with the seemingly innocent agenda of fostering laughter in traumatised communities are not exempt from potential risks suffered by other humanitarian organisations, highlighting the complexity of even this goal (Peacock 2016: 11). Tortell Poltrona himself was kidnapped by Croatian militia when on his way to perform for Bosnians and made to put on a show for Croatian children instead (Dobbs 2011), demonstrating how the organisation's work is at risk of being co-opted into political conflicts. Nevertheless, in considering their interactions as exchanges there is an attempt on CWB's part to distinguish their work from the problematic Northern aid worker-Southern beneficiary binary which plagues humanitarian and development sectors (Colomer nd: 5). Indeed, CWB International (2018: 17) is conscious of problems associated with a 'eurocentric approach', displaying an awareness of ethical issues associated with their work.

Moreover, CWB Ireland (2015) suggest that witnessing white aid workers in the role of clown, and not taking themselves too seriously, is a refreshing change from the typical figure of the solemn UN worker to which their audiences are normally exposed. This paper suggests that humanitarian clowning actually holds the potential to verge on a carnivalesque ridiculing of mistakes and shortcomings of humanitarian aid work and humanitarian actors (see Bennett, Foley and Pantuliano 2016).[2] It is interesting to consider where the line between innocent laughter within psychosocial aid work, on the one hand, and satirical, parodic criticism of the humanitarian agenda and white Western saviour complex, on the other, may lie.

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[2] It is important to note here that CWB do not express this aim, and I do not attribute this critique of humanitarianism to their work.

5 Colectivo/a Respiral

5.1 Background

Colectivo/a Respiral (Respi) was formed in 2009 to address a range of societal problems through "Teatro Foro Clown" or "Clown Forum Theatre" (CFT) (Corrales G. c2014). They deliver performances and workshops throughout Costa Rica as well as across several other Latin American countries (Respi nd: 10). Important for this study, Respi (nd: 10) profess an interest in tackling oppression at the level of the everyday, reminiscent of requirements for positive peace, and greatly inspired by Boal's TO (nd: 11). The Collective is also relevant, since Respi (nd: 10) outline laughter and clowning as key elements of their work. When asked to summarise the Collective's main objective, and how laughter fits in with this, Respi's representative outlined the use of CFT to facilitate 'social transformation' and explore alternative 'paths' to managing societal issues (2020, pers. comm., 18 July). Significantly, they highlighted laughter as a tool at the clown's disposal to engage the group's spect-actors.

Before proceeding, it is important to explain how CFT functions. Forum theatre, as devised by Boal, involves the performance of scenes of oppression whereby the audience (or "spect-actors") are free to stop and alter the action, thinking up alternative behaviours and solutions and rehearsing them on stage (Sullivan, Burns and Paterson 2007: 3). According to Respi (nd: 13), CFT draws on this tradition while incorporating the exaggeration of scenes of oppression through clowning. The clown plays an important role in opening up performances to incorporation of the comical and facilitating 'a constant communication' with the audience (nd: 13).

5.2 Complementarity

In the interview with the Respi representative, I wanted to understand to what extent laughter may complement the tool of TO. The respondent (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) felt that laughter

and TO work extremely well together, though they did mention risks associated with their work. When asked about the value of laughter, they suggested that the laughing agent is elevated into a 'position of power' in relation to the behaviour represented on stage, while still relating to the action. Interestingly, however, the respondent (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) also mentioned that when laughter is involved in scenes of oppression, the audience connects with the scene in a slightly different way and through different emotions. Indeed, the ability to laugh at oppression was perceived as allowing a more empowering, uninhibited, and 'freer' form of engagement than traditional TO may provide. The potential utility of a comedic narrative (through which laughter is often triggered) within conflict studies and international relations has been noted for its commitment to happy endings and tendency to not look too harshly upon actors' mistakes (Kuusisto 2009; Payne 2013). As such, it could be argued that laughter both complements TO's goals of empowerment and enhances the multifaceted nature of that functionality; it is not merely thinking up and rehearsing solutions to oppression which empowers, but also the promotion of laughter at one's own misfortunes and mishaps, implying freedom and hope. The respondent (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) anecdotally reported incidents of audience members displaying a desire and resolve to challenge oppression post-performance. This supports the notion that CFT can succeed in encouraging spect-actors to promote transformative change in everyday life, thus implying a more long-term, and slightly different, conception of power than that potentially generated through CWB's performances.

The respondent (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) also reported another result of their work, whereby audience members become more comfortable in discussing their experiences of oppression. This may function by allowing the audience to broach difficult subject-matter while preserving 'deniability' of offensive intent through joking and laughter (Swart 2009: 897). Indeed, Respi's clowns get away with problematic behaviour, such as displays of toxic masculinity (see colectivorespiral 2011c), which would constitute dark, sensitive subject matter

without the comedic twist, and would prove highly inappropriate displayed by developmental actors in the absence of a clowning persona. In addition to helping Respi address sensitive issues, according to the respondent (2020, pers. comm., 18 July), the Collective can, thanks to laughter, better 'connect' with their audiences, which is particularly valuable in contexts where communities may have received very little exposure to theatre. In this sense, laughter complements TO by facilitating the audience's acceptance of the TO process and encouraging their participation in it.

5.3 Loss of Control and Language

Importantly, the Respi respondent recognised laughter as valuable in its own right (2020, pers. comm., 18 July). Laughter's stand-alone utility indicates a potential for it to extend beyond TO, reinforcing the empowering impact it has on audience members, as outlined in the CWB case study. However, CFT is not immune to TO's risks. For instance, the respondent (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) recalled an incident of an audience member voicing homophobic ideas, indicating that audience participation in CFT cannot be romanticised. Moreover, new risks emerge, such as that of serious messages being obscured by the frivolity of laughter (2020, pers. comm., 18 July). This is symptomatic of carnivalesque approaches which often distract from the gravity of the message of alternative possibilities being conveyed (Cresswell 1994: 55). This serves as a reminder that, while laughter in the context of TO may hold its own value, this value is ultimately being employed to respond to and denounce issues of oppression.

Indeed, the respondent mentioned that Respi's past feedback was critical of their comical, slapstick depictions of scenes of violence for supposedly verging on inappropriate at times (2020, pers. comm., 18 July). As an example of such content-matter, one video of their work depicts a scene of domestic violence (see colectivorespiral 2011c: 00:12:07-00:12:20). The woman remains unhurt after receiving the beating and comically continues to act is if still feeling the force of being hit even once her male counterpart has stopped lashing out, eliciting

a couple of reserved giggles from the audience.[3] Significantly, then, laughter and humour can both assist in the denunciation and confrontation of unjust behaviours, *and* obscure the severity of the issues being addressed. We return, again, to this tension between defiance and preservation of the status quo.

Respi (nd: 13) maintain that laughter does not have to appear insensitive. Notably, the respondent placed the onus on the Collective themselves to ensure their performances treat issues of oppression respectfully (2020, pers. comm., 18 July), rather than labelling laughter as inevitably problematic. Indeed, when asked if audience laughter always comes from a place of positivity, the respondent (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) affirmed that they had never interpreted audience laughter as coming from a mean place and reemphasised that the greater risk came from the performance itself seeming inappropriate. Nevertheless, the Respi representative felt that their clowns could be successfully held in check with the help of careful writing and some form of facilitator.

Moreover, the respondent (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) proposed that laughter is a useful tool and *language* through which to discuss difficult or 'taboo' issues, as it can be used with all age groups and for people from all areas of society. However, laughter is not necessarily appropriate for all cultures (Le Goff 1989: 1), nor is clowning (Peacock 2016: 11), which is why the respondent once more placed the onus on the Collective themselves to research contexts carefully to ensure the language of laughter and clowning translates appropriately (2020, pers. comm., 18 July). What is particularly interesting about these comments is the implication that laughing and taking things seriously are not mutually exclusive but simply require careful balancing. In one performance, there is a scene where a

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[3] It should be noted that such risks of overstepping are not exclusive to Respi's work; CWB also emphasize the importance of sensitivity – gauging the appropriateness of their performances by monitoring community reactions to them (Talks at Google 2014: 00:45:20-00:47:16).

tourist displays cultural ignorance and happily objectifies the host country's inhabitants, who are in turn eager to pose for photos in exchange for money (colectivorespiral 2011a: 00:02:00-00:02:25). Despite audible laughter, audience members proceed to make serious points about the problematic nature of the behaviours represented on stage and remain undistracted in their goal of proposing alterations to the stories of oppression (colectivorespiral 2011b: 00:00:00-00:03:46).

5.4 Spect-actor and Spect-laughter

Correction is another way laughter can prove serious. For instance, laughing at oppression and society's failure to challenge it could theoretically serve as a form of satirical, correcting tool. In Respi's work, macho males are made ridiculous (colectivorespiral 2011c), and young adults' confusion and naivety in exploring sexual and romantic relationships are exposed as comical (colectivorespiral 2009a; 2009b). The clown's liminal, anarchic realm enables the adoption and ridicule of a variety of social roles, meaning that when the audience laughs, they often also laugh at those 'who in everyday life play the same roles in all seriousness' (Zucker 1967: 316).[4]

Moreover, when watching videos of Respi's performances, laughter is clearly not exclusive to the original clowning performance; it is also present when the audience are invited to share their thoughts and make changes to the action. This is facilitated by the clowns' skills at improvisation. For instance, in one segment of a performance on masculinity (see colectivorespiral 2011c: 00:35:00-00:38:30), a spect-actor proposes that instead of the stereotypically "macho" figure rejecting a hug from his friend, he should accept it. In response, the "macho" clown character demands to know where such an idea came from, comically breaking down the fourth wall and opening space for the audience member who made the proposition to practice the modification on stage. Indeed, laughter can foster agreeability

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[4] However, the advantages of more satirical elements would arguably rely on the audience and the Collective sharing similarly progressive understandings of desirable and undesirable behaviour.

(Speier 1998: 1356), paving the way for participation. The laughter which ensues during these improvisational segments of CFT arguably adds to a carnivalesque mocking, as the audience laugh at the clowns' ridiculous reluctance to change their ways in comparison to the behaviour of the spect-actor. Indeed, the spect-actor, where sincere in their propositions to alter the story, ends up triggering laughter, according to the respondent (2020, pers. comm., 18 July). Thanks to this spect-actor "versus" clown contrast, the spect-actor is allowed to 'relax' and feel 'free', encouraging them to explore further solutions.

However, the Respi representative (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) made an interesting distinction between the category of spect-actor, who acts with sincerity, and those who try to play the clown and force laughter. This latter group of spect-actor was perceived as often failing in their aim to elicit laughter due to not actually engaging with the scene in an authentic or 'vulnerable' way. This distinction makes clear that involving spect-actors in the generation of laughter does not always play out in the same way. The observation is also indicative of a potential risk of spect-actors feeling that, to participate, they must inspire laughter (Calderón Villalobos 2013: 173). Respi's work highlights the crucial role of spect-actors in generating laughter, which holds potentially equal importance to the tool of the clown and the audience's laughter in achieving liberation from victimhood and oppression.

5.5 The Laugh of the Oppressed

Respi have begun referring to themselves as a "Colectiva" ("Collective" in the feminine) to reflect their female cohort and feminist ways of working (Burgoa 2018). When asked about the name change in our interview, the Respi representative (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) reiterated these reasons and underlined that the content matter of their workshops often relates to gender issues. They concluded that the power to create comedy is often reserved for men in Latin American society, making their woman-dominated comedic group significant. The potential for laughter, when adopted and owned by women, can constitute a powerful statement. The

respondent (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) also referred to "Mujeres Libres Riendo" and an interest in spaces for women's participation in generating laughter, going on to note its importance for making visible women's issues, and the significance of having the freedom to address women's concerns from the position of comedy rather than from that of 'vulnerability'. The latter point very much resonates with UNSCR 1325 (2000) and the need to depart from the stereotype of "victim" as a woman's primary, if not sole, identity. Consequently, the language of laughter, humour and derision may provide a valuable alternative means of narration. This complements TO, as the Respi representative (2020, pers. comm., 18 July) stressed that the oppressed participant is not a 'victim', rather they are 'aware of their situation and want to change it'. It further complements TO, as, returning to Cixous' Medusa, the laughing woman holds the potential to escape roles the patriarchy defines for her (see Aneja 1992: 17) and resists taboos related to the control of women's pleasure and the female body which date back to the Middle Ages (Perfetti 1998).

6 Conclusions

By highlighting the ways in which laughter holds traditionally strong ties with both dramatic arts traditions and participatory festivities, this study proposes its potential for peace and development as both a complementary tool and valuable end-product within participatory theatre. Indeed, the case studies on CWB and Respi attest to this, as laughter can be useful for improving well-being for positive peace; eliciting feelings of power among the otherwise oppressed; generating a sense of unity among groups in conflict; and for addressing societal taboos. Laughter coupled with performance can also liberate in its facilitation of a carnivalesque subversion of roles of victimhood and oppression. Even in the context of very limited participation, laughter can theoretically provide a cathartic function and constitute a correcting tool through processes of "laughing at".

Yet, laughter involves its own set of difficulties and risks; it can help or hinder depending on one's goals. It is useful to consider the role of laughter as part of a process, whereby the means used to generate it and any long-term effects are as worthy of attention as the immediate feelings of entertainment, release, or power which laughter may provide. Future studies should consider laughter's potential in the context of peace and development – especially when used by clowning as a commentary on humanitarian failures, or by women as they appropriate it to address women's issues – as it can be a powerful tool for challenging traditional notions of peace, development, and humanitarianism, and for facilitating social change.

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